

# BRAZIL OPERATION

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

OCTOBER 2021



UNHCR and AVSI assisting refugees and migrants at the recently opened BV-8 Annex

### OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

As of 31 October, Brazil registered a total of 21,821,124 confirmed cases and 607,922 deaths from COVID-19. This month, Brazil reached more than half the population (58%) with complete vaccination against COVID-19, ranking as the fifth country in South America to achieve this mark, and more than 70% of the population with at least one dose.

On 4 and 5 October, the second virtual meeting of National Committees for Refugees (CONARES) of MERCOSUR States Party and Associated Countries was organized under the Pro Tempore Presidency of Brazil. Brazil's Presidency, held throughout the second semester of 2021, which will pass onto Paraguay in the first semester of 2022.

In the first week of October, UNHCR Brazil's Representative, José Egas, went on mission to the states of Espírito Santo and Paraná. In Espírito Santo, the Representative met with different State Secretariats, visited the Federal University (UFES) that is part of the Cátedra Sérgio Vieira de Mello (CSVM) network, and participated in meetings with the Commission on Human Rights and Citizenship of the Legislative Assembly and with the Federal and State Public Defender's Office (DPU/DPE) to follow up on coordination issues for reception of Venezuelans in the state. In Paraná, the Representative visited Casa do Migrante as well as the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA), exploring the opportunity for the University to join the CSVM network. Lastly, UNHCR Representative signed a Cooperation Agreement with the Municipality of Foz de Iguaçu, aiming at promoting joint actions to strengthen the reception, protection and local integration of refugees and migrants in the city.



On 19 October, UNHCR together with IMDH held the XVII Meeting of the Solidarity Network for Migrants and Refugees (RedeMiR) with the theme "Migration and refuge: reception, protection and integration in times of pandemic". In its third day, UNHCR Brazil Representative, José Egas, led the session on "resilience: challenges, opportunities and strategies to strengthen the protection of refugees and migrants".

On the same day, the Legislative Assembly of Pacaraima organized a public hearing to bring together municipal secretaries, political and indigenous leaders, civil and military police, Congress representatives, DPU and high-level officers of Operation Welcome and discuss the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in the city, including the higher number of people in the street.

In the last week of October, President Bolsonaro visited Roraima for the second time in less than a month. Together with the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Citizenship and the Minister of Justice, the President visited Rondon 5 shelter in Boa Vista and talked to refugees and migrants. Bolsonaro had promised to visit Pacaraima to give visibility to the work of Operation Welcome, but eventually limited his visit to Boa Vista only.

## KEY RISKS AND GAPS

**Access to territory and asylum:** Despite the flexibilization measures applied on the Brazilian side of the border, the Venezuelan side remains closed, resulting in higher protection risks for those many that are left with no other option than crossing irregularly in very vulnerable conditions. Moreover, efforts put in place by the Brazilian authorities to increase the capacity to issue documentation and undertake sanitary controls are outpaced by the growing number of new arrivals resulting in thousands of individuals waiting for their documentation, with a very significant portion living in the streets in Pacaraima.

**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 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 October, 2,933 refugees and migrants were allocated to Operation Welcome's shelters in Roraima. On 22 October, the São Vicente 1 shelter was officially closed for restructuring, bringing the total number of emergency shelters in Roraima to 14, including 5 indigenous shelters and one Transit Centre (BV8).

On 27 October, UNHCR held a meeting with the Humanitarian Logistical Task Force, the Ministry of Citizenship and the Ministry of Health on the restructuring and upgrade of shelters in Boa Vista for next year. The current proposal entails the consolidation of Rondon 1, 2, and 4 shelters into a single space as well as the change of Rondon 3 population profile to specifically support indigenous groups with improved reception conditions. A local working group composed of UNHCR, the Humanitarian Logistical Task Force and the Ministry of Citizenship will be created to coordinate this effort, which will allow a more efficient and cost-effective management of the emergency shelter response in the North of Brazil.

The municipal shelter in Belém was equipped with a computer lab, an initiative promoted by UNHCR and Fundação João Paulo XXIII (Funpapa) to support about 160 indigenous Warao currently living in this site in their study or work-related activities.

In October, two leisure areas were opened in Rondon 1 and 3 shelters featuring a playground with equipment that stimulate child cognitive and physical development. The initiative reflects broader efforts to improve shelter residents' social skills and overall wellbeing and is part of the "Scale-Up Urban95 Boa Vista" project, supported by UNHCR, Operation Welcome, AVSI, Bernard van Leer Foundation and the Boa Vista City Hall.

On 27 October, the BV-8 Annex was inaugurated as an emergency space that can accommodate up to 700 people among those who are living in the streets in Pacaraima waiting to complete their pre- or documentation processes. To support the first fifteen weeks of operations, UNHCR together with AVSI delivered 700 mattresses, family hygiene kits, cleaning kits and diapers. A strengthened communication flow for the referral of protection cases identified in the emergency space was also established.

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), 29 people were accommodated in the municipal shelters of Manaus in the month of October.



**Food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution:** In October, UNHCR delivered 2,422 backpacks, 2,907 family cleaning kits, 2,650 family hygiene kits, 781 mattresses, 1,166 waterproof mattress covers, 1,508 packs of diapers, 655 jerrycans, 605 buckets, and 64 solar lamps to support refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations remains key to ensure improved reception conditions in the northern regions in Brazil.

### Ensuring protection and supporting integration processes

**Integration:** In October, 115 refugees and migrants were voluntarily relocated from Amazonas and Roraima states to other parts of Brazil by bus or flight through the institutional modality. UNHCR supported 1,155 individuals with the Fit for Travel (FFT) process.

On 5 October, 48 Venezuelan refugees and migrants living in Manaus completed the technical courses on Hygiene and Food Handling, Stockist and Inventory Course, and Basic Computing, offered through a partnership between UNHCR, Centro de Educação Tecnológica do Amazonas (CETAM), ADRA and Hermanitos.

On 15 October, an entrepreneurship fair was held in São Vicente 2 shelter to celebrate the graduation of nine small business owners that completed their entrepreneurship course and were granted seed capital by World Vision in partnership with UNHCR. The programme focused on groups who face greater barriers to local integration such as persons with disabilities, single mothers, and persons over 50 years old. On the same day, a graduation ceremony was held in SENAC Boa Vista for 20 refugees and migrants that concluded the course of Client Service, promoted by SJMR in partnership with UNHCR.

Also, another round of the “Novo Caminhar” project was concluded. In total, 79 people concluded a 4-week training to better familiarize with local health and social services as well as financial planning basics and build their capacity to live self-reliantly outside the shelters. From the 21 families that participated, 15 families have already moved out of the shelter and live on their own.

On 18 October, UNHCR, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP) and the Ministry of Education (MEC) launched the “[Guide for parents and educators on the integration of refugee children and youth in schools](#)”, which is part of the [Portal for Refugee Children Education](#). The guide and the portal are intended to facilitate access to information to ensure the effective integration of refugee children and youth into the Brazilian education system.

In addition, UNHCR signed a cooperation agreement with ASSERTTEM (Brazilian Association of Temporary Work). The main objective of the agreement is to promote knowledge dissemination about access of refugees and asylum seekers to temporary job opportunities, as well as to produce informative products on this theme. Another cooperation agreement was signed between UNHCR and the human resources company ManpowerGroup Brasil, which is part of Companies with Refugees Forum. The agreement has the objective of promoting employment and income generation opportunities for refugees and migrants and providing training to NGOs whose work focuses on socio-economic integration.

In October, UNHCR provided financial assistance through multi-purpose cash grants to 650 families (2,019 individuals), 97% of them being of Venezuelan nationality.

**Protection:** In October, 815 refugees and migrants contacted UNHCR protection line in Manaus for queries related to access to documentation, urgent material support, financial assistance, and other protection issues.

Following the arrival of new Armed Forces officials deployed to act within Operation Welcome in Manaus, UNHCR together with IOM, UNFPA, UNICEF, Instituto Mana and Aldeias Infantis conducted an informative session for approximately 100 people on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEAH).

UNHCR and UNFPA hosted a workshop on Gender-Based Violence with the public network teams that work with GBV prevention and response in Roraima. The purpose was to facilitate information exchange about current workflows, gaps, and challenges, while also allowing a coordinated discussion about how to address these difficulties in the framework of existing strategies to strengthen the local network.

On 15 October, UNHCR conducted an activity with the LGBTQIA+ community at Rondon 3 shelter. During the meeting, topics related to gender identity, sexual orientation and expression, sexuality were discussed. A second activity was also developed to gather feedback on how this community is coexisting with the rest of the population in the shelter and what are the possible improvements that could be done in this context.

In Belém, UNHCR, in partnership with the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF), Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU) and the Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights of Pará (SEJUDH), held a seminar on the international protection of refugees and migrants in a border context for the airport personnel in the municipality of Belém. In the event, UNHCR had the opportunity to present to the airport authorities the legal framework relating to the protection of refugees, while also discussing and forwarding a proposal for setting up a flow for identification, protection, and assistance to foreigners in need of international protection arriving through the city's International Airport.

Also, in Belém, UNHCR met with the Immigration Police Station (DELEMIG) to provide a capacity building meeting for their staff. UNHCR talked about its mandate, 1951 convention and the definition of 'refugee', while also committing to deliver a capacity building session specifically on protection and solutions for Warao people, since they are the major population of concern to UNHCR in the state.

**Indigenous:** UNHCR in partnership with the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights and the Ministry of Citizenship published two handbooks that seek to promote integration and social service strategies that are culturally appropriate for Venezuelan indigenous persons living in Brazil. The "Reference Guide for Social Work with Indigenous Refugees and Migrants" and the "Community Protection Guide for Indigenous Refugees and Migrants" shed light on community protection practices as well as rights and services suited to the needs of these populations.

On 21 October, UNHCR organized a workshop on strategies to promote integration of indigenous refugee and migrant population living in Roraima. During the initiative, the participants were able to point out what they perceive as main priorities, as well as what are the current gaps in services and assistance. In total, 22 people participated, including six indigenous leaders from Pacaraima and Boa Vista, as well as representatives from the Logistic Humanitarian Task Force, CREAS, UNICEF, PADF, FFHI, MSF and ADRA.

**Documentation and Registration:** In October, in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, UNHCR and partners registered in proGres v4 5,379 persons and generated 1,532 shelter IDs. Additionally, UNHCR in partnership with AVSI, supported the documentation of 5,595 individuals at the Reception and Documentation Centres (PITrig) in both cities. In Manaus, UNHCR referred 888 asylum-seekers and 84 refugees for documentation procedures during the month of October.

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