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Reporting Period: 1 January to 30 April 2021

UNICEF ECUADOR Humanitarian Situation Report



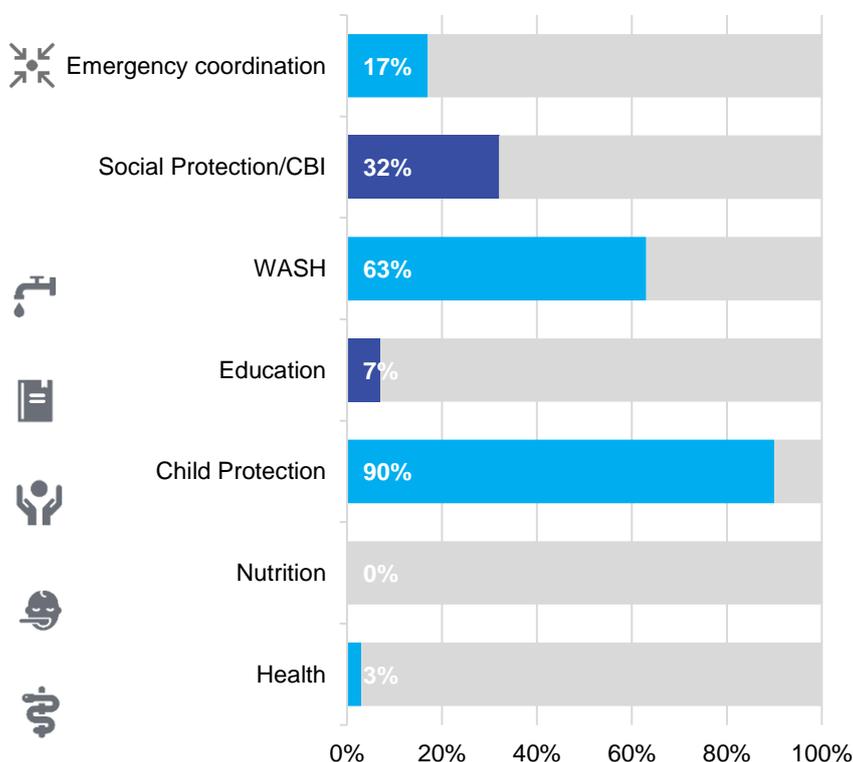
Highlights

- During 2020, Ecuador excess deaths amounted to 42,000 or 59.6% as compared to previous years. Official figures indicate more than 20,000 COVID19 related deaths. Emergency units at hospitals are currently at 95% of their capacity and 4% of the population has received the first vaccination dose.
- The latest National state of emergency declaration is in place from April 21 until May 20th requires the 415 schools that had reopened to return to online education. All 16,500 schools in the country remain closed to in person education.
- The secondary impact of the pandemic on families with children including families on the move has affected livelihoods, housing conditions, Gender Based Violence (GBV), violence against children rates, and mental health.
- Land border crossings remain officially closed. However, people on the move including unaccompanied and separated children, continue migrating through irregular border crossings facing risks such as human trafficking, violence including GBV, child recruitment, among others

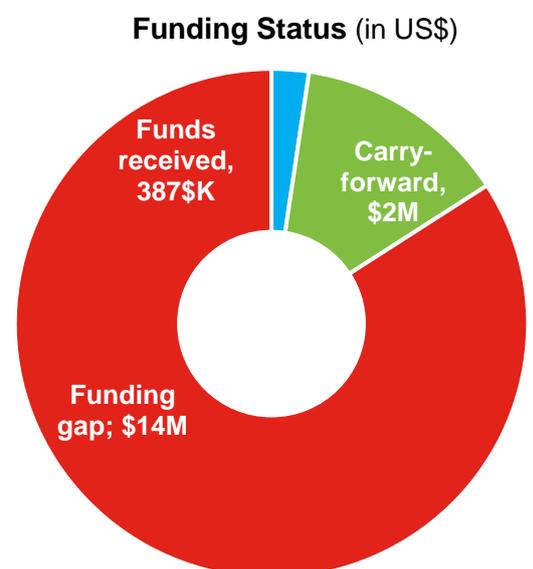
Situation in Numbers

- 4,300,000**
Children affected by school closure
- 172,000**
children on the move in Ecuador
- +400,000**
COVID19 Cases
- + 20,000**
deaths related to COVID19

UNICEF's Response and Funding Status



UNICEF Ecuador Appeal 2021 US\$ 16.4 million



Situation Overview & Humanitarian Needs

- As of April 2021, there are about **430,000 Venezuelan nationals in Ecuador**¹. Since the health emergency declaration due to COVID19 in March 2020, land borders with Colombia and Peru have been closed. Still, it is estimated that **500 – 1000 people enter the country through irregular border crossings daily**². The latest UNHCR Protection Monitoring (October – December 2020), based on a sample of their programme beneficiaries, finds that of those who arrived in Ecuador in 2020, **68 % entered through irregular border crossing points**
 - UNHCR Protection Monitoring exercises indicate that **62% of Venezuelan people do not have a regular migratory status**³ resulting in additional challenges in terms of access to services and fulfillment of their rights.
 - According to the same source, school closure has a higher impact for children already in a vulnerable situation: **26% of children and adolescents of refugee/migrant households have not been enrolled in school in 2020.**
 - Access to education has been even more limited due to the **lack of connectivity**, scarce economic resources, the worsening of educational quality, **discrimination**, and lack of educational materials.
 - Also, 75% of respondents mentioned they are mainly concerned about meeting the household's basic needs (i.e. water, food, housing). **33% of families live in overcrowded housing and 43% indicate that they do not have access to safe water.**
- During 2020, Ecuador excess deaths amounted to 42,000 or 59.6% as compared to previous years. . This increase has not affected children and adolescents⁴. Nevertheless, **the secondary impact of the pandemic has seriously hit families with children and adolescents.** According to the latest telephone survey supported by UNICEF and implemented in January 2021, **79% of households** with children and adolescents have seen **their income decreased** as compared to pre-pandemic levels, against the 63% of those without children.
- In the first 4 months of the year, the number of **COVID19 cases throughout the country has grown substantially**, collapsing the health system's capacity to attend patients in intensive care units nationwide. The GoE issued a new state of emergency decree with curfews from 8pm through 5am during weekdays, all day weekends and school closure once again.
- Although 80% of schools had presented their Education Continuity Plans to the MoE to resume in-person education, only 874 received approval and **415 had resumed in-person learning.** However, the latest National state of emergency declaration is in place from April 21 until May 20th requires the 415 schools that had reopened to return to online education. All 16,500 schools in the country remain closed to in person education.
- The current **vaccination** process is slow and has shown inconsistencies regarding prioritization according to age groups and vulnerability. As of 1st of April, Ecuador shows a slower COVID-19 **vaccination rollout (4.24% of the population has had at least one dose)** than neighboring Colombia (6.60%)⁵
- Municipalities with the most severe community transmission rates are also municipalities with the highest number of Venezuelan populations. Although COVID prevention measures are mostly known among the Venezuelan population surveyed, **the need to provide for their families, forces them to go to public spaces** risking exposure to the virus.
- The pandemic has had a severe impact on the **mental health** of both Ecuadorians and people on the move. Confinement, difficulties in satisfying basic needs, discrimination and uncertainty about the future have caused a deterioration in the psycho-emotional health of the population.⁶ Of our U-Report

¹ R4V Platform

² MoFA, March 2021

³ Humanitarian Visa or other

⁴ Universidad de Cuenca, UNICEF

⁵ Our World in Data, April 30 2020.

⁶ Community Consultations – Needs Assessment, UNHCR January 2021

responses on mental health polls, **23% of adolescents state that they have felt anxious and 19% depressed in the past 7 days.**

Summary Analysis of Programme Response

Nutrition

Children on the move from Venezuela

In coordination with its implementing partner Desarrollo y Auto Gestión (DyA), UNICEF Ecuador has been supporting nutrition initiatives for both migrant and host communities. In Guayaquil, **nutritional screenings** targeting both for host community and migrant **children under five** years old are part of a community-based surveillance strategy aimed at supporting the continuation of essential health and nutrition services. The screenings are part of nutritional brigades, benefitting families in the community.

From January to March 2021, over 847 children under five years old were screened for anaemia and acute malnutrition, of whom 200 children were diagnosed with anaemia and received treatment, and 5 children were diagnosed with acute malnutrition and were referred to health services for adequate treatment. UNICEF ensured that families of children were supported throughout their recovery and received the adequate nutritional support. **These efforts have been essential during the reporting period especially because national health services are challenged by COVID-19.**

Health

Children on the move from Venezuela

Over 100 people (including pregnant women, children, and adolescents) have benefitted from health promotion strategies, including **HIV prevention, prenatal check-ups, and inclusion of adolescents in art-based activities to support their mental well-being and raise awareness regarding teenage pregnancies.** These activities are carried out as part of larger strategies aimed at reaching both host and migrant communities and supporting efforts to provide universal access to health services.

UNICEF programme with DyA, through its community volunteers, surveyed communities to identify migrant populations who might be left out from health services, especially pregnant women without prenatal check-ups. These activities are essential, given that **migrant populations face challenges in accessing services** due, in some cases, to lack of formal documentation. As the COVID-19 crisis has worsened and borders remain closed, UNICEF actions have been affected. However, the programme is reaching the migrant and refugee population through its regular development programme.

COVID-19

UNICEF continues supporting the implementation of **community-based surveillance models** in Imbabura, Pichincha and Guayas. The surveillance model encourages community participation and engagement through community-based workers, and to date the programme **has recruited and trained over 1,000 community volunteers on: COVID-19 control and prevention; risk communication; health promotion; and community surveillance.** This programme **has reached over 5,000 children and 720 pregnant women in the three territories of intervention to ensure 1) COVID-19 prevention and 2) access to essential health maternal and child services.** Despite these achievements, challenges remain in keeping community volunteers involved in the project and they are now being trained with a view to increase their commitment and ownership of the intervention,

As for COVID-19 vaccination, the MoH has received **420,000 vaccinations through the COVAX** initiative so far. It is expected that 5,922,120 vaccines arrive through COVAX until December 2021. UNICEF is supporting the MoH with procurement services, e.g. 1,000,000 syringes has been completed and awaiting

dates for dispatch and delivery. In the following weeks there will be another one of 5,000,000 syringes acquired through supply division.

WASH

Children on the move from Venezuela

The closure of the borders and the increase of COVID-19 cases in neighbouring countries generated specific needs for WASH response, particularly in Huaquillas, on the southern border where the Government of Peru deployed its military to deter illegal immigration blocking the way into the country and leaving families stranded. UNICEF put in motion its **contingency plan**, worked in coordination with local institutions to provide the appropriate response. In coordination with the local government, WASH technical assistance was provided, **hygiene kits distributed, and showers and toilets installed in Huaquillas, benefitting 9,000 people, including 1,900 children**. Additionally, the conditional cash intervention to purchase essential hygiene items, carried out in partnership with WFP, reached 6,713 people, including 1,417 children on the move.

COVID-19

UNICEF has finished the intervention of WASH in healthcare facilities, through the WASH FIT methodology, in 27 healthcare facilities, and 29 additional have received handwashing stations. A total of 396 healthcare workers have strengthened knowledge and practices on Infection Prevention and Control and WASH.

UNICEF has coordinated with the MoE to provide essential WASH kits for small rural schools, to enable them to return progressively to presential education. Currently, **59 schools with 1,674 students will be able to return to school upon finalization of the current state of emergency (20 May 2021)**. These schools come on top of the 47 schools and ECD centers which have already concluded a WASH intervention, enabling them to return to school safely in the next weeks.

The WASH cluster, under the leadership of UNICEF, held two meetings in the first trimester of 2021.⁷ Its response plan was extended until May 2021, with updated targets. Upon request of the national government, UNICEF, in partnership with Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), **provided technical assistance to update the water and sanitation chapter of the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)**. UNICEF continued the implementation of WASH projects, in partnership with COOPI, ADRA and PLAN, focussing IPC and RCCE, in communities, healthcare facilities, schools and ECD centres.

Education

Children on the move from Venezuela

There are approximately 90,000 Venezuelan school-aged girls and boys of whom **57% are enrolled in the education system**. Educational inclusion for the remaining population is of paramount importance. This challenge has been exacerbated by the pandemic due to the **loss of livelihoods of Venezuelan households, the lack of connectivity and poor availability of technological resources to continue online education**. UNICEF has been gathering information to monitor and advocate for these children. In this context, the campaign *“La educación es el camino”* (Education is the Way, in Spanish) began in January, seeking to promote the **educational inclusion** of this group.

UNICEF also works to ensure Venezuelan children access educational opportunities. The continuation of the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) programme, which started in 2020 and reached around 11,300 migrant and refugee children, is expected to reach approximately 20,000 Venezuelan and **host community students on socio-emotional well-being and prevention of xenophobia**. Regarding pedagogical levelling and

⁷ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/ecuador/wash/documents>

acceleration programmes, this intervention is expected to be carried out in five cities, reaching approximately 50 schools and 1,300 teachers.

COVID-19

The **closure of educational institutions has affected approximately 4.3 million students**, more than 210,000 teachers and at **least half of Ecuadorian households**. Before the pandemic, approximately 268,000 children were out of the educational system and approximately 187,277 were over-age for grade of more than two years. Under current conditions, **these numbers are likely to have considerably increased**.

There are about 16,500 schools in the country. Current national emergency procedures require each school to submit their Educational Continuity Plan (PICE, in Spanish) to the Committee for Emergency Operations (COE) to reopen in-person learning. In line with MoE guidelines, UNICEF has been publicly advocating for a voluntary, progressive and biosafe return to in person education. The Representative has been repeatedly on television, print and digital media, as well as visited schools in Quito and in indigenous territories with evidence and messages about the need to return to in person education. Until April 21st, only **415 schools had reopened** providing services for 18,288 boys and girls with no COVID19 cases among them. With the emergency declaration of April 21st, **all schools were required to close until May 20th**.

To better respond to the context, UNICEF adjusted activities to: promote a **safe return to school**; generate **evidence** on the return to school; mitigate the effects on learning deficiencies; **support teachers** with technological tools for their education process; and **reduce the new barriers** to access education. **Psychosocial support programmes have reached 10,508 teachers and 300 Student Counselling Departments (DECE)**. Support was provided to **improve connectivity through the delivery of mobile devices and sim cards to 4,342 teachers and DECE**. UNICEF coordinated with the MoE the development of **radio and TV content** that supports learning outcomes of 2 million children and adolescents. For the indigenous population that is in the intercultural bilingual educational system, 250,000 guidebooks with learning material were distributed. UNICEF will continue to monitor the implementation of the educational continuity plans of the 15,800 educational institutions at the national level. UNICEF also plans to carry out four national surveys monitoring the situation of the educational community to supporting the reopening of schools in at least four territories.

Child Protection, GBViE and PSEA

Children on the move from Venezuela

UNICEF continues to provide legal and psychosocial support to children on the move and their families in eight cities; implement comprehensive support spaces in the host communities of Tulcan and Manta; and support the "Special procedure of attention for unaccompanied and separated children and their families" with the Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion. This work includes the implementation of **alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied and separated children**. Activities regarding legal and psychosocial support benefited 2,953 girls and 2,820 boys and their families. Overall, UNICEF is exceeding the planned results thanks to the invaluable support of the implementing partners HIAS, COOPI and Danielle Children`s Fund. The main concern is related to the alternative care services and the possibility for the government to implement it.

In response to the southern border crisis in January (see WASH above), UNICEF scaled up its protection response in Huaquillas as well, delivering **1,500 gender protection kits, 4 tents for shelter**, and scaling up partner response regarding psychosocial support and legal counselling.

The Constitutional Court requested the **technical assistance from UNICEF** in processes regarding specific cases of children on the move in need of protection and presented **Amicus Curiae regarding international standards for the protection of children on the move, especially unaccompanied children and their**

right to family reunification. This support seeks to strengthen the implementation of the Special Procedure for the Protection of Children on the move. In addition, there have been cases in which public institutions such as the Ombudsman's Office have filed complaints against human rights violations as is their role as National Human Rights Institution. The Court has asked UNICEF, UNHCR and IOM to share their criteria in accordance with their mandates.

COVID-19

UNICEF leads the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, **reaching more than 70,000 people with direct services during the pandemic, including legal advice on violence against children cases, psychosocial and parenting support, and supply delivery to children in special protection services.** A total of 1,200 boys, girls, and adolescents benefited from community-based actions to prevent violence against children. Also, 819 caregivers received psychosocial support and 299 men benefited from community activities to promote non-violent masculinity. Some 254 children victims of violence received legal support.

Specialized training for **141 officers from the comprehensive protection services**, care centres, and shelters for GBV survivors has been provided. This training was the result of an interagency effort between UN Women, UNFPA, and UNICEF, supporting the Human Rights Secretary.

The CO finalized its implementing partners' evaluation and training in PSEA and proposed specific improvement plans for each partner.

Social Protection and Cash Transfers

Children on the move from Venezuela

UNICEF has started the implementation of a new CBI strategy to support Venezuelan families, in coordination with UNHCR and WFP. Unlike the one-time off cash assistance previously implemented, the new strategy provides **support to the households for nine months**, on top of a one-time off support for each child attending school in the household. This shift is in line with the global United Nations Common Cash Statement (UNCCS) and has a stronger emphasis on education and protection. This new modality was piloted in selected cities in the last quarter of 2020. An evaluation of the CBI programme finished in the last quarter of 2020 showed it increased school attendance (all age groups), and access to health services for children under five, among other positive effects. The **greatest challenge is funding** the full implementation of the programme to meet the **increasing needs** amongst migrant and refugee vulnerable families.

Communication for Development (C4D), Accountability to Affected Population (AAP)

COVID-19

UNICEF promotes **community-based epidemiological surveillance models** to prevent COVID-19 and ensure the timely access to essential maternal health and nutrition services for children and pregnant women. As part of these efforts, the CO promotes communication for development processes that emphasize the importance of evidence-based strategies (Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices KAP studies). The C4D strategy also fosters social engagement through community leaders and through the creation of culturally appropriate communicational materials.

Moreover, the CO has been supporting the MoH in the planning stages of a National Communication and Edu-communication Plan to promote COVID-19 vaccination. The plan includes components related to public information, community engagement and mobilization, inclusion of indigenous populations, and the creation of a risk communication component to counteract misinformation.

The CO has also been supporting the Cayambe Municipality in the implementation of this communication plan to promote COVID-19 vaccination at local level.

UNICEF implemented a monitoring mechanism that included feedback from participants of Protection and WASH programmes in Esmeraldas and Manabi provinces, with the following findings:

- Time to collect water decreased from 27 minutes to 10 thanks to the water trucking service supported by UNICEF.
- Weekly expenditure on water decreased from 6 to 3 dollars.
- Monthly expenditure on hygiene items decreased 25% from 20 dollars.
- 92% of parents that received psychosocial support were satisfied with the services provided.
- 70% of participants believe that the information provided to prevent GBV was very useful.

Humanitarian Leadership and Coordination

The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) extended the 2020 COVID-19 response plan until May 2021, as the new government will take up its duties on 24 May. At least until then, the National Committee for Emergency Operations (COE) remains activated, and its sectoral subgroups continue coordinating with the respective clusters from the HCT. Most clusters including those led or co-led by UNICEF **will continue operating throughout 2021**.

In 2021, the **Education Cluster** has **52 participating organizations**, including private companies, national and international NGOs, cooperation agencies and governmental organizations. The Cluster has been working on: advocacy for educational continuity; opening the debate to implement the educational service in the face of the emergency; joint coordination to start the active search for students; contributions to the intercultural bilingual education law; creation of psychosocial support tools; dissemination of statistical information and case studies on the educational situation.

The WASH Cluster partners have reached **2,060,107 people with critical WASH supplies**, in 23 out of the 24 provinces of Ecuador. Also, **76,627 primary school students and 9,897 teachers in nine provinces will find improved and COVID-19 adapted WASH facilities when they return to school**, thanks to the interventions of the WASH Cluster. The WASH Cluster is currently preparing a national roadmap for Hand Hygiene for All, which will be the main planning and guiding instrument for WASH sector cooperation, once the transition towards the new government ends.

Human Interest Stories and External Media

UNICEF published **13 human stories** and press releases with a specific focus on the inclusion of children on the move, vaccination, COVAX, education in emergency with emphasis on reopening schools, and protection of children from violence.

On 14 January, UNICEF launched the campaign *“La educación es el camino”* (Education is the path) to promote education for all children and adolescents in Ecuador, with emphasis on the most vulnerable groups, like migrants and refugees, in the context of the COVID-19 emergency. As a result of the launch, there were at least 50 publications about this initiative, reaching 2,858,237 people. On social media (Facebook and Instagram), the campaign reached 383,170 people in January and February, and 734,957 people in March. In total, there were 626 mentions in online media and 354 mentions on print and broadcast media (including radio and TV). All of them were positive mentions. On Facebook and Instagram, UNICEF Ecuador reached a total of 629,399 people in January and February, and 1,065,198 in March.

One of the priorities of UNICEF has been the advocacy efforts to reopen schools. Between February and March, more than 86 articles, reports and interviews about this topic were published on national media, reaching 8,651,107 people.

Press releases:

[Ecuador receives the first COVID-19 vaccines through the COVAX Mechanism](#)

Children can't go on without going to school, says UNICEF: [here](#)

Prioritizing education for all children is the road to recovery: [here](#)

Web Stories and others

Joy returns to the classrooms of Zuleta: [here](#)

Protective Communities Project trained young people on the Ecuador-Colombia border in life skills: [here](#)

"I am excited to watch Aprender la Tele because they teach me many things and I understood what coronavirus is": [here](#)

Human Stories on social media

Teachers and student counsellors are trained in methodologies of inclusion and psychosocial support: [here](#)

Protective Communities Project trained young people on the Ecuador-Colombia border in life skills: [here](#)

"I am excited to watch Aprender la Tele because they teach me many things and I understood what coronavirus is": [here](#)

Why is it necessary to return to the classroom?: [here](#)

Video: Joy returns to the classrooms of Zuleta: [here](#)

Video: More than 80 community leaders from Mount Sinai help prevent and detect cases of COVID-19: [here](#)

Video: Education through NAP, #EducationIsThe Path: [here](#)

Video: [Comprehensive Support Space in Tulcán, inclusive services for local and people on the move](#)

Funding Status

Sector	Requirements	Funds available				Funding Gap
		Humanitarian resources received in 2021	Other resources used in 2021 (ORR)	Funding available from carry-over 2020	Total funds available	
Health	\$2,065,000	\$0	\$31,300.00	\$25,000.00	\$56,300.00	2,008,700.00
Nutrition	\$300,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0.00	300,000.00
Child Protection	\$2,084,800	\$340,751.40	\$1,023,000.00	\$517,248.60	\$1,881,000.00	203,800.00
Education	\$2,845,000	\$0	\$113,740.00	\$84,000.00	\$197,740.00	2,647,260.00
WASH	\$2,215,000	\$25,000	\$563,000.00	\$803,000.00	\$1,391,000.00	824,000.00
Social Protection/CBI	\$6,000,000	\$0	\$1,266,860.00	\$680,000.00	\$1,946,860.00	4,053,140.00
Emergency coordination	\$972,000	\$22,000	\$17,830.00	\$120,570.00	\$160,400.00	811,600.00
Total	\$16,481,800.00	\$387,751.40	\$3,015,730.00	\$2,229,818.60	\$5,633,300.00	10,848,500.00

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