

BRAZIL OPERATION

COVID-19 RESPONSE

SEPTEMBER 2021



Venezuelan refugees and migrants arriving at Rondon 5 after its inauguration

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

As of 31 September, Brazil reached a total of 21,427,073 confirmed cases and 596,749 deaths from COVID-19.

On 3 September, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued Ordinance N.24 that allows the granting of temporary visas and residence permits for the purpose of humanitarian reception of Afghan nationals, stateless persons and persons affected by a situation of serious or imminent institutional instability, serious violation of human rights or international humanitarian law in Afghanistan. The decision came after the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE for its Portuguese acronym) declared, in December 2020, the recognition of a situation of serious and generalized human rights violations in the country, in accordance with the national legislation for refugee protection.

On 6 and 8 September, a regular meeting of National Committees for Refugees (CONARES) of MERCOSUR States Party and Associated Countries was held through the modality of videoconference. The meeting was organized under the Pro Tempore Presidency of Brazil, held throughout the second semester of 2021. The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 5 October 2021.

On 14 September, the election of the president and vice-president of the Permanent Mixed Commission on Migration and Refugees (CMMIR) took place. Senator Paulo Paim (PT-RS) was elected to the presidency and deputy Bruna Furlan (PSDB-SP) as vice, while Túlio Gadelha, deputy for the PDT of Pernambuco, is the committee's rapporteur.

On the same day, the National Justice Council (CNJ), a body of the Brazilian judicial system, issued a non-binding recommendation guiding federal judges to observe human rights standards established in international human rights treaties and the 1951 Refugee Convention in the adjudication of cases that may lead to deportation, expulsion or repatriation to the country of origin of refugees or migrants, especially those dealing with the exceptional and temporary restriction on entry of foreigners in the country during the COVID-19 pandemic.

KEY RISKS AND GAPS

Access to territory and asylum: Even with the border flexibilization at the Brazilian side, the border with Venezuela continues to be formally closed, resulting in higher protection risks such as abuse and exploitation as many people are left with no other option than continuing to cross 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 and unable to move internally beyond 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, although recently 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 September, 1,581 refugees and migrants were allocated to Operation Welcome's shelters in Roraima. Overall, 8,641 Venezuelans are residing in 15 shelters, including 5 indigenous shelters and one Transit Centre (BV8), in Roraima.

On 1 September, a new kitchen in the Pintolândia shelter was inaugurated as a result of the partnership between UNHCR and the PADF (Pan American Development Foundation), which aims to improve the conditions of indigenous shelters in Roraima. The initiative was carried out after consultation with the sheltered indigenous community of Pintolândia and led both to renovate existing wood stove structures and to build some new ones, making a total of 14 wood stoves available for the community to prepare their own meals.

On 3 September, UNHCR participated in a seminar organized by Fundação Papa João XXIII – FUNPAPA about the Warao and their religion targeting the technical team working at the municipal shelter of Belém. The objective was for the staff to better familiarize with the indigenous Warao culture and, therefore, enhance their capacity of response.

On 29 September, a new shelter – Rondon 5 – was inaugurated receiving 150 Venezuelan refugees and migrants who were relocated from Rondon 2. As the new Operation Welcome site for relocation activities in the context of interiorization, the shelter is currently able to receive up to 500 people and will soon be ready to operate at full capacity of up to 1,000 people.

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), 25 people were accommodated in the municipal shelters of Manaus in the month of September.

Food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution: In September, UNHCR delivered 1,592 bags, 2,579 family cleaning kits, 5,713 family and individual hygiene kits, 1,047 waterproof mattress covers, 1,936 packs of diapers, 385 jerrycans, 387 buckets and 129 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 the northern regions of Brazil.

Moreover, the Instituto International de Educação do Brasil (IEB) distributed 220 solar lamps, donated by UNHCR, to indigenous groups living in the municipality of Santarém, and a second one 160 will be distributed in October. The lamps will help the communities to have access to light during the night and will contribute to peaceful coexistence between indigenous Brazilians and Warao people living in the state of Pará.



Ensuring protection and supporting integration processes

Integration: So far, 12,178 refugees and migrants were voluntarily relocated from Amazonas and Roraima states to other parts of Brazil by bus or flight through the institutional modality.

In September, 38 women concluded the last two classes of the 6th edition of the “Empoderando Refugiadas” project. Participants are currently sheltered in Rondon 2 and Pricumã, the latter site accommodating women with disabilities and women that are responsible for family members with disabilities who benefitted from the course and will be soon ready to participate in job interviews with the partner companies of the project.

On 3 September, a first round of capacity building of the “Novo Caminhar” project was finalized. The training covered financial planning, household budget management, peaceful coexistence, and access to public services for 21 families exiting the shelters to go live in rented houses. The families also received the first of three instalments of financial support (CBI) for housing and will be monitored for the next months to ensure a safe transition to this new step towards self-reliance.

On 17 September, SJMR in partnership with UNHCR delivered 14 starter kits to Venezuelan entrepreneurs to support their small businesses. The beneficiaries will continue to count on the support from SJMR for the next three months with monitoring of their small business and referral for complementary services, such as entrepreneurship classes and access to seed capital programs. Five of the small businesses supported in this occasion were green initiatives as part of UNHCR’s Green Jobs project that promotes access to jobs in the green economy and supports sustainable businesses.



On 27 September, UNHCR, in partnership with SENAC, started offering Portuguese classes to the sheltered population. A total of 180 people will be attending such courses in 11 different shelters of Boa Vista for a period of six weeks, at the end of which they will receive a certification in Basic Portuguese. In parallel, another 15 Venezuelan indigenous persons are enrolled in the Janokoida shelter in Pacaraima.

In September, UNHCR provided financial assistance through multi-purpose cash grants to 636 families (2,097 individuals), 97% of them being of Venezuelan nationality. Also, from 20 to 22 September, UNHCR CBI team conducted a mission to Boa Vista to review the implementation of cash-based interventions, as well as to meet with the main organizations working locally with cash transfers to understand coordination gaps and potential partnerships that could be strengthened through the local CBI technical group.

Protection: In September 2,176 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.

On 1 September, UNHCR participated on the first day of the project “Transformando Vidas”, implemented by the partner SJMR, to bring together trans women who are engaged in survival sex in activities of GBV prevention and response, women’s and LGBTQIA+ rights. In total, 27 refugees and migrants from Boa Vista participated in an informative session covering diversity, gender, sexuality, and rights in Brazil. On 7 September, UNHCR participated in another session of the project, at Cáritas Diocesana de Roraima, where 25 refugees and migrants talked about their concerns on sexuality and self-care techniques.

UNHCR and UNFPA offered four training sessions on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and sexual harassment (SH) to the new military contingent of Operation Welcome in Roraima. In total, 88 men and 12 women participated.

In São Paulo, UNHCR held two training sessions on International Refugee Law and Human Rights for the Federal Police team that works directly with unadmitted persons and asylum requests at the International Airport of Guarulhos. Civil society organizations, the Public Defender’s Office and the Social Assistance of the Municipality of Guarulhos were present to contribute to the discussion.

On 28 and 29 September, the XII National Seminar of the Cátedra Sérgio Vieira de Mello Chair (CSVM) occurred, discussing the theme “Protection of Refugees in the Context of the Pandemic”. The event was organized by UFES, UFSM, UFRGS, and UFU Universities, with the support of UNHCR, and

featured the launch of the CSVM Annual Report 2021, four thematic tables and the participation of Brazilian and refugee researchers. The event was [recorded](#) and had an audience of over 300 people.

Documentation and Registration: In September, 5,941 persons have been issued entry permits by the Federal Police in the northern border state of Roraima and accessed documentation (asylum procedures and migratory residence permits for persons affected by that situation in Venezuela), totalizing 19,118 persons since the operationalization of Ordinance 655, on 25 June.

In September, in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, UNHCR and partners registered in proGres v4 1,125 persons and generated 927 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 667 individuals at the Reception and Documentation Centres (PITrig) in Boa Vista and Pacaraima.

As for Manaus, UNHCR referred 1,056 asylum seekers and 60 refugees for documentation procedures during the month of September.

This month, UNHCR started the implementation of the documentation flow in the city of Tabatinga, at the triple border between Brazil, Peru, and Colombia. In coordination with the local Cáritas and other actors, UNHCR remotely supports the pre-documentation procedures of identified cases (mostly Venezuelans, but also including other nationalities), and makes the direct referral to the Federal Police in Tabatinga, to ensure access to territory and further expand local capacities of key actors in the city.

Launch of the project “I Know My Rights”

On 20 September, UNHCR together with I Know My Rights (IKMR) organization launched the #RefuTeen digital project for young refugees and migrants. The event, broadcasted on YouTube, presented an overview of the project's objectives, methodology and timeline. In total, 20 young refugees and migrants living in Brazil, aged between 12 and 18, were selected to participate in the initiative that promotes access to knowledge and content techniques on social networks from the perspective of human rights.

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