Since 2016, some 1.9 million Venezuelans have traveled through Ecuador, a country currently hosting approximately 70,000 refugees and 385,000 asylum seekers from Venezuela, Colombia, and other countries in the region and across the world.

**COVID-19 has destabilized the lives of refugees and migrants across Latin America and the Caribbean, cutting off access to income and increasing vulnerability to violence. To respond to their heightened needs, HIAS Ecuador has modified its service by implementing remote support and developing other innovative solutions. HIAS Ecuador helps the most vulnerable including single women, women-headed households, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), survivors of torture, older people, people with disabilities and serious medical conditions, and LGBTQ refugees.**

**HIAS PROGRAMS AND FOCUS**

HIAS protects and supports refugees to build new lives and reunite with family members in safety and freedom. In Ecuador, HIAS works hand-in-hand with government institutions, partner agencies, and the private sector to promote social and economic inclusion and the development of sustainable livelihoods through community-based psychosocial support and humanitarian assistance. HIAS’ strategy in Ecuador focuses on a case management approach that provides families with personalized and comprehensive assistance.

Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (CB-MHPSS)

HIAS’ MHPSS programs train key community members to recognize acute emotional distress in children and adults as a result of crisis, and how to respond with empathy and respect. HIAS Ecuador’s mental health programs focus on promoting well-being with an emphasis on GBV prevention and response and integration activities. HIAS provides psychosocial support services including individual mental health counseling, support groups, psychiatric referrals, psychological
first aid, and workshops on self-care. HIAS Ecuador’s staff train community leaders, public health officials, and partner organizations. In order to help refugee and host communities cope with the psychosocial effects of the pandemic, HIAS provides essential mental health support through phone calls and online platforms.

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response**

Women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals are disproportionately affected by forced displacement. HIAS’ GBV services are driven by the needs and the voices of survivors, and our GBV programming helps forcibly displaced women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals access human rights to pursue their potential, free from violence and gender-related oppression. HIAS prioritizes survivors’ leadership when designing and implementing activities, and in Ecuador, HIAS provides case management, psychosocial services, support groups, and refers survivors to health and legal protection spaces that enable them to recover, heal, and thrive. Through risk reduction activities, HIAS Ecuador decreases the threats to women and girls and LGBTQ refugees that arise from unsafe living environments, unstable economic situations, or isolation. In addition, HIAS implements programs that support transformative change, including programs for men and boys to unlearn norms and behaviors that contribute to or condone violence.

**Legal Protection**

Without legal status, refugees are forced to live on the margins of society, sometimes for generations, without access to healthcare, education, dignified work, or safe shelter. HIAS Ecuador works in close collaboration with the government, UNHCR, legal assistance providers, and other stakeholders to empower, educate, and support refugees as they seek to access rights and secure protection.

**Economic Inclusion**

Access to dignified, sustainable, and safe livelihoods are at the core of HIAS’ economic inclusion interventions. Our methodology enables refugees, vulnerable migrants, and host communities to find opportunities to enhance self-reliance, increase resilience, regain dignity, and to build independent and meaningful futures. HIAS Ecuador promotes the development of sustainable livelihoods by providing entrepreneurship and employment opportunities for beneficiaries. Through the Graduation Model Approach (GMA), HIAS Ecuador helps alleviate extreme poverty within 18 months, supporting participants to become food secure, enjoy stable and diversified incomes, increase their assets, better integrate into their communities, and have a plan for the future. HIAS’ Entrepreneurship School with a Gender Lens supports refugee and migrant women, survivors of GBV, and those at risk of GBV to develop safe sustainable livelihoods while strengthening their self-esteem, autonomy, and empowerment. HIAS’ agro-business program promotes social cohesion among refugee and host community families through the development of income-generating agricultural activities. HIAS also works closely with the private sector on higher-wage employment opportunities, empowering women in particular to become more economically independent.

**HIAS in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**

HIAS advocates for the protection of refugees, other forcibly displaced populations, and local host
communities throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. As part of a comprehensive regional response to meet the urgent needs of these populations, including the millions of displaced Venezuelans, HIAS participates in several regional coordination platforms and partnerships which focus on protection, food security, GBV, and Cash and Voucher Assistance, including:

- REDLAC (IASC Regional Work Group Risk, Emergencies and Disasters)
- UNHCR/IOM Regional Platform for the Venezuela Situation Response (R4V)
- Interagency Group on Mixed Migration Flows (GIFMM) in Colombia
- Working Group for Refugees and Migrants (GTRM) in Ecuador and Peru

HIAS currently has programs in nine countries in LAC (Aruba, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, Mexico, Panama, Peru, and Venezuela) and partners with a wide range of government agencies, UN entities (UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, UNVFVT), the private sector (Airbnb, TATA Consultancy Services, and Manpower), and other NGOs and consortia, including Jesuit Refugee Service, Save the Children, Norwegian Refugee Council, Plan International, and Girls not Brides.

**CONTACT**

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