

ECUADOR

Situation Report – January 2019



Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

On January 26th the **Inter-ministerial Agreement 0001/2019** came into effect, requiring Venezuelan citizens to present a certified criminal record in order to enter into the territory of Ecuador.

Registered regular entries during the month of January were relatively low, with a notable decrease in entries following the adoption of the measure. Simultaneously, an **increase in irregular entries** has been observed, generating additional protection risks. Subsequently, the **Inter-ministerial Agreement 0002/2019 was published** on 2nd February, establishing exceptions to the measure for certain specific population groups.

- **12,938 persons received emergency direct assistance**
- **18,988 persons received protection assistance**
- **861 persons received socio-economic and cultural integration assistance**
- **In total, 32,787 persons received assistance**
- **34% of the persons who received assistance were women and over 32% were children and adolescents.**

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The adoption of Ministerial Agreement 0001/2019, which established the requirement of certified criminal records in order for Venezuelan nationals to enter Ecuador, has had direct consequences on the access to the territory. Prior to the decision, a femicide had been committed by a Venezuelan national on 19 January in Ibarra. The incident triggered national outcry, and led to xenophobic reactions and incidents during the days that followed. Some Venezuelan refugee and migrants left Ibarra.

On January 30th, the Vice Minister for Human Mobility announced the Government's decision to extend the emergency declaration for the Human Mobility sector in the provinces of Carchi, Pichincha and El Oro. On February 2nd, the Ecuadorian Government adopted the Inter-Ministerial Resolution 0002 /2019 providing for exceptions to the obligation to present a certified criminal record, in particular for family reunification cases; for people in transit and in possession of a visa or a residence permit in the country of destination and for exceptional cases authorized by the Immigration authorities (Ministry of the Interior) or human mobility (Ministry of Foreign Affairs).

Monitoring conducted in the field has enabled to assess the impact of these decisions. The total regular entries of Venezuelan nationals to Ecuador amounted to 48,554 for the month of January (vs. 80,967 in December 2018), with a migratory balance of 6.4% (vs. 8.87% in December 2018) demonstrating a significant decrease in regular entries. Individuals lacking a certified criminal record, as well as those unable to present a certified Venezuelan identity card, while this is the only travelling document in their possession, have generally not been authorized to access the territory. The majority of persons not been admitted for these reasons is largely comprised of single adults, as this requirement does not apply to children and adolescents. Monitoring of border areas has allowed the identification of a significant number of cases with specific needs (persons suffering of chronic diseases, persons with disabilities, pregnant women), that would fall under the exceptions provided by the inter-ministerial agreements as well as cases of persons with international protection needs, which require a special follow-up by organisations to facilitate their entry into the territory. Many of the refugees and migrants who were refused regular entry reportedly had to opt for an irregular entry through smugglers or traffickers, exposing them to greater protection risks. The border region between Colombia and Ecuador is particularly characterized by the risks associated with the presence of armed groups and criminal gangs linked to drug trafficking.

RESPONSE OVERVIEW

Area of Intervention 1: Direct emergency assistance

- **12.938** persons received emergency direct assistance in January 2019, **39%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **32%** of the persons assisted were women and **37%** children and adolescents
- **585** health personnel benefitted **from capacity building**
- **4 shelters** were supported

Activities reported within the Area of Intervention 1 include direct assistance in terms of food security, health, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and humanitarian transportation. In the field of shelter assistance, GTRM members provided direct assistance to beneficiaries as well as material support to various shelters, including utensils, installation of internet connections and domestic appliances. Several temporal spaces are supported by GTRM members in collaboration of the Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion (MIES) in the northern and southern borders to enable refugees and migrants to rest (approx. 2,500 and over 350 people reached respectively)^[1].

In terms of access to information^[2], GTRM members distributed information on migratory and refugee determination status procedures through a variety of modalities, including information sessions (approx. over 860 people reached), “waiting rooms” (approx. over 5000 people reached) and the distribution of informative leaflets in border areas. WiFi access points are available in the northern and southern border points to improve access to information for refugees and migrants.

Area of Intervention 2: Protection

- **18.898** persons received protection assistance in January 2019, **58%** of the total of persons assisted in this month
- **37%** of the persons assisted were women and **29%** children and adolescents
- **30** members of the civil society benefitted **from capacity building**

The protection response includes activities to facilitate access to asylum and migratory alternatives, as well as specialized services, in particular in the field of child protection, gender-based violence, human trafficking and smuggling and assistance to LGBTI population, through coordinated action to ensure access to the territory and respond to the protection needs of these different population groups.

Several information gathering initiatives and protection needs assessments were carried out through specific interviews or as part of management of individual cases. Among others, this included specific initiatives on gender-based violence and forms of violence against LGBTI persons. Information on human trafficking was distributed to persons in situation of human mobility, including through the distribution of child-friendly material (approx. more than 3.300 persons reached)^[3].

Area of Intervention 3: Socio-economic and cultural integration

- **861** persons assisted in January 2019, **3%** of the total of people assisted in this month

^[1] These activities are reported in a narrative format given the diversity of modalities of intervention and of ways to measure people reached. Numbers provided are not integrated in the total of people reached with direct assistance.

^[2] These activities are reported in a narrative format given the diversity of modalities of intervention and of ways to measure people reached. Numbers provided are not integrated in the total of people reached with direct assistance.

^[3] These activities are reported in a narrative format given the diversity of modalities of intervention and of ways to measure people reached. Numbers provided are not integrated in the total of people reached with direct assistance.

- **17%** of the persons assisted were women and **63%** children

Several livelihoods and socio-economic integration advocacy initiatives were delivered in January. The advocacy initiatives were directed in particular to financial institutions and cooperatives to enable access to credit and other banking products for refugees and migrants. The objective of these interventions was also to identify the necessary requirements to enable access and plan future advocacy. At the local level, the livelihood components of the human mobility roundtables provided a crucial space to articulate initiatives with local institutions and to promote the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants. Engagement with universities also took place to promote micro-entrepreneurships.

Regarding social cohesion, the first phase of the communication campaign of the United Nations in Ecuador, “*Abrazos que unen*”, was launched through the social networks. The intention is to sensitize the Ecuadorian population against xenophobia. A first meeting of the Communication Group of the UN (GCOM) and GTRM members was organized at the beginning of February (February 8th) to identify synergies in the field of communication.

Finally, several technical meetings were held with the Ministry of Education with regard to the promotion of inclusive education for children. The aim of the meetings was to establish a multidisciplinary technical team within the Ministry of Education, which would function as an entry point for the engagement with refugees and migrants. Additionally, a process was established to support the elaboration of a public policy guaranteeing the right to education for refugee and migrant children present in Ecuador.

COORDINATION

Since the end of 2018, the Working Group on Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) has been progressively establishing a national coordination structure. Currently, the Working Groups on protection, information management, food security and shelter/water and sanitation (WASH)/Non Food items are functional. Additional efforts are made to identify key priorities for operational coordination in the short term and the operationalisation of the other working groups.

Efforts to present and publicize the GTRM and the Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants were carried out in several field localities, in particular in Lago Agrio (November 2018), Esmeraldas (December 2018) and Quito/Pichincha (January 22nd). These initiatives were also used to identify operational coordination needs, corresponding priorities and ways to structure coordination at the local level. An inter-agency mission of the Regional Platform, which focused on the establishment of integral support spaces took place at the end of 2018, at the northern and southern borders in particular. The report and recommendations were shared with the GTRM members for comments and discussed within the framework of the protection working group.

Following the incidents in Ibarra, two GTRM meetings were organized, at a technical (January 24th) and representative (January 25th) levels. During the meetings, an update of the situational context was provided by the protection working group and several response initiatives were discussed. The urgency of initiating the United Nations communication campaign against xenophobia (a first phase of the campaign was launched through social networks shortly afterwards) and the implementation of capacity-building activities directed to the medias (an activity planned in the RPRM) were discussed. The need to reinforce the community-based approach of the humanitarian response in Ecuador and to promote the integration of host communities in the interventions was also highlighted.

PLATFORM PARTNERS

ADRA | CARE | CSMM-PIDHDD Centro de Documentación en Derechos Humanos - Plataforma Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Democracia y Desarrollo | Dialogo Diverso | FUDELA Fundacion 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

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