Climate change is a significant risk multiplier that is contributing to displacement and protection needs worldwide, including in Latin America and the Caribbean. Over the past ten years, 93% of Brazilian municipalities have been affected by some type of natural disaster related to extreme events. According to the AdaptaBrasil Platform, 66% out of the 5,570 municipalities have low or very low adaptive capacity to extreme events and hydrogeological disasters, such as storms, heatwaves, strong marine surges, landslides, and floods. As a consequence, there is substantial material damage, economic losses, and human casualties.

Although drought is the most common of the natural disasters, especially in the Northeast, floods have the most devastating effects, including loss of human life, damage to property and infrastructure, and destruction of crops and livestock, which can lead to homelessness and displacement. According to the 2024 Report by the NRC's Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, Brazil is the country with most internal displacements recorded in the Americas in 2023 - some 761,000 had to leave their homes due to natural disasters.

The state of Roraima, the main entry point for refugees and migrants from Venezuela, is among those that are mostly experiencing the effects of environmental hazards. Furthermore, the state suffers from illegal mining that causes environmental and social damage to the indigenous communities. Roraima is also home to almost 7,300 indigenous peoples from Venezuela who face compounded challenges to access their rights, including collective rights, and local integration opportunities adapted to their socio-cultural needs.

Against this background, UNHCR Brazil is prioritizing environmental actions to reduce the long-lasting impacts of climate change on natural resources that directly affect displaced and host communities. These programmes also aim to raise environmental awareness among refugees and host communities and mitigate UNHCR operations’ ecological footprint. The geographic focus is on Roraima where refugees heavily rely on the assistance provided by the State, UNHCR and other actors, in the framework of the federal humanitarian response "Operation Welcome".

UNHCR is also strengthening coordination efforts with federal and local authorities and partners to ensure refugees and others in displacement are fully included in adaptation and mitigation plans and disaster relief actions.
The Ministry of the Environment of Brazil is now working on a new Climate Plan to collectively agree on a long-term sustainable development path for the country (2024 to 2035). UNHCR is liaising with the Secretary of Climate Change of the Ministry to discuss synergies in climate action and cooperation in the elaboration of the Plan. Similarly, UNHCR is contributing to the work of the Ministry of Social Development in updating guidelines for the social assistance system’s – SUAS – response to emergencies and disasters.

Moreover, UNHCR provides technical support to local authorities in assessing risks and impacts affecting refugees and other people living in areas especially exposed to climate-extreme events or disasters, such as Rio Grande do Sul and Amazonas states. UNHCR is contributing to communication efforts to ensure that refugees and migrants have timely access to official information on prevention and assistance to disasters.

UNHCR will continue to explore other possibilities for support based on needs assessments and operational capacities, adopting a complementary and coordinated approach to the government’s response.

**SUSTAINABILITY CENTRE**

In an effort to align humanitarian interventions with environmental stewardship, during 2023, UNHCR Brazil has strategically integrated environmentally conscious practices into its operational framework. At the core of UNHCR’s commitment to sustainability lies the [Sustainable Centre, located in Boa Vista, the capital of Roraima at the border with Venezuela](https://www.unhcr.org). This is the space where UNHCR promotes environmental awareness and engage refugees, fostering sustainable methodologies, and empowering communities for long-term development. In this facility, initiatives such as seedling planting, aquaponics, vegetable gardening, and rainwater harvesting have been implemented, empowering refugee volunteers under the guidance of UNHCR’s technical expertise.

**PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

UNHCR promotes climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable livelihoods through a series of interventions targeting people in need of international protection. Firstly, following the mapping of Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) working with topics of climate mitigation, UNHCR started to support these organizations facilitating connections to opportunities including training and funding. This initiative seeks to strengthen capacity of RLOs, including in projects aimed to enhance resilience and reduce vulnerability among forcibly displaced populations. Secondly, UNHCR is engaging with sustainable entrepreneurs to promote environmentally conscious business practices among members of the [Refugiados Empreendedores Platform](https://www.unhcr.org). Additionally, the office is making efforts to connect refugees seeking job opportunities with eco-friendly employers.

Finally, the UNHCR has been liaising with the NGOs specialized in reforestation efforts to engage indigenous refugees who live in rural regions in the restoration of degraded areas promoting both environmental conservation and potential livelihood opportunities. Overall, the UNHCR’s multifaceted approach aims to create resilient livelihoods, empower refugees, and address climate challenges.
During 2023, the Sustainability Centre has led the way in **pioneering sustainable housing projects**, including Transitional Shelter Units (TSUs), Mud Houses, and wood frame technic using sustainable structure panel. These initiatives prioritized locally sourced materials, reducing emissions associated with transportation. Furthermore, they delved into eco-friendly construction techniques, aiming to incorporate climate-resilient and adapted materials that not only offer extended lifespan of refugee housing within emergency contexts, but also a housing solution for rural areas, with enhanced living conditions by mitigating extreme temperatures and improving luminosity.

Another notable initiative implemented in specific shelters centers in Roraima involves transitioning from traditional on-grid lighting fixtures, dependent on the public electricity network, to off-grid solar automated alternatives. This transition not only lowers energy costs but also notably reduces environmental pressure. It's particularly significant in Roraima, as the state operates primarily on locally generated thermal power, a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, due to its isolation from the national electricity grid.

In response to the urgent challenges presented by droughts in northern Brazil, UNHCR has also enacted a comprehensive water contingency plan. This plan emphasized **sustainable water management practices**, incorporating structural adjustments such as gravity-based systems for laundry and bathrooms, as well as initiatives like rainwater harvesting and the installation of drinking water fountains. These combined measures effectively reduced water wastage and improved overall water resource management.

**1,338**

people from refugee and host community reached through environmental awareness activities at the Sustainability Centre

**3,000**

seedlings produced for reforestation, reducing the carbon footprint and mitigating local environmental impact of the emergency response
UNHCR is conducting a feasibility study on carbon credit-financed reforestation programs in Roraima that would link refugees and host communities to the global carbon markets, making them part of the worldwide movement to fight climate change. The study will assess the technical viability of large-scale refugee-led carbon credits plantations, that would generate an income that these communities can re-invest in new reforestation initiatives, as well as livelihood programs that boost their socioeconomic integration. The study will provide recommendations for project development strategies that mitigate risks and maximize financial results.

**ENVISIONING REFUGEE-LED CARBON CREDIT PLANTATIONS**

UNHCR Brazil is actively engaged in the “Greening the Blue” strategic sustainability project aimed to reduce the environmental footprint of UN agencies offices worldwide. In the framework of this initiative the office shares data on the consumption of energy and water and garbage collection in Brazil, and makes an effort to introduce sustainable practices into the operation, for example considering environmental dimensions in procurement processes and promoting staff awareness on waste reduction. Moreover, UNHCR is looking to secure funding to equip its offices with on-Grid Photovoltaic Solar Energy Generating Systems that would reduce electricity consumption and preserve natural resources.

**INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ENGAGING IN SUSTAINABLE FARMING**

The city of Cantá, Roraima, hosts some 140 Warao and Kariña indigenous persons living in a self-organized community based on subsistence farming. To address the needs that the community expressed during participatory consultations, UNHCR and the University of Aalto, Finland, conducted capacity strengthening sessions on composting and piloted a rainwater gathering system, providing water for personal hygiene and irrigation purposes. Participants produced a booklet to disseminate these best practices, and the lessons they learned throughout the process, among other indigenous and rural communities.

**UNHCR IS GREENING ITS OFFICES IN BRAZIL**

UNHCR Brazil is actively engaged in the “Greening the Blue” strategic sustainability project aimed to reduce the environmental footprint of UN agencies offices worldwide. In the framework of this initiative the office shares data on the consumption of energy and water and garbage collection in Brazil, and makes an effort to introduce sustainable practices into the operation, for example considering environmental dimensions in procurement processes and promoting staff awareness on waste reduction. Moreover, UNHCR is looking to secure funding to equip its offices with on-Grid Photovoltaic Solar Energy Generating Systems that would reduce electricity consumption and preserve natural resources.

UNHCR Brazil is also thankful for the important support of and partnerships with other UN agencies, Brazilian authorities (at federal, state and municipal levels) and civil society organizations working together to deliver the emergency response and in the regular programmes of the Brazilian operation.