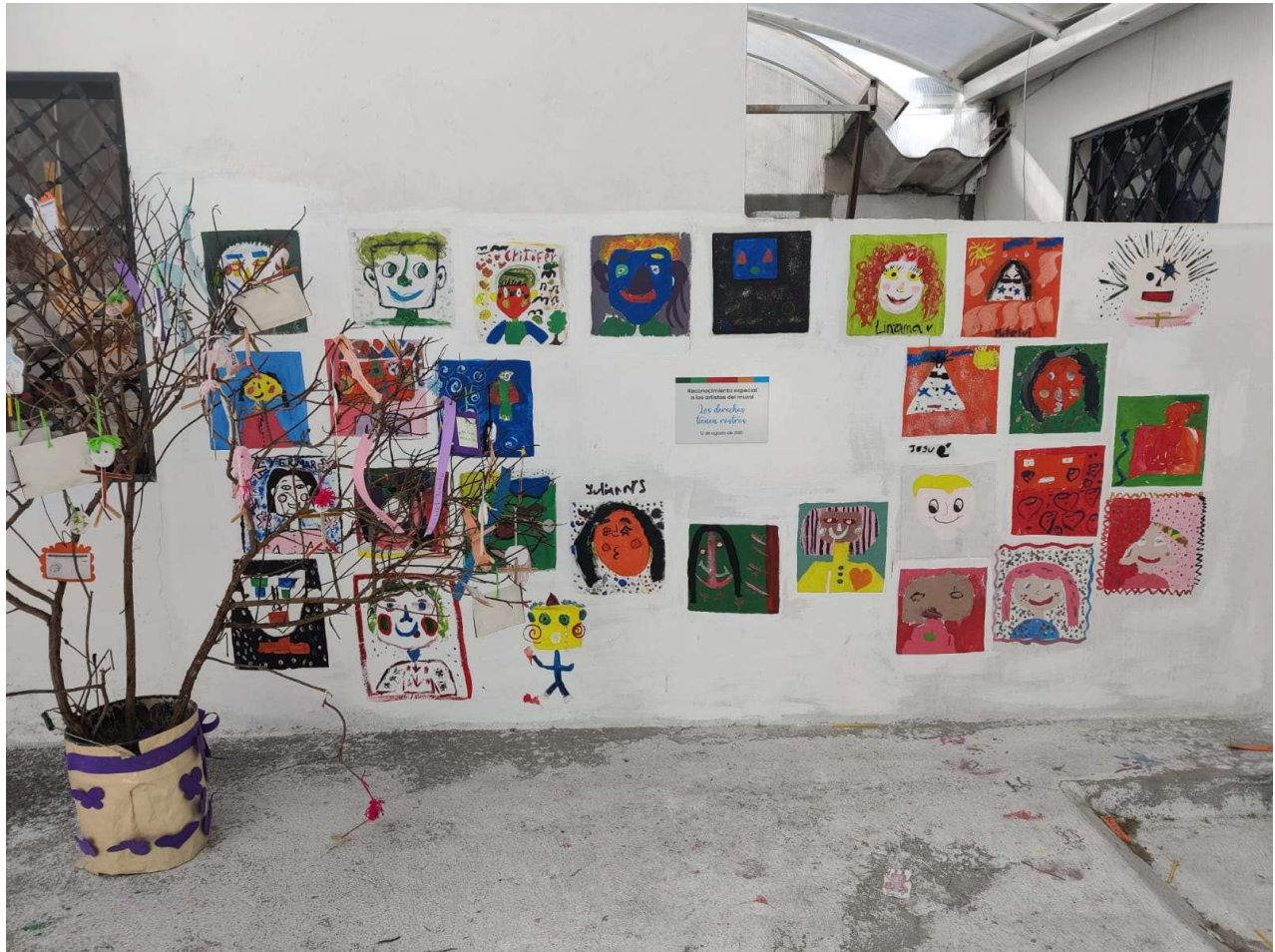


Multi-country evaluation of UNICEF's response to the Venezuela outflow crisis (2019-2021)



© EAI Tulcán - Julia Durand / DARA

Ecuador Country Case Study

October 2022

Julia Durand – Evaluator
Daniela Ruegenberg – Data Analyst
Elsa Brunet – Researcher
Tim Morris – Editor

Disclaimer

The views presented in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF.

The data collection for this country case study was conducted in November and December 2021, and the reporting phase was finalised in October 2022. Although findings were not updated, recommendations were workshopped with the Ecuador Country Office and regional office in August 2022.

Abbreviations & Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
CFD	C4D - Communication for Development
BPRM	US Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
CBI	Cash Based Interventions
CCC	Core Commitments for Children In Humanitarian Action
CEAP	Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure
CEBAF	Centros Binacionales de Atención a la Frontera
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CP	Child Protection
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCF	Daniëlle Children's Fund
DyA	Desarrollo y Autogestión
CWC	Communicating with Communities
ECO	Ecuador Country Office
EAI	Espacio de Apoyo Integral (Integral Support Space)
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
EQ	Evaluation Question
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FO	UNICEF Field Office
GAD	Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado (Decentralized Autonomous Government)
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoE	Government of Ecuador
GTRM	Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiadas y Migrantes (Working Group for Refugees and Migrants)
HPD	Humanitarian Programme Document
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FO	Field Office
HAC	Humanitarian Action for Children appeal
HPM	Humanitarian Performance Monitoring
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IP	Implementation Partner
IR	Inception Report
LACRO	UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office
IUNV	International United Nations Volunteer
KI	Key Informant
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIES	Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social (Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion)
MinEduc	Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education)
MoG	Ministerio de Gobierno
NFI	Non-Food Item
NUNV	National United Nations Volunteer
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee
PCA	Project Cooperation Agreement
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
R4F	Response for Venezuela
RCCE	Risk Communication and Community Engagement
RMRP	Regional Migration Response Plan
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SSA	Special Service Agreements
ToC	Theory of Change
UASC	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
UNCCS	United Nations Common Cash Statement
UNHCR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
R4V	Interagency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants
VMC	Venezuela Migration Crisis
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Background and context of Ecuador's country response to the Venezuelan Migration Crisis (VMC)	5
1.1 Context	5
1.2 Object of the evaluation and country case studies	7
Overview of UNICEF's response to the VMC in Ecuador	7
Funds mobilisation	10
2. Purpose, objectives and scope of Ecuador CO case study	11
2.1 Purpose	11
2.2 Objectives	12
2.3 Scope	12
2.4 Stakeholders	13
3. Evaluation criteria and questions	13
4. Methodology of the Ecuador country case study	13
4.1 Document review	14
4.2 Context analysis and timeline	14
4.3. Country visit	15
4.4 Semi-structured key informant interviews	15
4.5 Engagement with families of children on the move and host communities	15
4.6 Data analysis	15
4.7 Feedback loops and validation process of the case study	16
5. Limitations of the case study	16
6. Ethical and gender considerations	17
7. Findings	18
7.1 Appropriateness	18
7.2 Effectiveness	25
7.3 Coverage	43
7.4 Coherence and coordination	45
7.5 Efficiency	48
7.6 Connectedness	49
7.7 Cross-cutting: gender, equity and accountability	51
8. Good practices	52
9. Conclusions	53
10. Recommendations	54

List of Tables

Table 1. Humanitarian Funding Needs and Gaps – 2019 Ecuador.....	10
Table 2. Humanitarian Funding Needs and Gaps – 2020 Ecuador.....	10
Table 3. Humanitarian Funding Needs and Gaps – 2021 (Jan- March) Ecuador	10
Table 4. stakeholder overview	13
Table 5. Summary of HAC Health indicators per year.....	29
Table 6. HPM additional indicators related to Health	29
Table 7. Summary of HAC nutrition indicators per year.....	30
Table 8. Summary of HAC WASH indicators per year	31
Table 9. Summary of HAC Education indicators per year	33
Table 10. HPM additional indicators related to Education.....	34
Table 11. Summary of HAC Child Protection indicators per year	35
Table 12. HPM additional indicators related to Child Protection.....	36
Table 13. Summary of HAC Social inclusion/Protection indicators per year	37
Table 14. Summary of HAC C4D indicators per year.....	38

Executive Summary

Background

The protracted and ongoing economic, social and political crisis in Venezuela has provoked the greatest exodus in the history of the Latin American and Caribbean region. By 2022, more than six million Venezuelans had fled their country. The national asylum system of Ecuador, a signatory of the main international treaties and conventions relating to migration and refugees, was overwhelmed. By December 2021 it was estimated there were 508,000 refugees and migrants in Ecuador. As the Venezuelan influx increased and the COVID-19 pandemic engulfed the nation, the Government of Ecuador (GoE) progressively tightened entry requirements,

While before the onset of the Venezuela Migration Crisis (VMC) Venezuelans could enter Ecuador with a valid ID card and obtain a tourist visa for 180 days, they are now required to obtain in advance a humanitarian visa from an Ecuadorian consulate. Swift policy changes have had a devastating effect on the Venezuelan population, outside and inside Ecuador, leading to an upsurge in unauthorised border crossings and concomitant vulnerability to abuse, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Accurate enumeration is impossible due to the extent of unauthorised border crossings into and out of Ecuador.

Humanitarian Response

At regional level, the Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos (Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows, GIFMM) was established to coordinate the humanitarian response to the Venezuelan migration outflow (rather than classic cluster coordination mechanisms). UNICEF Ecuador played a critical coordination role in the Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiadas y Migrantes (GTRM), Ecuador's national coordination platform. In February 2019, UNICEF triggered its Level 2 Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure. This was raised to Level 3 in April 2020 as COVID-19 took hold.

UNICEF has focused on minimising such consequences for displaced Venezuelan children as food insecurity, vulnerability to human trafficking, exposure to violence on the road, poverty and exclusion from education. In partnership with other UN agencies, GoE and sub-national actors in a decentralised governance system, UNICEF has sought to:

- Ensure continuity of health care for migrant families
- Support water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), including by provision of hygiene kits and handwashing points
- support remote learning made necessary by the pandemic
- promote school entry for migrant and refugee children, mitigate high drop-out levels and challenge xenophobia
- provide child protection, psychosocial support and mental health as well as access to social and justice services
- roll out innovative and collaborative cash transfer programmes for migrant families
- generate evidence for better policy- and decision-making
- provide local level support to most affected geographical areas through capacity building.

UNICEF's VMC response, both in Ecuador and in other countries studied, has been consistently under-funded, with grave consequences in particular sectors.

Evaluation purpose, objective, intended audience and methodology

This country case study is one in a series of five which reviews the diverse ways that UNICEF through its development and humanitarian interventions has responded to the VMC since February 2019. The evaluation is intended to shed light on good practices and lessons learned from the experience of how UNICEF country offices have responded to an unexpected and protracted crisis and how the UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office and UNICEF HQ can better support the Ecuador Country Office (ECO) and other COs in current and future responses to mass population movements in the region. It further seeks to analyse the extent to which changes in social norms, including those related to gender and xenophobia, are envisioned and strategies are in place and are

measurable. The primary users of this evaluation are UNICEF staff – in Country Offices (COs) in which country case studies were carried out, in the Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) and in New York Headquarters (HQ) – as well as IPs, government counterparts and affected populations.

The evaluation uses criteria of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development / Development Assistance Committee adapted to humanitarian interventions in line with guidelines of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. These are appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and coordination, coverage and connectedness.

The evaluation focused on three main cities/regions, analysing UNICEF's urban and rural interventions in locations for migrants, refugees and host populations, particularly assessing responses to permanent or in-transit populations as well as host communities. Semi-structured interviews were carried out (on-site and remotely) with key in-country informants (both at national and field level) based on the stakeholder analysis in the Inception Report and adapted during the data collection phase in Ecuador. There were sex- and age-disaggregated group discussions with Venezuelan migrants on the move, with focus on families with children involved in UNICEF-funded programmes.

This evaluation report was submitted to UNICEF in June 2022 and went through a validation process which included a workshop in Quito in August 2022.

Findings

Appropriateness

Overall, UNICEF's response was appropriate considering the magnitude of VMC. UNICEF ECO, despite obstacles, developed and adapted several response strategies and implementations modalities to the different contexts and populations entering Ecuador, including adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic and adaptations to include more integration measures to respond to migrants and host communities. However, staffing and short-term contracts within UNICEF and with implementing partners (IPs) have limited capacity to appropriately respond to the needs of migrant and host communities.

As will be explored further in the Regional Synthesis report, in Ecuador, as in all five Country Case Studies, the evaluation notes a lack of a fully operationalised, overarching regional strategy to address what was a regional emergency. In its absence the Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal has been the main tool for harmonising implementation approaches between COs addressing the VMC.

While the VMC was an unexpected humanitarian situation before 2016, ECO's lack of emergency capacity and tools affected the response from the outset. This was corrected over time, and ECO became a champion in preparedness and contingency planning. The response to the VMC has been always articulated as short-term. This continues to impact UNICEF's capacity to transition to the medium to long term.

In collaboration with partners, UNICEF has gathered information about the migrant population yet learning about their needs remains a challenge in terms of incorporating feedback into programming. UNICEF and partners are providing migrants with useful information and putting in place feedback mechanisms through IPs. However, the operationalization of accountability to the affected population (AAP) and closing the feedback loop remains a weakness. UNICEF is implementing actions and efforts to address information gaps around gender-based violence (GBV), prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and human trafficking but these need to be strengthened.

Effectiveness

The VMC response has been severely underfunded throughout sectors. A lack of strong regional and global advocacy impacted funding and informants raised doubts about the R4V as a strong advocacy platform. Despite funding challenges, ECO has developed strong capacity-building, training and technical support, particularly in WASH, Health, CP, education and social inclusion.

There have been inconsistencies in monitoring and reporting and setting indicators and targets to measure results. Less than 40 per cent of indicators have met the targets each year of the response during 2019-2020. In 2020, COVID-19 caused many planned activities to be either cancelled or changed. At the same time some sectors, such as CP and WASH, were able to increase their outreach. There have been achievements to protect the human rights of children on the move. However, progress on mainstreaming migration and enhancing life opportunities for migrant children and their families has been limited.

ECO has been able to coordinate effectively with other partners such as government, UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to improve the response given to migrants and host communities. Coordination was done mainly in data collection, cash-based interventions (CBI), en route responses and capacity building with government.

Coverage

UNICEF outreach and coverage is limited by the ability to properly identify those in need (given data gaps) and the saturation of national services. However, a lot is being done by UNICEF to bridge the gaps left by strained services and support national and local services; and UNICEF was able to respond to the needs of the vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), victims of GBV, pregnant and lactating women, and migrants in transit. In general UNICEF has been able to leverage partnerships with line ministries, IPs and local governments to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable. The joint CBI with UNHCR and WFP allowed to extend coverage to vulnerable migrants. ECO's previous experience working with line ministries and civil society actors facilitated dialogue to influence high-level decisions in a challenging political environment, notably in supporting the development and implementation of the Special Procedure for Children and Adolescents and their Families in Contexts of Human Mobility.

Coherence and coordination

UNICEF is seen as a main VMC actor in Ecuador by sister UN agencies, NGOs, civil society organization (CSOs) and government counterparts. UNICEF was able to strongly coordinate with local and national actors to implement innovative structures such as Integral Support Space (Espacio de Apoyo Integral, EAI) and flexible mechanisms such as with CBI. ECO has been able to leverage partnerships to build joint communications campaigns to combat xenophobia and discrimination. Despite these effective coordination efforts, overall inter-agency coordination is not seen as coherent. There has been duplication of coordination mechanisms between the GTRM and the cluster system. A changing national context and high impact of COVID-19 made it difficult to align with national priorities. There has been lack of structured coordination mechanisms between UNICEF staff across the regions. Improved coordination is needed to raise the profile of UNICEF to support advocacy challenges, to coordinate donor support and to share good practices and challenges.

Efficiency

UNICEF has pursued efficiency by expanding previous relationships with government institutions and IPs to avoid overlap. UNICEF is seen as being flexible in funding and programme extensions, making IP work with migrant children and their families more efficient. However, UNICEF, like other response agencies, has not been able to find efficient solutions to monitor irregular entries. While UNICEF worked in collaboration with organisations to bridge the information gap, mainly at border crossings, information management and monitoring of population remains a major gap mainly due to irregular cross-border movements.

Connectedness

UNICEF has implemented several activities linking the emergency response to longer-term development goals. UNICEF worked towards reinforcing national structures and capacities for government and civil society, strengthening legal protection and enhance coverage for UASC, and advocating for the inclusion of local organisations to empower and build capacity. However, the short-term nature of the response, the nature of funding and short-term contractual arrangements affects sustainability of the actions carried out. A lack of a clear regional strategy has limited adoption of a whole-of-migration approach.

Social inclusion, gender and disability

UNICEF has been working to innovate in social inclusion, particularly being a pilot country for the UN's Common Cash Statement (UNCCS) initiative¹ and implementing CBI in coordination with other UN agencies. Although gender equality, GBV and PSEA are core aspects of the response, ECO does not have a gender specialist to support the response. ECO was able to bridge this gap by regularly requesting support from the LACRO GBV specialist, resulting in GBV awareness and prevention training for frontline workers, including civil servants. However, UNICEF should monitor the state of activities related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) risk prevention in the EAls, health facilities, the offices of IPs and schools. The capacity of IPs to identify SGBV cases and refer them needs to be enhanced. Disabilities are accounted for in all monitoring processes by UNICEF and partners, but the evaluation

¹ Launched in 2018 by UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR and WFP, UNCCS has fostered collaboration on cash and voucher assistance.

has identified weaknesses in the overall response, such as defining clearer differentiation of disabilities, and adapting spaces, such as the EAls, to persons with disabilities.

Good practices and lessons learned

Some relevant lessons can be extracted from UNICEF ECO's response the VMC

- **EAI:** The EAI in Tulcán has shown how inter-agency coordination exercise has enabled responses to shifting priorities and created a space for different agencies to work together. As UNICEF further rolls out the EAI model monitoring will be of prime importance.
- **Staff dedication:** Informants, as noted, overwhelmingly praise staff's availability, transparency, and openness. UNICEF has been able to leverage its existing presence and relationships linked to regular programming to build programmes and activities for the VMC.
- **ECO experience piloting UNCCS** has shown the possibility of working together to extend cash-based transfers and respond to the needs of vulnerable populations. A more detailed analysis can be found in the CBI evaluation and assessment.²
- **On social inclusion:** ECA has shown how CBI, if sufficiently funded, can respond to housing, employment, education, health and food needs and can be empowering.
- **The Special Procedure** has been a duplicable model of technical support and coordination with government institutions.

Recommendations

Strategic Recommendation 1 (Global Level and LACRO): Need to establish a LACRO regional strategy for migrant children and adapt the Children on the Move framework to the region.

Strategic Recommendation 2 (UNICEF Ecuador): Further invest in evidence generation and analysis by i) mapping key gaps in terms of territorial coverage and performance measurement; ii) understanding what evidence decision makers need and when; iii) defining how, when and who does the analysis, and iv) outlining how analysis is then used and shared for both operational and advocacy purposes.

Strategic Recommendation 3 (UNICEF Ecuador): Incorporate migration across sectors in the new 2023-2026 CPD.

Strategic Recommendation 4 (UNICEF Ecuador, LACRO and HQ): Invest in internal capacity-building, learning exercises as well as HR/staff resourcing and staff-care activities

Strategic Recommendation 5: Further invest in vulnerability assessment to ensure gender equality and disabilities are mainstreamed through all sectors.

² Evaluación de la estrategia de UNICEF Ecuador para la transferencia de efectivo no condicionado. Respuesta a la emergencia migratoria de Venezuela. Marilise Turnbull, Lezlie Morinière, Sebastián Serrano. Integrated Risk Management Associates LLC. November 2020

1. Background and context of Ecuador's country response to the Venezuelan Migration Crisis (VMC)

1.1 Context

The Republic of Ecuador is an upper-middle-income country that experienced substantial economic and social progress between 2003 and 2013. The positive economic environment resulted in an average annual growth of 4.3 per cent in gross domestic product (GDP) and an increase in public social investment that has reduced poverty and inequality. Between 2007 and 2017, income poverty fell from 36.7 per cent to 21.5%. Social investment rose from 4.2 per cent of GDP in 2006 to 9.4 per cent in 2016.³

Despite progress, there are several challenges that the Government of Ecuador (Go) has had to face. According to UN 2018 Report, Ecuador had substantive numbers of children suffering from chronic malnutrition and increasingly also from obesity. A lack of access to safe water and sanitation is one of the barriers to eradicating child malnutrition. Additionally, the education system faces major challenges in combating educational exclusion.⁴ Coverage of child development services for children under three years of age stood at 20.1 per cent in 2018.⁵ In early education (three and four years of age), the enrolment rate reached only around 23 per cent in 2016.⁶ Among the main barriers to exercising the universal right to education are the lack of culturally relevant education services and the shortage of teachers trained in innovative teaching methods. In 2017, more than 900 cases of sexual abuse in schools came to light.⁷ There are several explanatory factors behind violence in the family environment and at school. There is a failure to recognise children and adolescents as enjoying rights, a lack of specialisation and coverage of services that raise awareness of and address violence, the dismantling of the system of comprehensive protection of the rights of children and adolescents and a lack of funding for bodies mandated to prevent and address violence. Still, lack of more current research on the national level makes it difficult to know how the situation evolved in the period 2018-2021. The socioeconomic situation has deteriorated since mid-2014, when oil prices began to fall. The economy began to slump in 2015 and contracted by 1.2 per cent in 2016.⁸ Due to fiscal pressures, the coverage of Ecuador's main conditional cash transfer programme was also reduced,⁹ to 582,000 beneficiaries in 2014-2015.¹⁰ Working conditions significantly worsened. Unemployment, underemployment, and informality rates increased to levels not seen in ten years. Between 2013 and 2018, approximately 66,000 jobs were lost.¹¹

Ecuador is prone to floods, droughts, volcanic eruption, landslides and earthquakes. The GoE integrated disaster risk reduction strategies that contain specific plans to manage the impacts of displacement caused by disasters in its 2017 *Organic Law on Human Mobility*.¹² However, the increase of migrants, refugees and displaced people in the last few years, has stretched the capacities of the government to face the dramatic influx of Venezuelans.

The Venezuelan Migration Crisis (VMC)

Ecuador is a signatory of the main international treaties and conventions relating to migration and refugees. Ecuador acceded to the *1951 Refugee Convention* in 1955 and ratified its 1967 Protocol. It also signed the *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* in 1984, which defined refugees as:

Persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.¹³

This definition was incorporated into Ecuador's national legal framework and was included in both the 2008 Constitution (CRE) and the 2017 *Organic Law on Human Mobility*. The 2008 CRE recognised for the first time at a constitutional level the rights of asylum and refuge, according to the law and international human rights

³ Ecuador Country Programme Document, United Nations Children's Fund 2018.

⁴ UNICEF, based on the 2016 National Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment Survey

⁵ INEC, ENSANUT 2018, *Salud, Salud Reproductiva y Nutrición* | (ecuadorencifras.gob.ec)

⁶ *OSE 2018, Situación de la niñas y adolescentes en Ecuador 2019*

⁷ AAMPETRA Commission Report.

⁸ World Bank (2018)

⁹ Banco Mundial, Retos y Oportunidades de la migración venezolana en Ecuador. 2020.

¹⁰ Cecchini, Simone & Atuesta, Bernardo. (2017). *Programas de transferencias condicionadas en América Latina y el Caribe: tendencias de cobertura e inversión*

¹¹ World Bank (2019)

¹² <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5bc70a384.pdf>

¹³ Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama," adopted November www.oas.org/dil/1984_cartagena_declaration_on_refugees.pdf.

instruments.¹⁴ Under the *Organic Law on Human Mobility*, individuals with refugee or stateless status received an Ecuadorian national ID and temporary resident status, granting them the right to work and study, and the option to renew their temporary residency or request permanent residency after two years.¹⁵

Before 2018, Venezuelans could enter Ecuador with just a valid ID card and obtain a tourist visa for 180 days.¹⁶ Once in the country, they could apply for a Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR) visa, which granted them the right to stay and work up to two years.

In June 2018, the GoE declared that birth certificates for children and adolescents were no longer valid travel documents. In August 2018 Ecuador declared a state of emergency in response to an overwhelming flux of Venezuelans. To enter the country any person had to show a valid passport, instead of just an ID. The lack of functioning state institutions in Venezuela made this requirement incredibly difficult to be met. In January 2019, following an episode of violence in Ibarra, the GoE decreed only people with a legalised certificate confirming lack of a criminal record could enter Ecuador. This was followed in July 2019 by Presidential Decree 826 h requiring all Venezuelans to pre-obtain a Humanitarian Visa before crossing into Ecuador.¹⁷ As a result of advocacy these measures were revoked due to incompatibility with the constitution and the *Organic Human Mobility Law*. However, the Presidential Decree that entered into force on 26 August 2019, does not include exceptions for children and their families.¹⁸ Applying for a Humanitarian Visa is complicated and takes time. Many Venezuelans do not have a valid passport and cannot initiate the visa procedures. The process is also very expensive, costing at least US\$250.¹⁹ On 13 August 2020, the GoE announced that Venezuelans residing in Ecuador who had not regularised their situations may be subject to a fine of US\$800.²⁰ A new President, Guillermo Lasso, assumed office in May 2021 and in September 2021 announced a plan to regularise the status and integrate some 450,000 Venezuelans.²¹

These swift changes of policies have had a devastating effect on the Venezuelan population, outside and inside Ecuador, leading to an upsurge in unauthorized border crossings and concomitant vulnerability to abuse, sexual exploitation and human trafficking. The scale of unauthorised border crossings is nearly impossible to monitor. Thus it is difficult for humanitarian responders to know the real situation. Venezuelans already in Ecuador who had not managed to regularise their situation faced another conundrum: unable to work until they secured a longer-term visa, but unable to obtain a visa until they earned enough money to pay for one, Venezuelans were often forced to work illegally.²² The lack of reliable data on unauthorised entries hindered the full understanding of migrants' situation and vulnerabilities. This affected particularly children and adolescents. In 2021, based on estimations, the Regional Migration Response Plan (RMRP) – a mechanism first developed in 2018 as a strategic regional response plan and advocacy tool – reported approximately 150,000 Venezuelan children and adolescents in Ecuador in need of some form of assistance.²³ Since the public health emergency declaration due to COVID-19 in March 2020, Ecuador land borders with Colombia and Peru were closed. Still, it has estimated that 500 – 1,000 people entered the country through irregular border crossings daily.²⁴ In December 2021, the Puente Internacional de Rumichaca was reopened, at the border with Colombia, through the Centros Binacionales de Atención a la Frontera (CEBAF). To enter Ecuador, any person is required to show proof of vaccination and a negative PCR test. Additionally, visa requirements for Venezuelans still stand in 2022.

The protracted and ongoing economic, social and political crisis in Venezuela has provoked the greatest exodus in the history of the Latin American and Caribbean region (LAC). In February 2019, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported 2,000 average daily entries into Ecuador, with peaks of 5,000 per

¹⁴ CONSTITUCION DE LA REPUBLICA DEL ECUADOR [CRE], 2008.

¹⁵ LEY ORGÁNICA DE MOVILIDAD HUMANA. Presidencia de la República del Ecuador, January 2017.

¹⁶ Reglamento a la Ley Orgánica de Movilidad Humana, Decreto Ejecutivo 111, Lenín Moreno Garcés, Presidente Constitucional de la Republica de Ecuador, 17 de abril de 2018, https://www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/reglamento_ley_de_movilidad_humana_reformado_abril_2018.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.migrationportal.org/resource/decre-826-granting-exceptional-temporary-residence-visa-humanitarian-reasons/>

¹⁸ UNICEF ECUADOR- 2020 Action Plan Venezuela Migration Crisis. Summary Response Overview

¹⁹ ACAPS, Crisis Updates, Ecuador Overview. June 2021. Available at: <https://www.acaps.org/country/ecuador/crisis/venezuelan-refugees->

²⁰ Ministry of Government (ex-Ministry of Interior) of Ecuador 2021

²¹ Agencia EFE, 9 Sept. 2021, available at: <https://www.efe.com/efe/america/sociedad/lasso-dice-que-su-plan-para-los-migrantes-venezolanos-busca-incorporacion-social/20000013-4626193>

²² Johnny Magdaleno, "Unable to Afford Work Visas, Venezuelans in Ecuador Face Fines," Al Jazeera, April 26,

2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/unable-afford-work-visas-venezuelans-ecuador-face-fines-190404144511857.html>

²³ RMRP 2021

²⁴ MoFA, March 2021

day.²⁵ In March 2019, 221,000 Venezuelans refugees and migrants were living in Ecuador.²⁶ Ecuador's asylum system, originally designed to manage about 5,000 claims per year, was not equipped to manage a rapid spike in asylum applications.²⁷ The pandemic and the borders closure did not stop the flow of migrants. The December 2021 Response for Venezuela (R4V) Situation Report stated there were 508,000 refugees and migrants in Ecuador.²⁸ By 2022, more than six million Venezuelans had fled their country by 2022.²⁹

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Ecuador. During 2020, there were 14,034 COVID-19 related deaths reported.³⁰ According to the University of Cuenca, there were 114,130 deaths in Ecuador in 2020, against the expected 71,000. Men over the age of 30 were the most affected group.³¹ In 2021, 104,670 deaths were reported, with no significant differences in any age/gender groups.³² The capacity of intensive care units was overwhelmed as 333,906 COVID-19 cases were reported.³³

Those municipalities with the most severe community transmission rates are where are found the highest number of Venezuelans, mostly living in densely populated communities. A UNICEF survey in 2021 found that while most Venezuelans were aware of the need for COVID-19 prevention measures³⁴, the need to provide for their families was forcing them into public spaces, increasing risks of exposure.

As a result of the pandemic Ecuadoran schools were closed in March 2020, after the GoE declared a sanitary emergency³⁵ and remained closed intermittently for most of 2021.³⁶ By December 2021, only 25 per cent of students (approximately one million) had been able to resume full in-person learning.³⁷ On-line learning is often not a possibility for many migrant and refugee children, lacking connectivity and access to the necessary technology.³⁸ Tackling the educational inclusion for the migrant population was prioritised by UNICEF Ecuador. The agency's activities were adjusted its 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 and reduce the new barriers to access education.

1.2 Object of the evaluation and country case studies

UNICEF's response to the VMC, both at country and regional levels, constitutes the object of the evaluation. Through a regional lens and five country case studies in Ecuador, Brazil, Colombia, Peru and Trinidad and Tobago, the overall evaluation will review the diverse ways that UNICEF through its development and humanitarian interventions has responded to the VMC, given the specific opportunities and constraints of national contexts. The five country case studies shed light on good practices and lessons learned from the experience of how UNICEF country offices (COs) have responded to what has become a protracted humanitarian crisis and how the UNICEF Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office (LACRO) and HQ can better support COs in their response efforts.

Overview of UNICEF's response to the VMC in Ecuador

In May 2018, UNICEF Ecuador started responding to the VMC, prioritising populations on the move at border crossings in Rumichaca, San Miguel and Huaquillas, and Venezuelans settling in the main cities of Ecuador – Quito, Manta, Ibarra, Guayaquil and Cuenca.

²⁵ UNHCR, "Global Focus", 2019.

²⁶ UNHCR, "Latin America and the Caribbean."

²⁷ R4V, "Regional Refugee and Migrants Response Plan (RMRP)"

²⁸ The number includes the official migratory balance of Venezuelans migrants and refugees, as well as an estimation of irregular border crossing. Sistema Interagencial de Monitoreo de Fronteras y Caracterización de Flujos del GTRM, 2021.

²⁹ R4V Platform, 2022. <https://www.r4v.info/en/document/rmrp-2022>

³⁰ John Hopkins University, [Ecuador - COVID-19 Overview - Johns Hopkins \(jhu.edu\)](https://www.jhu.edu/COVID-19-Overview)

³¹ [Universidad de Cuenca, Análisis de Mortalidad](https://www.universidadcuenca.edu.ec/Análisis-de-Mortalidad)

³² Ibidem

³³ John Hopkins University, [Ecuador - COVID-19 Overview - Johns Hopkins \(jhu.edu\)](https://www.jhu.edu/COVID-19-Overview)

³⁴ UNICEF ECUADOR, Humanitarian Situation Report, January to April 2021

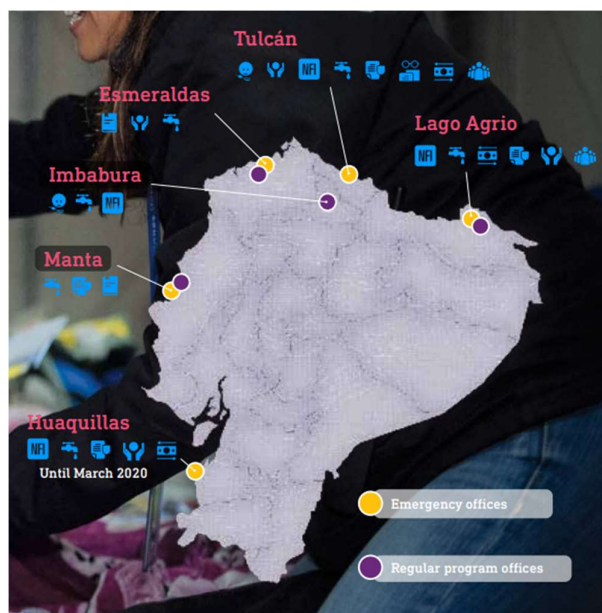
³⁵ El Tiempo, 12 March 2020, available at: <https://www.eltiempo.com/vida/educacion/ecuador-suspende-todas-las-clases-por-covid-19-472146>

³⁶ UNICEF LACRO, COVID-19 Respuesta Educativa. November 2021

³⁷ [UNICEF, December 2021](https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/COVID-19-Respuesta-Educativa)

³⁸ In the mean time schools have reopened in Ecuador.

Figure 1. UNICEF presence up to March 2020



Three informants interviewed by the evaluator described how the ECO (UNICEF Ecuador Country Office) raised the alarm early on, concerned about saturation of over-burdened social services, national and sub-national competencies and capacities, risks related to unaccompanied minors and family separation and administrative and legal gaps. However, it seems a regional coordinated response was difficult to set up. Several key informants (KIs) suggested that political sensitivities may have caused this delay. UNICEF Ecuador's Country Programme Document (CPD) approved in September 2018 mentioned that "migration dynamics"³⁹ was one of the reasons for regional prioritisation.⁴⁰ In 2019 UNICEF declared a Level-2 (L2) Emergency Response – a procedure to mobilise additional support to enable a CO to respond to a crisis– in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

In May 2022, LACRO shared a draft regional strategy with the evaluator. The draft version, dated September 2018, establishes a regional strategy around three pillars: comprehensive child protection (CP), humanitarian action, development and social policy. However, no final version was shared. The evaluator understands that UNICEF began drafting a new regional strategy in May 2022.

In 2018, the UN Secretary-General directed UN agencies not to set up classic cluster coordination mechanisms for the VMC. The Grupo Interagencial sobre Flujos Migratorios Mixtos (the Interagency Group on Mixed Migratory Flows, GIFMM)⁴¹ was established, with coordination provided by UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the newly created GIFMM-R4V coordination platform. Ecuador CO has played a critical coordination role in the Grupo de Trabajo para Refugiadas y Migrantes (GTRM)⁴², Ecuador's national R4V platform. The ECO co-leads, together with its IP, COOPI⁴³ – the national CP sub-group of the GTRM.⁴⁴

The northern borders with Colombia, Rumichaca (in Carchi Province) and San Miguel (Sucumbíos Province), together with the southern border with Peru, Huaquillas (El Oro Province), were the geographical areas where UNICEF focused its humanitarian response. The most crowded border has been, and remains, Rumichaca. During August 2019, 85,952 people were registered to have entered the country by land,⁴⁵ triggered by new visa requirements about to come into force. Since then there has been an increase in irregular border crossings, making people more vulnerable to human trafficking.

³⁹ Country Programme Document, UNICEF, 2018. https://sites.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2018-PL13-Ecuador_CPD-ODS-EN.pdf

⁴⁰ The CPD mentions a fluctuating population of migrants, refugees and displaced people on the northern border, without specifically indicating the Venezuelan population as a key concern.

⁴¹ Originally the GIFMM was within the Emergency Humanitarian Platform structure and then changed to the R4V platform.

⁴² <https://www.r4v.info/es/node/422>

⁴³ <https://www.coopi.org/en/country/ecuador.html?ln=3>

⁴⁴ <https://www.coopi.org/en/ecuador-with-unicef-to-protect-young-migrants-and-refugees.html>

⁴⁵ Ministerio de Turismo, Ecuador: <https://servicios.turismo.gob.ec/index.php/turismo-cifras/2018-09-19-17-01-51/movimientos-internacionales>

UNICEF strategy focused on minimising such consequences for children of displacement as food insecurity, vulnerability to human trafficking, exposure to violence on the road and poverty. Technical assistance was provided to the GoE. These included direct interventions in:

- Health: support to continuity of health care for children and women
- Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH): provision of critical hygiene kits and handwashing points including in schools
- Education: support to remote learning, school reopening and dropout prevention
- Child Protection: psychosocial support and mental health services as well as access to social and justice services
- Social Policy: cash transfer programmes for migrant families, evidence generation for better policy- and decision-making, and local level support to some of the most affected geographical areas through capacity-building, provision of necessary equipment, and risk communication and community engagement initiatives
- Gender-Based Violence (GBV): capacity building, training, comprehensive messaging, attention points such as the EAls, psychosocial support).

In terms of expected results and coverage, these are outlined and explored in detail by sector in the findings section on Effectiveness below (see section 7.2). Targets, indicators and short-intermediate results are further presented in the Theory of Change (ToC) in Annex 1.

Since 2018, UNICEF Ecuador has worked with 12 IPs. These have included:

- Agencia Adventista de Desarrollo y Recursos Asistenciales (ADRA),⁴⁶ (covering WASH and nutrition activities)
- COOPI (protection and WASH in border crossing points and en route)
- RET⁴⁷ and Plan International⁴⁸ (education)
- Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)⁴⁹ and Daniëlle Children's Fund (DCF)⁵⁰ (CP and social policy, health and social inclusion activities)
- Desarrollo y Autogestión (DyA)⁵¹ (nutritional screening, advocacy and communication activities)
- World Vision⁵²
- Nación de Paz⁵³
- Fundación Lunita Lunera⁵⁴ (FULULU) (teaching-learning processes)
- LAB XXI⁵⁵
- Fundación Idea Dignidad⁵⁶
- Arteducarte⁵⁷

UNICEF has worked closely with other UN agencies, local governments and GoE ministries, especially the Ministerio de Educación (MinEduc) and the Ministerio de Salud Pública. In the health and education sectors UNICEF support has been primarily logistical.

⁴⁶ <https://adra.org.ec/>

⁴⁷ <https://theret.org/ecuador/>

⁴⁸ <https://plan-international.org/ecuador/>

⁴⁹ <http://hias.org.ec/>

⁵⁰ <https://daniellechildrensfund.org.ec/>

⁵¹ <https://www.dyaorg.net/la-organizacion>

⁵² <https://www.worldvision.org.ec/>

⁵³ <https://www.naciondepaz.org/>

⁵⁴ <https://fundacionlunitalunera.org/wp/>

⁵⁵ <https://lab-xxi.com/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.ideadignidad.org/>

⁵⁷ [Arteducarte | Programa de educación artística independiente](#)

Funds mobilisation

UNICEF requested US\$43,425,049 for Ecuador through the regional Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal over the period 2019 to 2021.⁵⁸ The requirements started with US\$11,705,250 in 2019 (of which \$US7,658,065 was covered) and increased to US\$15,238,000 in 2020 of which only US\$5,016,352 was covered (including humanitarian and other funds, as well as a 15 per cent carry over). For 2021, the HAC included both UNICEF's response to the COVID-19 crisis as well as the response to support people affected from violence and displacement. In 2021, US\$16,481,799 was requested for Ecuador.⁵⁹ Up until March 2021 only nine per cent of the total requested funds had been covered, reaching around 32 per cent by the end of the year. A summary of sector requirements, funds available and funding gaps for 2019, 2020, and Jan-March 2021 is provided below.⁶⁰

Table 1. Humanitarian Funding Needs and Gaps – 2019 Ecuador

Sector	Requirements	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2019	Other resources used in 2019	Resources available from 2018 (Carry-Over)	US\$	%
Advocacy / Communications	520,000				520,000	100%
C4D	239,000			217,636	21,364	9%
Child Protection	2,704,040	1,562,994	262,957	108,770	769,319	28%
Cross-sectoral support		464,240	163,152	158,000		
Education	1,915,300	41,213	2,027,308			
Health	714,760	328,547	18,280	3,369	364,565	51%
Nutrition	946,950	67,816	8,819		870,315	92%
Social Inclusion	1,776,200	1,274,239	66,141		435,821	25%
Unallocated / to be allocated to sectors		62,995				
WASH	2,889,000	613,483	30,422	177,684	2,067,411	72%
Total Ecuador	11,705,250	4,415,527	2,577,079	665,459	5,048,795	43%

Table 2. Humanitarian Funding Needs and Gaps – 2020 Ecuador

Sector	Requirements	Funds available			Funding gap	
		Humanitarian resources received in 2020	Other resources used in 2020	Resources available from 2019 (Carry-Over)	US\$	%
Advocacy / Communications	430,000				430,000	100%
C4D	1,000,000		108,000		892,000	89%
Child Protection	4,118,000	1,210,277	788,315	170,946	1,948,462	47%
Cross-sectoral support	250,000	380,900		225,211		0%
Education	4,000,000	54,585		195,329	3,750,086	94%
Health	500,000	197,280		157	302,563	61%
Nutrition	200,000				200,000	100%
Social Inclusion	2,220,000	1,298,340		341	921,319	42%
WASH	2,520,000	231,542		155,129	2,133,328	85%
Total Ecuador	15,238,000	3,372,924	896,315	747,113	10,577,758	69%

Table 3. Humanitarian Funding Needs and Gaps – 2021 (Jan- March) Ecuador

Sector	Requirements	Funds available (Jan-March 2021)			Funding gap (Jan- March 2021)	
		Humanitarian resources received (Jan-March 2021)	Other resources used (Jan-March 2021)	Resources available from 2020 (Carry-Over)	US\$	%
C4D, community engagement and AAP	747,025				747,025	100%
Child protection, GBViE and PSEA	2,182,323	387,994		324,653	1,469,676	67%
Education	2,872,009			136,194	2,735,815	95%
Health	2,084,604			96,934	1,987,670	95%
Nutrition	302,848				302,848	100%
Social protection and cash transfers	6,056,962			55,919	6,001,043	99%
WASH	2,236,028	26,375		389,698	1,819,955	81%
Total general	16,481,799	414,369		1,003,398	15,064,032	91%

As presented in Figure 2, the sectors with the most persistent funding gaps have been advocacy/communication and nutrition. CP, including GBV and Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) together with social inclusion were the best funded sectors between 2019 and 2020. It is worth mentioning that the ECO has flexibility to redistribute sectoral funds according to the identified priorities.⁶¹ In terms of requirements there was a major increase in the now renamed Social Protection sector in 2021 (going from around US\$2 appealed for in 2019 and 2020, to more than US\$6 million sought in 2021). There was a similar rise in requested health funding in response to COVID-19 needs.

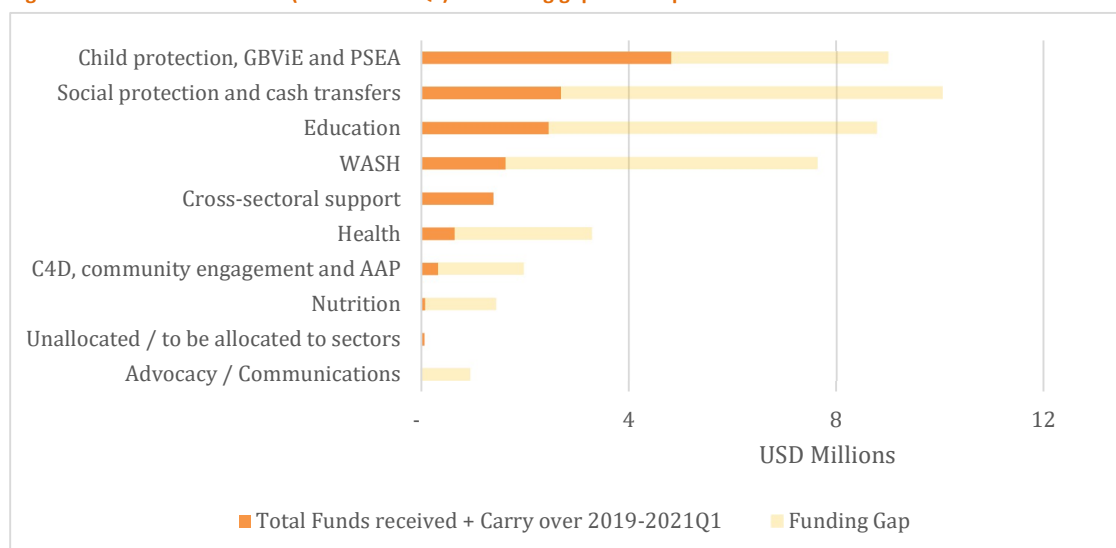
⁵⁸ Humanitarian Action for Children 2019 is related to the "children and populations affected by the migration flows from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela", 2020 HAC (August revision) and 2021 HAC it includes "children on the move from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and people affected by COVID-19".

⁵⁹ According to the LACRO emergency section the distribution of the funds requested by the HAC 2021 appeal in Ecuador were intended to cover: US\$10.1 million for the migration component, \$US6 million for COVID and US\$300,000 for the violence component.

⁶⁰ Figures from the LACRO Sit Reps. Funds include Humanitarian resources per year, non-humanitarian funds received in the current year and used for the humanitarian response and carry over from previous years, corresponding only to humanitarian funds

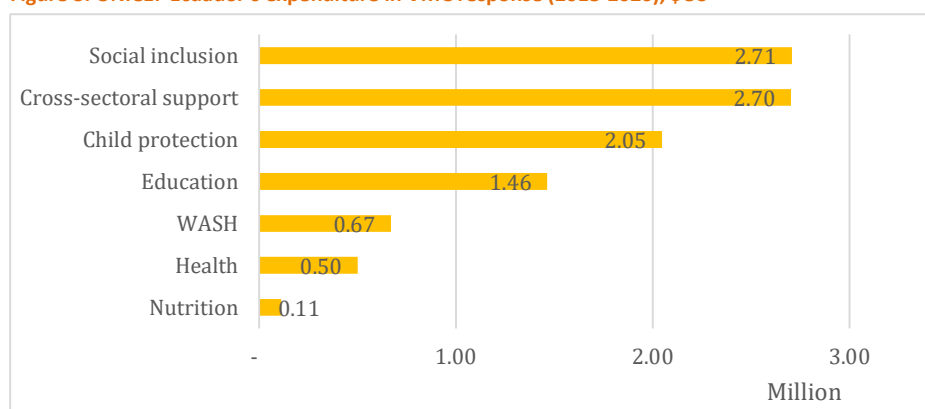
⁶¹ LACRO Emergency section

Figure 2. Total funds received (2019 – 2021 Q1) vs Funding gap over requirements



Since the tables and figure above include both funding for VMC as well as COVID-19 in the years 2020 and 2021, Figure 3 solely presents expenditures related to the VMC response over the period 2018-2020. In terms of financial investment (expenditure) the most important sectors were child protection, social inclusion, education and WASH.

Figure 3. UNICEF Ecuador's expenditure in VMC response (2018-2020), \$US



2. Purpose, objectives and scope of Ecuador CO case study

2.1 Purpose

The purpose of the overall evaluation is both summative and formative. On the one hand, it accounts for the results achieved between January 2019 and December 2021, to draw lessons learned, and to support enhanced accountability. On the other, it is formative as it presents recommendations that will guide future strategic and programmatic priorities in the region and in Ecuador, including the new Regional Office Management Plan and relevant CO Programme Documents. The Venezuela Outflow evaluation reviews the appropriateness, effectiveness, coherence, coordination, efficiency and connectedness of the delivery response actions and strategies implemented by the ECO. The primary intended users of the case study are UNICEF COs, LACRO and HQ. Specifically, at the level of ECO the evaluation findings and recommendations will feed into the development of the new Country Programme Document that is being developed in 2022. Secondary intended users are IPs, UNICEF GoE partners and UN agencies. Finally, this study aims to guide ECO and LACRO on pathways to improve their response in order to better serve migrants, refugees and host communities impacted by the VMC.

For the purposes of this evaluation, it has been important to focus on:

- Ecuador's efforts to ensure access to services, enhanced protection of children and access to GBV prevention and referral, which includes capacity building and reinforcement of local structures.

- UNICEF has avoided duplicating existing systems; hence it will be valuable to assess the challenges addressed, in terms of capacity building, linking emergency and development actions and integrating them in long-term planning processes.
- The ultimate incorporation of migration flows and the application of *The Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*, the challenges and opportunities experienced and the extent to which they have been factored into UNICEF COs as a new paradigm for the long term.
- Exploration of upstream and downstream advocacy and capacity building, route-based approach, key transit areas and border crossings services and protection, services and assistance in urban settlements, indigenous communities and social cohesion/tensions with local host communities.

The evaluation has had a gender and equity focus component, exploring how and to what degree UNICEF has been implementing the gender and equity lens and considered gender dynamics, such as socio-economic status, ethnic groups, and other relevant variables in its design, planning and implementation.

2.2 Objectives

As per the evaluation Terms of Reference (ToR), the primary objective of this case study is to evaluate the extent to which UNICEF has provided an adequate, effective and timely response to the crises generated by the outflow of migrants from Venezuela to Ecuador since February 2019, and to understand what the enabling and constraining factors and lessons learned have been. It additionally looks into UNICEF actions to create opportunities to establish localised solutions, as well as more long-term solutions to the integration of migrants through institutions and systems of duty bearers. The results of the case study will provide some insight and recommendations for the ECO's new CPD.

It will also seek to analyse the extent to which changes in social norms, including those related to gender and xenophobia, are envisioned and strategies are in place and are measurable.

The evaluation has sought to identify good practices, innovative approaches and lessons learned and to develop, in a participatory manner, forward-looking recommendations to strengthen UNICEF's results, with a special focus on reaching the most vulnerable groups. The evaluation provides evidence on whether UNICEF's Regional Response to the VMC has been, and continues to be, appropriate, effective, efficient, coherent, coordinated and connected.

2.3 Scope

Timeframe: This evaluation covers UNICEF's response to the Venezuela outflow crises in Ecuador, from the time the Level 2 Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure (CEAP)⁶² was triggered in February 2019 to its deactivation in June 2020, as well as the overlapping period with the Global L3 CEAP, activated in April 2020, following the COVID-19 outbreak. As most field missions have been carried out during the last quarter of 2021, it was agreed with LACRO to extend the timeframe beyond the deactivation of the L2 VMC Emergency until December 2021.

Criteria scope: The evaluation covers the evaluation criteria of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Development Assistance Committee OECD-DAC⁶³ adapted to humanitarian interventions in line with guidelines of the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)⁶⁴, namely: appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence & coordination, coverage and connectedness.

Geographical scope: The case study focused on three main cities/regions: Manta (Manabí), Tulcán (Carchi), Quito (Pichincha). The evaluation will cover UNICEF urban and rural interventions in those locations for migrants, refugees and host populations, particularly assessing responses to permanent or in-transit populations as well as host communities.

COVID-19: the evaluation will include an assessment of UNICEF's COVID-19 adaptations to the migration crisis response.

⁶² https://www.corecommitments.unicef.org/kp/unicef_2019_procedure-on-corporate-emergency-activation-for-l3.pdf

⁶³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

⁶⁴ ALNAP (2016), *Evaluation of Humanitarian Action (EHA) Guide*. <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/evaluation-of-humanitarian-action-eha-guide>

2.4 Stakeholders

As primary stakeholder we retain specially the affected population, as well as UNICEF staff and IPs engaged in the response. In addition, secondary stakeholders have been identified and included as external to UNICEF in the table below.

Table 4. stakeholder overview

Level	Internal to UNICEF	External to UNICEF
Headquarters Level	-Sr. Management, Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), Children on the Move (Geneva)	-UNHCR, IOM, World Food Programme (WFP), UNFPA -Donors (including United States Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM), ECHO, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Canada for UNICEF)
Regional Level	-UNICEF Sr. Management, Emergency and Technical Advisors	- UN Partners: UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, World Food Programme (WFP), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) - Regional R4V Platform members - Donor representatives
National Level	-UNICEF Sr. Management and Section chiefs, sector specialists, Emergency and Technical teams (Migration technical team)	-UN Partners: UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, WFP - National government partners in key ministries and government agencies - R4V Coordination members - IPs - Donor representatives - Partners in media and other opinion influencers
Sub-national Level	-UNICEF Field-Office teams, specifically in Tulcán and Manta, including different sector specialists,	-Municipalities -IPs -Beneficiaries of UNICEF-funded - programmes -Representatives of host communities, including by gender -R4V Coordination members under WASH, Education, CP, C4D -Local media/influencers

3. Evaluation criteria and questions

Evaluation criteria are aligned with the OECD/DAC criteria and incorporate two cross-cutting approaches: a human rights approach (HR) and a gender perspective. The evaluation assesses the extent to which the human rights, gender equality, equity and intercultural approach for girls, boys and adolescents was incorporated into the implementation of the to the VMC. In terms of quality standards, the evaluation refers to UNICEF's 2020 *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*⁶⁵ as well policy guidance for children on the move.

The evaluation questions (EQs) have been validated by a reference group⁶⁶ and arranged in an evaluation matrix (see Annex 2). The evaluation team⁶⁷ maintains the same questions for all case studies to ensure harmonisation of the enquiry process.

4. Methodology of the Ecuador country case study

The methodology applied for this study is that approved in the inception report (IR) for all the evaluation process. The evaluation has defined an analytical framework with all applicable standards of reference to the case of children on the move, which is the core of the response to be evaluated. The analytical framework has been constructed combining the OECD/DAC criteria with such human rights instruments as:

⁶⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>

⁶⁶ The reference group was formed by UNICEF RO and composed of programmatic and operational UNICEF staff at regional and country level.

⁶⁷ The Ecuador country visit was composed of only one evaluator; however the regional analysis is composed of an evaluation team of four team members.

- *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*⁶⁸
- *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*⁶⁹
- *The Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*⁷⁰
- *The Global Compact on Migration*⁷¹;
- *The Guidelines on the Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking*
- *Minimum Standards of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE)*⁷²
- *UNHCR Policy Framework for the Protection of Children*⁷³
- *The Global Programme Framework on Children on the Move*⁷⁴
- *UNICEF's Six-Point Agenda for Children on the Move*⁷⁵
- *UNICEF Core Commitments for Children (CCCs)*.⁷⁶

The evaluation is utilisation focused and participatory, with a focus on learning. The evaluation is also forward-looking with a view to shedding light on the results achieved so far and the possible strategic and programmatic priorities in the region towards durable solutions for the beneficiaries and communities.

In the absence of a formulated log frame or ToC for the VMC response in Ecuador, the evaluator has attempted to construct a ToC (see Annex 1), as to shape a theoretical framework which spans both humanitarian and development dimensions, as approved in the IR.

The methodology consists of mixing various methods as presented below. In particular, the country case study is based on extensive document and literature review, semi-structured interviews with key informants (KIs) at national and local level, and field visits to consult representatives of both migrant and host communities.

4.1 Document review

During the data collection phase, the evaluator conducted an extensive review of country- and regional-level document on the coverage and quality of humanitarian assistance relevant for each country case study. This review of key qualitative and quantitative material, including metrics applicable to UNICEF's response and strategy for responding to the needs of migrant populations and host communities, has informed understanding how UNICEF has leveraged its mandate to strengthen the rights of migrant and refugee children, to improve access to services and to seek solutions for refugees and migrants. This in-depth analysis allowed the evaluator to create a framework to measure progress on collective (regional or cross-border) and individual (country-level) efforts and capture lessons learned and good practices.

The desk review included the information provided by LACRO and ECO, available in shared folders, sometimes internal and non-public documents, monitoring data, operational contracts and reports of IPs, contextual data of the RRMP, R4V platform, academia, GoE and other sources (see Annex 3 for an overview of documents and secondary data sources consulted).

4.2 Context analysis and timeline

During the data collection phase, the evaluator conducted individual country-level context analyses as part of each country case study, to identify and analyse the different contextual factors, including the political and pandemic response, under which each country operation has been working. This includes the identification of challenges and adaptations, such as qualitative or quantitative description and analysis of the local economic, political, institutional and socio-cultural context, to understand how local factors might affect outcomes across the countries where UNICEF implements its activities.

⁶⁸ https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf

⁶⁹ <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/CPMS-2019-EN.pdf>

⁷⁰ <https://gbvguidelines.org/en/>

⁷¹ <https://www.iom.int/global-compact-migration>

⁷² <https://inee.org/minimum-standards>

⁷³ <https://www.unhcr.org/50f6cf0b9.pdf>

⁷⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/documents/global-programme-framework-children-move>

⁷⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/children-uprooted/agenda-for-action>

⁷⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/core-commitments-children>

4.3. Country visit

From 14 to 26 of November 2021, the evaluator visited sites where UNICEF implements activities and support local institutions, in Manta, Tulcán and Quito. At the sub-national level, the ToR specified that the evaluation should select sites purposefully to learn about a route-based approach, which examines how UNICEF has responded at transit and border points as well at destination areas. Initially the evaluator had planned to visit Quito, Tulcán and Huaquillas to ensure a route-based approach. After consultation with ECO and desk review, and given that the field office (FO) in Huaquillas was being closed, it was decided that a field visit to Manta would be more appropriate (see agenda in Annex 4). Indeed, the visit to the Manta FO allowed the evaluator to observe different activities, meet with partners and government officials, while seeing different context of UNICEF, IP and government work (transit versus permanent population).

4.4 Semi-structured key informant interviews

Fifty-four semi-structured interviews (28 with females and 26 with males) were carried out (on-site and remotely) with key in-country informants (both at national and field level) based on the stakeholder analysis in the IR and adapted during the data collection phase in Ecuador. Interviews were undertaken with ECA and LACRA staff, IPs, government counterparts, multilateral agencies, bilateral donors and civil society organisations (CSOs) (see Annex 5 for list of interviewees). Furthermore, group discussions were held with FO staff in each of the areas visited to get their overview and identify challenges, gaps and lessons learned. Group discussions in the field were also carried out with parents and representatives of both migrant and host communities (see below). A generic interview guide guided the Ecuador case study and can be found in Annex 6. Interview guides were kept as simple and as brief as possible without compromising quality, giving the highest levels of sensitivity and respect for beneficiaries and communities, and staff.

An interview guide, based on the revised EQs was used in the Ecuador Case Study and can be found in Annex 6. Interview protocols were kept as simple and as brief as possible without compromising quality, giving the highest levels of sensitivity and respect for beneficiaries and communities, and staff, including an AGD approach. In order to capture gender perspectives, 6 focus group and informal discussions (14 female and five men) with representatives of both migrant and host communities, including both women and men migrants and refugees, and adolescent girls and boys on the move, were carried out in all field locations visited.

4.5 Engagement with families of children on the move and host communities

The evaluator conducted sex- and age-disaggregated group discussions with Venezuelan migrants on the move. Specifically, families with children involved in UNICEF -funded programmes and activities at sub-national level were considered for selection in group discussions. The evaluator requested UNICEF's support in setting up focus group discussions (FGDs). There was a variety of KIs, both in age, gender, as well as diversity of activities they participate in. These included informants from the Espacio de Apoyo Integral (EAls)⁷⁷ in Tulcán and Manta. Rolled out by ECO in 2019, EAls provide a physical space offering legal counselling, socioemotional support, recreational activities and orientation.⁷⁸ Following the age, gender and diversity (AGD) approach, there was a wide range of informants. A total of 9 FGDs were held with beneficiaries from host and migrant communities, including a balance of both men and women, as well as children and adolescents in a range of settings along the migration route. All public health recommendations, such as masking and social distancing, were respected.

4.6 Data analysis

Qualitative evidence from the interviews was analysed according to emergent categories of analysis, e.g., similar themes or issues raised by multiple respondents, and through an initial qualitative analysis. The data analysis was used to support comparisons within and between FOs and across sectors on variables that can be accurately quantified. This data includes the number and types of beneficiaries, financial data and the relationship between targets set and targets achieved across UNICEF interventions and sectors. Quantitative methods were used to compare responses between groups on EQs and gauge the extent to which different respondents may agree or diverge. Triangulation was used to ensure that evidence generation is robust by mitigating the bias generated by

⁷⁷ EAls are similar to the Blue Dot model, established by UNHCR to provide a safe space for families and children on the move in Europe. The framework was adapted by ECO to respond to the needs of the Venezuelan population and host communities. These include integration activities as well as direct assistance.

⁷⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/consultor%C3%ADa-para-construcci%C3%B3n-del-modelo-de-gesti%C3%B3n-para-el-espacio-de-apoyo-integral-en-tulc%C3%A1n>

any single information source alone and that a reasonable level of convergence across different types of evidence at different points in time is achieved to fully demonstrate findings and draw reasoned conclusions.

Data collected was triangulated in a number of ways:

- Source triangulation: comparing information from different sources, e.g., perspectives of different stakeholder groups defined through the stakeholder analysis.
- Method triangulation: comparing information collected by different methods, e.g., interviews, document reviews, observation and groups discussions.
- Geographic triangulation: comparing information collected from different FO to ensure that emerging findings can be generalised and are not confined to a particular area context.

4.7 Feedback loops and validation process of the case study

This report was submitted to LACRO and ECO and went through a validation process:

1. LACRO and ECO staff provided written feedback to this report addressing inaccuracies, possible gaps in information or misinterpretations.
2. Validation workshop: the evaluation organised with ECO and LACRO staff a workshop on xx August 2022 to briefly discuss findings and conclusions and to address any remaining gap in information. The main objective of this workshop was to refine and validate recommendations, examine their feasibility to encourage learning and to explore how to enhance ownership of the evaluation results.

5. Limitations of the case study

Limitation	Action to minimise
Lack of a referenced ToC.	The ET has outlined a ToC that was presented in the approved IR. The ToC was the basis for the evaluation framework and assumptions for the country case study.
Lack of data	Quantitative data was difficult to receive as most of it is saved in UNICEF's SharePoint. Data collection was finalised in February 2022 at which time financial data for the whole of 2021 was not yet available.
Lack of a formulated strategic plan for the VMC in Ecuador including objectives, outcomes and output with related activities and progress indicators.	The response is articulated as part of R4V platform and in the RRMP, and also in the UNICEF regional HAC, and shares objectives and monitoring and evaluation M&E arrangements. The evaluator has reconstructed a working framework to assess progress to outcomes.
Evaluation fatigue: the ECO is going through various assessments and evaluations, absorbing significant dedication.	Care has been exercised not to overload the UNICEF team and the evaluation has adapted to the availability of staff in the field.
Turnover of staff.	Indirect information from other KIs has been collected to complement the gap. The evaluator also reached out to several people who are no longer with the ECO but were key staff during the response.
Government counterparts were not interviewed.	The evaluator was unable to speak to government officials at national level. Data was triangulated through desk review and secondary studies. The team requested a survey be shared with government officials. ⁷⁹ Information from other sources was gathered.

⁷⁹ As part of the data collection methods a short survey was distributed. However, given a low response rate at country level the survey data have not been used for the country-level analysis. They will be used, however, in the cross-country analysis and synthesis.

6. Ethical and gender considerations

The evaluator applied the necessary ethical standards throughout the case study, as included in the IR. The Case Study was designed according to, and its implementation relied on, the standards set forth in the *Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation*⁸⁰ prepared by the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) and the *UNICEF Procedure on Ethical Standards and Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis*.⁸¹

The evaluator strove to assure all participants were informed and their participation was voluntary. Privacy, confidentiality, and wellbeing during this process was ensured through informed consent forms (see annex 7). Regarding ethical approaches to managing evaluation participant data (applying to the content of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), this case study ensured the following:

- **Respect for dignity and diversity:** respecting the differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs, gender, disability, age and ethnicity and the potential implications of these when carrying out our research. We took steps to minimise any risk of disruption to the respondents, provided ample notice and respected their privacy.
- **Rights:** We ensured that participants were treated as ‘autonomous agents’ and were given the time and information to decide whether or not they wished to participate, and not pressurised into participating. The participants were selected as per the defined sampling methodology.
- **Redress:** Participants were provided sufficient information to seek redress and how to register a complaint.
- **Confidentiality:** We respected the respondent's right to provide information in confidence and made them aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality. Names and any other sensitive information were anonymised.
- **Data security:** Data has been stored systematically and securely and in line with DARA’s data protection policy, which has been updated to be fully compliant with the 2018 GDPR standards. Data will be stored in a way that makes it available and clearly accessible to the evaluator only. Data will be retained for the period of the evaluation, and then destroyed.
- **The IR and supporting data collection tools** were submitted for an external Institutional Review Board (IRB) review, which is required according to UNICEF ethics procedure when data collection happens with vulnerable groups, e.g. children. Final IRB approval can be found in Annex 8.
- **The case study and overall evaluation frameworks**, as well as all data collection tools were built on UNICEF procedures for *Ethical Research Involving Children* (ERIC).⁸²
- **The team followed best practice and UNEG guidance.** The team carried out the work with special attention to conflict sensitive and ethical considerations in all cases and with particular sensitivity to human rights and gender equality principles. Consultants strictly adhered to the Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation in the United Nations system, respecting the core principles of independence, impartiality, credibility and utility. The ET confirms it does not have any conflict of interest. The ongoing interaction with UNICEF throughout the evaluation process, validation of results and feedback on the reports ensured accountability and transparency.
- **The team used a gender-sensitive approach** by integrating gender considerations into the entire evaluation process. When selecting data sources, gender sensitivity was applied with due consideration of the local context and in consultation with the implementing organisations with prime knowledge about local conditions.

⁸⁰ <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/2866>

⁸¹ <https://gdc.unicef.org/resource/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

⁸² <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/706-ethical-research-involving-children.html>

7. Findings

Findings are structured according to the evaluation criteria. Under each criterion the ET responds to related overarching and specific questions. Each sub-section ends with synthesising related strengths and challenges.

7.1 Appropriateness

This section presents the key findings related to the appropriateness of UNICEF's response to the VMC. Each of the five EQs related to appropriateness are discussed in turn. Key findings are presented in a summary box followed by the supporting analysis.⁸³

EQ1. To what extent did UNICEF's Regional Office develop and adapt an integrated intervention logic (i.e., Theory of change/strategy for the regional response) that was appropriate and relevant to the changing dynamics of the outflow and the needs of COs?

- The ET has seen several drafts of a comprehensive a strategy document which was first drafted in 2018, but never finalised.
- The HAC is used as a strategy and provides for an intervention logic, which has its limitations.
- LACRO contributed to strengthening technical capacity mainly in Communication for Development (C4D), WASH, education, gender and M&E.
- Three years after initiation of the response, LACRO's CP section engaged with an independent organisation to develop a regional strategic framework on children on the move.

No evidence of an overarching regional ToC⁸⁴ to support COs, including ECO, to frame the emergency response was provided to the ET, beyond the HAC appeals documents. Several informants commented on the lack of a clear UNICEF regional strategy.⁸⁵ According to several KIs, this directly impacted ECO's ability to quickly respond and adapt its response to the VMC according to the changing dynamics. Three interviewees mentioned ECO raised the alarm early on, particularly regarding saturation of over-burdened social services, national and sub-national competencies and capacities, risks related to unaccompanied minors and family separation as well as administrative and legal gaps. However, it seems a regional coordinated response was difficult to set up.⁸⁶ In the absence of a ToC of reference for the UNICEF response, and on the basis of evidence collected from the initial desk review of relevant documents (results frameworks, implementation plan, action plans, situational reports, etc.), the evaluator reconstructed the implicit theory of change, integrating the current results frameworks of the interventions and relevant gaps. The ToC was approved in the IR and can be used by ECO to build one of their own.

According to KIs with UNICEF team members in Ecuador, the main contribution of LACRO to the regional response has been the technical support in the humanitarian response, resource mobilisation, and some coordination between UNICEF COs affected by the VMC. Additionally, LACRO's role was to fundraise at regional level through Canada, ECHO, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO, ex DFID) and distribute funds to each CO for national level programmes. KIs and document review show that LACRO and CO did not develop an integrated intervention logic or ToC to address the VMC. The country level and regional response was guided by the HAC, RMRP, and UNICEF's *Six-point Agenda for Children on the Move*. Funding analysis, document review and several KIs show that LACRO was unable to mobilise resources via the R4V platform in order to secure an adequate flow of financial resources to allow ECO to respond effectively to the scale and complexity of the VMC. LACRO was able to mobilise funds effectively through bilateral donor funding, rather than through the platform.

In this, UNICEF LACRO's coordination and contribution to the response at national level is seen to have been relevant, but also lacking in some key areas:

- The regional response led by IOM and UNHCR as well as UNICEF 'response to the VMC has been severely underfunded. ECO staff overwhelmingly stated that funding for the UNICEF response in Ecuador has not

⁸³ All country case studies focused on national and sub-national data collection. This question should be nuanced to reflect there has not been regional data collection, therefore triangulation with regional analysis has not been done. This EQ will be further analysed in the synthesis report.

⁸⁴ UNICEF guidance does not require a ToC to be developed for a humanitarian response.

⁸⁵ In May 2022, LACRO shared a draft regional strategy with the evaluation team. The draft version, dated September 2018, establishes a regional strategy around three pillars: comprehensive child protection, humanitarian action, development and social policy. However, no final version was shared. It is our understanding that as of (May 2022 UNICEF was drafting a new regional strategy.

⁸⁶ Several KIs stated that political sensitivities may have caused this delay. The team was provided with a draft UNICEF Regional Response Strategy from September 2018. It is unclear, as of April 2022, if and when this document was approved. It is important however to note that this country case study has focused on national and sub-national data collection. As stated above, the regional triangulation will be done in the synthesis report.

corresponded with needs and requirements. Although LACRO supported ECO with resource mobilisation, Kiss stated they did not feel that LACRO was advocating enough at HQ and global level for recognition and higher funding, specifically when compared to the extent and impact of the VMC at regional, national and sub-national level. As detailed below in EQ 14, this is mainly due to the complexity of the R4V coordination platform and competing mandates and interests. This will be further analysed and reflected in the synthesis report.

- In terms of coordination between countries, ECO respondents note that LACRO did facilitate some cross-border conversations between LACRO and ECO. However, there was a lack of coordination between ECO and the Venezuela CO. Several KI stated this would have been a fundamental step to ensure the ECO response was adapted to the flows and needs of migrants.
- LACRO is seen to have provided technical support to various sections of the ECO response. Sectors that have had specific technical support include C4D,⁸⁷ WASH, education, gender, and M&E.⁸⁸ However, the COVID-19 pandemic and restriction measures broke the flow of technical support and visits from LACRO colleagues early in 2020 and as of December 2021 had not resumed at an adequate level.⁸⁹ More sustained technical support from LACRO would be appreciated. Several sectors did state they had received technical support (guidance, procedures, training and/or informal discussions) but that it was sector-related and dependent on individual affinities.
- KIIs with Ecuador team members and partners identified an overall weakness in advocacy and investment in an early warning system that would be triggered from Venezuela, where the population movements originate, and relayed to localities and countries along the migration route, allowing them time to prepare to receive large population movements. Furthermore, due to the political sensitivities of the VMC, some KIs stated that the alert was given by ECO but that LACRO was unwilling to react. Although the response started before the declaration of the L2, several KIs stated that delay in declaring an emergency slowed down several processes that could have facilitated a more efficient, fluid and coordinated response. While the migration flow in Ecuador dates to at least 2017, and the Declaration of Migratory Emergency was issued on August 9 2018,⁹⁰ LACRO's L2 emergency activation took place only in February 2019. One could argue that this was relatively late. This activation follows the declaration in April 2018 from the UN Secretary-General for IOM and UNHCR to lead and coordinate the regional response to the situation of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and establishment of the GIFMM or R4V Platform. The reasons for this delayed response will be considered in more detail in the Regional Level interviews and report.
- Finally, KIs from UNICEF recognised the absence of an integrated information sharing system. As a regional crisis, it has been recognised by all organisations and actors that enhancing information sharing between countries would improve preparedness in the different countries.

EQ2. To what extent did UNICEF Ecuador develop and adapt response theories of change, strategies, objectives and implementation modalities that were appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of migrant children/families, opportunities, capacities and circumstances in border, transit and urban/rural settlements, including adaptations to the COVID19 outbreak.

- Overall, UNICEF Ecuador has developed and adapted a number of response strategies, objectives and implementation modalities, which have been appropriate and relevant to the changing needs of migrant children and their families along the migration route. These included adaptations to the COVID-19 outbreak.

⁸⁷ A majority of advocacy and communications campaigns are drafted at regional level and adapted at national level to translate well to the national and sub-national context-related issues.

⁸⁸ Technical notes, meetings and lessons learned were shared between countries, supported by LACRO. There were also specific technical visits from LACRO staff to ECO to ensure exchange and ownership.

⁸⁹ It should be noted that regional specialists need to be invited by a CO to go on mission and support it.

⁹⁰ *International Cooperation Framework for the national response to Venezuelan people on the move in Ecuador*, Ministerio de relaciones exteriores y movilidad humana, Ecuador, 2018. https://www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2018/12/international_cooperation_framework.pdf

- Migration was mentioned in the current CPD and “migration dynamics”⁹¹ was stated as one of the reasons for regional prioritisations. The new CPD offers an opportunity to further institutionalise migration as part of UNICEF Ecuador’s strategy for the years to come.
- UNICEF adapted its programming and activities when COVID-19 hit, distributing hygiene kits, information on sanitary measures and additionally provided psycho-social support.
- UNICEF adapted to the changing profiles of migrants, shifting to include more integration measures to respond to migrants and host communities.
- In a number of cases however, the appropriateness of and relevance of UNICEF strategies, objectives and implementation modalities could be reviewed and revised, in light of the scale and complexity of the VMC.

According to the 2019 HAC, Ecuador was one of the countries that had to adjust its plan to include migration flows in 2019. UNICEF’s modus operandi was adapted in order to include:

- a humanitarian aspect to cover protection for migrant children and their families, to ensure access to CP services, education, holistic health and nutrition support and WASH services
- CP and advocacy to ensure that migrants and refugee children including their families are at the core of the actions taken by national stakeholders, civil society and humanitarian organisations
- resilient development and social policy to promote inclusion and integration.

It is clear through the document review and interviews, that UNICEF Ecuador adapted its response to the changing dynamics. As detailed below, ECO adapted its strategy to the changing needs of families, unaccompanied minors and populations in transit and with desire to reside in Ecuador (vocación de permanencia). Specifically, ECO focused its work on strengthening national and sub-national processes for regularisation. ECO also worked closely with its IPs to improve and increase processes and structures to accompany and respond to the needs of unaccompanied minors. Additionally, ECO adapted its response to the changing national dynamics.

When the Venezuelan migration influx began, the humanitarian communities’ main areas of attention were at the northern and southern borders: Rumichaca, San Miguel and Huaquillas. UNICEF was one of the first agencies to implement activities in Rumichaca and San Miguel and open dialogue with local authorities, while raising the alarm at national level. During the first six months of 2019, in Rumichaca and San Miguel, activities were focused on cash-based interventions (CBI), WASH, CP, nutrition, health and non-food items (NFIs), awareness and information campaigns, protection and advocacy for education to migrants who were, for the vast majority, transiting through Ecuador to reach Peru, Chile or elsewhere.

UNICEF’s work focused on three pillars:

- i) humanitarian assistance to those in transit
- ii) comprehensive protection of children and adolescents,
- iii) inclusion in the host country.⁹²

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, UNICEF had to adapt its response to the changing needs. Particularly, ECO focused on delivering personal hygiene and protective equipment supplies in collaboration with WFP. Cash-Based Interventions (CBI) was maintained and interviews were conducted over the phone. UNICEF focused on psycho-emotional support through virtual workshops to children and adolescents while also working with school staff to ensure appropriate measures were being implemented in online classes. Social protection activities were maintained through IPs. Additionally, UNICEF was able to leverage its longstanding relationship with MinEduc⁹³ to support teachers and caregivers with distance learning methodologies and socio-emotional assistance. More than 500 tablets and 4,335 sim cards with call and connectivity plans were donated so that teachers and student advisors could provide academic and emotional support to students and their families.

In August 2020, GTRM published a Joint Needs Assessment⁹⁴ indicating that 72 per cent of households in human mobility had problems related to right to housing such as difficulty in paying rent or risk of eviction. In 2021, UNICEF

⁹¹ Country Programme Document, UNICEF, 2018

⁹² UNICEF Ecuador’s response to the human mobility crisis from Venezuela, December 2020

⁹³ This was already established as a key strength of UNICEF ECO in the Systematization and Lessons Learned report of the 2016 earthquake “Informe de Sistematización y Lecciones Aprendidas”.

⁹⁴ Evaluación conjunta de necesidades, GTRM, August 2020

started implementing a new CBI strategy to support Venezuelan families, in close coordination with UNHCR and WFP. Unlike the earlier once-off cash the new strategy provides support to households for nine months, in addition to a once-off support for each child attending school. The new modality has a stronger emphasis on education and protection. An evaluation of the CBI programme, completed in the last quarter of 2020, showed it increased school attendance (all age groups) and access to health services for under-fives, among other positive effects.⁹⁵

Lastly, a notable adaptation is the EAI in Tulcán. Since 2018, UNICEF had a strong presence in Rumichaca, delivering essential humanitarian assistance to those in transit. However, after the introduction of the 2019 “Humanitarian” visa, there has been an increase of populations arriving through irregular entry points (*trochas*).⁹⁶ As population entries have significantly decreased, due to this visa and the COVID-19 pandemic, KIs from UN agencies, IP and affected populations indicate that the need for an ongoing presence in Rumichaca is no longer justified. Due to the current restrictive context and the pandemic, several informants mentioned Rumichaca is no longer a strategic point of presence. However, if and when the context changes (political or health), UNICEF and its IP should be ready to revise their presence in the northern border. As is, UNICEF’s and its IP’s added value are seen to be both in Tulcán and in the migration route from the northern border towards Quito. UNICEF considers it key to have a safe space where populations (both migrants and host communities) can find assistance, guidance and support. Yet with the COVID-19 outbreak the Tulcán EAI was shut down for several months during which time UNICEF, its IP and other agencies switched to online activities. When the centre reopened in 2022, UNICEF in collaboration with the Ecuadorian Red Cross, was able to implement the appropriate health and safety measures, and offer vaccination stations. Building on the positive experience of the EAI,⁹⁷ UNICEF has opened an EAI in Manta. The team visited the EAI in Manta and Tulcán, cities with different migration profiles (vocation of permanence and in-transit, respectively). In Manta, partner organisations and IP are more focused on integration with legal assistance, capacity-building, socio-economic strengthening. Both EAI work closely with the local Gobierno Autónomo Descentralizado (GAD)⁹⁸ to build ownership and ensure durability.



EAI entrance in Tulcán/@Julia Durand

Following IOM and UNHCR data on migration profiles, UNICEF has adapted the concept of the EAI to tailor it to the needs of the population in Manta. This EAI is very recent and will need to be evaluated to ensure that the EAI concept can be adapted to different contexts. UNICEF has also begun building/ renovating a space in the city of Esmeraldas to open an EAI by the end of 2022.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ [Evaluation reports | UNICEF Evaluation in UNICEF](#)

⁹⁶ UNICEF Country Office Annual Report, 2019

⁹⁷ Several KIs, from UNICEF, IPs and UN agencies involved with the EAI in Tulcán, reported challenges in setting it up. However, all stated it is an innovation compared to other spaces, as there is strong coordination and collaboration between several IPs, UN agencies and government officials. Also, the centre is where the GTRM meets weekly, reported as another added value.

⁹⁸ GADs exist at region, province, canton and parish levels across Ecuador. They enjoy political, administrative, and financial autonomy, and are governed by the principles of solidarity, subsidiarity, equity, interterritorial, integration, and citizen participation.

⁹⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/media/8856/file>

EQ3: To what extent were UNICEF's plans, actions and key decisions informed by the active participation and voice of affected populations? Were different types of beneficiaries consulted and included in the response?

- UNICEF has participated in three joint assessments which allowed the agency to tailor its activities and programming to the changing needs and profiles of populations.
- While standard feedback mechanisms were set up UNICEF could and should go further to include voices of affected populations.
- Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) and Communicating with Communities (CWC) are part of all Project Cooperation Agreement (PCAs) with IPs.

UNICEF has participated in three joint needs assessments¹⁰⁰ through the national R4V platform, the GTRM. This has allowed it to tailor activities and programming to the changing needs and profiles of populations. U-Report – a messaging tool to empower and connect young people around the world to engage with and speak out on issues that matter to them¹⁰¹ – also allowed gathering of feedback from adolescents.

In 2019, in coordination with the Education sector, activities were held in host communities and schools to reach teachers, students and communities with messages on the importance of inclusion and intercultural dialogue with the aim to prevent xenophobia. Focus groups were held at border points as an AAP mechanism. This involved asking 936 people to participate in the evaluation of activities and to give recommendations to strengthen and adjust UNICEF's programmes.¹⁰² The ET has been unable to ascertain these adjustments had been made following this consultative process. However, several KIs stated that the launch of the anti-xenophobia campaign was based on Venezuelan migrants, particularly children. Following FGDs with children from host communities and migrant populations, UNICEF gathered that the messaging was more harmful than helpful. Targeting a specific nationality made them more visible and more prone to bullying. Students from host communities also mentioned that there were other nationalities to consider. Following this feedback, UNICEF adapted its messaging and developed a broader communication strategy to implement the Seamos Amigos campaign, which involved several activities aiming at promoting rights, empathy, solidarity and conflict resolution.¹⁰³

Despite the positive investments in consulting and communicating with affected populations, AAP and the implementation of appropriate feedback mechanisms remain a challenge. First, while AAP and Communicating with Communities (CWC) are part of all IP PCAs, for most partners their operationalisation remains challenging. KIs have stated that changing contexts, high turnover, short-lived programmes and reporting burdens have impeded full implementation of AAP and CWC mechanisms. While the standard active and reactive mechanisms¹⁰⁴ are put into place to ensure minimum standards are followed (e.g. suggestion boxes, phone interviews, hotlines, focus groups, community visits/consultations), AAP, C4D and active participation remain activities led and implemented by the communications team in UNICEF. KIs stated that AAP is not mainstreamed through programmes and activities, rather something that is implemented through the communications team and which is not systematically incorporated. Although needs assessments, standard feedback mechanisms and PCA's with AAP components are set up, the final step to accountability mechanisms is weak. As the START Network states, accountability mechanisms aim to take account, give account and be held to account:



¹⁰⁰ Joint Needs Assessment are channelled through the R4V platform. There have been 2 in 2020 and one in May 2021.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/u-report>

¹⁰² Migration flows in Latin America and the Caribbean - Situation Report – Jan-Dec 2019

¹⁰³ Respuesta de UNICEF Ecuador a la crisis de movilidad humana venezolana. UNICEF, diciembre 2020

¹⁰⁴ Accountability, Feedback & Complaints Mechanisms in Humanitarian Responses to Migration, Clea Kahn, START Network, June 2020.

Affected people should have the opportunity to assess what agencies are doing and how they are providing assistance, to provide feedback that is meaningfully considered and incorporated, and to sanction abuses and poorly delivered assistance, wherever possible. This means that people should also be informed about how agencies have responded to their feedback.¹⁰⁵

EQ4: Did the design of interventions take into account specific barriers linked to gender and societal expectations, challenges faced by minorities (for example indigenous migrants), vulnerable groups (for example unaccompanied children or children with disabilities, women and pregnant women, etc.)?

- UNICEF has been advocating for vulnerable groups, such as unaccompanied children and pregnant women, through safe spaces, capacity building and technical support to government institutions.
- Although ECO does not have a gender specialist, it has been integrating gender equality, GBV prevention and psychosocial support into its programming in different sectors.

During the first phase of the response, until the introduction of the 2019 visa requirements, UNICEF created safe overnight spaces, child-friendly spaces, and breastfeeding spaces in Rumichaca to respond to the population entering Ecuador. In both EAls which the evaluator visited, in Tulcán and Manta, there is a focus on addressing specific gender challenges faced by migrants and host communities, through psychosocial support, skills-building workshops for women, workshops on the prevention of GBV and promotion of positive masculinity. This is done through capacity building of local institutions, information campaigns on the risks faced by both populations, training targeting vulnerable groups, and psychosocial support. Other vulnerabilities are also addressed in the EAls, where there are safe spaces for psychological support, legal assistance, accompanied activities for unaccompanied minors and spaces for pregnant and lactating women.

Although ECO does not have a gender specialist, LACRO and ECO worked closely to implement capacity building and technical support related to gender equality. Prevention of GBV and PSEA are core aspects of the response. UNICEF has been active in raising the profile of those issues, ensuring visibility in all assessments and information tools, providing training and monitoring progress. UNICEF has provided capacity building workshops in Ecuador for local governments officials and IPs on CP and violence prevention, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).¹⁰⁶ Another example of activities that aim to address GBV is the project implemented through FULULU which ran from August 2020 to February 2021. The activities aimed at generating teaching-learning processes on non-violent masculinity, sexual diversity through capacity-building, GBV prevention, awareness-raising exercises with adolescent and adult males, teachers and MinEduc personnel. However, without a focal point, ECO has limited capacity to appropriately address the differential gender needs of migrants or host communities. FGDs showed that a priority for migrants was to have more information on SGBV prevention, safe routes and available services. ECO is seen to be addressing these concerns, with limited resources. In April 2022, Canada agreed to support UNICEF to improve protection services for Venezuelan adolescents, particularly girls, in Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Guyana.¹⁰⁷

Additionally, ECO has been implementing alternative gender responsive care modalities for migrant children in a housing structure in Quito operated by DCF, with the support of the Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social (MIES). The project will help to enhance psycho-emotional support services and provide guidance for the development of life plans for adolescents (autonomy and empowerment), including life-skills capacities for adolescent girls.¹⁰⁸

UNICEF has been a key stakeholder in raising awareness around unaccompanied minors (children and adolescents). Since the beginning of the VMC, unaccompanied minors have been of growing concern. UNICEF has been able to implement alternative care structures, such as the shelter house in Quito managed by DCF. The house helps teenagers in the process of family reunification, providing safe space for overnight stays, psycho-emotional care and recreational activities. The alternative care structure uses a methodology developed by UNICEF with feedback from the IP. It provides accompaniment and support for developing life skills, life plans leading to greater

¹⁰⁵ Clea Kahn, 2020, "Accountability, Feedback & Complaints Mechanisms in Humanitarian Responses to Migration", START Network, p.6." <https://startnetwork.org/resource/accountability-feedback-complaints-mechanisms-humanitarian-responses-migration>

¹⁰⁶ Respuesta de UNICEF Ecuador a la crisis de movilidad humana venezolana, Dec 2020, UNICEF

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/canada-provides-cad14-million-over-two-years-in-support-unicef-strengthen-education-and-protection-services-for-venezuelan-refugee-and-migrant-children>

autonomy. As an informant mentioned, this methodology and subsequent structures in Tulcán and Quito led to the creation of a formalised technical norm for the MIES' temporary spaces of care (*casas de abrigo*). Additionally, UNICEF is supporting institutions working on children and adolescents' protection, both for migrant and host communities, to strengthen Ecuador's protection system. This work includes technical support, capacity building, and training to government institutions, such as the MIES, the La Junta Cantonal de Protección de Derechos de la Niñez y Adolescencia¹⁰⁹ and several GADs (Tulcán, Manta, Lago Agrio, among others).

In 2019, following an episode of femicide, there was an increase of xenophobia and acts of discrimination against the migrant population. ECO shifted its campaigns to address these issues, with a strong focus on inclusion and integration, including activities with both migrant and host communities.

However, some vulnerabilities, such as those faced by people with disabilities, while addressed in programme documents, are not fully considered in the implementation of activities. The evaluator particularly noted this during a visit to the EAI in Tulcán where access is obtained by a two-story staircase.

Indigenous migrants do not seem to be a target population for the VMC in Ecuador. Other vulnerable groups were not considered for this country case study, either due to limited data, limited data collected by the evaluator or no specific mention of these groups in programme and reporting documents.

EQ5: How appropriate were UNICEF's internal arrangements at RO and CO levels for the management/staffing/leadership/capacity development/technical support (including human resources, tools, protocols, fundraising and managerial capacity/surge capacity, etc.) to address the context, scale and complexity of the Venezuelan outflow?

- ECO is understaffed and overstretched; notably, ECO does not have a gender focal point.
- ECO closed its Huaquillas office in 2021, which has been stated as a limiting factor to an appropriate response.

Most informants reported that UNICEF staff is both understaffed and overstretched. As noted, ECO does not have a gender specialist. Many KIs mentioned overall fatigue due to the length of the emergency, no clear regional strategy, changing national contexts and the COVID-19 crisis. This response also closely follows UNICEF's 2016 earthquake response, which had already strained UNICEF staff.¹¹⁰ A key finding of the COVID-19 Real Time Assessment (RTA)¹¹¹ stated burnout as an issue to be addressed by adopting "additional measures to address CO staff burnout and support LAC staff to cope with a persistent crisis." One KI stated that ECO did implement mental health care through a staff-dedicated psychologist, free memberships of wellbeing apps, internal discussions and forums. However, the ET was not able to assess to what extent these tools were used by staff members.

Due to the changing political contexts in both Ecuador and Peru, documents and several KIs mentioned that UNICEF closed its FO at the southern border of Huaquillas. This decision was made due to the political context which resulted in Peru, like Ecuador, restricting its entry requirements to migrants at the border. Additionally, in January 2021 Peru deployed military forces to the Peruvian border,¹¹² which heightened tensions for migrants trying to leave Ecuador to enter Peru. UNICEF shifted its focus to provide humanitarian assistance to people in transit to other cities as well as strengthening its integration strategy.¹¹³ KIs from different UNICEF, IPs and UN agencies stated that while this may have been justified at the time due to funding constraints the decision caused a major gap in addressing the needs of migrants in the region. The absence affects direct assistance (in WASH, protection and education) as well as advocacy at local level.

In Tulcán, a key field office for the VMC, UNICEF has two National United Nations Volunteer (NUNVs): a CP officer and a driver. Although migrant needs and profiles are changing, the Tulcán FO remains an important attention point not only in the city of Tulcán but also along the route between Tulcán and Ibarra. Although KIs

¹⁰⁹ <https://www.gob.ec/gadmc-biblian/tramites/proceso-administrativo-medidas-proteccion>

¹¹⁰ The earthquake response relied on surge capacity including experts in emergency response, compared to the VMC response where UNICEF decided against having two parallel teams.

¹¹¹ Real-Time Assessment (RTA) of UNICEF's response to COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Synthesis Report, April 2021.

¹¹² <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/documents/real-time-assessment-rta-unicefs-response-covid-19-latin-america-and-caribbean>

¹¹³ [Perú despliega militares en la frontera con Ecuador para controlar el paso de migrantes \(france24.com\)](https://www.france24.com/en/peru/20210115-peru-despliega-militares-en-la-frontera-con-ecuador-para-controlar-el-paso-de-migrantes)

¹¹⁴ Migration flows in Latin America and the Caribbean, Situation Report, Sept-Oct 2019

overwhelmingly praised UNICEF staff for their dedication and involvement, several noted that expecting one person to tend to all the needs in the region is a major gap in UNICEF's ability to respond.

Informants agree that the lack of experience in humanitarian response required a process of institutional learning. External missions and consultancies were mobilised at the initial phases with this aim. In 2018 and in June 2019 consultants were hired to identify and address bottlenecks around the roll-out of the GoE's *Procedimiento de atención para niñas, niños, adolescentes y sus familias en contextos de movilidad humana en Ecuador*.¹¹⁴ This aimed at following up the methodology of the interview process -a key step in the implementation of the procedure, identifying gaps and opportunities to improve the process. The analysis and recommendations from this consultancy were shared with the Ministry of the Interior – now known as the Ministerio de Gobierno (MoG) and MIES.¹¹⁵

Several KIIs stated that leadership at both national and local levels has not been consistent throughout the response,¹¹⁶ thus directly impacting the ability to advocate for the VMC to local and national government officials, donor, and the international community. However, UNICEF staff overwhelmingly stated significant leadership and support (both at human and professional levels) were one of the key reasons ECO was able to respond as it has throughout the VMC. Through KIIs and observations the evaluator found the ECO and FOs to be overstretched while facing severe constraints such as the humanitarian visa and the pandemic.

7.2 Effectiveness

The evaluation of the effectiveness of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: ***To what extent did UNICEF's response to the VMC achieve, or can be expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including any differential results across groups, (including by gender/age/ethnicity) across border, transit, urban and other settlements?*** Similar to the previous section on Appropriateness, specific EQs about effectiveness will be discussed in turn. This section will systematically review results achieved by each sector of the response.

EQ6. To what extent did UNICEF's response to the VMC achieve, or can be expected to achieve, its objectives and results, including differential results across groups (including by gender/age/ethnicity) across border, transit, urban and other settlements?

EQ7: How effective has UNICEF been in responding to the influx of Venezuelan migrant with regards to:

- a) Supporting UNICEF- bolstered access to their rights and protection: child and social protection, education, prevention of gender-based violence, early childhood development, health, nutrition and WASH services for migrant, refugee and host community children**
- b) Supporting and promoting inclusion and integration by ensuring access to national social services and humanitarian/social cash transfers; the regularisation of children's and families' legal status; strengthened social policies and national/local integration capacities.**
- c) Generating a sense of empowerment for migrant children, adolescents and families in terms of having access to information and opportunities.**

- Less than 40 per cent of the indicators have met the targets each year (2019 and 2020). In 2020, COVID-19 caused many planned activities to be either cancelled or changed. At the same time some sectors, such as CP and WASH, were able to increase their outreach.
- Unclear targeting definition shows that in some cases either target populations have been underestimated or the results from programme implementation have been over estimated. There seems to be an indistinct relationship between available resources and reported results.
- There have been important funding gaps across sectors. Nutrition and advocacy were particularly under-funded while CP has had the lowest percentage funding gap.

¹¹⁴ The Special Procedure for Unaccompanied or Separated Children and Adolescents and their Families in the Contexts of Human Mobility in Ecuador. <https://www.cancilleria.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/procedimiento.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Migration flows in Latin America and the Caribbean - Situation Report – March 2019

¹¹⁶ At national and regional level, a change in representatives increased support and advocacy at national and regional level.

- Inconsistencies in monitoring and reporting information with indicators' definition were found. The ET was informed that ECO showed LACRO and UNICEF HQ some disconformity with some standard indicators.
- There are some comparability issues from year to year, as indicators were not defined to be annually collected.
- Even though results are not always disaggregated per type of beneficiary (VMC/ COVID 19), there are some activities undertaken by the ECO where targets show good levels of reach including psychosocial support, CP and education. CBI relieves stress for families and helped to empower female household heads. A project run by Arteducarte¹¹⁷ to promote integration and challenge xenophobia and in-school violence received positive comments from beneficiaries as did specific WASH interventions.
- ECO is an example of coordination with other agencies to improve the response, in particular during and after COVID-19
- Strong capacity-building, training and technical support to bridge gaps (for health workers and / MinEduc teachers.
- Insufficient facilities for Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) and coverage of alternative routes, ineffective nutrition response as per the targets established.

This Country Case Study will address EQs 6 and 7 as a continuum as they complement each other. Achievement of results is usually gauged based on the level of achievement of the intended objectives through the progress of the indicators that measure the different activities. This poses a challenge for this country case study as most of the comparable information available comes from the regional Situational Reports, which only have a small section with country information, and the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM)¹¹⁸ indicators, available only for 2019. This limits the level of analysis. Additionally, the HPM indicators alone do not always demonstrate the full result chain intended by the country operation. The ToC elaborated by the ET (see annex 1) provides a frame for the overall response in Ecuador and assumes that achievement of results (through outputs) will eventually lead to the intended outcomes, provided that the enabling factors as outlined in the ToC are ensured. Furthermore, starting from the HAC revision¹¹⁹ in August 2020 and including the 2021 HAC the appeals both included humanitarian needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic¹²⁰ as well as those from the VMC.¹²¹

ECO has monitored its response to the VMC using between 12 to 15 HAC indicators to track sectoral response yearly as presented in the SitReps (see Annex 9) (compared to the 40+ indicators included in the 2019 HPM).¹²² As presented in Figure 5 below, in 2019 only 28 per cent of these indicators had met the established targets. In 2020, this number reached almost 60 per cent. By March 2021 none of the indicators were close to reach their targets.¹²³ Targets as per Ecuador CPD, at outcome level, are defined using governmental sources of information and

¹¹⁷ <http://arteducarte.com/>

¹¹⁸ The objective of the HPM is to support UNICEF CO management in a) assessing performance through improving predictable, effective and timely humanitarian action of UNICEF and its partners, b) strengthening links between government frameworks, and UNICEF humanitarian and regular programmes, and c) to reinforce accountability. The HPM is designed to feed into the Situation Report (SitRep) which is aligned to the CCCs and is the minimum monitoring and reporting requirement for UNICEF COs in on-going humanitarian situations. HPM is self-reported. See: Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Toolkit and Guide: <https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/Humanitarian%20Performance%20Monitoring%20Toolkit%20and%20Guide%20Single%20Doc%2001June2011.pdf>

¹¹⁹ As per the revised HAC 2020, in August 2020, UNICEF continued working at the border and transit paths but also scaled up its response to address needs in urban settings. It kept CP at the centre of its humanitarian and COVID-19 action. Due to COVID-19, some UNICEF activities were temporarily suspended, cancelled, or modified. To respond to the COVID-19 context, activities have been adapted, by introducing alternative modalities of service delivery, and ensuring compliance with prevention measures and protection of frontline workers and beneficiaries

¹²⁰ As presented in Latin America and the Caribbean COVID-19 Response Progress Report No. 3 "specific COVID-19 issues related to the response to the Venezuela migration crisis are addressed in the country/sub-regional chapters of the R4V". See <https://www.unicef.org/media/83596/file/LACRO-COVID-19-SitRep-22-July-2020.pdf>

¹²¹ HAC2021 redefines the three priority strategic objectives as: (1) the most vulnerable Venezuelan migrant and refugee children and their families and host communities; 2) the most vulnerable non-migrant children and families affected by COVID-19, and (3) children affected by violence and displacement. See: <https://www.unicef.org/media/98396/file/2021-HAC-Children-on-the-move-from-Venezuela-May-Update.pdf>

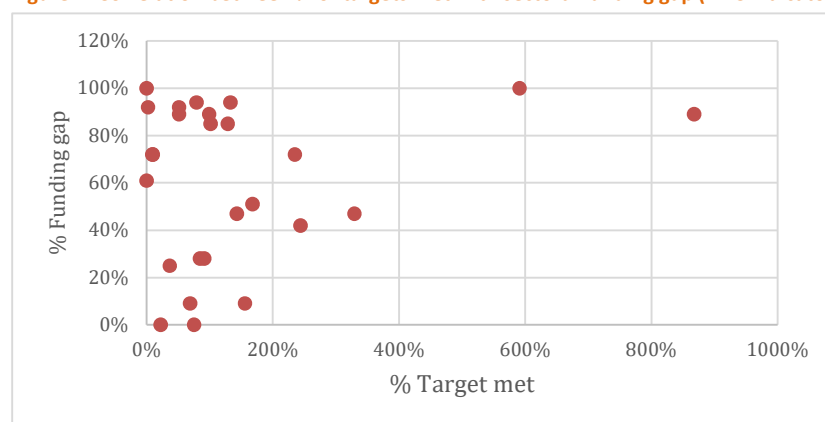
¹²² In the HAC (and its related HPM) of 2019 the articulation of the response encompasses a formulation of sector results (nutrition, health, WASH, CP, education, social inclusion and C4D) with a number of related indicators, with targets for both host population and for migrants. The use of different indicators and different way of arranging indicators in successive years makes it difficult to compare from year to year and to assess progress over time for the evaluation period. (See summary table of HPM indicators in Annex 9).

¹²³ Information provided by LACRO until December 2021 showed that only one indicator was close to reaching the target (with a little above 70 per cent coverage)

statistics. In 2019, UNICEF defined the targeted population for migrant and host communities based on data provided by the RMRP (IOM-UNHRC), official data from the Ministry of Interior (Venezuelan people that entered Ecuador), other secondary data sources¹²⁴, and the three needs assessment undertaken by ECO in 2019-2021. In its response UNICEF prioritised population on the move at border crossings in Rumichaca, San Miguel and Huaquillas, and Venezuelan population settling in the main cities of Ecuador (Quito, Manta, Ibarra, Guayaquil, Cuenca). With COVID-19 pandemic, needs changed and so did the targets.¹²⁵ However, there is no detailed information on the process for adjusting targets, or how other aspects such as resources, funding and planning are included in the target setting process. Moreover, taking into account Ecuador 2019 and 2020 implementation results, there is no strict correlation between funding needs met and the target completion (see figure below), supporting the finding of a poor or unclear process for target setting.

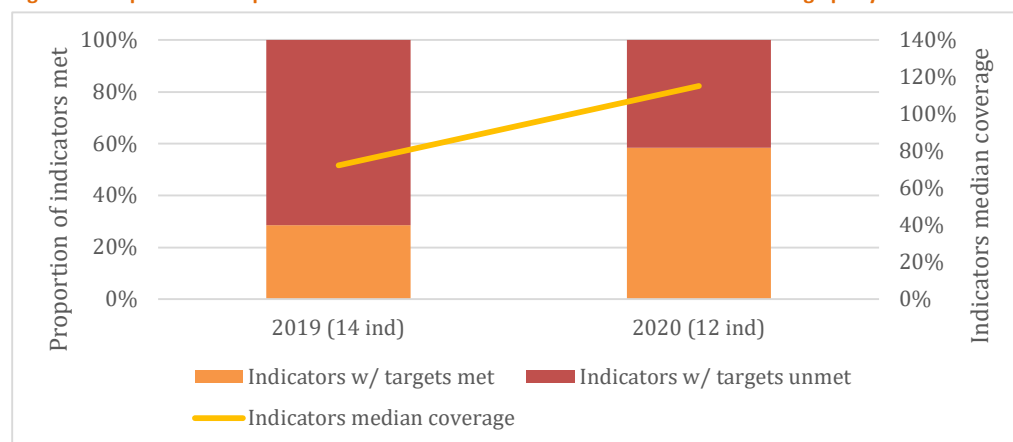
Thus, from the data provided, the level of achievement of the indicators only partially informs the actual achievement of results, which are implicit in the response as the overarching aim for each sector of intervention. The evaluation will expand the ToA validation in the conclusions section.

Figure 4. Correlation between % of targets met with sectoral funding gap (HAC indicators 2019-2020)



If we compare the proportion of indicators that met their targets, as presented in the Situational Reports, with the median coverage of the indicators registered each year, we can see that only in 2020 did the median surpass 100 per cent.

Figure 5. Proportion of implementation indicators met and unmet vs. Median coverage per year in Ecuador



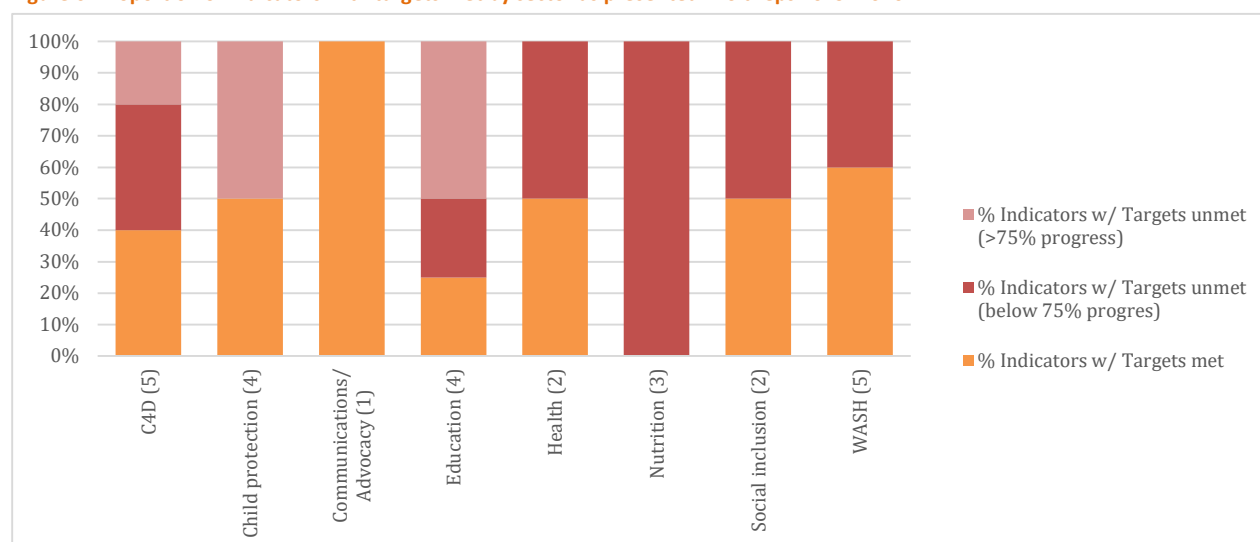
UNICEF's response is articulated with the formulation of sector results (CP, nutrition, health, WASH, education, social inclusion, C4D and advocacy) with a number of related indicators, with population targets. In terms of achievement of indicator targets by sector, Figure 6 shows that from 2019 to 2020 the only indicator included in the Communications/Advocacy sector reached its objectives. Sixty per cent of the WASH indicators met their targets as did 50 per cent of the indicators considered for CP. Health and Social inclusion reached their targets. On the other side of the spectrum, none of the nutrition indicators reached their targets in the period 2019-

¹²⁴ See SUMMARY RESPONSE OVERVIEW UNICEF MIGRATION CRISIS ACTION PLAN 2019 COUNTRY: ECUADOR

¹²⁵ See revised HAC 2020

2020.¹²⁶

Figure 6. Proportion of indicators with targets met by sector as presented in SitReps 2019- 2020*



* Number of indicators considered in the analysis is presented next to sector label on X-axis

The use of different indicators and different ways of arranging indicators in successive years makes it difficult to assess progress over time for the evaluation period. Also, disaggregated information is limited, so gender/ age targets or type of population disaggregation is sometimes only presented in action plans, rendering in-depth analysis only partially possible. We will consider some qualitative elements to assess effectiveness for each sector, based on the initial formulation of intended results of 2019, also selecting the indicators that have some permanence over time.

Health and nutrition

The output-level result formulated in the HAC 2019 is as follows:

<i>Sector results formulated as in HAC 2019</i>
<i>Health: Boys and girls, adolescents and women on the move and in host communities equitably access essential health services with sustained coverage of high-impact preventive and curative interventions</i>
<i>Nutrition: Health systems strengthened to identify and address nutrition issues and monitor nutrition trends</i>

In 2019, the provision of baby kits for vulnerable children under the age of 3 surpassed by almost 70 per cent the targeted population. This support reached Rumichaca and San Miguel through ADRA.¹²⁷ On the other hand, there are no achievements registered in 2020 due to COVID-19, when baby kits support was intended to reach Ecuador's northern border (Imbabura, Carchi, Esmeraldas, and Sucumbíos) and Manabí. Neither are there achievements regarding UNICEF provision of technical assistance to the Ministry of Health nor with regard to CBI to help families with children needing specialised medical assistance.¹²⁸

In 2020, the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic caused most HAC activities to be cancelled and therefore no beneficiaries were registered in 2020 indicators. In 2021, the expected number of beneficiaries for the VMC was defined, between two and to 40 per cent of the targeted population.¹²⁹ A slow normalisation of activities in 2021 made it possible to register some improvements during the first quarter of the year, in particular using its regular development programme to reach migrant and refugee population.

It is curious, however, to see that some accomplishments are described in the country section of the Situation

¹²⁶ Note that at this stage only those indicators where targets have been fully met are being considered. The extent to which each indicator is close, or not, to meet its targets will be analysed separately at a sectoral level in the following sections.

¹²⁷ See Action_Plan_Migration_Outcome_Ecuador_2019_ENERO_2019

¹²⁸ See ECU - Summary_Response_Overview_Migration 2020

¹²⁹ See the "REVISION-ECUADOR_2021_HAC_planning final REV 2.0.1"

report, but no achievement is included in the regional comparative table with indicators (see 2020 indicators on the table below). For example, the indicator on “Children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities” even when the activity is marked as cancelled in 2020, more information should be included to better understand these achievements. In 2021, the target population increased exponentially due to the change in scope. A clear improvement from the previous year was registered, with almost 24 per cent of the target being covered from January to March.

Table 5. Summary of HAC Health indicators per year

Health	2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved (up to March)
# Children 6 to 36 months who receive baby kits containing basic supplies for the care and hygiene of vulnerable children under the age of 3	10,000 (migrant)	16,768	No target/indicator (but reported 6,000 delivered kits)		No target/indicator	
# Children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities	No target/indicator		1,926 (1,600 host, 326 migrant)	Activity cancelled due to COVID-19 but reported access for 47 children and 2 pregnant women	30,300 (19,143 women, 5,440 boys, 5,717 girls) 2% VMC, 98% COVID	7,158
# of health workers reached with personal protective equipment	No target/indicator				4,000 (1600 men, 2400 women)) 40% VMC, 60% COVID	-

The ET has had access to the 2019 HPM indicators for Ecuador and therefore was able to see the level of performance in specific activities in relation to the response (these indicators were not included in the SitRep 2019, but results are showcased as part of the response to the migration crisis in the country descriptive section of the report). These include the donation of medical supplies (zinc and oral rehydration salts), provision of capacity training to health workers and certification of two new health facilities as mother and baby friendly, and finally the distribution of a standardised Health Card, that included health history and vaccination, delivered to 81 per cent of the targeted population (migrant children and pregnant women).

Table 6. HPM additional indicators related to Health

HPM Indicator – Health	Target	Reached 2019
# of children under 10 who access and receive comprehensive treatment including oral rehydration, salts and zinc.	10,000 (1500 migrant, 8500 host)	7,000
# of health cards distributed	28,750 (migrant)	23,377 (19,872 children, 3,505 pregnant women).
# of trained health professionals in the integrated management of childhood illness (IMCI) who provide equitably access to essential health services with sustained coverage of high-impact preventive and curative interventions.	700 (host)	800
# of health centres providing maternal and child health	6	7

services with a focus on inter-cultural, gender-sensitive and equitable services in crisis affected areas		
---	--	--

The needs assessments presented in Ecuador's country action plans with disaggregated target population data (women, children, host and migrants) also determine HAC information on population. Targets were established in light of the RRMP and the ECO capacity. However, this disaggregation has not been consistent with reporting achievements. There are also questions on their variability over time.

In general, UNICEF's response to the Venezuelan crisis in the nutrition sector in Ecuador from 2019 to 2021 can be portrayed as ineffective. None of the targets were met and the 2020 activities after the pandemic were either cancelled or delayed. As happened with the health sector there is only one indicator with information for two years (2020 – 2021). Although activities had to be cancelled in 2020, and no achievements were recorded in 2020, there are reports indicating that between February and March the UNICEF IP HIAS, conducted nutritional screening, reaching over 250 under-fives and providing nutritional supplementation to 150 children. DyA screened children for malnutrition, anaemia and provided immunisations and nutritional supplements. DyA reached 276 children in the host community in Guayaquil as well as 15 migrant children.

Over 2021 the screenings for anaemia and acute malnutrition implemented by DyA reached 847 under-fives. Two hundred children were diagnosed with anaemia and received treatment, and five children were diagnosed with acute malnutrition and were referred to health services. These five children, however, are not registered in the table of results for the correspondent indicator.¹³⁰

The nutrition sector is one of the sectors that received less funding over the years 2019 and 2021. It is relevant to point out that no funds were registered (including carry-over) in 2020 and 2021 (until March).

Partners until 2020 were mainly the MoH, HIAS or ADRA but since 2021 one of the most important ones has been DyA.

Table 7. Summary of HAC nutrition indicators per year

Nutrition	2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved (up to March)
# boy and girl under-fives with acute malnutrition accessing nutrition treatment in UNICEF -supported facilities	3,600	86	No target/indicator			
# children aged 6 to 59 months with severe acute malnutrition admitted for treatment	No target/ indicator				20 (10 boys, 10 girls) 25% VMC, 75% COVID	
# of boys and girls (6-59 months) receiving nutrition supplementation to prevent undernutrition	14,000	7,182	No target/ indicator			
# of under- fives screened for malnutrition, including anaemia ¹³¹			1,560 (653 migrant, 907 host)		8,200 (3200 boys, 4,920 girls) 88% VMC, 12% COVID	1,516

¹³⁰ This could be done because the reported Ecuador results include UNICEF's response to needs related to the VMC, COVID 19, and violence and internal displacement in parts of the country.

¹³¹ 2021 indicator is # children aged 6 to 59 months screened for acute malnutrition.

Effectiveness: Health and Nutrition	
Strengths	Challenges
Capacity building, training health professionals	Limited funding and coverage
	COVID -19 effects and restrictions deeply affected these sectors

WASH

<i>Sector results formulated as in HAC 2019</i>
<i>WASH: Women and children on the move have access to sustainable safe drinking water and adequate sanitation</i>

Excluding cross-sectoral sectoral funding, in 2019 the sector with the highest funding requirements was WASH. In absolute terms requirements have been constant over the years. However, it has been an underfunded sector receiving only 28 per cent of funding solicited in 2019 13 per cent in 2020 and 19 per cent in 2021 (Q1). In 2020, notwithstanding the decrease in funds, both considered indicators surpassed the targeted population.¹³²

As pointed out above in the discussions on health and nutrition, WASH indicators also change over time, and progress towards results becomes challenging to assess. The table below presents all WASH indicators considered in the response. Highlighted in grey bring so out how one indicator changes over time. Some aspects of the response might not be considered throughout the years.

Most of the indicators considered over the period 2019-2021 reflect achievement of results, although there seems to be some discrepancies regarding the populations reached. For example, in the Sit Rep 2021 the number of reported beneficiaries of hygiene kits and showers and toilets in Huaquillas is 9,000 people, followed by the CBI in partnership with WFP which reached 6,713 people.

Table 8. Summary of HAC WASH indicators per year

WASH	2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved (up to March)
# children accessing appropriate WASH facilities and hygiene services in learning facilities and safe spaces	119,800 (17% migrant, 83% host)	12,241 (6101 girls, 6140 boys)			101,812 (25% VMC, 75% COVID)	0
# of people (men, women, boys and girls) with daily access to WASH services at service delivery points (health centres, shelters, migration points and transit points) as per agreed standards (according to context)	48,697 (migrant)	114,477 (43,262 women, 34,354 men, 8,329 girls, 4,363 boys)				
# of population provided with sanitation or hygiene kits or key hygiene items or with access to handwashing points with soap or similar items	70,000 (migrant)	6,385 (833 women, 1,023 men, 1,500 girls, 1,500 boys)				

¹³² Delivery of hygiene kits for Venezuelan families can be accessed through WASH CBI (see SitRep 2020), and delivery points are able to stretch the response without increasing the per capita cost.

No. of people accessing key hygiene items			27,892	35,954 (25% women, 19% men, 27% girls, 24% boys)		
# people reached with critical water, sanitation and hygiene supplies) and services					50,000	16,190 (8% children on the move)
No. of people with access to safe water at community level, including access to water through water filters			15,000	15,199 (28% women, 29% men, 20% girls, 22% boys)		
# people accessing a sufficient quantity of safe water for drinking, cooking and personal hygiene					210,000 (15% VMC, 85% COVID)	29,472 (no gender disaggregation provided)

Here we can also find indicators that do not capture the progress towards results. For instance, reaching more than 114,000 people with daily access to safe water only captures the population that has potential access to water systems (installed capacity) and not daily access, given that UNICEF provided support for maintenance of WASH services in 2019.¹³³ On the other hand, there seems to be an overestimation of the target population for some indicators due to the acute drop in number of migrants following the humanitarian visa requirement at border points. However, this could also be explained by a problem with the needs assessment or because of delays in implementation, as the visa was established in August that year.

In any case the positive results on the WASH response seem to be linked to strong partnerships with national and local governments¹³⁴, UN agencies and private partners. Also, UNICEF's role as focal point for COVID and people on the move responses has mainstreamed coordination and extended its response plan. It is important to point out some key response projects that have had a long-term effect. These include the wastewater treatment unit installed in Rumichaca and drilling of a borehole at the migration point in Huaquillas in 2019. In 2020, in collaboration with MinEduc, UNICEF conducted assessments to prioritise the improvement of toilet facilities, handwashing stations and hygiene conditions of schools in which significant numbers of Venezuelans were enrolled. This facilitated safe return to schools after the pandemic, as did a class in WASH in schools which was offered online to teachers.

From May 2020 onwards and given the COVID-19 restrictions an important part of the response to the VMC was provided through an agreement between UNICEF and WFP. Under it, UNICEF provided top-up support to buy hygiene supplies to augment the WFP voucher given to Venezuelan families to buy food. Additionally, UNICEF and WFP jointly strengthened the national social protection system for vulnerable national, migrant and refugee families.¹³⁵

Initially the IPs expected to provide WASH interventions were RET, Plan International and ADRA. Initially, no specific partner was identified for cash voucher activities

Effectiveness WASH	
Strengths	Challenges
Active coordination in relation to the WASH assessments	Specific VMC support from the government WASH sector

¹³³ Reason for which Ecuador CO was reluctant to use this global indicator. This issue was brought to LACRO and HQ.

¹³⁵ See UNICEF AND WFP'S JOINT ACTION PLAN

Hygiene promotion in response to COVID-19 using CBI	
WASH capacity building initiatives	

Education

Sector results formulated as in HAC 2019
<i>Children on the move are supported to access education opportunities while enhancing capacity of schools in host communities</i>

The funds received for education in 2019 surpassed requirements mainly through the category “other type of resources”. In subsequent funding periods most of the resources came from carry-over, moving from a 0 per cent funding gap in 2019 to a more than 94 per cent gap in 2020 and 95 per cent in 2021 (until March).

The key indicators used to monitor the response in the education sector are:

Table 9. Summary of HAC Education indicators per year

Education	2019		2020		2021 (up to March)	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# children accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	57,000 migrants (45,000 Formal, 12,000 Non formal)	36,711 (34,000 Formal, 2,711 Non formal)	10,000	13,319	1,124,445 (490,000 boys 510,000 girls) only 1.5% for VMC, 1% conflict, 97.5% COVID	949,089 (470,880 girls, 478,209 boys)
# children receiving individual learning materials					60,000 (29,400 boys, 30,600 girls) 90% COVID	
# under-fives benefiting from early childhood development activities			15,300	12,135		

From the three education indicators in the SitReps, one of them can be tracked for the full period covered by the evaluation. Access to individual learning materials and early childhood development are included in one of the three years within the timeframe of this evaluation.

Only the indicator on formal or non-formal education in 2020 achieved its target. Other indicators presented a high percentage of achievement throughout the years of interest. In 2019 access to formal education seemed more effective than non-formal education. UNICEF plugged gaps and assessed needs. This helped proper implementation of such interventions as;

- the Education Cannot Wait (ECW)¹³⁶ project implemented in six municipalities: Quito, Guayaquil, Esmeraldas; Ibarra; Manta; and Santo Domingo.¹³⁷
- technical assistance to increase the educational system’s capacity to include Venezuelan children and adolescents
- assistance with inclusion and xenophobia prevention programmes implemented by MinEduc and Arteducarte. Of the 94,534 child beneficiaries almost 50 per cent saw a positive change of attitudes, and 91 per cent indicated willingness to further participate in the programme.

In 2020 UNICEF effectively coordinated the development of a comprehensive approach to promote inclusive education, through interventions such as:

¹³⁶ <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/our-investments/where-we-work/ecuador>

¹³⁷ ECW is the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises.

- The identification and insertion of out-of-school children
- Provision of materials and methodologies
- Development of safe school environments
- Promotion of national policies to remove barriers to the right to education
- Responding to the pandemic with in-kind support and school supply kits and also via a YouTube-available distance education programme *Aprender la Tele* that reached approximately 35.6 per cent of migrant children.

As presented in the SitRep, in 2021 programme outreach to the almost 50 per cent of migrants outside of the education system continued to be paramount. Initiatives such as the ECW are expected to reach double the population from the previous year 2020, around 20,000 Venezuelan beneficiaries. However, given the pandemic the response was mostly focused on the safe return to schools. Close collaboration with MinEduc enabled, inter alia:

- high levels of adaptability by providing technological tools and connectivity (mobile phones and sim cards) to teachers
- providing psychosocial support for teachers and 300 Departamentos de Consejería Estudiantil (DECEs) – Student Counselling Departments – (DECE)
- development of radio and TV content for learning outcomes.

Other indicators included in the 2019 HPM and 2021 HAC revision are the following which show an overachievement of results in all 2019 cases and some achievements in 2020:

Table 10. HPM additional indicators related to Education

HPM indicator –Education	Target 2019	Achieved 2019	Target 2020	Achieved 2020
# boys and girls benefitting from psychosocial support to provide inclusive and sensitive education in schools with UNICEF standards	8,400	94,534		2,221 (VMC) 71,708 (host)
# teachers benefitting from psychosocial support training in order to provide inclusive and sensitive education in schools	2,000 (host)	11,068	6,000 (10% conflict, 90% COVID)	5,314
# of children and adolescents accessing life skills programmes disaggregated for girls and boys	50,000 (1,400 migrant, 48,600 host)	94,534	100,000 (5%VMC, 10% conflict, 85% COVID)	
Existence of education strategies and protocols to ensure the inclusion of migrant boys and girls in the national education system	1	1		

Effectiveness education	
Strengths	Challenges
Integration and xenophobic prevention projects with positive feedback from beneficiaries	National context which sometimes led to discrimination and xenophobia
Successful response adaptation under the COVID -19 pandemic.	Services and service-providers are overstretched
Successful implementing coordination during school closures	Limited coverage

Child Protection

<i>Sector results formulated as in HAC 2019</i>
<i>Children on the move are protected from violence, exploitation and abuse and are able to access services and exercise their rights.</i>

As indicated above, ECA has received constant funding support for CP. Reported activities can be assessed through time for at least two indicators of those considered in the SitReps. This can be seen in the table below. Twenty-five per cent of the indicators surpassed the target and 25 per cent more were close to doing so, particularly during 2019.

Table 11. Summary of HAC Child Protection indicators per year

Child Protection	2019		2020		2021 (Until March)	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# children, and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support ¹³⁸	14,400 migrants	12,241 at CFS at border	3,300	10,871 (5,525 girls, 5,346 boys)	8,000 (7000 VMC, 1000 COVID)	4,672
# unaccompanied and separated children accessing family-based care or a suitable alternative care	No indicator in SitRep but included in Action Plan: 144 migrants	No data in SitRep but 75 registered in HPM (30 girls, 45 boys)			100 (VMC)	15
# children, adolescent, and women received GBV response services, including risk mitigation interventions and prevention			700	1,000 women	2,500 (VMC)	-
# of people subject to immigration/asylum procedures have access to adequate information and legal assistance	7,500 migrant	6,877 (2,259 women, 1,399 men, 518 girls, 1,701 boys)				
# children identified as in need of specialised services who are referred to health, social welfare and justice services					5,100 (2,550 boys, 2,550 girls)	2,504

In 2019, tougher immigration policies and visa requirements made migrants increasingly consider irregular routes. Undocumented children have been hampered from being able to regularise their status, access basic social services or have their special protection needs addressed.

Children and caregivers accessing mental health and psychosocial support showed positive results, even during the first quarter of 2021, when almost half of the targeted population was reached.¹³⁹ Families received support in eight cities, including Tulcán and Manta.

As described in 2020 HAC, UNICEF assisted with the establishment of a national protocol for unaccompanied and separated children. However, even though UNICEF provided recreational activities with child-friendly spaces and psycho-emotional support to separated, unaccompanied or at-risk children in 2020, no information was gathered for the indicator on UASC until 2021. Both the target and achieved population seem rather low compared to

¹³⁸ Note that this indicator included the word “caregivers” in 2021 HAC indicator and the wording for 2019 HAC was “# of girls and boys provided with psychosocial support including access to CFSs with intersectoral programming interventions”

¹³⁹ Ibid.

previous years when 3,016 UASC were identified and referred to specialised protection services.¹⁴⁰ Other reports mention that from 2019 to 2020 more than 450 UASC accessed protection support by the authorities.¹⁴¹ These activities are coordinated with MIES and other partners such as COOPI an IP charged with implementation of around 25 per cent of the ECO CP budget.¹⁴² They provide legal support in Carchi, Manabí, Guayas, El Oro and Sucumbíos.

In addition to the range of its IPs listed above ECA partners with UN Agencies, GoE, local institution as well as the Ecuadorean Red Cross, the Red Eclesial Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Migración, (Red Clamor¹⁴³) and the Fundación Alas de Colibrí,¹⁴⁴ to name but a few.

In 2021 an interagency GBV response training was organised (UN Women, UNFPA, UNICEF, and the Human Rights Secretary) reaching 141 officials from comprehensive protection services, care centres, and shelters for GBV survivors in Esmeraldas and Manabí provinces. However, no children, adolescent, and women were registered to having received GBV response services in the first quarter of 2021 even though risk mitigation interventions and prevention are included activities.

Training sessions and safe family spaces are not prioritised in alternative routes which adolescents and UASC unable to meet restrictive immigration requirements are forced to resort to.

Other indicators included in HPM and Action plans for 2019 are presented below to complement UNICEF response to the VMC, it is worth mentioning that even though it was established having 5 family support hubs in 2019 was appropriate there is still only one official hub in 2021, so no changes in achievements are observed, furthermore given the COVID 19 restrictions remote support is being prioritised.

Table 12. HPM additional indicators related to Child Protection

HPM indicator – 2019 Child protection	Target	Achieved
# of families benefiting from programmes to prevent and address violence, abuse and exploitation (including GBV), are being mobilised and strengthened.	5,000	
# of public officers trained in CP for children and adolescents on the move to prevent and address violence, exploitation, abuse and trafficking.	100	126
# of EAls implemented	5	1 (EAI in Tulcán)
Prioritised municipalities implement special procedures (protocol) for children and adolescents on the move in need of protection	5	3

Effectiveness Child Protection	
Strengths	Challenges
Methodology development for safe integral support spaces reaching children, adolescents and UASC	Insufficient UASC facilities and family safe hubs to reach children in alternative routes.
Technical capacity building to institutional services for several forms of violence	

¹⁴⁰ See SitRep 2020

¹⁴¹ See UNICEF_Respuesta Movilidad Humana 2018-2020_VF

¹⁴² See REVISION-ECUADOR_2021_HAC_planning final REV 2.0

¹⁴³ <https://redclamor.org/>

¹⁴⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/AlasdeColibriFundacion/>

Social inclusion

<i>Sector results formulated as in HAC 2019</i>
<i>The most vulnerable children and their families settling in Ecuador benefit from social protection initiatives</i>

Table 13. Summary of HAC Social inclusion/Protection indicators per year

Social Inclusion/ Protection	2019		2020		2021 (Until March)	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved
# of families with boys and girls on the move who receive social protection services as part of a programme supported by UNICEF (including CBIs)	10,000 (7,000 transit, 3,000 settlement)	3,679 (1,554 transit, 2,135 settlement)				
No. of families benefiting from cash-transfers			2,735	6,674		
# households reached with humanitarian cash transfers across sectors					29,000 ¹⁴⁵ (15,225 men, 45,675 women, 20,300 boys, 20,300 girls)	2,634

In 2019, social protection services for settlement purposes (Venezuelans with the intention to reside in Ecuador) represented almost 60 per cent (2,135 families) of the total population reached. The SP intervention provided unconditional cash transfer, which is given only once, to enable target families to meet rental costs and buy domestic appliances and basic items. It proved to be more effective than interventions for families on the move, as they reached around 70 per cent of the targeted population (3,000 targeted families). 2020 activities include CBI and information factsheets on access to social services as well as advocacy and technical assistance to key line ministries. Key partners for the intervention include HIAS, WFP, and UNHCR and distribution is intended to reach Tulcán, Lago Agrio, Guayaquil, Quito, and Cuenca. In 2021, there was a change in the CBI strategy with a stronger emphasis on education and protection. The initiative moved from once-off payment to offering nine-month support to households on top of a once-off support for each child in the household attending school. In 2020, CBI improved migrants' living conditions, access to free health services and fostered school enrolment.¹⁴⁶ The programme follows a gender inclusive and equality approach where 85 per cent of the CBI is delivered to mostly women heads of households (the selection criteria prioritise single mothers, as well as pregnant, lactating mothers and UASC). This has resulted in empowering women to develop income generating activities, a better place to live or enhanced household protection. Results are not disaggregated to see the families that received the intervention only once. Up until March 2021 less than 19 per cent of the targeted families had been reached with CBI. The results presented are not sector specific either and therefore no clear effectiveness conclusions are drawn.

There's a conflictive figure in terms of CBI received: the HAC 2021 mentions that 25,000 families were reached in Ecuador for conditional WASH cash-based interventions, when the total number of families from 2019 to 2020 reached 10,353. The UNICEF Human Mobility Response 2018-2020 report stresses that the implementation of both education-related interventions and WASH support was key in terms of social inclusion achievements. However, the disaggregated data mentions that 2,094 families received transit CBI and 3,091 families received settlement CBI. Again these numbers don't match the previous ones in terms of achievements.

In 2020 an evaluation of the unconditional CBI took place in Ecuador.¹⁴⁷ The key results in terms of effectiveness

¹⁴⁵ Later, CO changed it to 14,000 households

¹⁴⁶ Turnbull M., Morinière L. and Serrano S. "EVALUACIÓN DE LA ESTRATEGIA DE UNICEF ECUADOR PARA LA TRANSFERENCIA DE EFECTIVO NO CONDICIONADO Respuesta a la emergencia migratoria de Venezuela" Integrated Risk Management Associates LLC; 2020.

<https://evaluationreports.unicef.org/GetDocument?fileID=15540>

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

can be divided by type of beneficiaries:

- For in-transit beneficiaries these interventions were a stress reliever, meaning that parents were able to ensure transportation, temporary housing and other basic needs while adjusting migration/destination plans.
- For the beneficiaries in the settling group the intervention allowed for a better housing option, meeting of basic needs and indirect betterment of access to health and education services.

Social inclusion	
Strengths	Challenges
Reported positive effects in school enrolment and retention	Registry and monitoring processes to avoid discrepancies and ensure better understanding of the response
Positive CBI results for transit and settling migrants	Funding remains a challenge. Following the August 2022 workshop with ECO, the evaluator was made aware that due to funding limitations, the CBI will not be extended. Until December 2022, there will be a systematization and evaluation of the CBI and UNCCS process and an exit strategy is planned to be implemented.

Communication for Development (C4D)

Sector results formulated as in HAC 2019
<i>Children and their families are consulted for the elaboration & monitoring of the project and have access to life saving information and protective practices on access and use of services. Adolescent migrants are engaged as peer educators. In order to reduce discrimination and xenophobia, the host community is made aware of the rights and needs of the migrant population</i>

This sector went from having 91 per cent of funds covered in 2019 (from carry-over), to having just ten per cent requirements (that had quadrupled) covered in 2020, to no funds at all in 2021 (up to March). In terms of monitoring indicators three out of four indicators can be assessed over at least two years of implementation, as can be seen in the table below.

Table 14. Summary of HAC C4D indicators per year

C4D	2019		2020		2021	
	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved	Target	Achieved (up to March)
# of affected population in targeted areas actively participating in accountability mechanisms supported by UNICEF	600	936 (58% women, 22% men, 11% girls, 9% boys)	2,000 ¹⁴⁸	1,979	1,000 (200 VCM, 800 COVID)	
# of people reached in affected areas with messages on life saving skills and protective practice and behaviours, as well as information on access and use	200,000	138,051 (57% women, 22% men, 10% girls, 11%)	5,000 ¹⁴⁹	43,395		

¹⁴⁸ The 2020 indicator reads: "No. of people in targeted areas actively participating in accountability mechanisms supported by UNICEF"

¹⁴⁹ The 2020 indicator reads: "No. of people reached with messages on life-saving skills and protective practices or information on uptake of services"

of services		boys)				
# people reached with messages on access to services					3,650,000 (1,277,500 men, 1,642,500 women, 365,000 boys, 365,000 girls, 200,000 VMC, 200,000 violence conflict, 3,250,000 COVID 19)	847,299
# of people in host communities participating in community activities on prevention of xenophobia, promotion of inter-cultural dialogue or inclusion	8,500 not included in SitRep 2019	18,321 (29% women, 18% men, 26% girls, 26% boys)	396,960	204,761	300,900 (240,900 VCM, 60,000 Conflict)	

Results gathered throughout the years are positive as most targets have been met or have nearly been. In a couple of cases targets are relatively low compared to results. This can indicate that targets were underestimated or results too general, so that beneficiaries are double counted. Such is the case of the indicator “No. of people reached with messages on life-saving skills and protective practices or information on uptake of services”, where results in 2020 are eight times higher than estimated target population. In 2019, UNICEF disseminated key messages on protective practices to prevent the migrant population from falling into trafficking networks, and also conducted xenophobia prevention interventions in host communities at schools. However, results are not explained in detail in the SitReps, even though funds for this activity represented more than 82 per cent of the total sector requirement for the 2019 appeal. This is not adequate from an accountability perspective.¹⁵⁰

According to the VMC HPM 2019 data, the achievement for this indicator “# of people in host communities participating in community activities on prevention of xenophobia, promotion of inter-cultural dialogue or inclusion in crisis affected areas” doubled the targeted population. The 2020 *Seamos Amigos* campaign to promote empathy and non-violence¹⁵¹ was aimed at children and their families who are already included in the formal education system. Other campaigns supported education activity or GBV prevention. The main partners in 2020 included Vicariato Apostólico de Esmeraldas (VAE), Plan Internacional, RETs, Grupo DADA (social media provider) and MC Comunicaciones (PR provider) in addition to private Special Service Agreements (SSAs).

In terms of AAP, focus groups were held at border points from 2019. Nine hundred and thirty-six people were asked to participate in the evaluation of activities and to give recommendations to strengthen and adjust UNICEF’s programmes. In 2021 direct sectoral feedback mechanisms are included and in 2020 the U-Report on The Move gave adolescent and young refugees and migrants information about their rights and available services, as well as scope to influence decision-making. Through private messages via Facebook, and WhatsApp, and via YouTube videos, this virtual system, in addition to offering information, generates surveys to learn about the issues of concern to this population.

In 2021, the UNICEF C4D strategy fostered social engagement through community leaders and through the creation of culturally appropriate communication materials. UNICEF Ecuador also supported the MoH in the planning stages of a national plan to promote COVID-19 vaccination.

¹⁵⁰ The Migration Action plan for 2019 (see Action_Plan_Migration_Outcome_Ecuador_2019_ENERO_2019) points out these interventions that should be carried out by Arteducarte in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca

¹⁵¹ <https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/seamos-amigos>

C4D	
Strengths	Challenges
Promoting AAP among children and adolescents using direct sectoral feedback mechanisms and U-Report on The Move,	Unclear targeting process, given fairly high target numbers

EQ8: To what extent did UNICEF's situation monitoring, monitoring of the quality of the service, real-time monitoring, accountability mechanisms at the migrant/host community/ and government service levels, lead to improved effectiveness of the response at CO/RO levels

- ECO was able, throughout the response, to collect information from the field and improve its programming
- Two main external factors have challenged monitoring activities for ECO: border closure, increase of entries through irregular border points COVID-19
- UNICEF presence and leadership in some sectors in the GTRM, at both national and sub-national level, allows the organisation to position itself strongly in order to collect data.
- Information and data management is mainstreamed in all PCA and reporting targets are clearly stated with all IPs.
- UNICEF participated in three joint needs assessments and a national household survey which allowed ECO to adapt their strategies.

ECO was able to collect data from the field using different mechanisms. UNICEF had been introducing the KOBO toolbox since the 2016 earthquake and continued using it for the migration response for monitoring and a deeper qualitative capture of the information. The tool is comprehensive and can be used online and offline. However, it is no longer in use since the implementation of GoE restrictions on entries in August 2019. In addition to KOBO, UNICEF implemented nutrition screenings, situation monitoring at Rumichaca and Lago Agrio and telephone surveys. UNICEF also leveraged its partnerships with HIAS and COOPI to collect data in the EAls (Tulcán and Manta), during household visits for the CBI (Tulcán) and on the route between Tulcán and Ibarra. This has allowed UNICEF to adapt its strategies, namely in communicating around GBV prevention, including a strong focus on xenophobia across sectors, and strengthening its psychosocial support.

As one KI stated, ECO has been a champion office in terms of preparedness and contingency planning. Documents show staff was able to assess the situation both at local and national level to address the changing needs of migrants and host communities. Data is collected to assess the needs, establish risk scenarios, elaborate a response strategy with coordination mechanisms and a budget allocated. ECO was able to assess the local and national needs through these plans and to develop different scenarios in order to respond more efficiently.

UNICEF has also been successful in implementing the U-Report on the Move platform, aimed at making the voices of adolescents and young refugees and migrants heard. Although an interesting initiative, that also promotes cross-national coordination, it seems the coverage is limited. In the last quarter of 2020 1,921 adolescent and young refugees and migrants had registered.¹⁵² This could also be explained by COVID-19, which caused both organisations and individuals to shift their priorities.

Social media has been key for developing these connections, support networks, and sharing essential information from how to access regularisation, employment, and health services, to the cultural nuances of specific destinations. María Corina from Venezuela¹⁵³

Due to COVID-19 lockdown, UNICEF and IPs were unable to directly reach families on the move and host communities. UNICEF partnered with WFP to monitor food security, nutrition and mental health among school-

¹⁵² UNICEF Ecuador Country Office Annual Report– 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/reports/country-regional-divisional-annual-reports-2020/Ecuador>

¹⁵³ <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/stories/UreportOnTheMoveYouthSummitEcuador>

aged children and their families.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, UNICEF, through its IPs, collects data through education and WASH activities.

Finally, inter-agency coordination for joint information gathering and data collection has been done through two main components: joint needs assessments and the World Bank national household survey on living conditions of Venezuelan migrant families and host communities. The result of this survey was documented in 2020 in the *Retos y Oportunidades de la Migración Venezolana*¹⁵⁵). This World Bank document enabled UNICEF to raise awareness on the plight of migrant, refugee and host community children and adolescents. The report charts:

- the evolution of migration over the years in Ecuador
- the scale of migration and its socioeconomic, health, education, social protection and gender impacts
- the integration and discrimination aspects of migration.

The report gives an overview of these aspects while also providing policy recommendations. Of particular interest to this case study is the table with recommendations organised by pillars and sectors, showing the prioritisation and timeline for each recommendation.

Figure 7. Recommendations by pillars and sectors (World Bank, 2020)¹⁵⁶

TABLA 2: PRIORIZACIÓN DE POLÍTICAS Y PROGRAMAS PARA LA INTEGRACIÓN DE CIUDADANOS VENEZOLANOS: PROPUESTAS DESDE EL ESTADO CENTRAL.					
Políticas y/o programas	Criterio de Priorización			Sector	Temporalidad
	Integración Económica	Inclusión social	Comunidad de acogida		
Pilar I: Fortalecer Oportunidades					
Regularizar el estatus migratorio	(+++)	(+++)		ML, E, PS	CP
Certificar capacidades y convalidar títulos de educación	(+++)	(+++)	(++)	ML, E	CP
Facilitar el acceso a información sobre derechos y obligaciones	(+++)	(+++)		ML, E, S, PS	CP
Pilar II: Construir y fortalecer el capital humano					
Monitorear la capacidad de la infraestructura de servicios sociales			(+++)	E, S y PS	MP
Continuar garantizando el acceso gratuito y sin discriminación a los servicios de salud esenciales		(+++)		S	MP a LP
Incentivar empresas que ejecuten normas y programas que promuevan conductas positivas hacia todas las mujeres	(+++)	(++)	(++)	ML	MP
Garantizar la inscripción al sistema educativo fuera del inicio del ciclo lectivo	(+++)	(+++)	(++)	E	
Mejorar los esfuerzos para disminuir la desnutrición crónica	(+++)	(+++)	(+++)	E, S y PS	MP a LP
Reducir la exposición al trabajo infantil	(+++)	(+++)	(++)	E y PS	MP
Reducir la tasa de embarazo adolescente		(+++)	(+++)	S	MP a LP
Robustecer la protección de las niñas y adolescentes en el ámbito escolar, transporte, y barrios para reducir la inseguridad		(+++)	(+)	E	CP a MP
Capacitar a los prestadores de servicios en educación y salud para asegurar la aplicación uniforme de la normativa que garantiza el acceso	(++)	(+)	(+++)	E, S	MP
Fortalecer la ruta de atención a víctimas de violencia de género		(+++)	(+++)	E, S, PS, ML	CP a MP
Pilar III: Levantar barreras para la integración					
Apoyar la convivencia y la prevención de la xenofobia	(++)	(+++)	(++)		CP a MP
Sensibilizar a la sociedad para que se respeten los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes		(++)	(++)		MP
Fomentar la integración cultural entre los ecuatorianos y los venezolanos		(++)	(++)		MP
Fortalecer la confianza entre la población y las instituciones del estado			(+++)		MP

Los niveles de importancia se definen como: (+++) muy importante, (++) importante, (+) modesto, (=) neutral, y (-) impacta negativamente o impacta de manera temporal.

La temporalidad se define como: (CP) corto plazo (1 año), (MP) mediano plazo (entre 2 y 3 años) y (LP) largo plazo (más de 3 años)

Sectores: ML= Mercado Laboral, E= Educación, S= Salud, PS= Protección Social.

¹⁵⁴ Migration flows in Latin America and the Caribbean - Situation Report – Jan-June 2020

¹⁵⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ecuador/retos-y-oportunidades-de-la-migraci-n-venezolana-en-ecuador>

¹⁵⁶ Retos y Oportunidades de la Migración Venezolana en Ecuador, World Bank, June 2020, p.8.

EQ9: To what extent have internal (within UNICEF, between countries and sectors) and external coordination mechanisms been effective in enhancing the quality of the overall response and advocacy on behalf of VNZ migrant children and their families?

- Having two parallel coordination mechanisms going at the same time – the GIFMM for the migration response and the OCHA Cluster system for COVID-19 has been very challenging for all agencies to sustain.
- Several examples of good external coordination mechanisms to collect data and manage information sharing.

KIs from various organisations indicated that the GTRM coordination mechanism was an additional burden for most agencies already familiar and comfortable with the OCHA-led humanitarian cluster system. While UNICEF and other agencies were starting to get used to the GTRM coordination mechanism, COVID hit. This led to the cluster system being activated, and therefore a duplication of coordination. After several months, a “back-to-back” strategy¹⁵⁷ emerged, in which meetings of the GTRM were followed by Cluster sectors’ meetings. Focal points for transversal working groups were designated to ensure more efficient, relevant and less energy-consuming coordination mechanisms. Despite the practicality of this solution, many KIs see this as doubling of the time and effort to coordinate internally and externally. This separation has also led to some frustration whereby migration matters cannot be discussed in the cluster meetings. As one KI stated, this does not allow for a fluid, coherent and long-term approach to durable solutions.

At regional level, the coordination is channelled through the R4V platform led by UNHCR/IOM. ECO is co-leading the WEN, health and nutrition, education and CP sectors of the Regional Platform. At national level, coordination was challenging, as UN agencies had regular programming coordination mechanisms through the cluster structures. UNICEF FO in Tulcán is also an active member of several sectors of the local GTRM and the EAI hosts all of its meetings. UNICEF is seen as a strong actor of the response, which has given them the clout to advocate on behalf of Venezuelan migrant children and their families at both local and national level.

As stated above, there have been a number of successes in terms of the coordination of UNICEF and other agencies, such as UNHCR, IO and the World Bank. There have been three joint needs assessments done through the GTRM, a World Bank household survey financially supported by UNICEF, among other UN Agencies (UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, UNDP, WFP), joint communication campaigns, joint information collection and information sharing for the protection sector, and, notably, a joint CBI bringing together UNICEF, UNHCR and WFP.

A final element on external coordination is that significant responsibilities and added tasks for coordination are currently given to relatively junior staff, among them United Nations Volunteers (UNVs). As stated by a KI, UNV do not have the authority to sign off on strategic decisions, having to refer decision-making to Quito, therefore delaying processes at local level. UNVs are in a strategic position. While their professionalism was praised by many in and outside UNICEF, their ability to respond to the changing needs is limited. This is something that UNICEF needs to take into account as it considers how to strengthen its external coordination role within the existing and dual humanitarian GTRM and OCHA platforms.

EQ10: To what extent did the activation of the UNICEF Level 2 emergency procedure in 2019 in Ecuador, and later L3 designation of COVID-19 emergency, allow for more effective scale-up of UNICEF’s support (from all levels) and response to address the critical needs and provide increased protection and services to Venezuelan migrant children and their families? To what extent did the L2 designation facilitate/change/simplify procedures at CO/RO/HQ levels?

- The L2 facilitated some aspects of the response but did not allow to significantly increase funding.

The L2 declaration allowed ECO to swiftly respond, particularly in the north in Tulcán and Lago Agrio. It facilitated ECO in three main aspects: i) staff hiring and reduced time to contract personnel, ii) swift approval on PCAs with IPs, and iii) procurement (health, WASH and education materials). ECO declined surge capacity. Several KIs stated UNICEF did not want to have two parallel teams, as was the case during the 2016 earthquake response. However, LACRO and ECO deployed consultants and short-term experts to accompany in-sector and migration expertise,

¹⁵⁷ Mecanismos de articulación del Equipo Humanitario de País (EHP) con el Grupo de Trabajo sobre Refugiados y Migrantes (GTRM) para la respuesta a la COVID-19 Quito, 08 de abril de 2020

resource mobilisation and monitoring of the VMC (third-party monitoring to monitor the CBI strategy and joint collaborations). As previously stated, the L2 did not ensure an increase in funding, neither regionally nor nationally (see EQ 6 and 7 for funding gaps).

The field teams were built through short-term contractual arrangements (short term consultants or Temporary Appointments) for most FO and communications staff. Evidence shows these arrangements are becoming a constraint to ensure continuity of the presence (Tulcán, Huaquillas FO closure) or adequate institutional leverage with government entities and the GTRM platform. This has been a HQ and LACRO directive which has directly impacted ECO.

Regarding the L3 activation, UNICEF was able to scale up its interventions to respond to the health crisis. As seen previously, UNICEF adapted its interventions to incorporate virtual assistance, support government officials and CSOs with distance training, do household visits through IPs, and support virtual learning. Many IPs noted that UNICEF was flexible in all administrative requirements to fast-track disbursement and technical support when needed.

In 2020/2021, BPRM provided \$US\$1.8 million to integrate the COVID-19 response with the Venezuelan migration crisis, as well as an additional \$US\$120,370 for WASH. This was used to deliver CBI to Venezuelan families to provide them with essential WASH supplies.¹⁵⁸ Additionally, ECO focused its interventions to maintain educational continuity through support to education radio programmes to reach migrant children and adolescents, and host communities. Finally, during COVID UNICEF was able to deliver cash transfers for migrant and refugee families to cover basic needs and installation.

7.3 Coverage

The evaluation of the coverage of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: ***To what extent were the most vulnerable Venezuelan refugee/migrant girls and boys and their families reached with needed protection, assistance and empowerment?*** This section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question.

EQ11: What were the internal and external factors that enabled or constrained UNICEF's ability to provide the most vulnerable Venezuelan migrants and refugee children, their families and host communities with protection and assistance according to their needs?

- UNICEF's previous experience working with line ministries facilitated dialogue and enhanced their possibility to influence high-level decisions, notably in supporting the development and implementation of the Procedure for Children and Adolescents and their Families in Contexts of Human Mobility
- Dedicated staff who were able to quickly adapt and respond to the needs of the most vulnerable through psychosocial support, en route assistance and alternative care solutions.
- Short term contractual arrangements, both for internal staff and PCA, were a constraint to ensure continuity of UNICEF's presence.
- Challenging political context which also led to heightened xenophobia.

As stated in the Colombia case study, "coverage is primarily affected by the ability to identify those in need, their location, profile and vulnerabilities, and the capacity of the agency to address these with practical measures that correspond with their rights and protection needs. Overall, it implies that the response, and its programmes, are designed to correspond with the scale of needs identified. This represents a major gap in the response. While UNICEF can list many different vulnerabilities, there are limited specific strategies in place to ensure the most vulnerable are reached with needed protection, assistance, and empowerment." For the Ecuador case study, the main vulnerabilities identified are those faced by UASC, pregnant and lactating women, and victims of GBV. Internally there are several factors that have enabled and constrained UNICEF's ability to provide protection and assistance to the most vulnerable. Due to its regular programme and earthquake response in 2016, UNICEF has managed to build strong relationship with several line ministries such as (MinEduc, MoH, MIES and MoG. This has allowed for quicker response and implementation of several activities and openness to dialogue from government officials in the VMC response. However, due to the humanitarian visa, there is a significant gap in information and

¹⁵⁸ COVID-19 Situation Report, Reporting Period 1-30 September 2020, UNICEF.

data management. Irregular entries and the difficult context to collect real time data constrain UNICEF to provide to the most vulnerable.

ECO felt particularly strained given the VMC response closely followed the 2016 earthquake response. Several KIs at both national and regional levels stated ECO was early to sound the alarm and request the VMC be incorporated in early regional strategic documents, yet LACRO was slow to react.

The great bulk of IP and government informants stated that UNICEF staff has enabled UNICEF and its partners to provide protection and assistance to the most vulnerable migrants and refugees. However, due to staff capacity (only two NUNV in Tulcán, one of whom is the driver), reach and presence is limited in this space. Informants stated that UNICEF's advocacy work with GADs and presence in the EAI is highly appreciated and relevant. All KIIs, including those from affected populations noted UNICEF staff's dedication to this space and their focus on attending to the needs of those in most need. The team would also like to acknowledge the NUNV's dedication to furthering UNICEF's presence in the humanitarian corridor between Tulcán and Ibarra and focusing on pressing needs (particularly education and unattended adolescents). Although regular entries have decreased since the August 2019 decree (see context section), overall entries have continued and there has also been an increase in pendular movements. However, overwhelmingly UNICEF staff have stated there is high level of fatigue among the team.

Limited funding and short-term agreements have been another factor. As mentioned, the response in Ecuador is under-funded. ECO has managed to reallocate funds from regular programming to respond to pressing needs. ECO also implements, with its partners such as Nación de Paz, Lunita Lunera, Danielle's Children Fund, RET and LAB XXI, innovative methodologies in education, protection, social inclusion. KI mentioned that although it is very encouraging that ECO is open to implementing new practices, these take more time to be approved and implemented.

Externally there are several factors that have enabled and constrained UNICEF's ability to provide protection and assistance to the most vulnerable:

Political context: Ecuador has been seen as an example in terms of inclusion and access to services due to its 2017 *Organic Law on Human Mobility*. It makes central and local governments jointly responsible for the inclusion and integration of people finding themselves in situations of human mobility, requiring them to mainstream the human mobility approach in the planning of public policies, plans, programmes, projects and services... The regulatory framework establishes a strong link between migration and development. Migration is mainstreamed in the National Development Plan 2017-. Notwithstanding this apparently conducive climate, the implementation of the humanitarian visa greatly affected assistance and protection to vulnerable migrants and refugees. Changes of power, at both national and sub-national levels during the years of the VMC have slowed down several processes as well as impacting the ability of UNICEF and other response agencies to collect data on migrants entering the country. As stated in the January to April 2021 SitRep, "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".¹⁵⁹

Linked to the point above, UNICEF, among other UN agencies, was crucial in assisting the Ecuadorian government to develop and implement its Procedure for Children and Adolescents and their Families in Contexts of Human Mobility in July 2019. This legal document was a turning point to ensure the protection of UASC, following a sentence issued by the Ecuadorian constitutional court. This sentencing followed a protection action filed by three brothers who had been refused entry to the country in the CEBAF in San Miguel de Sucumbíos. UNICEF has continued to support with technical expertise the government to ensure the protocol is implemented and updated.¹⁶⁰

Following a femicide of an Ecuadorian woman by a Venezuelan man in January 2019,¹⁶¹ acts of discrimination and xenophobia against Venezuelan nationals were on the rise. The international community and GoE had to shift campaigns, messaging and activities to have a greater focus on integration and work with host communities. Initially this was a constraint to implementation activities, but following feedback from host communities and vulnerable populations, UNICEF was able to adapt operations.

¹⁵⁹ UNICEF Situation Report, January-April 2021, UNICEF

¹⁶⁰ "Protocolo de atención integral para niñas, niños y adolescentes no nacionales en situación de movilidad humana", Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana, Ministerio de Gobierno, Ministerio de Inclusión Económica y Social de la República del Ecuador, Mayo 2022.

¹⁶¹ Retos y oportunidades de la migración venezolana en Ecuador, p. 135, Grupo Banco Mundial, junio 2020

COVID-19 impacted the response that had already been late in being implemented. Notably difficult was monitoring the flow of people entering and leaving Ecuador as UNICEF and IP staff were also in lockdown, absent from the field. In 2020, several activities had to be halted or adapted. Several activities, such as capacity-building, discrimination campaigns, psycho-social support, shifted to online platforms. However, internet coverage gaps in Ecuador are high. According to UNICEF's call for action,¹⁶² internet coverage is a mere 11 per cent in poor households versus 43 per cent in non-poor households.

EQ12: What factors have affected donors' perceptions and willingness to fund UNICEF's programmes and appeals in line with assessed needs/targets?

- The evaluator was not able to speak to donors, therefore the response is limited.
- Funding remains a challenge, as the VMC is severely underfunded.

The evaluator has not gathered enough information to respond to the question of donor perceptions fully and objectively. However, overall, it seems the R4V platform is not serving its purpose of joint advocacy. Several KI and the funding analysis (see Effectiveness section) show that VMC is severely underfunded everywhere. Some donors, such as Canada, have extended funding for two more years, showing a willingness to support and invest in the response of ECO.

Generally, funding remains a challenge to implement and maintain activities overtime. For example, this has been stated by several KIs as a challenge for wider and extended coverage of the CBI programme. Additionally, given that the initial cohort of Venezuelans was mainly in transit in Ecuador, this may affect donor willingness to invest in the country.

7.4 Coherence and coordination

The evaluation of the coherence and coordination of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: ***What are the main factors that have led to internal and external coherence and coordination of UNICEF's response or lack thereof?*** This section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question.

EQ13: What factors led to or detracted from UNICEF's ability to balance its response to local needs and national priorities?

- A changing national context and high impact of COVID-19 made it difficult to align with national priorities.
- FOs in different areas led to UNICEF's capacity to respond to local needs coherently
- However, due data collection gaps UNICEF is unable to fully respond to the local needs, as UN agencies do not have a clear picture of the situation at field level.

UNICEF has struggled to shift gears from regular programming to emergency response ECO was not prepared for. In addition, the pandemic severely hit Ecuador and UNICEF's response to the Venezuelan migration outflow. Responding to local needs has also been complicated by the changing national context. One of the key lessons learned from UNICEF's response to the 2016 earthquake was to invest in personnel with knowledge of emergency response. Document review and KIs show that staff did not have emergency or migration training.

As in Colombia, a key factor behind UNICEF's ability to balance its response to local needs and national priorities has been the process of establishment of FOs in areas most affected by the VMC. This has allowed ECA to have direct engagement with local civil society and GADs and to be more aware of the gaps and bottlenecks that impede local realisation of national level policies, which, as noted, are generally favourable to the rights and inclusion of Venezuelan migrant children and their families.

Data collection challenges, particularly the increase in the frequency of irregular border crossings have further impeded comprehensive responses to local needs. UNICEF FO in Tulcán for example has stated that the EAI is a first step to balance its response to local needs. However, since irregular entries are rising, UNICEF has had to shift its response. In coordination with COOPI, they are responding to the needs of migrants in transit from Tulcán to Ibarra.

¹⁶² UNICEF call to action – indigenous communities and the right to education in times of COVID-19, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/documents/unicef-call-to-action-indigenous-communities-and-right-education-in-times-of-covid19>

EQ14: What is UNICEF's added value in the Venezuela Outflow response?

- Close collaboration with government officials, allowing advocacy for migrant children and their families at national and local level.
- Partnerships with local organisations that have facilitated the search or innovative solutions.

Overwhelmingly KIs reported that UNICEF's added value is its capacity to closely work with government officials at both national and regional levels. Work with the GAD in Tulcán, and more recently in Manta, shows the advocacy work done by UNICEF leads to concrete results. In Tulcán, the municipality, concerned by influx into the city, requested the international community should deliver aid outside of the city and relocate to the Panamericana international highway.¹⁶³ UNICEF was able to advocate for the opening of the EAI, with the GAD's support. FOs, particularly in Tulcán, have few resources, limiting advocacy and activities in other sectors such as education. The ability to work closely with governments allows UNICEF to potentially sustain activities and strengthen national capacities. This should be monitored for example in the case of the EAI in Tulcán where the GAD is set to take over the EAI.

ECO has partnered with national, sub-national and local organisations to implement alternative care structures for unaccompanied children and adolescents. Partnerships with LAB XXI in Tulcán and with DCF in Quito may be small scale but show s ECO thinks outside the box and is trying to bring in local capacity and innovative solutions to respond to a long-term crisis.

EQ15: To what extent were meaningful partnerships and/or coordination mechanisms established with other key actors (e.g., government at national and local levels, civil society, NGOs, academia, private sector, other UN agencies etc.), to assist, include and empower the most vulnerable Venezuelan children and their families?

- Meaningful partnership with government institutions notably led to develop the Procedure for Assisting Unaccompanied or Separated Children and Adolescents and their Families in Human Mobility
- ECO has been a champion at partnering with UN agencies such as UNHCR and WFP on CBI.
- ECO has been able to leverage partnerships to build joint communications campaigns to combat xenophobia and discrimination,

UNICEF works closely with line ministries and GADS. ECA promoted, together with UNHCR and IOM, the development and implementation of the Procedure for Assisting Unaccompanied or Separated Children and Adolescents and their Families in Human Mobility. It was signed by the Ministry of the Interior (now the Ministry of Government), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, and the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, on 5 November 2018. The Procedure was streamlined at sub-national level and capacity-building was delivered to administer procedures. UNICEF, in addition, joined legal action which protected three Venezuelan children and adolescents, denied entry to Ecuador.¹⁶⁴

UNICEF, through its IP ADRA, collaborates closely with the Ministry of Public Health to monitor the nutritional status of children from six to 59 months and deliver nutritional supplements. UNICEF has also worked closely with MinEduc on activities for educational inclusion, prevention of xenophobia and violence in schools through the *Seamos Amigos* campaign to promote empathy and non-violence¹⁶⁵ as well as, through a play-focused methodology used by Nación de Paz called *Pazita se va de Ruta*. These activities have sought to include and work with migrant populations and host communities to enhance social cohesion and prevent discrimination and xenophobia. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ECO supported teachers and caregivers with distance learning methodologies and socio-emotional assistance. Additionally, as already noted, tablets and sim cards allowed families and students to seek academic and emotional support.

UNICEF has been able to leverage local organisations in different regions. In Tulcán, UNICEF leveraged its strong relationship with the IP HIAS to collect information from households. Several IPs have incorporated prevention of violence, GBV, PSEA and gender components in their field presence. Manta's EAI focuses on integration and

¹⁶³ [COE de Tulcán exhorta a organizaciones de asistencia social a atender a los migrantes en la vía Panamericana | Ecuador | Noticias | El Universo](#)

¹⁶⁴ [e2NhnBldGE6J3RyYW1pdGUnLCB1dWlkOic5YzE5ZDNmMS04Y2E4LTRlMmUtOTIxY0YmJhM2I2MGVmOGYucGRmJ30= \(corteconstitucional.gob.ec\)](#)

¹⁶⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/ecuador/seamos-amigos>

inclusion activities which empower host communities and vulnerable Venezuelan children and their families. When the evaluator visited, UNICEF had organized several vocational trainings, amongst them was a workshop for adolescent girls with an aesthetician. Workshops are oriented towards capacity-building and training on professional capacities. The EAI in Tulcán managed to unite several key organisations, CSO and NGOs to respond to the pressing needs of migrants, refugees and host communities.

An example of empowering activities is the Recicentro initiative, a recycling programme launched in January 2022 in the North with the Tulcán municipality, UNHCR, IOM and Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo. KIs involved in the initiative all mentioned the pride felt when informal recyclers were provided with uniforms, thus giving legitimacy to their livelihoods.¹⁶⁶

A further good practice is that Ecuador has been one of seven pilot countries in the UN's Common Cash Statement (UNCCS) initiative. Launched in 2018 by UNICEF, OCHA, UNHCR and WFP, it has fostered collaboration on cash and voucher assistance.¹⁶⁷ In Ecuador this has allowed for meaningful and coherent coordination on CBI, a long-term solution to needs, particularly on housing, education and food.

Q16: How coherent were coordination mechanisms at the CO and Regional level?

- Coordination was not seen as coherent due to a duplication of coordination mechanisms between the GTRM and cluster system (OCHA-led coordination)
- There is good coordination with IPs, especially at local level, where UNICEF has worked with local institutions to bolster innovative solutions.

At regional level, coordination is channelled through the R4V platform led by UNHCR and IOM. ECO is co-leading the El Grupo de Trabajo de WAN (WASH, Alojamiento, NFI1 y Transporte Humanitario) – GT WANWEN¹⁶⁸ and the Health & Nutrition, Education and Child Protection sectors of the Regional Platform. LACRO has facilitated technical support C4D, WASH, gender, education and M&E. Coordination between LACRO and ECO was also fruitful in terms of proposal preparations. UNICEF FO in Tulcán is also an active member of several sectors of the local GTRM and the EAI hosts all of its meetings. At national level as noted above, coordination has been challenging as UN agencies had at times overlapping cluster coordination mechanisms. Having back-to-back cluster and R4V meetings has shown coordination challenges can be overcome. UN agencies and IPs have been working together to present information jointly, as done by the CP sub-group.¹⁶⁹ ECO and LACRO coordination will be further developed in the synthesis report.

Informants have raised concerns about the limited staff capacity and advocacy at higher level. Informants mentioned that UNICEF's absence in Huaquillas has been challenging to ensure mid- and long-term activities. KIs clearly stated that UNICEF's close collaboration and coordination with government institutions is a major added value, allowing UNICEF to push for the recognition of children's and adolescents' rights (see EQ 15 for more details).

Coordination mechanisms between UNICEF and IP are coherent with the context, capacities and needs of migrants and refugees. These have allowed for flexible implementation of activities and funding. IP informants have all seen UNICEF's technical, human and operational capacities as an added value to an effective and fluid coordination process.

Several KIs stated that coordination with UN agencies has sometimes proven to be a challenge. Competing mandates and funding, different strategic focuses, tension between personalities and differentiated geographic presence have been stated as being the source of some tension. However, UNICEF has managed to continue to advocate at national and sub-national level for the rights of children.

The great majority of KIs at national and local levels stated that even though LACRO was present in several instances, the lack of a formal regional strategy impacted cross-national communication. Documents and interviews show that some sectors were able to exchange best practices, such as WASH and C4D, but others were not able to build a structured exchange. The evaluator found several cases of good practices that could and should

¹⁶⁶ [Reciclaje e inclusión para que la infancia viva en un ambiente más sano y seguro | UNICEF Ecuador](#)

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.unhcr.org/5f5223f44.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ This Working Group leads on issues around WASH, shelter and non-food items. <https://www.r4v.info/es/ecuador/wan>

¹⁶⁹ [GTRM Ecuador: Boletín Protección a la Infancia - Junio - Agosto 2021 | R4V](#)

be discussed at regional level, such as CBI experience with EAls. Staff in different sectors stated that is very difficult, almost impossible, to have a route-based approach if there is no regional dialogue. As noted, exchange between ECO and the Venezuela CO has been limited. In terms of information management, provisional programming and setting up interventions, ECO staff indicated that not having specific information on vulnerabilities from the moment migrants leave Venezuela has had a negative impact on ECO adaptation to changing needs.

7.5 Efficiency

To what extent has UNICEF delivered results with efficiency and timeliness? The evaluation of the efficiency of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: **To what extent has UNICEF delivered results with efficiency and timeliness?** This section will address the different specific EQs under this overarching question.

EQ17: Were UNICEF strategies and programmatic interventions designed taking into account the activities, capacities and efficiencies of other UN agencies, local governments, central governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, private sector?

EQ18: When did coordination with national Governments, UN agencies and other major respondents avoid overlaps and bridge gaps? If any, what are the reasons for the gaps and what is needed to close them?

- UNICEF was able to leverage its presence in Ecuador, and previous relationships with government institutions and IPs, to avoid overlap. UNICEF is seen as being flexible in funding and programme extensions, making IP work with migrant children and their families more efficient.
- At national level, UNICEF has worked on capacity building and technical support to ministries to respond to major gaps, taking into account the capacities and efficiencies of local and central governments.
- UNICEF worked in collaboration with organisations to bridge the information gap, mainly at border crossings. However, information management and monitoring of population remains a major gap mainly due to irregular cross-border movements.

As mentioned above, UNICEF established agreements and coordination with local governments and civil society organisations, involving them in the working groups early on. UNICEF also engaged CSOs and NGOs as IPs, such as ADRA, LAB XXI, World Vision, FULULU, DyA, Fundación Idea Dignidad and Nación de Paz.

However, the team found no evidence of any NGO/local partner mapping which would have ensured broader coverage and avoided duplication.¹⁷⁰ Several KIs mentioned some difficulties working with one IP whose PCA was not renewed. Other KIs note that UNICEF has done a good job at mobilising local actors. In Tulcán, UNICEF successfully developed PCA with HIAS and LAB XXI with whom they are implementing household visits, adolescent participatory mechanisms, and other activities. In Quito, UNICEF partnered with DCF to implement alternative care mechanisms. DCF has been operational in Ecuador for several years and is familiar with the political and administrative context.

All IP informants mentioned UNICEF's openness to share materials, build local capacity and share knowledge and best practices. However, the team noted these remain informal and sector-specific exercises. Several informants reported that UNICEF and IPs would benefit from increasing and upstreaming feedback from local actors and migrant and host communities. A majority of IP informants also mentioned UNICEF's flexibility regarding funding structures and programme extensions. However, as noted previously, lack of a strong regional and global advocacy impacted funding.¹⁷¹ Several KIs stated the R4V platform was not seen as a strong advocacy platform.

UNICEF has managed to build strong relationship with several line ministries (particularly MinEduc, MoH, MIES and MoG). The most notable result of this has been to enable UNICEF to advocate for children, adolescents and their families through the Procedure for Assisting Unaccompanied or Separated Children and Adolescents and their Families in Human Mobility, launched in November 2018. This joint effort between ECA, Ecuador, UNHCR and IOM ensured the development and adoption of a comprehensive protection. UNICEF focused on designing and implementing a plan to strengthen interviewing teams and other government and private entities carrying out the special procedure. This aimed to build capacity and ownership at national and local level, while avoiding both overlap and re-victimisation of interviewees. This was aligned with Ecuador's priorities in September 2018, which

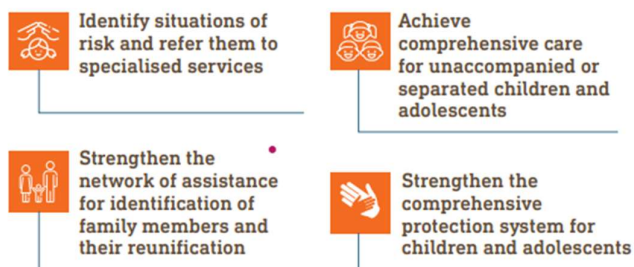
¹⁷⁰ This was also stated by two KIs as a pressing need.

¹⁷¹ Advocacy for the Venezuelan crisis is an issue that came up in several interviews, at regional, national and sub-national level. This is not only an issue pertaining to UNICEF but more globally to the humanitarian system, where the Venezuelan crisis is not at the forefront of regional and global discussions.

focused on establishing alternative procedures to care for children and adolescents who do not have the required documentation, without violating their rights to human mobility. However, when the government established the humanitarian visa, which did not include exceptions for children and adolescents, this halted progress on the procedure. UNICEF has continued advocacy efforts to ensure regularisation is maintained for migrants who have entered the country prior to 2019 and who fulfill the requirements.¹⁷²

Figure 8. Added value of the Protection Protocol

This protocol also serves to:



UNICEF has also been a strong advocate for the right to access services¹⁷³ such as health and education. At the local level, UNICEF Ecuador expanded a programme of cooperation with the Nación de Paz Foundation to reach students and teachers with messages for prevention of xenophobia and violence, through the play focused Pazita se va de Ruta methodology.

UNICEF has included capacity-building and training exercises in *Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action*.¹⁷⁴ In addition, through COOPI, UNICEF is working with the boards at the cantonal level to refer cases and services for unaccompanied adolescents who are at risk.

A major gap is information management and monitoring of population. Although there is information from the GTRM or UNICEF, there is a need for better and more detailed information from official sources. Since 2019 this has been extremely difficult as the vast majority of migrants have entered Ecuador without authorisation. To manage this gap, UNICEF collaborates with IOM for its DTM, participates in Joint Needs Assessments through the R4V platform, and in the northern border, through COOPI UNICEF has started implementing activities along the humanitarian route to collect data while delivering assistance. Another good practice in Ecuador, that should be replicated, has been the study led by the World Bank and financed by UNICEF, among other UN Agencies (UNHCR, IOM, UNFPA, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and WFP), on the challenges and opportunities of Venezuelan migration in Ecuador.¹⁷⁵ This report defined the evolution of migration in Ecuador, its needs and profiles, and set recommendations to bridge gaps identified.

At local level, work has been carried out in coordination and collaboration with the GAD. The team visited the EAI in both Manta and Tulcán, cities with different migration profiles in which UNICEF has been able to adapt its programming.¹⁷⁶ UNICEF has signed cooperation agreements with the GADs, detailing the responsibility of local governments to provide continuity to the proposed projects.

7.6 Connectedness

The evaluation of the connectedness of UNICEF's response is guided by the following overarching question: **To what extent is UNICEF Colombia's response to the Venezuelan Outflow linked to other key institutional planning and policy processes?** The two EQs are answered together because they are related.

¹⁷² The initial process was further strengthened to support government officials with technical assistance to respond to the needs of migrants, particularly during COVID-19.

¹⁷⁴ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/minimum-standards-child-protection-humanitarian-action-2019-edition-enar>

¹⁷⁵ Retos y Oportunidades de la migración venezolana en Ecuador, Grupo Mundial, 2020

¹⁷⁶ In Tulcán activities are more geared towards direct assistance, with health, legal, psycho-social support, as well as some activities focusing on inclusion. Manta, due to the profile of populations, is more focused on capacity-building, legal assistance, access to services.

Q19: How is the new country programme of UNICEF Ecuador adjusted to the new context and needs of the Venezuela migrant and refugee populations effectively being addressed by linking the emergency response to longer-term development goals in each country? What are the difficulties, including opportunity costs, if any, encountered internally and externally (i.e., UNICEF internal structure and processes, donor requirements)?

Q20: To what extent has UNICEF adopted a whole-of-migration cycle approach which provides longer-term solutions for migrants, refugees and returnees including preparedness for new influxes, support to access social services in host countries as well as when returning and reintegrating in their home countries (the nexus)?

UNICEF Ecuador is currently drafting the new CPD, an opportunity to mainstream migration and advocate strongly for migrant children and their families, as well as host communities. UNICEF has been a strong advocate of including local organisations to empower and build capacity to ensure sustainability.

As stated in the Final Project Report for Canada,

having humanitarian assistance combined with sustained integration processes is critical for vulnerable adolescents to develop life plans with a clear notion of what prevention of gender-based violence implies and to become multiplier agents in their communities. The training of more than 1,000 civil servants, the dissemination of preventive information, and the development of coordination and accompaniment mechanisms for girls and boys on the move have greatly enhanced the project's results to guarantee the human rights of children on the move.

Migration was mentioned in the current CPD and “migration dynamics”¹⁷⁷ was stated as one of the reasons for regional prioritisations.¹⁷⁸ The new CPD presents an opportunity to mainstream migration through its objectives and strategies. Several KI stated that migration should and will be an integral component in the new CPD.

The response to the Venezuela’s migrant outflow has demonstrated the need for ECO capacity to deal with emergencies, and the need for experienced staff and management capacity, as well as strong advocacy from local and national levels. As noted, ECO has implemented several activities linking the emergency response to longer-term development goals – including UNCCS promotion, EAls in Manta and Tulcán and capacity-building in various ministries. UNICEF is also working closely with GADs to build ownership and local capacity. UNICEF has been a strong advocate of including local organisations to sustainably empower and build their capacity. The short-term nature of the response and the funding associated is likely to affect sustainability of the actions carried out. A phase-out or hand over strategy with longer support will be necessary.

UNICEF established programmatic interventions in the framework of the R4V platform and GoE strategies. The response has always been, and largely continues to be, treated as an emergency situation by all involved, including the GoE and the R4V platform. This has affected any medium to long term strategic approach by UNICEF and all agencies and affected the mobilisation of resources as a short-term requirement.

In reference to EQ20, the ET Found little to no information regarding returnees. In general, ECO was able to provide longer-term solutions for migrants, particularly looking at settlement and transition. ECO’s FOs have adapted interventions to the type of migration present. For example, Tulcán focused its interventions mainly on preparing for new influxes, transit populations. However, with the migrant population transitioning to settlement, the FO has adapted its interventions in the EAI to an integration logic with psychosocial support, working with host communities and building capacity. In Manta on the other hand, UNICEF ECO and FO was able to adapt the EAI structure to focus almost exclusively on integration. This is to be replicated in Esmeraldas where an EAI is due to open by the end of 2022.

The evaluator noted an action described in the Final Project Report for Canada. MIES has developed a protocol¹⁷⁹ that contemplates identification actions and specialised interviews with street teams in transit areas or areas where adolescent girls and LGBTIQ+ adolescents live. Implementing work on the street is a novel strategy that is

¹⁷⁷ Country Programme Document, UNICEF, 2018

¹⁷⁸ The CPD mentions “a fluctuating population of migrants, refugees and displaced people on the northern border” without mentioning specifically Venezuelan population as a key concern.

¹⁷⁹ The protocol refers to the protocols and guidelines for the identification and protection of unaccompanied or separated adolescent girls and LGBTIQ+ adolescents on the move.

currently being reviewed and accompanied with technical support by the UNICEF Ecuador protection team”¹⁸⁰ This is a good example of adapting to the needs of populations. As stated in the final Canada project report, “half of the girls and adolescents in the context of human mobility surveyed by Plan International in 2021 in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, identify the streets as unsafe places.” In Ecuador, the political will towards the migrant population has diminished in recent years, making it urgent and necessary to strengthen the mechanisms for identifying unaccompanied or separated adolescent girls and LGBTIQ+ adolescents on the move in transit places and destination communities. This could be a promising initiative to be monitored in the future.

UNICEF has chosen the approach of reinforcing local capacities as the core of the response. Potentially this offers a starting point for a medium-term support, as the challenges will remain. Improving CP and education or health systems will benefit host communities as well as migrants. UNICEF has substantially focused its efforts on improving structures and capacities. As stated in the mobility law, access to services is a right to all people, regardless of nationality. However, both the VMC and COVID-19 have put a strain on national and sub-national structures and service-providers. UNICEF has supported at both levels to improve access to health, WASH, education and social protection, while also working towards reducing discrimination and xenophobia. Related to the Special Procedure, UNICEF initiated a series of capacity-building sessions with partners, migration officials and government partners at all three border points of Rumichaca, San Miguel and Huaquillas. These addressed the technical gaps slowing down the special procedure for children and separated or unaccompanied adolescents. UNICEF was able to build local and national capacity through joint standard operating procedures used to coordinate the management and referral of cases between all key actors.

ECO addresses immediate needs while also working towards long-term ones. Activities, such as WASH in schools, capacity-building, distribution of tablets and health materials, allow Ecuador to be better prepared and improve its response to the VMC and to migration as a whole. However, these are sometimes limited due to staff capacity, funding, political willingness and changing context. The ET was not made aware of an integrated emergency/development strategy or planning process.

As mentioned above, a lack of cross-border coordination and a clear regional strategy, has limited the adoption of a whole-of-migration approach. Several IP and UNICEF KIs mentioned the short-term nature of arrangements makes it difficult to implement a long-term strategy. Often activities have short-term and limited reach and effects.

7.7 Cross-cutting: gender, equity and accountability

The evaluation examines some cross-cutting dimensions of UNICEF’s response and is guided by the following question: To what extent has UNICEF’s response to the Venezuelan Outflow taken a gender, equity, conflict sensitive and accountability approach at all levels?

EQ21: To what extent has UNICEF Ecuador addressed cross-cutting issues, especially:

- ***Accountability to affected populations (AAP)***
 - ***Gender, disability and social inclusion***
 - ***Prior, new, and emerging gender inequities and protection issues for women and children (e.g., child marriage/premature unions)***
 - ***Gender based violence (GBV)***
- AAP is mainstreamed throughout all agreements with IPs. However, challenges remain and are notorious in areas where irregular migrants gather, where lack of beneficiary engagement, poor information, and absence of standards affect the AAP framework.
 - ECO has been working to innovate in social inclusion, particularly being a pilot country for the UNCCS and implementing CBI in coordination with other UN agencies.
 - Ecuador does not have a gender specialist. However, ECO has focused much of its interventions on addressing key gender gaps and inequalities such as GBV, access to education, women’s empowerment through capacity building and training and working with women-led households.

¹⁸⁰ Debla López, “Adolescent girls and LGBTIQ+ adolescents unaccompanied or separated: An invisible migration?”, UNICEF, May 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/media/34616/file/an-invisible-migration.pdf>

- Disabilities are accounted for in all monitoring processes by UNICEF and partners, but the evaluation has identified weaknesses in the overall response, such as defining clearer differentiation of disabilities, and adapting spaces, such as the EAls, to persons with disabilities.

This report has covered cross-cutting issues throughout the various EQs.

AAP

We have seen that AAP is mainstreamed throughout all agreements with IPs. ECO has been proactive in developing materials and capacity-building to ensure AAP is implemented. However, challenges remain in areas where irregular migrants gather, where there is lack of beneficiary engagement and poor information. EAls, route assistance and household visits provide good contexts to implement AAP if clear information is provided, participation promoted, and feedback mechanisms are strengthened and diversified. Often AAP is confined to life-saving messages (such as protection messages). Among initiatives to be highlighted are U-Report on the Move, education FGDs, household visits with IPs (mainly in Tulcán and Manta), and workshops with teachers and MinEduc staff. Another good practice has been communication team adaptation to feedback received from adolescents in schools. There was early response to the rise in xenophobia, targeting students and teachers. UNICEF responded to consultancy advice on messaging. Noting how messaging was perversely making migrant students stand out, rather than helping with their integration, UNICEF worked with MinEduc on the *Seamos Amigos* campaign.

There is little to no evidence that the feedback loop is closed throughout activities implemented. Specifically, actions or responses seem to rarely be communicated to populations. AAP is limited to the communications sector. Several KIs stated AAP should be mainstreamed across all sectors and be embedded in strategic documents.

Social inclusion

A good practice has been piloting UNCCS and, as described above, pragmatically shifting to longer-term household support with a stronger emphasis on education, protection and gender equality. A major challenge is finding funding to meet the increasing needs amongst migrant and refugee vulnerable families. This should be a focus area for UNICEF and the international community.

The R4V Gender-Based Violence Working Group has pointed out that GBV cases are underreported due to the irregular situation of migrant women and girls, and the fears associated with reporting. There has been lack of data disaggregated by sex, age, place of origin or immigration status. Although gender equality, GBV and PSEA are core aspects of the response, ECO does not have a gender specialist. ECO was able to bridge this gap by regularly requesting support from the LACRO GBV specialist, resulting in GBV awareness and prevention training for frontline workers, including civil servants. Two GBV learning tools were designed and rolled out. As shown throughout the report, Ecuador is working towards building an adapted response to respond to the needs of migrants and host communities in terms of gender equality, GBV and PSEA. ECO is working to bridge the gender gaps through its interventions, focusing on empowerment activities, capacity-building, communication on masculinities, among others. UNICEF should monitor the state of activities related to SGBV risk prevention in the EAls, health facilities, the offices of IPs and schools. The capacity of IPs to identify SGBV cases and refer them needs to be enhanced.

Disabilities are accounted for in all monitoring processes by UNICEF and partners, but the evaluation has identified weaknesses in the overall response. An additional challenge for UNICEF and partners is to define a clearer differentiation of disabilities. Mental health disabilities are not properly singled out and addressed. UNICEF has invested in psycho-social support with several partners. While disability is cross cutting in programmatic documents there are gaps in practice.

8. Good practices

Some relevant lessons can be extracted from UNICEF ECO's response the VMC

- **EAI:** The EAI in Tulcán has shown how inter-agency coordination exercise has enabled responses to shifting priorities and created a space for different agencies to work together. As UNICEF further rolls out the EAI model monitoring will be of prime importance.
- **Staff dedication:** Informants, as noted, overwhelmingly praise staff's availability, transparency, and openness. UNICEF has been able to leverage its existing presence and relationships linked to regular

programming to build programmes and activities for the VMC.

- **ECO experience piloting UNCCS** has shown the possibility of working together to extend cash-based transfers and respond to the needs of vulnerable populations. A more detailed analysis can be found in the CBI evaluation and assessment.¹⁸¹
- **On social inclusion:** ECA has shown how CBI, if sufficiently funded, can respond to housing, employment, education, health and food needs and can be empowering.
- **The Special Procedure** described above has been a duplicable model of technical support and coordination with government institutions.

9. Conclusions

The evaluation has responded to the EQs based on the evidence obtained in the field, from informants and affected population and from the documents and data available. We propose a number of conclusions.

Appropriateness

Overall UNICEF ECO developed and adapted several response strategies, objectives and implementations modalities to the different contexts and populations entering Ecuador. The UNICEF team also managed to work with challenging government restrictions. However, staffing capacity and short-term contracts within UNICEF and with IPs have limited capacity to appropriately respond to the needs of migrant and host communities.

While the VMC was an unexpected humanitarian situation before 2016, ECO's lack of emergency capacity and tools affected the response from the outset. This was corrected over time, and ECO became a champion in preparedness and contingency planning. The response to the VMC has been always articulated as short-term. This continues to impact UNICEF's capacity to transition to the medium to long term. Additionally, there seems to have been limited cross-border information sharing.

In collaboration with other partners, UNICEF has gathered information about the migrant population yet learning about their needs remains a challenge in terms of closing the feedback loop and incorporating feedback into programming. UNICEF is implementing actions and efforts to address information gaps around GBV, PSEA and human trafficking but these need to be strengthened. While UNICEF and partners are providing migrants with useful information and putting in place feedback mechanisms through IPs, AAP remains a weakness. It is not simply a question of providing complaint meetings or convening meeting to solicit beneficiary feedback. Communities are rarely consulted upstream when strategies and activities are being elaborated. Nonetheless, UNICEF and partners have progressed, and the promotion of adolescents' participation and other community-based mechanisms offers a platform for AAP. It is important to enhance what has been poor cross-border dialogue and data sharing.

Effectiveness

As noted, funding has been a challenge at national and regional level. However, ECO has developed strong capacity-building, training and technical support to bridge gaps, particularly in WASH, Health, CP, education and social inclusion. C4D is a sector that has been severely impacted by a shortfall in funding.

Two main external factors – border closures and the pandemic – have challenged ECO monitoring. IP informants admire UNICEF's flexibility regarding funding structures and programme extensions. However, lack of strong regional and global advocacy impacted funding and informants raised doubts about the R4V as a strong advocacy platform.

ECO has been able to coordinate effectively with other UN agencies, NGO, INGO, CSO and government counterparts to improve the response given to migrants and host communities. Coordination was done mainly in data collection, CBI, en route responses, and capacity building with government.

Coverage

UNICEF outreach and coverage is limited by the ability to properly identify those in need and the saturation of national services. However, a lot is being done by UNICEF to bridge the gaps left by strained services and support national and local services. In general UNICEF has been able to leverage partnerships with line ministries, IPs and local governments to respond to the needs of the most vulnerable.

¹⁸¹ Evaluación de la estrategia de UNICEF Ecuador para la transferencia de efectivo no condicionado. Respuesta a la emergencia migratoria de Venezuela. Marilise Turnbull, Lezlie Morinière, Sebastián Serrano. Integrated Risk Management Associates LLC. November 2020

UNICEF presence and leadership in some sectors in the GTRM, at both national and sub-national level, allows the organisation to position itself to collect data. UNICEF is working towards reinforcing national structures and capacities for GoE and civil society. UNICEF is working to strengthen legal protection and enhance coverage for UASC. Short term contractual arrangements have constrained continuity of UNICEF presence. A notable example of optimal coverage was the joint CBI done in coordination with WFP and UNHCR.

Coherence and coordination

UNICEF is seen as a main VMC actor in Ecuador by sister UN agencies, NGOs CSOs and government counterparts. ECO was able to strongly coordinate with local and national actors to implement innovative structures such as EAls and flexible mechanisms such as with CBI. As reported earlier, ECO has partnered with sister UN agencies and the World Bank on a national household survey of Venezuelan and host families. ECO has been able to leverage partnerships to build joint communications campaigns to combat xenophobia and discrimination. Despite these effective coordination efforts, overall inter-agency coordination is not seen as coherent. There has been duplication of coordination mechanisms between the GTRM and the cluster system.

As noted, there has been lack of structured coordination mechanisms between UNICEF staff across the regions. Improved coordination is needed to raise the profile of UNICEF to support advocacy challenges, to coordinate donor support and to share good practices and challenges.

Efficiency

As analysed above, UNICEF has improved efficiency by expanding previous relationships with government institutions and IPs to avoid overlap. UNICEF is seen as being flexible in funding and programme extensions, making IP work with migrant children and their families more efficient. However, UNICEF, like other response agencies, has not been able to find efficient solutions to monitor irregular entries.

Connectedness

UNICEF has put reinforcing local capacities at the core of the response. This offers a starting point for a medium-term support, as the challenges will remain. Better performing child protection, education or health systems will benefit host communities as well as migrants. CO has contributed to a number of initiatives that help create a receptive environment for migrant children, such as, notably, the special procedure described above and creation of centres for UASC. However, since the 2019 visa requirement and border closure, there has been more difficulties to reach UASC. There are few centres and little data to show the impact of this intervention.

Social inclusion, gender and disability

UNICEF has been working to innovate in social inclusion, particularly being a pilot country for the UNCCS and implementing CBI in coordination with other UN agencies. Although gender equality, GBV and PSEA are core aspects of the response, ECO does not have a gender specialist to support the response. ECO was able to bridge this gap by regularly requesting support from the LACRO GBV specialist, resulting in GBV awareness and prevention training for frontline workers, including civil servants. However, UNICEF should monitor the state of activities related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) risk prevention in the EAls, health facilities, the offices of IPs and schools. The capacity of IPs to identify SGBV cases and refer them needs to be enhanced. Disabilities are accounted for in all monitoring processes by UNICEF and partners, but the evaluation has identified weaknesses in the overall response, such as defining clearer differentiation of disabilities, and adapting spaces, such as the EAls, to persons with disabilities.

10. Recommendations

Strategic Recommendation 1 (Global Level and LACRO): Need to establish a LACRO regional strategy for migrant children and adapt the Children on the Move framework to the region.

Operational Recommendations:

- Ensure that UNICEF humanitarian standards, expectations for advocacy and approaches to regional migration are clearly articulated. They should inform staff and partner training/orientation and development of an operational culture with a clear understanding of humanitarian and emergency response modalities.
- Establish a permanent coordination platform at LACRO level, with different triggers for activation, to understand and respond to emergency migration challenges. It should include the Venezuela CO.

Strategic Recommendation 2 (UNICEF Ecuador): Further invest in evidence generation and analysis by i) mapping key gaps in terms of territorial coverage and performance measurement; ii) understanding what evidence decision makers need and when; iii) defining how, when and who does the analysis, and iv) outlining how analysis is then used and shared for both operational and advocacy purposes.

Operational Recommendations:

- ECO should develop an advocacy plan to ensure that data and evidence generated from the field on gaps in coverage and non-enjoyment of rights is translated into specific and verifiable advocacy actions with authorities. This should be accompanied by sharing of best practices and lessons learned to ensure a better route-based approach to the migration crisis. Insofar as possible, these meetings should include all sectors to enhance cross-sectoral dialogue and programming. At national level, UNICEF should push for further coordination in the GTRM to avoid duplication of actions in information generation and management.
- UNICEF at national and local level needs to invest in data collection and continue with the systematisation of information on services provided in the field, especially in EAI. Data collected at field level should inform interventions to ensure quality responses. It is essential to develop with MIESS more efficient registration and monitoring systems for case management and identification of girls and boys, especially UASC. ECO should monitor the education system, particularly the extent to which migrant children are enrolled in schools and their educational achievements.
- Building on the success of UNCCS, ECO should explore further collaborative procurements. ECO should organise a workshop with all UNICEF COs and LACRO to share lessons learned from the UNCCS pilot and explore funding opportunities with LACRO.
- UNICEF Ecuador has a good track record of implementing activities and programmes based on national priorities and needs of the population. However, ECO needs to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of activities in different contexts. The ET proposes a rapid assessment of Manta's EAI to see how the EAI concept is being translated in different contexts (transit and permanent, as well as different vulnerable groups such as children and GBV survivors). There is also need for specific analysis (such as Real-Time Assessments) of activities aimed at legal assistance to ensure appropriate measures are taken to address pressing needs, particularly of regularisation of status of migrants.
- Map out existing IP and other actors in the territory to explore potential collaborations. Additionally, the team would recommend preparing a brief note on past and current IP to better understand the needs of UNICEF in the different regions and how to address bottlenecks.

Strategic Recommendation 3 (UNICEF Ecuador): Incorporate migration across sectors in the new 2023-2026 CPD.

Operational Recommendations:

- Include addressing migration challenges in the new CPD with objectives and areas of convergence with development components. Migration should be transversal to all sectors and response strategies should include an internal mechanism to monitor progress.
- Establish a clear national strategy to address short-term humanitarian gaps identified for those entering Ecuador with the intention of transiting to other countries or those seeking to regularise permanent residence in Ecuador.
- ECO needs to review coverage to avoid unnecessary overlap with other VMC responders in order to enhance UNICEF's standing as a provider of added value.
- Design a transition from humanitarian response to medium term development and handover of UNICEF interventions to government or civil society actors. This requires strengthening relationships with local partners and training and capacity building; and ensuring documentation/ handovers are made. Given limited funds and challenging contexts, a strong relationship with local actors seems the best option.

Strategic Recommendation 4 (UNICEF Ecuador, LACRO and HQ): Invest in internal capacity-building, learning exercises as well as HR/staff resourcing and staff-care activities

Operational Recommendations:

- UNICEF at national, regional and HQ levels should further invest in cross-sectoral and regional exercises to

enhance learning and work towards a route-based approach. This requires structured and accompanied cross-national dialogue and sharing of experience.

- ECO responded to the earthquake and VMC back-to-back. The team recommends continuing investing in wellbeing activities and capacity building exercises. ECO seems to be implementing interesting activities and options for staff (free memberships to wellbeing apps, psychologic support). ECO should ensure staff is aware of all options made available.
- At all levels UNICEF should review its staff capacity and resources, both in terms of humanitarian response capacity and delegation of decision-making authority. Staff, and particularly UNVs, need to be better informed about migration dynamics, child-related international human rights instruments and international best practice in responding to migration flows.

Strategic Recommendation 5: Further invest in vulnerability assessment to ensure gender equality and disabilities are mainstreamed through all sectors.

Operational Recommendations:

- LACRO and UNICEF ECO needs to have an integrated and adequately funded gender strategy, particularly addressing issues around GBV, sexual diversity and gender identity.
- Gender issues should not be left to consultants to address. ECO should be funded to support a full-time gender specialist.
- Although UNICEF and IPs are required in all monitoring process to consider disability issues, the needs of persons with disabilities remain largely unknown or unaddressed. UNICEF supported facilities need to have disabled access. IPs should be supported to develop checklists of what needs to be done to meet the needs of people with disabilities.