

ECUADOR

Situation Report – February 2019



Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

- The Inter-ministerial Agreement 0001/2019 remained in effect in February, while additional controls were implemented on the Rumichaca International Bridge.
 - Exceptions for the requirement of certified criminal record for vulnerable groups, as established by the Inter-ministerial Agreement 0002/2019, has required a case-by-case follow-up by the GTRM members in order to guarantee compliance and access to the territory.
 - Single adults travelling without children are mainly affected by the measures.
- 56,714 persons received humanitarian assistance¹⁻²
 - 30,861 persons received protection assistance
 - 1,483 persons received socio-economic and cultural integration assistance
 - In total, 89,068 persons received assistance
 - 34% of the persons who received assistance were women and over 45% were children and adolescents.
 - 1,176 civil servants benefited from capacity-building activities

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

During February 2019, Inter-ministerial Agreement 0001/2019 establishing the requirement of certified criminal records for Venezuelan nationals to enter Ecuador, remained in force. On 15th February, additional controls were implemented on the Rumichaca International Bridge, enabling only persons in possession of the required documentation to enter to Ecuador. These measures have hindered the identification of vulnerable cases that would fall under the exceptions established by Inter-ministerial Agreement 0002/2019. The restrictions imposed through the Inter-ministerial Agreements and modifications of the border management processes on the Rumichaca International Bridge, generated spontaneous protests at the border from the Venezuelan nationals wanting to enter Ecuador. On 27th February, the Ecuadorian Ombudsman's Office issued a press release denouncing the 'collective deportation' of 17 Venezuelan nationals, and urging the State to observe the principles of prohibition of collective expulsion, *non-refoulement* and to guarantee rights.

In February, regular entries to Ecuador decreased by 40% compared to the previous month and a negative migratory balance (-5.6%) was registered. Based on protection monitoring interviews with 515 people who had not been admitted at borders, Rumichaca, San Miguel and Huaquillas, more than 77% of non-admission cases were not in possession of criminal records and 21% were in possession of uncertified criminal records. The most affected population group was comprised of single men and women (18-29 years old) traveling without children, given that the requirement to present certified criminal record does not apply to minors³, and by extension to their parents travelling with them, to prevent family separation. However, several cases of children and adolescents affected by the measure were identified, including cases of minors travelling in extended family groups where adults were not in possession of a certified criminal record. More than 81% of those interviewed that could not access Ecuador indicated that Peru was their ultimate destination, while less than 14% stated that Ecuador was their ultimate destination.

¹ The quantitative data measures direct assistance and does not include information or advocacy activities. The numbers displayed correspond to people assisted and not to other metrics (e.g. institutions assisted, shelters).

² The numbers of persons assisted reflect direct and individual assistance interventions. These figures may, however, include persons who have been assisted several times through different interventions.

³ Article 2 of inter-ministerial agreement 0001/2019.

The presence of the GTRM members at the border enabled the identification of cases with specific protection needs (including pregnant or lactating women, persons with chronic illnesses or disabilities, separated or unaccompanied minors and people in need of international protection, in Ecuador or in another country) that could fall under the exceptions provided for by the in Inter-ministerial Agreement 0002/2019. However, several challenges remained, as the exceptions were not spelled out in the Agreement, and in particular due to the absence of protocols identification and referral of cases with specific needs. This has required a case-by-case approach, generating significant efforts from GTRM members present in border areas. These efforts have also translated into advocacy initiatives at the national level to improve the implementation of the inter-ministerial agreements and promote a protection approach.

In many cases, persons who were denied regular entry to the Ecuadorian territory continue their journey irregularly, resulting in increased protection risks, particularly in terms of trafficking in persons and gender-based violence. In particular, young women and men who travel alone and unaccompanied adolescents constitute a high risk group. The increased presence of smugglers and traffickers offering to facilitate the refugees and migrants' entry to Ecuador, was observed on the Colombian side of the border. The scarcity of information on the new access requirements to Ecuador created confusion among Venezuelan refugees and migrants and facilitated the operation of smuggling and trafficking networks.

RESPONSE OVERVIEW

Area of Intervention 1: Direct emergency assistance

- **56,714** persons received emergency assistance in February 2019, **64%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **34%** of the persons assisted were women and **46%** were children and adolescents
- **6 shelters** were supported
- **51 Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) kits** were delivered to the Ministry of Health

Several shelters were supported with various materials and equipment, in particular with bedroom furniture, kitchen utensils, educational materials for children, and Internet connections to facilitate communication with family members. These infrastructures provide temporary shelter to refugees and migrants in transit and are located in border areas as well as along the routes followed by Venezuelan nationals.

The temporary rest areas established at the border, particularly in Rumichaca and San Miguel, continue to operate. These facilities have benefited a total of 6,539 persons at both border points (2,306 women, 1,240 men, 1,327 girls and 1,269 boys). Among the beneficiaries were 344 pregnant women, 26 pregnant teenagers and 18 people with disabilities. In addition, 3,312 blankets were delivered to families with children. At the Huaquillas CEBAF, a rest area was accommodated with the delivery of various supplies (including mattresses, sheets, ventilation).

Information delivery remains a key activity falling under area of intervention 1 and is being implemented through a variety of modalities: distribution of leaflets, screens broadcasting information messages and the organization of information sessions. It is estimated that more than 26,000 persons were reached by these activities during the course of February.

Area of Intervention 2: Protection

- **30,861** persons received protection assistance in February 2019, **35%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **34%** of the persons assisted were women and **45%** were children and adolescents
- **1,309** members of the civil society benefitted **from capacity building**

Protection and referral protocols for LGBTI persons in a situation of human mobility were developed, for the use of organizations specializing in responding to the needs of this specific population group. These tools were developed with a regional focus and with the aim of presenting them at the regional meeting scheduled for the month of March.

With regard to response and preventing of gender-based violence (GBV), safe spaces were established for persons in need of GBV assistance, in particular women and adolescents in situation of human mobility and for case management, in Carchi (Rumichaca) and Sucumbíos (San Miguel). Additionally, capacities as well as protection gaps with regard to GBV and SSR were assessed in both Carchi and San Miguel. A rapid gender equality assessment (survey of 415 people) took place in Quito to evaluate: 1) differences in the needs, access to resources, decision making power, etc. between men and women; 2) the understanding and appropriation of gender-based violence concepts and the risk of GBV in a situation of human mobility.

Area of Intervention 3: Socio-economic and cultural integration

- **1,493** persons assisted in February 2019, **2%** of the total of people assisted in this month
- **36%** of the persons assisted were women and **38%** children
- **50 interventions** in the field of **livelihoods**
- **42.000 reactions** on Instagram to #ChallengedelAbrazo

Technical support was provided to the Ministry of Education in the coordination and implementation of a national strategy for educational response for persons in situation of human mobility. A specialised workshop was held for the technical teams of the Ministry on the promotion of an inclusive approach to refugees and migrants' right to education and the recognition of the non-formal educational processes taking place outside the formal education system. At the field level, several initiatives were implemented to advocate and enhance access to education for children and adolescents in situation of human mobility, especially through various technical support initiatives to local institutions (e.g. education districts) to enable school enrolment; evaluation of alternatives to minimize enrolment time; and certification of academic degrees enabling refugees and migrants to continue their education.

Several interventions in the field of livelihoods were implemented in February, for example through the delivery of seed capital, support provided to beneficiaries on entrepreneurship and advocacy done at the local level to various institutions to enable the participation of entrepreneurs in several events (e.g. obtaining spaces for small businesses in Ibarra; participation in local fairs) or the establishment of links with the labour market. Toolboxes contained several items, such as a handbook on the economic integration to hire a refugee and migrants. Key information and messages were also distributed to several companies and labour organizations. Workshops on financial inclusion took place in Quito and in Ibarra with the participation of several financial institutions, GTRM members and representatives of local government institutions. Other advocacy initiatives were carried on through the human mobility roundtable of Imbabura to promote the integration of refugees and migrants in the public and private sectors.

To enhance social cohesion, an initiative was launched through the United Nations' campaign against xenophobia. The #Abrazo Challenge was published on social media, asking community members to upload a photo taken with a person of another nationality. Several influencers joined the challenge, in particular on Instagram. In total, this challenge generated more than 42,000 reactions in Instagram, 400 in Twitter and more than 1,500 in Facebook.

Area of Intervention 4: Support to the host Government

- **1,176 civil servants benefitted from capacity building** in protection, border management, GBV-SRH
- **58 health personnel trained**

Civil servants benefitted from various capacity-building activities on a variety of topics including human mobility; international asylum law; best practices for the eradication of poverty among vulnerable groups; employment and livelihoods for persons in situations of human mobility; gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health.

In terms of technical and material assistance, an information point was installed at the Rumichaca CENAF in addition to several Refugee Housing Units (managed by GTRM partners) which were installed in Rumichaca (11) and in San Miguel (4), with the objective of improving assistance to the population in transit and enhancing shelter capacities. Additionally, advocacy was conducted by GTRM members with the Ecuadorian Social Security Institute to obtain affiliation for asylum seekers, resulting in a declaration by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility confirming the possibility for asylum seekers to access this service.

Members of the GTRM actively participated and supported local coordination mechanisms, particularly with regard to the Roundtable on Human Mobility. The participation in different local networks on the protection of rights and livelihoods enabled advocacy and monitoring of the work conducted by different institutions on these different topics. The Tulcán Cantonal Council on the protection of Rights functioned as the coordination space for the development of trainings on various topics, that allowed to develop an agenda for the equality in Tulcan.

organisation of workshops on different subjects affecting persons in situation of human mobility, which led to the elaboration of the Canton of Tulcán Local Agenda for Equality.

COORDINATION

The various GTRM working groups continue to be established gradually. Main updates for these different coordination spaces are the following:

- 7th February: the third meeting of the **Protection Working Group** took place. The results of the elections of the Working Group co-leader were communicated (NRC). Several updates were shared, in particular with regard to access to territory, gender-based violence and the situation of LGBTI persons. The Regional Platform's mission report on support spaces and the latest updates regarding the establishment of a support space in collaboration with the Rights Protection Council in Tulcán were presented to the group. One of the key outcomes of the meeting was the decision to develop a joint strategy on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.
- 8th February: the first joint meeting between the United Nations **Communication Group** (GCOM) and GTRM members took place. During the meeting the following activities took place: the identification of focal points of this joint Working Group; the elaboration of terms of reference and of potential synergies in the field of the elaboration of key messages; the expansion of the coverage of communication campaigns.
- 27th February: a meeting of the Working Group on **Food Security** took place, during which the need for the sharing of the partners' planning data was reiterated, to analyse potential gaps.

The GTRM coordination team organized a training session on Activity Info on 12th February to facilitate reporting to the platform.

PLATFORM PARTNERS

ADRA | CARE | CSMM-PIDHDD Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos - Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo | Diálogo Diverso | FUDELA Fundación de las Americas | HIAS Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society | ILO | IOM | Jesuit Refugee Service Ecuador | Misión Scalabriniana | Norwegian Refugee Council | Plan International Ecuador | Red Cross Ecuador | RET International | UNDP | UNESCO | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | UNOCHA | UNWOMEN | World Vision Ecuador | WFP | WHO

For more information, please contact:

Interagency Coordination

Capucine Maus de Rolley, Inter-agency coordinator, mausdero@unhcr.org

Nicolás Vexlir, Inter-agency coordinator, nvexlir@iom

Information Management

Jean Laurent Martin, Information Management Officer, martin@unhcr.org

Francis Fayolle, Information Management Specialist, fayolle@unhcr.org

Reporting

Tuuli Karjala, Associate Reporting Officer, karjala@unhcr.org