

# IMPACT REPORT



Stories from the CARE Learning Tour to Ecuador, August 7-11, 2022

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## OVERVIEW

A bipartisan and bicameral delegation of Congressional staffers traveled to Ecuador with CARE to see the impacts of U.S. foreign investments firsthand. The delegation met with Ecuadorian government officials, civil society actors, and program participants to discuss how violence and poverty undermine development throughout Latin America and force people to flee their communities, as well as the role that global investments in rights-based, community-led emergency response and development can play in combatting poverty.

Ecuador presents a complex and dynamic context for learning about human mobility in the region, with as many as 1.2 million Venezuelans arriving and 500,000 settling in the country since 2015. The majority are women and girls who often bear the brunt of challenges present in forced migration, according to CARE's research. However, during the Learning Tour to Ecuador, delegates witnessed forcibly displaced and under-resourced women rising to become essential leaders in their community.

Throughout the three and a half-day trip, the delegation gained an understanding of the ways in which the traditionally siloed categories of humanitarian and development aid are insufficient to respond to protracted crises such as human mobility throughout Latin America and explored the ways that comprehensive and integrated services are effective at building thriving communities in the region. In discussions with Venezuelan women who have taken on the responsibility to educate new arrivals to the country—whether they are from Venezuela, Colombia, Haiti, or anywhere else—about how to access their rights in Ecuador, the delegation explored how rights-based approaches to humanitarian response are essential to meeting the need. Through meetings with government officials and NGO experts as well as local community health workers, the delegation learned about the interconnectivity of the economic recession sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the following food shortage and livelihood crisis affecting both local Ecuadorians and forcibly displaced peoples. And throughout the Learning Tour, the delegation witnessed the resiliency of women building their own wealth and cohesion between host and migrant neighbors through community banking systems, from Village Savings and Loan Associations in Ibarra to community banking for agribusiness in Tulcán.

## → DAY 1

### SETTING THE SCENE

Upon arrival to Ecuador, the delegation attended an introductory briefing from NGO experts. The group heard from representatives from CARE, ESQUEL, and The University of San Francisco Quito on the key health, gender and economic challenges facing both locals and displaced people who have relocated to Ecuador.



After arriving in Quito, the delegation gained context for the country's humanitarian-development situation in Ecuador from: Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, Secretary General, CARE International Secretariat; Boris Cornejo, Founder and President Advisor, Esquel; Michelle Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Universidad San Francisco de Quito and Director of Jhpiego RISE; Humberto Salazar, Executive Director, Esquel.

## HUMAN MOBILITY AS HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY

On the first full day of the Learning Tour, the group explored the challenges to and opportunities for effective humanitarian response in Ecuador by visiting programming that meets the immediate needs of both migrants and Ecuadorans in crisis. The group met with displaced Venezuelan women

and adolescent survivors of human trafficking to hear directly about their needs and the resources available to them. The group also joined a breakfast with the U.S. Ambassador to Ecuador, the USAID Mission Director, and PRM's Deputy Regional Refugee Coordinator; a meeting with the Ecuadorian

Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility; and a lunch with healthcare workers who were on the frontlines of emergency response to the pandemic in the country.

### HIAS Training of Community Promoters Program

**LOCATION:** Chillogallo, Quito, Ecuador

**BACKGROUND:** The group's first program visit was to the Chillogallo neighborhood of Quito, where they met with Community Promoters. In September 2021, HIAS identified 16 women of Venezuelan nationality who voluntarily carry out recreational activities for children and adolescents both local and in human mobility within the community. These Community Promoters identify people in states of human mobility who have newly arrived in their neighborhoods and ensure that they have access to broad support networks, as well as their right to education, health and labor free from exploitation. The educational and outreach activities are meant to promote healthy development in children and promote the local integration of people in situations of human mobility. Activities include education on human rights, a neighborhood-run childcare center, socio-cultural activities, fairs and mingas. During the delegation's visit to the program, the Community Promoters performed skits that they have used to instruct recent arrivals about their human rights.

**DONORS:** U.S. State Department

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** HIAS



The delegation speaks with Community Promoters about their experience walking to Ecuador from Venezuela through informal passageways, facing discrimination upon arriving in Ecuador, and learning about the human rights available to them as forcibly displaced people without legal paperwork to remain in Ecuador.



In a meeting with U.S. Ambassador Michael J. Fitzpatrick and the Ecuadorian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility, the group talked about strengthening the bilateral relationship between the two countries as well as efforts from the Ecuadorian government to tackle some of their greatest development challenges throughout the country, such as the high rate of child malnutrition.

### El Nido de Proteccion Shelter

**LOCATION:** Quito, Ecuador

**BACKGROUND:** The delegation toured El Nido de Proteccion Shelter or Alas de Colibrí's Protection House and met with adolescent survivors of sexual exploitation. The shelter provides a safe, temporary, group home setting in which young women can feel open and empowered to become active participants in protecting their own human rights. This safe home is one of only two aftercare homes in the entire country specifically prepared to support the healing female adolescent survivors of human trafficking.

**DONORS:** U.S. State Department

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** Alas de Colibrí Foundation



## ACCESSING ESSENTIAL SERVICES

On the third day of the trip, the delegation delved into the current ways that INGOs, Civil Society, and the Ecuadorian government are working together to break down the silos that traditionally separate the categories of humanitarian and development aid in order to provide comprehensive support to both forcibly displaced people and underserved Ecuadorians, often indigenous communities living in rural settings.

### CARE Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Project

**LOCATION:** Ibarra, Ecuador

**BACKGROUND:** CARE's Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) program is a series of workshops carried out, based on the principles of inclusion and supporting women in human mobility and women of the host population, to provide training on matters such as: acknowledgement of rights, prevention of GBV, types of violence, protection routes and protocols, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and psychological first aid. During the delegations visit to the CARE center, the group toured the office and learned about the services offered to women seeking support. They then joined an indigenous healing circle and met with a [Village Savings and Loans](#) group. Approaches to group healing draw on holistic and indigenous practices, including deep breathing, meditation and symbolic acts that promote debate and sharing of experiences by the participants, thus promoting individual and collective self-recognition. The project also provides essential emergency support — such as vouchers to access health services, housing, and cash transfers — integrated with the [Village Savings and Loans](#) model to support women in accessing credit and loans in the medium-and-long-term.

**DONORS:** U.S. State Department

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** CARE



In Cayambe, the delegation joined Mercedes, an Indigenous Community Health Worker, on a house visit in her community. Mercedes works with doctors at the local health clinic to track pregnant and lactating mothers in her community, evaluate potential risks and complications, and develop a birth plan to ensure that they receive the care they need. Mercedes incorporates indigenous healing practices like scanning a pregnant woman's body with a cuy (guinea pig) to check for medical complications and build trust between the community and local doctors.

### ADRA Integrated Health and Food Assistance to Vulnerable Population Affected by COVID-19

**LOCATION:** Cayambe, Ecuador

**BACKGROUND:** The delegation visited two ADRA programs during their second full day in Ecuador. First, they met with doctors completing their post-graduation year of medical service in rural communities and learned about the partnership between informal community health workers and formal doctors in rural settings. Afterwards, the groups completed a home visit with a community health worker who prioritizes pregnant and lactating mothers to monitor the health of women and families and advise families with limited access to formal healthcare on when they need to visit the health clinic

The second ADRA program visited was comprised of food assistance to vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19. The program was implemented in the provinces of Carchi and Pichincha and benefited approximately 5,000 poor and vulnerable families affected by COVID-19 whose family included children under 2 years of age or pregnant women. The beneficiary families participated in a nutrition education program and received a \$250 voucher per family to support in buying food and home supplies for children while markets were closed and incomes were decimated during the height of the pandemic. In Cayambe where the delegation visited, 300 vulnerable families benefited and was implemented with the support of the participating municipalities of Carchi and Pichincha.

**DONORS:** USAID, World Food Programme, UNICEF

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** ADRA



On Tuesday night, the delegation attended a reception co-hosted by the U.S. Mission to Ecuador at Casa Museo Guyasamin. The evening served as an opportunity to connect with a larger group of international and Ecuadorian-based professionals working in the government, private-sector, and development field. Here, delegate Casey Davison meets with the Mayor of Cayambe, Guillermo Churuchumbi



## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CULTIVATING ROOTEDNESS

On the fourth day of the trip, the delegation witnessed previous humanitarian contexts that have evolved into sustainable development and met with programs that aim at cultivating rootedness in both rural and urban contexts of Ecuadorian society. By meeting directly with women and youth, the group was able to connect over their shared experiences and ambition for a communities where everyone—regardless of their gender or country of origin—can thrive.

### HIAS Agribusiness & Community Banks Program

**LOCATION:** Tulcán, Ecuador

**BACKGROUND:** This agribusiness project was created in 2017 with the aim of developing productive microenterprises for displaced people and host communities living in the border area, including Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Venezuelan women. Women were trained in farming pigs and guinea pigs, as well as in running hydroponics farms, which provide an advantage to displaced women because they do not require land ownership to cultivate. In addition to each microenterprise, women also join local VSLA community banking programs.

The delegation was hosted by an Ecuadorian woman named Yolanda who lives on the border of Colombia. After arriving at her home, the delegation learned about her microenterprise trainings and toured her farm, helping her feed the farm animals along the way. The delegation got ready for the weekend Cuy Festival with the community by racing Cuy and celebrated the visit with a communal lunch.

**DONORS:** USAID, World Food Programme, UNICEF

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** HIAS



After arriving at Yolanda's home, the delegation learned about her microenterprise trainings in hydroponic lettuce farming and toured her farm. Katherine Thomas helped harvest some lettuces along the way.

### A Story from the field

**Yolanda** is an indigenous Ecuadorian woman and program participant with HIAS' rural agriculture microenterprise initiative. With the support of U.S. funding, Yolanda was able to build her own hydroponic lettuce farm to supplement the income that she produces as a small-holder farmer. Yolanda and her cooperative sell the lettuce directly to local restaurants. Hydroponic gardens allow women in the Tulcan region who do not have access to land to still be able to produce, and the lettuce is welcomed in a community rife with health complications from pesticides and inorganic farming practices. Thanks to the hydroponic lettuce initiative, Yolanda was able to double her monthly income and use her proceeds to expand her farm from just guinea pigs to



include chickens, pigs, and vegetables. Beyond an income, Yolanda was also able to create community through the programming via the community banking VSLA. Today, she calls members of the VSLA from Venezuela and Colombia, "her daughters," and has become a key support system for vulnerable women crossing the border into Ecuador. Next, Yolanda dreams of adding strawberry production to her farm and opening a local restaurant.

### Youth Ready

**LOCATION:** Barrio San Blas, Quito, Ecuador

**BACKGROUND:** Youth Ready is World Vision's Positive Youth Development (PYD) programming model, helping thousands of vulnerable youths across the globe discover their potential, plan for their future, and gain the skills, support, resources, character, and confidence they need to succeed in both work and life.

In Barrio San Blas, World Vision implements Youth Ready with Venezuelan youth between the ages of 15 and 25. The four phases of the program include: 1) Who am I? 2) Ready for Employment 3) Ready for Entrepreneurship and 4) Ready for Citizenship. After learning about the trainings, the delegation had small group discussions with Venezuelan youth and tasted snacks prepared by a program graduate who has started her own catering business.

**DONORS:** World Vision and Barret Family Fund

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS:** World Vision

## → POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To meet urgent humanitarian needs, short- and medium-term approaches must be scaled up and facilitate durable solutions. This includes regularization of asylum pathways, access to social protection and opportunities for livelihoods in host countries, and services for people on the move.

Simplistic solutions that seek to deter human mobility will not override the reality that people move when their humanitarian needs for protection, shelter, livelihoods, or food are not being met. People and communities need immediate, flexible assistance to cover their basic needs and sustainable mechanisms to build resilience against future shocks. For the millions of people in the Americas already in need of life-saving assistance, there isn't time to wait for long-term solutions. At the same time, deteriorating pressures on social protection systems and public institutions are impacting communities in host countries and those who remain in countries of origin; access to rights and services must be universal and account for the specific needs of all marginalized communities.

However, the urgency to address the immediate humanitarian needs in Latin America and the Caribbean cannot simply replace efforts to address the root cause of displacement and migration: the fact that people cannot access adequate protection, shelter, livelihoods, and/or food at home. Human mobility from and around Latin America, like many of today's largest humanitarian crises, necessitates not just humanitarian relief but long-term, sustainable investment in development in order to curb the impacts of migration and displacement on the well-being of communities across the Western Hemisphere.

### **The U.S. can be a leader in humanitarian response in the region and globally by:**

- Increasing regular appropriations from Congress for international disaster assistance (IDA), migration and refugee assistance (MRA) and other humanitarian accounts that support the response Latin America and around the world. This includes ensuring base funding for these accounts is increased to the highest proposed levels in the respective FY23 House and Senate Appropriation bills in any FY22 Continuing Resolution lasting longer than two months.

- The U.S. should support local and regional policy approaches that promote "rootedness" — the fostering of communities that people want to live in — through investments into core areas of society like inclusive economic development, climate adaptation, governance, and gender equality rather than policies that prevent freedom of movement. To achieve this, regional and international policy cooperation is key, especially as states are increasingly thrust into overlapping roles of host, destination, and transit country for people on the move from the Americas and beyond.
- The U.S. and regional States should also work with civil society to design accountability and enforcement mechanisms to implement national, regional, and international legal conventions that have already been adopted in the Americas, like the Cartagena Declaration.

### **The U.S. can be a leader in food security response in the region and globally by:**

- Reauthorizing Feed the Future, the U.S. government's flagship global food security program, at a minimum level of \$1.23 billion annually and expanding its programming to more fully promote gender equality and support women and girls by elevating their role as decision makers, helping to break down barriers they face, and comprehensively integrating nutrition into food and health systems.

- Utilizing legislative vehicles like the reauthorization of the Farm Bill to make U.S. food assistance smarter and faster. The current assistance toolkit includes a broad range of tools like cash, vouchers, and in-kind commodities, but requires modernization to ensure response actors can use the right tools at the right time. This will ensure food assistance meets the most vulnerable and builds the resilience of communities while more efficiently maximizing U.S. investments.

### **U.S. policymakers can specifically support women and girls, experiencing crisis in the region and globally by:**

- Adequately resourcing protection, gender-based violence prevention and response, and cash and livelihoods support; by holding humanitarian actors accountable to gender-responsive (and where possible and safe to do so, gender transformative) aid approaches; and by passing the [Safe From the Start Act](#), into law.
- The U.S. and other donor governments should also provide flexible funding to local and community-based organizations, especially those led by marginalized communities and women led groups and networks. This supports the accountability of local power structures and ensures that programs to provide humanitarian assistance and promote rootedness are designed and implemented optimally to suit local realities.



Delegates pose with the CARE team in Ibarra after witnessing a women's savings group meeting and participating in an indigenous healing circle.

Photos: All Images: Ana Maria Buitron/CARE

We are deeply grateful to the many people who generously gave of their time to make this visit to Ecuador a success.



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