



*Carmen is a Colombian refugee who participates in a UNHCR funded project in Esmeraldas. Read her story in page 3.*

## Key figures

**52%**

of refugees and migrants consider employment their second top priority  
([JNA, 2020](#))

**3,487**

Venezuelan refugees and migrants involved in UNHCR livelihood intervention in 2021

**9%**

of UNHCR funding needs received by 6 April 2021

## Situational Highlights

Barriers to access the territory for Venezuelans imposed in late 2019 (Decree No. 826) and the closure of borders due to the sanitary emergency have directly affected people of concern's income generating activities, particularly in the informal sector, and their capacity to cover basic needs (rent, food, health care, education).

200,000 Venezuelans who are in an irregular situation in Ecuador face barriers in accessing the formal labour market because of their irregular status, which exposes them to higher risks of resorting to negative coping mechanisms, exploitative work environments, abusive relationships, or to be forced or coerced into prostitution.

Refugees and asylum seekers were dramatically hit by economic crisis due to pandemic lock downs. The vast majority work in the informal sector and lack a social safety-net. They are unable to cover their basic needs, such as rent and food. In such an adverse scenario, where economic recovery is to be addressed by the government at different levels, immediate humanitarian support and reactivation of livelihoods are required to help people of concern.

## UNHCR's Response

Due to COVID19, the Livelihood Strategy has been redefined to focus on the protection and recovery of affected livelihoods through innovation, equipment, digital marketing, digital inclusion, delivery services, elaboration of masks and protective textiles, certification for labor competencies. Also, UNHCR adapted its livelihood strategy to COVID-19, through the provision of guidelines to partners (the Minimum Economic Recovery Standards - MERS), and with and active participation in the early recovery clusters.

UNHCR monitors and addresses potential risk factors that can help to reduce refugees and migrants' exposure to violence, exploitation, and negative coping mechanisms.

UNHCR focuses to provide at-risk groups, like women and girls with safe alternatives for generating income by empowering them with technical training and delivery of seed capitals.

UNHCR facilitates access to markets by improved compliance with procedures and requirements related to labelling and packaging, as well as security equipment and connectivity (internet and mobile phones). UNHCR livelihood programmes involves important alliances with the private sector, local authorities, Academia and financial institutions.



## Best Practices

- UNHCR identifies refugees with artisanal skills, helps them to create strong artisan groups and connects them to experienced local social enterprise partners to develop market-ready products. This initiative, called [MADE51](#), connects refugees with social enterprise partners around the world.
- With the methodology “Sumar” developed by implementing partner AVSI, UNHCR supports the strengthening of associative projects and individual businesses for 180 Venezuelan refugees and Ecuadorians, in areas of textiles, construction, repair services and food production.
- The “A Ganar” programme is a joint initiative by UNHCR and its partner FUDELA, that helps young refugees and Ecuadorians who could not complete their basic education to find a job. In alliance with Fundación Telefonica Movistar, the programme has been adapted to a digital modality and resulted in “Conectados Ganamos” (Connected we Win), an online training initiative which provides tools for employment, entrepreneurship and soft skills. So far, more than 560 young refugees and Ecuadorians have been supported through these digital platforms.
- UNHCR supports textile enterprises as a way to generate livelihoods. “Ecolibr” is a women initiative that developed, since 2020, reusable ecological textile products such as sanitary towels to mitigate environmental impact. In Quito, UNHCR has launched a textile challenge for refugees and Ecuadorians with the support of “Allpamamas”, a sustainable fashion social enterprise.
- 60 refugee women improved their business and working opportunities through a digital marketing capacity building training implemented by UNHCR, HIAS, in alliance with Girls in Tech.

## Stories from the field

“Taking care of my plants is like a therapy, I love it.”



### Carmen Sánchez: the Colombian farmer who loves her plants

Taking care of her plants, makes Carmen the happiest person in the world. After surviving violence in Colombia and being forced to flee to Ecuador, Carmen settled in Esmeraldas. She lives in a rural area on the outskirts of the city, where she has enough space to grow corn, passion fruit, papaya and sugar cane, her favorite plant.

She participates in a livelihoods project called “Plant your food”, promoted by UNHCR, its partner FEPP, and the city’s government. It seeks to facilitate food

sovereignty of refugees and host communities, and also to provide an income through the sale of the food they grow in local agricultural fairs. However, for Carmen, growing her plants is not only a matter of improving her economy, but also of mental health. “My mind is kept busy, it is like a therapy, to be sowing the plants, transplanting, cultivating. I love it.”

Carmen, who also bakes bread daily and goes out to sell it in nearby neighborhoods, dreams of continuing to live in the countryside, surrounded by her plants, but in a new house where she could also build her own bakery.

## Funding needs

With shortage of funds, UNHCR faced challenges in providing required services for objective Self Reliance and Livelihoods improvement. Fresh donor contributions of USD 1,316,041.67 are urgently needed for UNHCR to continue its coordination and response efforts to meet the most urgent livelihood needs of Venezuelan refugees and migrants and host communities.

### We thank the contributions of our donors

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