

# A gradual approach to local integration



The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Ecuador has developed a livelihoods methodology with refugees and asylum seekers, who have been forced to escape from armed conflict and persecution. The methodology emphasises the importance that these households reach dignified and sustainable livelihoods that allows them to build a home in their host country. As part of this effort, the so called Graduation Model is a comprehensive programme of support for refugees who are economically active or have the potential to generate income, and find themselves in a situation of vulnerability.

The pilot Graduation Model, developed in 2015 in the city of Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas (192 km from the capital, Quito), benefited 200 Ecuadorian and Colombian refugee families. With the experience and lessons learned from it, in March 2016, UNHCR Ecuador has started to implement the Graduation Model at the national level, which intends to reach 1.500 families (an approximate of 7.500 individuals). The purpose of this programme is to overcome risk of exclusion poverty under which these families live, with the ultimate goal of reaching integration in their new community, thus creating a long term sustainable solution.

Based on UNHCR's multiannual strategy, the Comprehensive Solutions Initiative (2016-2018) firmly anchored in the defence of human rights with a multidimensional perspective (economic, social and legal), the Graduation Model uses innovative tools such as a the *base line, local*

*integration index and market studies to allow for a better understanding of the socioeconomic situation and integration challenges that the refugee population faces in Ecuador.*

## Ecuador, a new home for refugees

Every month, Ecuador receives approximately 500 individuals who aim at building a new home after having escaped armed conflict and persecution. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador (2014), 60.500 individuals have been recognized as refugees in the country.

Amongst this population, 98% are of Colombian origin while a small percentage of asylum seekers come from Cuba, Afghanistan, Peru, and other Asian and African countries. According to the data provided by the Refuge Directorate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility in 2013, 48% of the refugee population are women<sup>1</sup>, 70% live in urban areas and the majority of the remaining 30% live in border areas, often isolated with scarce or inexistent basic services available<sup>2</sup>. The provinces that record the highest percentage of settlement of refugees are: Pichincha, Sucumbíos, Esmeraldas, Carchi, Imbabura and Guayas.

Refugees in Ecuador often struggle trying to achieve a dignified and sustainable livelihood. In search of employment, many have experienced sub employment due to the lack of appropriate documentation, which is in turn is an outcome of their lack of awareness concerning their rights and the lack of opportunities. The latter is often the result of the lack of knowledge of the current job demands in the country or the difficulty to start a new with none of the invested resources for a livelihood they had back in their country of origin and its support networks. Nonetheless, this population that has been forcefully displaced carry with them knowledge, skills, and experience from which they can take advantage. Henceforth, many have a great potential of being self-sufficient.

## A follow-up model for ending extreme poverty

Based on a pilot project developed during the year 2015 in the city of Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas (152 km from the Capital, Quito), UNHCR, along with its partner organization HIAS, has put into place in 2016 a national Graduation Model programme. The aforementioned programme has the aim of supporting refugees and asylum seekers who find themselves in situations of vulnerability and who have the potential of generating income so that they reach a greater level of integration into local society.

Through a selection of criterions predefined to favour the improvement of their wellbeing and their income, the households will be able to reach a certain degree of autonomy that will allow them to break free from the cycle of dependency from assistance.

Anchored in UNHCR's livelihoods guidelines, this programme has been designed to guarantee sustainability and efficiency on its execution. Thus throughout five stages, families are accompanied in a systematic way during a period between one year and eighteen months, in the process of a security network construction (economic, social and occupational), complemented by the transfer of assets (not only economic but also in terms of training, orientation and employment opportunity

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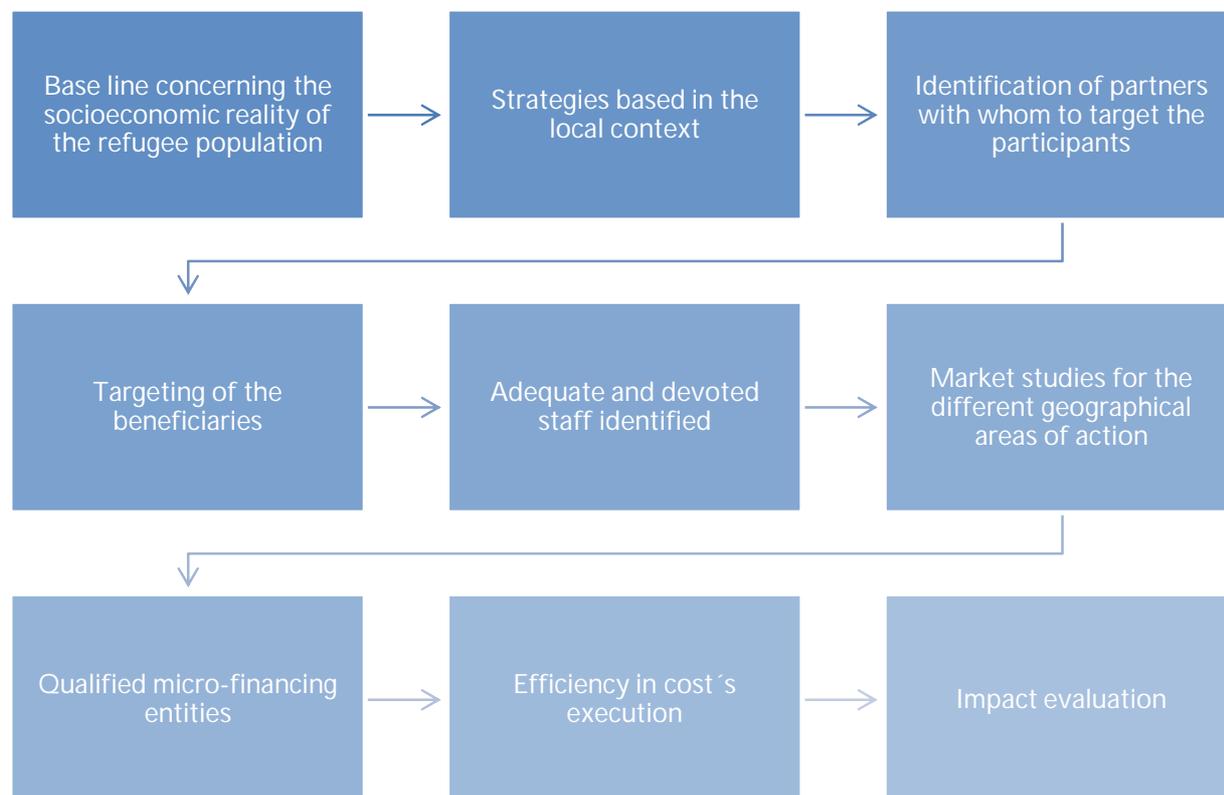
<sup>1</sup> Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Movilidad Humana del Ecuador, <http://cancilleria.gob.ec/estadistica-de-refugios/> (últimos datos oficiales disponibles hasta septiembre de 2013)

<sup>2</sup> ACNUR, Hoja informativa / Mayo 2015

[http://www.acnur.org/t3/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=t3/fileadmin/Documentos/RefugiadosAmericas/Ecuador/2015/ACNUR\\_Ecuador\\_2015\\_General\\_ES\\_Mayo\\_v2](http://www.acnur.org/t3/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=t3/fileadmin/Documentos/RefugiadosAmericas/Ecuador/2015/ACNUR_Ecuador_2015_General_ES_Mayo_v2)

enhancing). The aim is that at the end of the cycle, the members of the household should be able to overcome conditions of vulnerability under which they initially found themselves.

Figure 1 Guidelines of the UNHCR for the livelihoods programmes



### Targeting: adequate responses adapted to the vulnerability and capabilities

With the aim of better understanding the socioeconomic situation of population of concern living in Ecuador (not only recognized refugees, but also asylum seekers and individuals who have not been able to access the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure, UNHCR realized a broad statistical analysis about the socio-cultural, economic and legal situation of the persons of interest in Ecuador. The results provided a base line to analyze such factors.

By means of a survey conducted with 3.6649 households (9.392 individuals) in areas of major concentration of UNHCR's population of interest, the survey has allowed to obtain information concerning their migratory situation, type of documentation, access to employment opportunities, education, health services, etc. Among other variables, for instance, the survey allowed to find, the average monthly income per capita which is set between USD \$39.83 and \$56.85. The majority of the households find themselves in the lower range.

March 2016



The systematized information proved to be an opportunity for better understanding to what extent the refugee population in Ecuador felt integrated into society. Based on this information, UNHCR created an innovative methodology for analysing how different factors have an impact on the level of integration of an individual in the host country. The level of integration was thus measured by the Local Integration Index (LII).

The LII combines elements that are both objective and subjective to calculate the degree of local integration of the population of interest based on legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions. When applying the LII, the results exposed that the average level of integration of the entire refugee population, particularly in Ecuador, is 59, 7%. Moreover, the analysis also exposed how those who find themselves in the most precarious situations in the country, only reach 35% of their level of integration. This tool can also be applied to a new population through a simple table or “calculator” in which one can enter the relevant household information.

The base line results and the LII have been used as significant information for the establishment of selection criteria of the beneficiaries who will participate in the Graduation Model. As such, UNHCR, in coordination with HIAS, will support the population of interest who fall below 35% of the LII.

UNHCR's and its partners working experience shows how, refugees, despite the uprooting and loss of their economic or social capital, possess “wealth” which can be used in the host country, including knowledge, skills, and the material and non-material goods that they bring with them. For this reason, HIAS and UNHCR not only develop an analysis of the vulnerabilities experienced by the group of interest, but also one about their capacities. Moreover, opportunities are also evaluated, so that the families encounter the best path towards integration.

Based on the data generated by the analysis of socioeconomic criterions , the results of the LII and the analysis of skills, three main working groups have been identified, for which diversified responses are provided. By taking these categories as references and understanding the household as unit of action, UNHCR has established the selection of participants through a process known as ‘targeting’.

POPULATION	SITUATION OF VULNERABILITY/ SKILLS	RESPONSES
<i>Population above the poverty line</i>	Households of interest <sup>3</sup> (refugees, asylum seekers, families who have suffered forceful displacement) who earn on a monthly basis more than USD \$82 per person.  They find themselves in economic conditions that are superior to the poverty thresholds and who have access to education, health, etc.	LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMES EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE ORIENTATION SERVICES AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROGRAMMES RESETTLEMENT
<i>Population falling below the poverty line (who are or might be) Economically active</i>	Households of interest who earn on a monthly basis less than USD \$82 per person.  The poverty situation prevents them from satisfying basic needs.  They have the potential to generate incomes.  They are willing to take the responsibility by participating in activities defined as part of a family plan through which they are oriented on future-building.	GRADUATION MODEL RESETTLEMENT LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMES EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE ORIENTATION SERVICES AND PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROGRAMMES
<i>Population falling below the poverty line (who cannot be) Economically active</i>	Households of interest who earn on a monthly basis less than USD \$82 per person.  The poverty situation prevents them from satisfying basic needs.  The situation of extreme vulnerability prevents them from generating income.  Includes children and adolescents not accompanied, older adults without support networks, individuals with mental or chronic illnesses.	HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE REFER FAMILIES TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROGRAMMES OF INTEREST RESETTLEMENT LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMMES EMPLOYMENT GUIDANCE

## The challenge of identifying individuals

In Ecuador, one of the challenges faced by UNHCR, as well as by other institutions, when responding to the needs of people of concern is identifying them on the field, particularly in urban areas.

With the aim of improving this identification process of and response, UNHCR, with ample coordination with the World Food Programme (WFP) and HIAS, as well as with public and private institutions, has increased its efforts to expand its community reach. These efforts are accomplished by visiting communities, neighbourhoods and several members of local networks that enable the most vulnerable people of concern to receive the required support to build a better future. As part of the Graduation Model, and based on the targeting criterions, UNHCR expects to support 1.500 households (approximately 1.500 individuals) so they can overcome extreme poverty.

Beginning with a first identification, and with the collaboration of a technical team from HIAS, with UNHCR's backing, the situation of the families will be analysed in terms of access to documentation, access to public services and critical socioeconomic condition. The aim is to analyse their potential to become economically active. For this purpose, two specific tools are used such as the household profiling form and the Local Integration Index "calculator".

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.acnur.org/t3/a-quien-ayuda/>

Moreover, with the aim that the individuals, in any socioeconomic conditions, are able to access the existing services, UNHCR and its partners are actively working on advocacy with governmental and private institutions so that the persons of interest are able to improve their access to social services in order to find solutions to their specific problems.

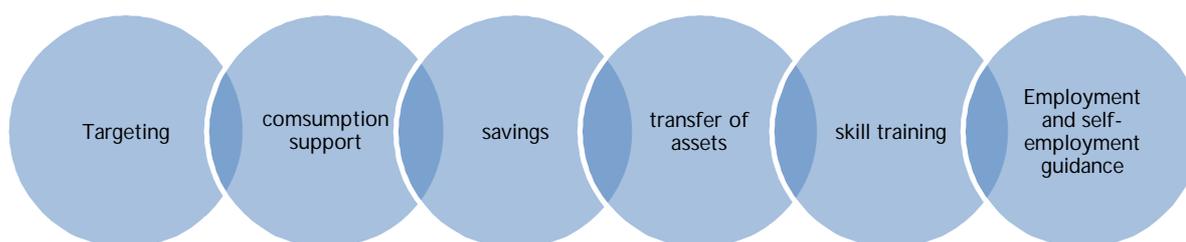
On this matter, UNHCR works in collaboration with the Ministry Coordinator of Social Development, who supervises the work of the Ministries of Economic and Social Inclusion, Health, and Education, among others, with the desire of including the persons of interests in its specific governmental programmes.

## Innovative Features

- *By placing the family as subject of intervention.* Rather than emphasising on the head of the household, the model focuses on the family as a whole, with the aim of producing benefits that will be maintained in the long run and from which the entire household will benefit. Such feature of the programme is what fortifies a security network in which savings are important when facing all sorts of casualties and problems that may affect a member of the household, such as an accident, disease, or the loss of a remunerated job.
 
  
- *Through Close follow-up.* Home visits conducted by social promoters, families receive a follow-up during the process that allows them to overcome potential obstacles that impedes them from graduating (i.e. mitigating the impact of intra-family violence, a potential disease, etc.). Thus social promoters are pivotal to identify risks, and to guide each family in their access to basic services, maximizing the potential of success in the long run. They also allow for a greater follow-up of participants' mobility, particularly if one takes into account the fact that refugees' households present numerous changes of address throughout the city. Periodic counselling is, according to participants of the pilot project, "what makes the difference".
 

## Graduation, step by step

The Graduation Model is composed of various innovative elements tailored to respond to the needs of UNHCR's persons of interest. . The following seven stages make up the Graduation process.



1. **Identification of the participants: targeting (Durable Solutions Area).** Based on the experience of the Graduation Model in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, UNHCR has determined that needs such as food and shelter, as well as capacities assessment is key to support people of concern This implies, as a result, a necessary analysis of the level of social integration, the socioeconomic condition, as well as the migratory situation of the individuals within the household.

In this process, UNHCR and HIAS will continue to offer specific responses to those in situations of major vulnerability, as well as to families who have recently arrived or who find themselves in situations of risks on their security. For these cases an initial support including basic feeding and emergency medical assistance will be provided.

In the instance that an individual does not meet the selection criteria, but however, he or she faces certain challenges when accessing social services or requires legal assistance or any other type of specialized support, these individuals will be referred to the available and necessary services or mechanism.

2. **Commitment of the household.** Once the Area of Durable Solution of HIAS and UNHCR have determined, via the established selection criteria, that a household qualifies to begin the Graduation Model programme, the head of household will participate in a process of information sessions during which the family makes an agreement committing to participate in every stage of the programme, including training, workshops or specific activities. For instance, some of the commitments imply the participation in the 'World Food Programme' (WFP) training on food security or in vocational workshops, as well as a commitment to save part of their income on a monthly basis
3. **Consumption Support.** With the objective of helping the families reach a minimal consumption capacity that secure basic conditions of nutrition, housing, etc., the Graduation Model contemplates a cash transfer, essentially via a financial institution with major local presence and that is able to secure them access to their assets. Such economic transfer, intended to allow families to cover their basic needs, has been adjusted to the number of individuals that compose the family unit. Hence, each family will receive a minimum of USD \$420 in a period of one year (households of three members), and USD \$960 for households with more than four members.
4. **Savings and financial training.** The Graduation Model not only allows families to count with a minimum capital, but through the programme, families are oriented towards a culture of economic savings. UNHCR and HIAS will establish the necessary links with a series of local institutions which will allow the participants to access financial services. With the purpose of making the saving process efficient, participants will have access to structured financial training, based on the developed methodology during the pilot project in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas. Attendance to these training sessions will be a prerequisite for the participants to be able to continue in the programme.
5. **Periodic Counselling.** With the aim of supporting and orienting the household in the required performance within the framework established, a social promoter will conduct biweekly visits to the families, which allow the sustainable involvement of participants thus contributing, motivating and orienting their accomplishments while creating an environment for better integration in the country. Within this support, special attention will be paid to the situation of women (especially female heads of household), children, unaccompanied minors, the elderly, violence survivors and individuals with disabilities, identifying their particular protection needs. These may include referring them to psychological care or sexual and/or gender-based violence victim support. All cases will be monitored, allowing staff to determine how their needs evolve. Monitoring and follow-up includes:
  - Guidance on the use of cash transfers provided;
  - Assessment on compliance with the requirements of education and training;
  - Establishment of joint plans to identify and respond to specific needs.
  - Guidance procedures regarding access to public services, with special emphasis on school enrolment and primary health care;
  - Inclusion of people of interest in government social programmes and labour inclusion;
  - And constant counselling.
6. **Vocational training.** In order to improve the employability of individuals, the programme envisages the creation of networks, through which participants of the Graduation Model can

access training processes and vocational training, offered by both public and private institutions, based on market analysis, identified in their lieu of residence.

7. **Transfer of assets for self-employment.** For those who decide to implement entrepreneurship projects (small businesses), within the Graduation Model programme, UNHCR will provide USD \$500 seed capital at the first phase of the project per household. Thus it is expected to support around 400 families' entrepreneurial projects. In addition, families will receive technical support from the HIAS Vocational Guidance Service in order to provide them knowledge and skills on how to better manage their own projects.
8. **Employment counselling.** Through the Service Employment Guidance that HIAS offers, and with the accompaniment of social work unit, individuals can be advised to identify their skills and training needs for employability, and the acquisition of "soft" skills (interviews, resume design) that allows them to enter the labour market as employees. Advocacy with companies at various levels (small, medium and large companies) will be conducted in order to allow participants to enter the job market.

### **A Project based on the experience with the pilot Project of 2015**

In line with its commitment to finding durable solutions for displaced populations by linking them to existing services and mechanisms, UNHCR and partner organization HIAS -with technical support from the international non-governmental organization BRAC which, focuses on the eradication of poverty, and Trickle Up, a pioneer in graduating people out of extreme poverty-, officially launched the Graduation Model. The Graduation Model was presented in the bustling commercial hub of Santo Domingo (Ecuador) a smaller yet still vibrantly active city a few short hours from Quito in order for it to serve as a pilot before expanding the approach to other parts of the country. This pilot in Ecuador, is one of the three countries (Costa Rica and Egypt) currently applying the Graduation approach among refugee populations. This pilot in Ecuador includes key partnerships with the World Food Program, several provincial agencies including health and vocational training and, the private sector to facilitate access to employment.



Each family participating in the Graduation Model Pilot has different dynamics, abilities, opportunities, and vulnerability levels. Thus families have made progress at different levels. Based on a recent midline evaluation (May 2016), we can divide the families into three groups:

GRADUATION IN PROCESS: data from 2015-2016 PILOT PROJECT (may 2016)

	25% Still struggling	36% can graduate by the end of 2016	39% can graduate within the next 3 months
Members of the HH eat three times a day.	1-2 times	2-3 times	3 times
The HH has diversified sources of income	Currently in vocational training	One source of income	One or two income sources
The HH receives at least the basic salary (82USD per capita	Household not earning \$82 per capita	Household earning per capita some of the time	Household earning per capita consistently
At least one person in the family (head of HH) has a savings account	Household does not have a savings account	Household with savings account	Household with savings account
The HH is able to save at least 10% of their income.	Families without the capacity to save consistently	Families saving less than 10% consistently	Families saving 10% consistently
The HH participates in community spaces, they have support networks	Families without community participation	Some members of the household participate in the community	Most members of household participate in the community
Overcrowding * not a requirement for graduation	Families facing overcrowding	Few families facing overcrowding	No families facing overcrowded
Child education * not a requirement for graduation	Children attending school	Children attending school	Children attending school

Variable	Baseline	Midline	Difference
Members of the HH eat three times a day.	60%	77%	17%
The HH has diversified sources of income	49%	57.5%	8.0%
The HH receives at least the basic salary (82USD per capita	66.31%	78.88%	16.6%
The HH is able to save	1%	61%	60%

For the 25% of families still struggling, HIAS will continue with biweekly visits with an increased focus on linking to existing mechanisms and community groups. For the remaining families, visits will occur monthly or even every other month through the end of the year.

### Multifunctional team dedicated and qualified

With a total team of 167 persons in 9 locations and 11 field offices, HIAS will have a dedicated staff of 90 people specifically for care, identification and monitoring of the households according to the criteria of the Graduation Model.

Thus the project is run by a team that includes community social work professionals, psychologists, and legal and employment counsellors, among others, as well as promoters and a team of community volunteers.

The project approach includes active participation of the population, seeking to build bridges between the population of interest and opportunities to achieve a sustainable and dignified life in the country.

For this, UNHCR and HIAS have defined a management scheme of cases that respond to their socioeconomic diversity and their protection needs, allowing not only for the identification of individuals to be potentially included in the Graduation Model, but also those who can receive other guidance on existing services in the country.

- Durable Solutions area. Comprised of experienced professionals in the care and support to refugees, the Solutions area is the first reception space for cases where, through a family assessment form, they can determine the household's vulnerability and capabilities (targeting). These cases will be reviewed by UNHCR in order to ensure that the individuals included in the programme are refugees, asylum seekers or other persons of interest. In turn, from this area, the household's evolution is monitored.
- Social Promoters area. In order to monitor the household's progress, a team of social promotion will conduct home visits in order to provide, counselling and referral to public and private services guidance for access to employment and facilitating the transfer of consumption support. In few words, this team is the "heart" of the model, offering constant presence, counselling and support to the families in rebuilding their future.
- Social Work area. The area of Social Work provides assistance and support to individuals who, because of their vulnerability cannot be economically active. This area facilitates referral to services and public and private programmes according to various special needs (for unaccompanied children, the elderly, people with mental or chronic illnesses, risks of physical protection, sexual violence or gender-based among others). This area works closely with UNHCR in order to favour resettlement to a third country for the most vulnerable people.
- Community Volunteers area. Based on the experience in recent years under the pilot Graduation Model in Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, this area is created across the country in order to improve the identification of cases, generation of networks and promoting integration in participative spaces. The area of community volunteer thus works in 9 locations where HIAS is present, by mapping and identifying people of interest that have not reached HIAS or UNHCR's offices, lacks documentation and fits the criteria to be part of the Graduation Model. In this way, the volunteers conduct the community outreach of this programme. They also support the team of social promoters in monitoring the cases identified. In turn, this area of work will encourage efforts to reduce discrimination and xenophobia, with special emphasis on women LGBTI people and people with disabilities, and to support initiatives of peaceful coexistence and cultural integration.
- Service of Occupational Guidance (SOG). Specialized in access to employment or self-employment, the area is in charge of developing advocacy actions with employers, provides support for people starting entrepreneurial projects, provides technical guidance on vocational training, etc.
- Psychology Area. Area of work specialized in individual or group psychological assistance for those identified cases, for instance, women victims of SGBV, unaccompanied children, victims of conflict who require specialized care.

## When does a participant graduate?

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One of the fundamental goals of the graduation approach is to generate changes in the lives of people so that they can integrate in Ecuador.

Throughout the Graduation Model process the advancement of households will be analysed and followed up. Thus people are expected at the end of process, to meet the following criteria:

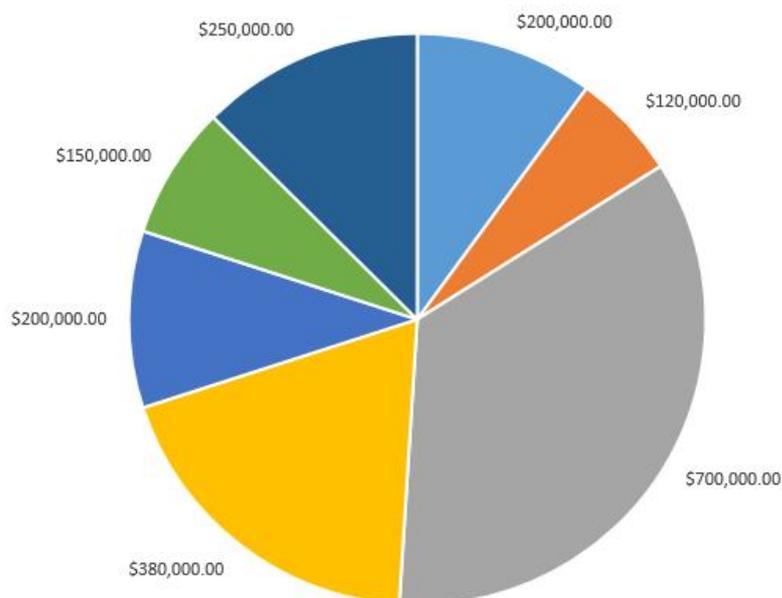
1. Members of the household eat three times a day.
2. The household has diversified sources of income for at least 6 months.
3. The household receives at least the basic salary (82USD per capita) every month for more than 6 months.
4. At least one person in the family (head of household) has a savings account.
5. The household is able to save at least 10% of their income for 6 months.
6. The household participates in community spaces, they have support networks.

It should be noted, however, that although people acquire a sustainable and dignified life (i.e. they have "graduated"), UNHCR will continue to provide advice on specific issues, such as related to documentation or other legal issues, development of their entrepreneurial projects, access to rights, support for special needs related to childhood, disability, gender-based violence ...

## Budget

Products	Indicator	Cost
<b>Targeting and follow-up cases (Solutions Area)</b>	7,500 identified individuals	\$200,000.00
<b>Humanitarian support: shelter and food assistance.</b>	1,200 individuals supported	\$120,000.00
<b>Consumption support to satisfy basic needs.</b>	7,500 individuals supported	\$700,000.00
<b>Guidance to improve access to employment (Entailment with employment networks, orienteering, abilities for self-employment, ...)</b>	3,500 advised individuals	\$380,000.00
<b>Seed capital delivered to begin entrepreneurship projects</b>	400 capital delivered	\$200,000.00
<b>Training for acquiring skills: vocational training, financial training.</b>	500 individuals supported	\$150,000.00
<b>Team of professionals devoted to support the population</b>	7,500 individuals supported	\$250,000.00
<b>Total Budget</b>		<b>\$2,000,000.00</b>

### Graduation Model Budget



- Targeting and follow up of cases
- Humanitarian support: shelter and emergency food assistance.
- Consumption support to satisfy basic needs.
- Guidance to improve access to employment (Entailment with employment networks, orienteering, abilities for self-employment, etc).
- Seed capital delivered to begin entrepreneurship projects
- Training for acquiring skills: vocational training, financial training
- Team of professionals devoted to support the population

## Demographics data

	Percentage of the group	% women	% men
0 to 4	<b>0.15%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>51%</b>
5-17	<b>23.87%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>53%</b>
18-59	<b>56.20%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>52%</b>
60 and >	<b>8.90%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>51%</b>

## At a glance...

- Participants who live with less than USD \$1.50 per person/daily (USD \$82 per capita/monthly).
- Number of households participating in the programme: 1,500 families (7,500 individuals)—direct beneficiaries.
- Areas where participants live: mainly in urban areas (only some in rural areas).
- Use of the “calculator” of local integration: marks less than 0.35 (on 1) of local integration.
- Partner organization: HIAS, and international NGO.
- Staff: 90 individuals.
- Territorial scope: 9 localities, 11 offices.
- Budget: USD \$2 M.
- 1.200 individuals receiving first need humanitarian assistance (shelter and food)
- Around 500 individuals receive support to access career training.
- Around 400 families receive capital to start a business.
- Support provided by the programme:
  - Cash Support for consumption.
  - Financial training.
  - Support on access to saving services.
  - Orientation and legal counselling.
  - Training in technical skills for self-employment.
  - Delivered capital to begin entrepreneurship projects.
  - Support to increase employability.
  - Links on employment opportunities.
  - Help in accessing other services (public or private programmes on education, urban gardens ...)