

BRAZIL OPERATION

COVID-19 RESPONSE

JUNE 2021



On World Refugee Day, celebrated globally on 20 June, UNHCR Brazil organized a series of initiatives to celebrate the power of inclusion

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

As of 30 June, Brazil reached a total of 18,557,141 confirmed cases and 518,066 deaths from COVID-19, placing Brazil at the second-highest number of deaths in the world in absolute numbers.

On 23 June, the Office of the Presidency, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and the Ministry of Health approved Ordinance 655, which introduces more flexible measures for Venezuelans affected by the humanitarian crisis in Venezuela. The Ordinance reaffirms that Brazil's land borders (except for the one with Paraguay) remain closed but incorporates several changes, including free transit between "twin cities" in Venezuela and Brazil; entry to Brazil of Venezuelan nationals and legal residents of Venezuela and their subsequent regularization; and regularization of status (asylum claim and migratory residence permits) by Venezuelan nationals and legal residents of Venezuela who entered Brazil irregularly during border closure. The Ordinance does not apply to nationals of other countries.

On the same day, Brazil assumed the Pro Tempore Presidency of the Quito Process. During the handover ceremony, Brazil reaffirmed its commitment to continue supporting the search for solutions to alleviate the situation of the 4,6 million refugees and migrants from Venezuela in Latin America and the Caribbean and emphasized its support for host communities, young people, and the relationship with international cooperation. During its term, Brazil will conduct the VIII International Technical Round on Human Mobility of Venezuelans in the Region.

On 11 June, Brazil was elected to occupy a non-permanent seat of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for the 2022-2023 term. It will be the country's 11th time serving at the most important body responsible for international collective security.

KEY RISKS AND GAPS

Access to territory and asylum: The flexibilization introduced by Ordinance 655 allows Venezuelans and third countries nationals legally residing in Venezuela access to territory through the official border. However, with the border from the Venezuelan side still closed, free transit between "twin cities" has not yet resumed. Protection risks such as abuse and exploitation are still present, and many are left with no other option than continuing to cross irregularly in very vulnerable conditions.

Access to humanitarian assistance: With the inflow of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, the socio-economic structures of border cities such as Pacaraima and Boa Vista are experiencing additional pressure. The capacity of Operation Welcome's shelters, although being expanded, needs

to be linked with continued efforts on registration and documentation, along with relocation opportunities to other cities in Brazil.

UNHCR RESPONSE

Strengthening shelter support and ensuring access to basic items

Shelter: In June, 926 refugees and migrants were allocated to Operation Welcome's shelters in Roraima.

In the context of UNHCR's protection mapping to identify refugees and migrants in a vulnerable situation at the Manaus Bus Station Support Space (PRA), in the month of June, 47 individuals were accommodated in the municipal shelters.

Food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution: In June, UNHCR delivered 2,340 family and individual hygiene kits, 2,553 bags, 2,379 family cleaning kits, 2,190 masks, 1,825 mattresses, 2,010 waterproof mattress covers, 2,671 packs of diapers, 1,469 jerrycans, 1,565 buckets, 865 mosquito nets and 454 solar lamps to support refugees and migrants sheltered in Roraima. Basic assistance provided to Venezuelan refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations remains key to ensure improved reception conditions in Roraima.

Ensuring protection and supporting integration processes

Integration: In June, a total of 1,467 refugees and migrants were voluntarily relocated from Amazonas and Roraima states to other parts of Brazil by bus or flight. UNHCR supported 1,582 individuals with the Fit for Travel (FFT) process.

On 23 June, UNHCR and the UN Global Compact Network Brazil launched the [Fórum Empresas com Refugiados](#). Bringing together business organizations interested in supporting the inclusion of refugees in the labor market, the Fórum Empresas com Refugiados encourages the exchange of best practices, promotes sustainability and diversity policies, and overall expands opportunities for refugees in work environments through training, mentoring and recruitment.

In Manaus, UNHCR and Hermanitos promoted the "Employability Week" with young refugees and migrants who will be supported to access apprenticeship programs with the School-Enterprise Integration Centre (CIEE) and the private sector. Activities included group discussions about behavioral skills and professional plans with 42 young participants.

In Boa Vista, twenty women sheltered at Rondon 2, who are participating in the VI edition of the "Empoderando Refugiadas" project, started their classes on professional development, cultural adaptation, and sales techniques, organized in partnership with SENAC Roraima. After the capacity-building program, participants will be referred to job opportunities offered by companies engaged with the project.

On 8 June, at the request of Roraima's Secretariat of Planning (SEPLAN-RR), UNHCR facilitated a meeting between World Bank and state secretariat representatives, also counting on the participation of Roraima Desenvolve, the Deputy Finance Secretary, and Codesaima (Companhia de Desenvolvimento de Roraima). The meeting was an opportunity for SEPLAN-RR to present their 2030 Sustainable Development Plan, while also exploring opportunities for joint collaboration.

During the month of June, UNHCR provided financial assistance through multi-purpose cash grants to 640 families (2,016 individuals), 95% of Venezuelan nationality.

Indigenous: On 19 and 20 June, the COVID-19 vaccination of Indigenous peoples who are sheltered in Boa Vista restarted, under the coordination of Operation Welcome's Task Force and executed by the NSA. More than 480 Indigenous asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants sheltered received the first dose, while the vaccination for the rest of the sheltered population continued over the following weeks.

On 9 June, with the special participation of Institute Insikiran (Institute of Indigenous higher education of the Federal University of Roraima), UNHCR hosted a training session on inter-culturality and the specificities of working with indigenous population, reaching 80 persons.

In Manaus, 14 Warao artisans supported by the joint project between UNHCR and Museu A Casa do Objeto Brasileiro participated in the First Indigenous Handicraft Fair in Amazonas State, launched on 6 June. In addition, eleven indigenous artisan women were supported to access the National Artisan License, through which they will be able to participate in national and international fairs and benefit from VAT exemption for their handicrafts, with the aim of forging new market access and opportunities for income generation for refugee artisans.



Protection: In the framework of CONARE's 155th Plenary Meeting, 621 refugee claims were deliberated. The Committee recognized 87 individuals as refugees, including people from Cuba and Venezuela, and granted derivative status to 422 persons, mainly from Venezuela. To date, 61,203 refugees have been recognized in Brazil, out of which 48,081 are Venezuelans.

In June, 1,136 refugees and migrants contacted the UNHCR Manaus protection line for queries related to access to documentation, urgent material support, financial assistance, and other protection issues.

During the second week of June, UNHCR, together with IOM, carried out a technical mission to the city of Tabatinga at the Brazil-Peru-Colombia border. UNHCR met with local government representatives, Caritas, and Federal Police and visited two local communities, conducting an initial assessment of their needs.

In Boa Vista, UNHCR, in close coordination with UNFPA, held two sessions on preventing sexual exploration and abuse for 39 participants from private security teams working in the Operation Welcome shelters. Furthermore, two training sessions on gender-based violence prevention were carried out for partners SJMR, AVSI, and FFHI, including their staff located in Pacaraima.

Moreover, UNHCR conducted an online training on Humanitarian Principles, Legal Framework, and International Protection to partners responsible for pre-documentation in the Reception and Documentation Center (PITrig), aiming to strengthen their capacities in preparation for the flexibilization measures regarding access to territory.

UNHCR also facilitated a series of capacity-building sessions for state and local authorities in their response to refugees and migrants in the South-Southeast of Brazil. In Espírito Santo, UNHCR delivered a protection training to the Secretariats of Social Assistance of all the 78 municipalities; in Paraná, approximately 100 participants were trained on assistance to LGBTQIA+ refugees and migrants; in Minas Gerais, an introductory module on refugee protection and assistance was organized for 60 participants from the local public network.

On 21 June, UNHCR participated in a Statelessness Workshop coordinated by the Ministry of Justice and the research institute ObMigra (University of Brasília). This was the first forum on the matter bringing together public officials, UNHCR and civil society actors and resulted in technical recommendations that will guide public policies in an effort to contribute to the reduction of statelessness in Brazil.

In June, UNHCR launched the first version of the automatic response WhatsApp "Chama". As part of communicating with communities initiatives, this artificial intelligence tool has been created to respond to frequently asked questions of Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in the Brazilian territory, counterbalancing the circulation of fake news among this population.

Documentation and Registration: In June, in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, UNHCR and partners registered in proGres v4 2,383 persons and generated 3,048 shelter IDs. The numbers reflect registration efforts targeting PoCs supported through shelter allocation, CBI assistance or included within the voluntary relocation strategy promoted by the federal government. Additionally, UNHCR in

partnership with AVSI supported the documentation of 579 individuals at the Reception and Documentation Centres (PITrig) in Boa Vista and Pacaraima.

Since Ordinance 655 came into force, Operation Welcome Task Force and the Federal Police started working together with UN agencies and partners on a processing capacity that includes daily sanitary control for 80 people (50 for new arrivals through official border and 30 other Venezuelans) and daily pre-documentation for 100 people (through BV8 and Janokoida).

As for Manaus, UNHCR referred 286 asylum seekers and 80 refugees for documentation procedures during the month of June.

Celebrating World Refugee Day and the power of inclusion

In Boa Vista, UNHCR and AVSI promoted the initiative "Fútbol sin Fronteras" where 60 children participated. The activity, which involves boys and girls living in Rondon 1 shelter in soccer activities, intends to support the recovery of their self-esteem, promote integration and peaceful coexistence, while using sport as a safe and inclusive space for young communities.

In Belém, UNHCR organized a capacity-building session for 15 journalists to foster fact-based information about refugees and asylum-related themes, promoting peaceful relations between displaced persons and host communities through the use of multimedia communications.

In Manaus, UNHCR and Instituto Mana held two group discussions with women living at the indigenous municipal shelters to promote community-based activities, including dancing and handicraft expositions, enriching the celebration event for Radio Yakera Jokonae's first anniversary on 18 June.

In São Paulo, UNHCR in partnership with Memorial da América Latina promoted a virtual press conference focused on UNHCR's Global Trends report, presented by UNHCR Brazil Representative, and the digital publication "Tradução Humanitária e Mediação Cultural para Migrantes e Refugiados", which includes a chapter on UNHCR's role in cultural mediation and community-based protection in Brazil.

In addition, UNHCR Private Sector Partnership organize the live virtual event "The power of inclusion: an exclusive conversation with Khaled Hosseini & Pedro Bial", attended by fifty participants, which contributed to sensitize potential private donors in Brazil about the refugee cause.

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