



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

**STRENGTHENING INCLUSION
AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE
THROUGH COMMUNITY CINEMA
AND DIGITAL MEDIA WITH REFUGEE
YOUTH AND HOST COMMUNITIES**

A promising practice in Ecuador



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Cover photo: Refugee and host community youth in the process of producing a video as part of the 'De Cámaras a Camaradas' project.

Photo credit: UNHCR Ecuador

Title: 'De Cámaras a Camaradas' (From Cameras to Comrades).

Project objective: To strengthen peaceful coexistence and inclusion between refugee youth communities and host youth communities in Ecuador.

Dates: June 2019 - present

Population groups: Refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and host communities.

Partners: Fundación Aldhea (Alternativas Latinoamericanas de Desarrollo Humano y Estudios Antropológicos), Turubamba Cultural Centre, Secretary of Culture of the Municipality of Cuenca Ministry of International Relations, Zonal Directorate No 6. Cantonal Council for the Protection of Rights of the Municipality of Machala, Movimiento de Mujeres del Oro, Fundación Quiema, Movimiento Afro de Azuay, Fundación Uniendo Voluntades and Casa del Migrante de Cuenca y CINEC.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

To promote peaceful coexistence between the refugee and host community in Ecuador, young people, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) youth, participated in community cinema in four different cities, creating six short films. This project helped strengthen local support networks and foster spaces for mutual support between the host community, refugees and other persons of concern.

CONTEXT

Since 2016, some 1.5 million Venezuelans have crossed into Ecuador, which currently hosts 503,644¹ refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants including persons from Colombia and other neighbouring countries. Although Ecuadorian communities have demonstrated immense solidarity with refugees, discrimination and xenophobia towards persons of concern (PoCs) to UNHCR continues to rise. Social tensions between both communities have been exacerbated by pressure and competition over scarce resources. Refugees are perceived as taking jobs away from Ecuadorians and overstressing public services. They are often blamed for an increase in crime, particularly in urban areas. Growing xenophobia, violence and discrimination has undermined the peaceful coexistence of PoCs with their host communities and continues to impede the access to adequate housing, healthcare and social protection programmes. According to a mid-line study conducted by UNHCR in 2018, around 40 per cent of PoCs have felt or feel discriminated against, mostly in public spaces. In the case of Venezuelans, the figure is higher at 46 per cent.



¹ UNHCR Ecuador, as at 31 December 2019

² Refugees and Migrant Response Plan 2020 for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela

Against this increasingly insecure backdrop, youth – who comprise approximately 30 per cent of PoCs – continue to struggle to plan a future life for themselves, while at the same time facing limited access to opportunities for higher education and self-reliance. This has been further compounded by uncertainty in finding a lasting durable solution. Due to displacement, young people are often forced to take on new roles and responsibilities as a way of ensuring that their own as well as their families' basic needs are met, which sometimes places them in precarious situations during the migration process. The marginalization, isolation, and hardship resulting from this forced displacement

can increase young refugees' vulnerability. PoCs with a diverse sexual orientation or gender identity face particularly distinct vulnerabilities. In addition to serious discrimination and violence in their countries of origin, including gender-based violence (GBV), lack of police protection, barriers to accessing basic services and general social exclusion, LGBTIQ+ PoCs are often continuously exposed to harm during forced displacement. LGBTIQ+ young people are at high risk of remaining invisible due to a fear of further persecution in the country of asylum. UNHCR recognizes the importance of ensuring that LGBTIQ+ youth are protected from harm and that their rights are upheld.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

UNHCR protection and public information colleagues in Ecuador came together to explore how a human-centred approach can enhance engagement with LGBTIQ+ youth and foster local integration with the host community. Following extensive discussions with youth, film was explored as a tool for potential social change and intervention. In May 2019, UNHCR organized a workshop with a youth group comprising 15 LGBTIQ+ refugees from Columbia and Venezuela, as well as members of the local Ecuadorian community. During this iterative process, participants attended classes on pre-production, production, photography, acting, storytelling and editing. In the end, participants came together to produce a short film called *Shalek*, which premiered during the 2019 Pride Week in Ecuador. The film was also shown at the National Contemporary Arts Center in Quito and selected for screening at a Canadian LGBTIQ+ film festival. The project was a success in that participants noted that it not only had a positive impact on their self-esteem but also enabled them to establish a more cohesive personal network with the local LGBTIQ+ community.

Building on the success of this experiment in cinema, in August 2019, UNHCR partnered with Fundación Aldhea (an organization with extensive experience in human rights education and the use of cinema to promote social change) and five community centres in Cuenca, Quito, Machala and Guayaquil to implement the first phase of the community cinema project.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Understand the realities, barriers, challenges and protection concerns of refugee youth;
- Promote peaceful coexistence between refugee and host communities through participatory, community and popular education methodologies;
- Develop processes that promote youth's rights to communicate by stimulating their interpretation and consideration of what affects them; and
- Create safe digital spaces for youth through alternative community communication, art and culture.

By employing participatory and community cinema methodologies, the project encouraged participants to examine their experiences of forced displacement, as well as the dynamics of conflict, violence, rejection and discrimination in interactions between both communities in their neighbourhoods. Considering the limited opportunities for refugee and host communities to have an open dialogue, this project sought to create spaces for collaboration and mutual exchange between different groups, so that they might share their life stories and speak freely as a way to foster social cohesion.



Photo credit: UNHCR Ecuador

Refugee and host community youth participating in the 'De Cámaras a Camaradas' project.

▶ PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES

Phase I of Cameras to Comrades lasted from July to December 2019.



SELECTION OF WORKSHOP VENUES AND CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS:

Workshop venues were chosen after mapping out community spaces and cultural centres in neighbourhoods identified as hosting persons of concern. A list of strategic partners was used to guide the mapping process and Fundación Aldhea's network from previous work in the community was used to guide the four selected venues. A call was

sent out for youth participants aged 15 to 30 years old, via local and national media, social media, television and radio, resulting in wide coverage and high interest. A commitment of 40 hours for the technical pre-production workshops was required of each participant.



PRE-PRODUCTION WORKSHOP – DEVELOPING A SHORT FILM SCRIPT:

Several techniques were utilized to explore themes such xenophobia, discrimination, and violence. Participants were encouraged to identify challenges and barriers for their local integration and peaceful coexistence. Participants then collectively mapped

the problems and identified responsible actors in, and solutions to, the situation of displaced persons. This permitted closer examination of how gender, age, ethnicity, and class variables intersect in these expressions of rejection by host communities.



Photo credit: UNHCR Ecuador

Refugee and host community youth participating in the 'De Cámaras a Camaradas' project.

Other participants in the workshops included women with children, persons with disabilities and members of the LGBTIQ+ community, thus allowing for real time feedback on the creation of a collective script. The main reflections from the participants' lived experiences and identified problems were

transformed into an audio-visual narrative through the creation of a script. For each location, one script for a short film lasting approximately five minutes was created around themes of GBV, prejudice within schools, local integration, cross-cultural communication, and experiences of displacement.



PRE-PRODUCTION WORKSHOP AND TECHNICAL TRAINING:

Practical workshops on cinematography introduced participants to photography, sound, audiovisual language, film viewing, storyboards for video shooting, location scouting, costumes, and acting. The scripts brought together documentary, fiction, docufiction and stop-motion techniques. Practical

work was prioritized during the workshops and included film viewing on selected topics. UNHCR guidelines on human rights and the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in Ecuador were incorporated throughout the training.



PRODUCTION:

A detailed production plan was generated for each script and participants shot the script and put into practice what they had learnt during pre-production. All participants were provided with roles, including field production, photography, sound, lighting, costumes and performance, as required. The filming of each script took place over two days in each location and lasted up to 12 hours.



Photo credit: UNHCR Ecuador

Refugee and host community youth participating in the 'De Cámaras a Camaradas' project.



POST-PRODUCTION:

The footage was edited in a specialized studio in Quito where participants played with sound effects and visual effects under the technical guidance of project facilitators. The rough cut of the short films was shared with Fundación Aldeha project coordinators and UNHCR for review. Participants also created a behind the scenes “making of” feature, which gave an account of the training process and the collective work and a trailer that was broadcast during the preview and premiere.



EXHIBITION – COMMUNITY PREVIEW AND EVALUATION OF SHORT FILMS:

As a key principle of community cinema, the participants returned to the locations to give previews of the short films, which was an important step in ensuring accountability. A cinema forum was held in each neighbourhood in which the films were shot, involving the participants, UNHCR representatives and other organizations

from these locations. During these events, the participants shared the process as well as the product of their work with the community, thereby generating a space in which to raise awareness of the challenges faced by refugees and migrants and engage in a collective discussion on how to improve local relationships.



EXHIBITION – PREMIERE AND OFFICIAL RELEASE OF SHORT FILMS:

A preview tour of all six short films was organized and the official launch was held in November 2019 at the Teatro Facultad de Artes Central in Quito. The event was attended by an audience that included participants, their families and friends, UNHCR partners and local organizations. The screening of the short films lasted 45 minutes and, at the end of the screenings, selected participants from different locations shared their experience of the project to build support networks between cities.



Photo credit: UNHCR Ecuador

Refugee and host community youth participating in the 'De Cámaras a Camaradas' project.

PARTICIPATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The structure of community cinema workshops involved youth as members of the film's community throughout all stages of the production process, from planning through to execution and evaluation of the resulting short films. As a way of ensuring accountability and promoting process ownership, the participants organized an exhibition and led a session in which they reflected on the process of making the film rather than the product. Through this approach, participants were able to explore and

represent local concerns while also representing themselves and their issues through cinema.

The selected participants were diverse and representative of refugee and host communities. They included men, boys, women and girls and comprised persons with disabilities and persons with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

RESULTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The six participatory community film workshops involved 133 young people, thus exceeding the initial project target of 120 participants; 67 women and 66 men participated, of whom 65 were persons of concern to UNHCR and 68 were Ecuadorian; 6 community film workshops and 6 short film screenings were held in Turumbamba, Cotacollao, Guayaquil, Cuenca and Machala. The national premiere in Quito was attended by an estimated 470 individuals.

Participants noted that the project helped bolster positive social cohesion and promote peaceful

coexistence between communities. A strong camaraderie was also observed during the premiere. Feedback from participants indicated their desire to continue the project since these initiatives helped to create protective and horizontal spaces of trust and familiarity. Participants also reported that they had shared the films with their family, friends and fellow students through social networks, which in turn enhanced community networks in the neighbourhood and created a greater awareness of refugee rights.

As a way of ensuring **accountability and promoting process ownership**, the participants organized an exhibition and led a session in which they **reflected on the process of making the film rather than the product**.

▶ LESSONS LEARNED

- 💡 During workshops, the process of exploring problems resulted in intense reactions, mainly from refugee participants. Workshop facilitators should have the psycho-emotional tools necessary to channel these feelings and allow for proper collective reflection, closure and containment.
- 💡 The presence of community promoters, who were incentive workers from both refugee and host communities in each location, was essential to ensure outreach and participation. During the first iterations of workshops, attendance rates were low and it was only by bringing in persons from the community to actively support identification of the participants and follow-up of activities that the project was able to ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of communities.
- 💡 In locations where UNHCR field officers were able to closely engage with the project and follow-up activities, the overall result was better than in locations without a UNHCR presence.
- 💡 Engagement with community cultural centres ensures a more sustainable process, while supporting improved community engagement with these centres.
- 💡 Workshop materials, including bibliographies, free film references, and webpages were provided to participants in a closed Facebook group. This group was one of the ways in which ties between participants were also strengthened.
- 💡 Staff with unique knowledge, sensitivity and experience working with LGBTIQ+ communities enabled the project. This expertise helped to facilitate contact with and identify entry points, through which positive working relationships could be built between LGBTIQ+ youth and humanitarian actors.

▶ TIPS FOR REPLICATION AND SCALING UP

- ✔ Encourage commitment by requesting that participants fill out a letter of commitment promising to attend workshops.
- ✔ Plan the frequency of workshops and schedules according to the needs/availability of participants and ensure flexibility.
- ✔ Ensure close follow-up by UNHCR offices in each location. This allows closer contact with participants and ensures that, once the project is over, youth support networks remain active and in close contact with UNHCR to plan and implement new activities.
- ✔ Provide participants and involved organizations with a workshop on the UNHCR mandate and the concept of international protection to ensure greater visibility of asylum.

NEXT STEPS

Building on the experience of 2019, Phase II of the project is designed with a view to enhancing sustainability and expanding to new locations. However this was delayed due to COVID-19. Below is a list of specific activities planned for 2020.

- ▶ A scaled approach to cinematography workshops following the processes in Phase I. A level one course is offered, in which participants produce a three-minute film. A more advanced level two course is offered, with a focus on strengthening and demonstrating technical knowledge with a film of more than three minutes.
- ▶ Targeted workshops to address unplanned emerging needs due to discrimination and xenophobia: context-specific workshops

held to explore issues UNHCR considers prevalent in schools and/or community-wide spaces to promote more inclusive educational communities.

- ▶ Community reporting: a safe digital space will be established in which youth can create content that is disseminated during a weekly broadcast promoting peaceful coexistence and safe environments during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

MORE INFORMATION

- ▶ <https://www.facebook.com/Camaras-camaradas-Cine-comunitario-2872626246144666/>
- ▶ Machala: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oXkmbN5ZM&feature=youtu.be
- ▶ “La Maleta Viajera” (The travelling suitcase) -
- ▶ “Guatiarepa” (The name comes from two main dishes the Ecuadorian “guatita” and the Colombian/Venezuelan “arepa”) Guayaquil: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B-dPm3ymUbo>
- ▶ “Shalek” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfNh2knNNfs>
- ▶ Reporteros Comunitarios first programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ag7mjjPwjTY>
- ▶ Reporteros Comunitarios second programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iple0K2Y9G4>
- ▶ Reporteros Comunitarios third Programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1BnnTzGw8Ck>
- ▶ Stop-motion workshop for participants: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0q7ixx6ZSL4>
- ▶ What should you do if you have COVID-19 symptoms? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-m0IDJG21KA>
- ▶ My experience in Dale Play, Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IBrX6DODTmY>
- ▶ My experience in Dale Play, Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=84gqS-fujrg>
- ▶ This is why we celebrate LGBTIQ+ Pride: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Br8XTd2jAno>
- ▶ What should you know about the second phase of social distancing in Ecuador? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StO77Gnyn5U>

DALE PLAY

An initiative to support 18 young refugee and migrant YouTubers and influencers from Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Ecuador and Spain, who live in Ecuador, by providing them with tools to combat discrimination and promote the rights of PoCs through social media.

A three-day workshop was held from 27-28 November 2019, during which participants had the opportunity to learn about the UNHCR mandate and receive practical sessions on how to develop and manage content for their audience on social media and how to record and edit videos using their phones and free software. By the end of the event, participants had developed a 17-point action plan on how to improve youth participation in terms of Communicating with Communities.

Positive feedback was received and UNHCR continues to support them in generating content relating to the rights and duties of refugees and migrants in Ecuador, including by providing them with videos promoting peaceful coexistence and raising awareness on COVID-19.

“The meeting seemed spectacular to me. It has personally motivated me to develop an idea that I have been thinking for a long time and I hope to be able to collaborate together for the transformation of society by positively influencing people, who listen to me and see the work I am creating. Dale Play has opened doors to share knowledge and useful information so that we can contribute to a peaceful society. I hope to be able to contribute by sharing the knowledge that I have regarding various topics of interest.”

- Excerpt taken from feedback from a participant in the Dale Play

ANNEX 1

DISTINCTION TABLE

Below you will find the categorization table for field practices. The practice above from Ecuador has been defined as a promising practice based on the criteria below:

| | Case Study | Emerging Practice | Promising Practice |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Rationale | <p>Capture practices to provide information on process, insights and lessons that are of interest (topics, themes etc.), but there is no requirement to evidence the study.</p> <p>The purpose of case studies is to capture successful and/or unsuccessful attempts to implement a project. These are considered valuable for learning and improving.</p> <p>There is a requirement that the study was designed to meet minimum criteria in <u>design</u>.</p> | <p>Identify and track practices which may have not yet produced sufficient results but there are indications that it could. The practice should not have been documented elsewhere with an exception of programme evaluations. There is a requirement to ensure that it meets the minimum criteria in <u>design and results</u>.</p> | <p>Document and share practices that are promising. The practice should not have been documented elsewhere with an exception of programme evaluations. There is a requirement to ensure that it meets the minimum criteria in <u>design and results</u>.</p> |
| Definition | <p>Descriptive and explanatory overview of a practice, or part of a practice, without requirement for provision of evidence or any judgement as to its value or sustainability. It can provide insights and lessons learned into future programming.</p> | <p>Practice that shows early indications of producing positive results to transform lives of individuals or communities.</p> | <p>Practice that is proven to work well and produce sustainable results, and has a protective and/or transformative potential for individuals or communities, as demonstrated by quality and reliable evidence. It can serve as a model to be replicated and scaled up.</p> |
| Results (evidence level) | <p>No results are required.</p> <p>It is a plain explanation of the process that does not have any results or may have very limited results such as quotes about the process.</p> | <p>The availability of indications can be 'showing signs of some aspects' to 'consider producing positive results along the way'.</p> <p>Indications can be assessment (qualitative or quantitative) or monitoring results that do not have a comparison with a baseline. An emerging practice should be something that has the potential to become a promising practice</p> | <p>There should be some existing results of effectiveness of the practice demonstrated as positive changes that the practice is making. Baseline and midline or endline data (qualitative or quantitative) should be available as well as documented results before and after the practice is carried out.</p> <p>When results are not documented, the practice can be still considered if staff members or partners can provide a detailed account on observable changes.</p> |

A demonstration of attempted adherence refers to those practices that attempted to apply the criteria and did not succeed for various reasons such as context/operational environment etc. It is recognised that all practice implementation must strive toward adhering to and achieving the criteria. It is acknowledged that there are lessons to be learned from challenges faced and unsuccessful attempts.

| | Case Study | Emerging Practice | Promising Practice |
|--|--|---|---|
| Inclusion | Can be a study that is inclusive of all groups or that is targeted. | Can be a practice that is inclusive of all groups or that is targeted. | Can be a practice that is inclusive of all groups or that is targeted. |
| Criteria *optional ®Should only be indication that these were considered in the design phase in order to allow for capturing all types of case studies. | Relevance® Participation® Age® Gender® Diversity® Do no harm® Innovation* | Relevance Participation Age Gender Diversity Do no harm Innovation* Results (indicated outputs/ outcomes/impacts) | Relevance Participation Age Gender Diversity Do no harm Innovation* Results (outputs/outcomes/ impacts) Sustainability Replicability Scalability |
| Timeline | No minimum requirement for implementation duration. Can be on-going or recently completed. | No minimum requirement for implementation duration. Should be on-going. | Implemented within the past 3 years, can be concluded or ongoing. |
| Submission | All submissions, regardless of a category, will be submitted using a common template to describe the practice briefly (not more than three pages) applying a self-rating tool | | |
| Process *clearance is only needed for documents for external publication | Self-rating by the field operation Review by HQ to confirm self-rating Completion of documentation by field team Review of documentation by HQ + editing Publish on intranet | Self-rating by the field operation Review by HQ to confirm self-rating Completion of documentation by field team Review of documentation by HQ + editing Approval and clearance (for external publications) at field level (+Bureau) Clearance at HQ and publish | Self-rating by the field operation Review by HQ to confirm self-rating Completion of documentation by field team Review of documentation by HQ + editing Approval and clearance (for external publications) at field level (+Bureau) Clearance at HQ and publish |
| How it will be used | Can be hosted online (intranet) Incorporated into learning tools and materials Can be offered as examples in various reports | Can be hosted online (intranet) Can be published in print or online for external audiences Incorporated into learning tools and materials Can be offered as examples in various reports | Can be hosted online (intranet) Can be published in print or online for external audiences Incorporated into learning tools and materials Can be offered as examples in various reports |

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