



Responding to Migrant Needs in Ecuador

Results from the Systems Evaluation of CARE Ecuador's Humanitarian Assistance Program

KEY TAKEAWAYS



Migrant and refugee GBV survivors have a greater ability to escape violent situations; LGBTIQ+ family members are more accepted; migrant men and women enjoy more equitable relationships.



Protection and health systems were significantly strengthened for vulnerable migrants, refugees and host communities, improving their access to comprehensive SRH care and case management services.



Social movements and CSOs were strengthened and had greater impact, which was key to supporting successful systems strengthening and policy advocacy on the rights of refugees and migrants.



Key policy change successes at local, national and binational level to support migrants and refugees.



Livelihoods strengthened and businesses created. Highly innovative health financing mechanisms used.



Program has a significant impact on improving the lives of women, migrants, and LGBTIQ+ communities.

Systems-level challenges in Ecuador and Humanitarian Assistance Program (PAH)

Ecuador is experiencing a significant increase in the flow of Venezuelan migrants and refugees entering the country, driven by a worsening political-economic context in Venezuela.¹ Those arriving in Ecuador lack basic resources, are highly food insecure and have growing protection

and social needs.² Migrant women and people of diverse sexualities experience discrimination, exploitation and violence during their journey to Ecuador, and local health services insufficiently respond to their needs.³

CARE Ecuador's Humanitarian Assistance Program (PAH) responds to the Protection and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) needs of the Venezuelan migrant population and vulnerable host communities in Ecuador. PAH activities include psychosocial support, healthcare, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, multipurpose cash, legal guidance, case management and referrals, accommodation support, outreach activities, creation of support networks, educational awareness campaigns, collaboration with local government and public entities, and supporting education and job opportunities for young people.

PAH employs several systems-level pathways, including promoting changes in social norms, service systems strengthening, promoting social accountability, supporting social movements, implementing inclusive market-based approaches, and policy advocacy.

PAH was implemented through CARE Ecuador's five in-country offices and partner organizations beginning in 2018, with funding from the United States Government Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).

Evaluation Questions and Methodology

Outcome Harvesting (OH) methodology was used to answer the following questions:

- 1. Process:** What did the program do and how were the systems-level pathways integrated across its activities?
- 2. Systems-change:** What changes were achieved by the project through different systems-level pathways to impact at scale?
- 3. Population-wide impact:** How did those systems-level changes result in improving individual lives?

Outcome harvesting is a participatory approach in which the harvester facilitates the collection of evidence of what has been achieved and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

Evaluation Findings

Systems-level change related to the different pathways

Social norms change

Reflection spaces and training workshops challenged social norms about masculinity, leading to attitude changes among men about gender equality and sexual diversity, complemented by economic and cultural changes in Ecuador regarding the need for women to be in paid work.

Supporting social movements

CARE Ecuador-PAH worked through a range of social movements and consortiums to recognize and promote the rights of migrants and refugees. Women's networks across Colombia and Ecuador were supported and strengthened to come together to build a Cross-Border Agenda on their rights, creating procedures and establishing mechanisms with authorities to influence change.

Advocacy to influence policies, program and budgets

PAH influenced reforms in public policies to recognize rights of transgender migrants and refugees and other non-binary individuals, such as in the Civil Registry Law and new Articles in the Human Mobility Law.



Service systems strengthening and social accountability

Access to SRH services and the quality of medical supplies significantly improved for the migrant and refugee populations as a result of building the organizational and technical capacity of national and municipal health officials and medical personnel on the needs of migrants and refugees. These staff increased their understanding on the needs of migrant populations, women survivors of GBV, pregnant and lactating women, infants, LGBTIQ+ people and vulnerable youth, and strengthened their capacities to adapt their services and provide rights-based, gender-sensitive, non-discriminatory care

Inclusive-Market Based Approaches

Local markets were strengthened through innovative electronic transfers, vouchers and payment mechanisms to provide health and social services to migrants, refugees and vulnerable host communities. For example, PAH partners with health providers and pharmacies to provide a card to purchase services and supplies. Accommodation providers are trained and engaged to accept vouchers for emergency room and board for migrants.

Systems Pathway Integration

PAH integrated its work on social movements and policy advocacy with significant success – capacitating these movements and organizations as advocates to change policies on behalf of the target group. These intersections were not only at national level, but also binational where they supported a cross-border agenda. These strengthened movements then continued to support advocacy and monitor change beyond initial PAH actions. PAH also integrated a focus on systems strengthening and accountability within its policy advocacy, where it supported local governments to introduce the policy changes made and held them account for doing so.

Impact on people's lives due to systems change

PAH had a significant impact on people's lives, including increase in the agency and capacity of women migrants and women survivors of GBV and LGBTIQ+ people, greater equality at the household level, increased employability, increased social networks, and increased knowledge of sexual and reproductive health.



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Sustainability and systems-change effects

Sustained system level effects include enhancing the organizational capacity of project partners to better meet the rights of target groups, increasing the capacity building of public officials, and changes to local and national policies.

Limitations and Challenges

The evaluation was undertaken over a very short time period, reducing the amount of time available for interviews and data collection. Some challenges were also identified within the interventions themselves. The regional advocacy network, Alianza Migrante, faced some challenges being seen as a legitimate South America voice, given it was not registered as a regional CSO. This arguably lessened its impact at times on promoting the rights of the target group.

Lessons learned

Humanitarian responses are often seen as principally about responding to immediate emergency needs than longer-term systemic change. PAH shows the benefits and importance of focusing on systems change within humanitarian contexts (as well as direct support), and thus positioning this work within the nexus of humanitarian and development.

Recommendations and future directions

FOR CARE GLOBAL

- **More deliberate focus on systems-change during design, monitoring and evaluation (M&E):** As PAH did not set out to deliberately do systems-change, and has done so organically, a more deliberate integration of these strategies within project design, M&E and the articulation of the intended impact should be encouraged across the CARE confederation. This will deepen the impact of CARE's work.
- **Expand PAH's systems change approach within humanitarian response to other locations:** Embed a focus on systems change within CARE's broader humanitarian work, leveraging the experience of CARE Ecuador.
- **Expand a focus on working through social movements for policy change:** CARE should promote and leverage PAH's experience globally on engaging social movements and CSOs to achieve successful policy change.
- **Expand explanation of social movements pathway to include capacitating local CSOs:** Many CARE offices work with and support local implementing partners and CSOs, which are distinct from social movements. Explanations of this pathway should include capacitating local CSOs and clarify the differences between those and social movements. This will also support CAREs locally-led agenda.
- **Explore how community change is positioned within the pathways:** Changes in communities can be seen as a result of the social norms pathways, as PAH found. Communities (beyond structured social movements) can also become mechanisms for action themselves, leading to further change.

FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PRACTITIONERS

- **Ensure clarity on how the project included systems-level activities before undertaking the evaluation.** It is important to spend time exploring how project goals, and related project activities, relate to the systems-level pathways before the evaluation.
- **Support a greater focus and measurement on the impact of systems-level change in individuals.** Support Country Offices to explore and understand systems approaches and to measure those.

Endnotes

- 1 Abuelafia, E. 2020. *Migration in the Andean region: impact of the crisis and expectations in the medium term*: Inter-American Development Bank
- 2 Ecuador Venezuelan Refugees – ACAPS, [June 2021](#)
- 3 November 2019, a study by ANálisis Rápido de Género in Ecuador

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