Each month, Ecuador receives approximately 900 asylum claims, with an estimated 60% of the population of interest primarily scattered within urban zones such as Santo Domingo de los Tsachilas. Refugees in Ecuador often struggle to attain prospects for sustainable and dignified livelihoods. In particular, many suffer from underemployment for lack of proper documentation, poor awareness of employment and opportunities, and difficulty re-establishing social capital away from their country of origin. Forcibly displaced people nevertheless carry something of considerable value: their knowledge, skills and experience’ most have the potential to become self-reliant.

In line with its commitment to finding durable solutions for displaced populations by linking them to existing services and mechanisms, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partner HIAS-with technical support from BRAC and Trickle Up, in January 2015, officially launched the Graduation Model in the bustling commercial hub of Santo Domingo, Ecuador, a smaller yet still vibrantly active periurban 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 currently applying the Graduation Approach among refugee populations.

The Graduation Model is composed of both innovative elements in line with the necessities with the Ecuadorian context and the five core buildings blocks of the Graduation Approach: a well targeted selection, consumption support, savings, assets transfer, and skills training. By equipping each household with the skills and means for income generation to break the cycle of dependency on outside assistance and resources, the stepwise approach of the project is designed to create a self-sustaining safety net to lift some 200 poor refugee and Ecuadorian families from their current level of poverty to improved conditions and more stable livelihoods.
PROGRESS SINCE JANUARY 2015

TARGETING
395 families targeted and interviewed

MARKET STUDY
Identifying market, employment and self-employment opportunities

SELECTION OF 200 FAMILIES
In-depth interviews and use of poverty assessment tools

PERIODIC HOUSEHOLD VISITS
Bi-weekly visits

DEFINE HOUSEHOLDS ACTION PLANS
Agreements on training, savings and transfer of assets

BASIC FINANCIAL EDUCATION
Basic finances of the household, savings, incomes and expenses

CONSUMPTION SUPPORT-WFP
Courses on healthy nutrition and food support

SAVINGS ACCOUNTS
In partnership with Banco Pichincha and Microenterprise support Foundation

LAUNCH OF THE GRADUATION MODEL

BASELINE SURVEY OF ALL PARTICIPANTS

THE GRADUATION APPROACH

TARGETING

CONSUMPTION SUPPORT AND SKILLS ASSESSMENT

SAVINGS AND VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING

ASSET TRANSFER (2016)

ABILITY TO COPE WITH RISK
ACCESS TO A BANK ACCOUNT: 30%
At baseline, the percentage of families who have access to a bank account was 10%.

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
ACCESS TO A REGULAR SOURCE OF INCOME: 30%
23% Self-employment, 7% formal employment. At baseline, the percentage of families who have access to a regular source of income was 10%.

FAMILIES WHO HAVE RECEIVED VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL TRAINING: 39%

FAMILIES WHO HAVE RECEIVED FINANCIAL EDUCATION: 30%

FOOD SECURITY
CONSUMPTION SUPPORT: 89%
178 Families have attended a healthy eating course as a previous step to receive the coupon. Consumption support started in June.

2-3 MEALS A DAY: 81%
At baseline, the percentage of families who ate between 2 and 3 meals a day was 17%.

REFRIGERATOR AT HOME: 54%
At baseline, the percentage of families who had a refrigerator was 20%. This asset is very important because if families do not have any place to store meats, fruits or vegetables, they have to buy food daily which is more costly.