

BRAZIL OPERATION

COVID-19 RESPONSE

NOVEMBER 2020



In November, the last round of “*Empoderando Refugiadas*” with refugees and migrants with disabilities took place in Boa Vista, Roraima.
Photo: UNHCR / Allana Ferreira

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

As of 30 November, Brazil reached a total of 6,335,878 confirmed cases and 173,120 deaths from COVID-19.

Since mid-March, all borders were closed and entry restrictions by land and sea remain in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including for Venezuelans, with few irregular entries and exits reported. Air entries are authorized. For individuals already in the country, the validity of documentation providing legal stay was extended until the end of the emergency.

On 12 November, the Office of the Chief of Staff, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Health issued [Ordinance 518/2020](#), which extends by an additional period of 30 days from the date of the Ordinance the exceptional and temporary restrictions on entry by land or sea by foreigners regardless of nationality due to COVID-19. The restrictions on entry of individuals arriving from Venezuela remain, which means that regardless of an individual’s migratory status, persons arriving from Venezuela will not be allowed entry to Brazil.

Entrance by air, however, is now allowed nationwide and the person will have to present a visa (if required by the Brazilian Migratory Law). The non-compliance with entry restrictions continue to lead to possible deportation and disqualification of asylum claims

On 13 November, the Ministry of Education issued [Resolution n. 1](#) alongside the National Council of Education and the Chamber for Basic Education, on the rights to enrolment of children and adolescent refugees, migrants, stateless and asylum seekers in the Brazilian public education system. The resolution establishes that, when requested, the enrolment of said children and adolescents shall be ensured without discrimination in the primary school system, public-run day cares (creches) and the “Basic Education for Youth and Adults” (Educação de Jovens e Adultos - EJA) — an inclusive system coordinated by the Brazilian Federal Government to provide basic education for adults and adolescents that have not concluded their education. The resolution also waives the refugee and migrant children and adolescents from translated school records, allowing them to undergo placement evaluations in their native language if needed.

On 15 November, 5,567 Brazilian municipalities held elections for city councillors (*vereadores*) and mayors. While the voter turnout exceeded initial expectations, the abstention rate was still the higher ever recorded (23%) due to the pandemic. The runoff municipal elections were concluded on 29 November in 57 Brazilian municipalities, including Manaus, Boa Vista, Belém and São Paulo. Elections in Macapá, capital of the state of Amapá, were postponed to the first week of December since the state faced 22 days of energy crises during November.

On 23 November, the Brazilian soap opera *Órfãos da Terra* (Orphans of the Land) was awarded an International Emmy in the category Best *Telenovela*. The soap opera was produced by the Brazilian broadcaster *Rede Globo* with the support of UNHCR, addressing the theme of peaceful co-existence and integration of refugees in Brazil. This is the third award given to *Órfãos da Terra*, after the Rose D’Or and Seoul Drama Awards Grand prize. The soap opera was broadcast in 2019 and was already syndicated to over 50 countries.

KEY RISKS AND GAPS

Community transmission: Hundreds of Venezuelan refugees and migrants are living in informal settlements in dire situations, also exposed to increased contagion risks because of inadequate WASH conditions. Moreover, refugees and migrants lack reliable information on COVID-19, its transmission, symptoms and effective ways to reduce exposure.

Collapse in health systems: The health systems in several Brazilian States are particularly critical, facing challenges in the capacity to respond properly.

Socio-economic impact: Due to social distancing and isolation measures, many Venezuelan refugees and migrants are unable to continue with their economic activities and have lost their income source.

Gender-based violence (GBV): The prolonged and intense co-existence caused by social isolation, coupled with loss of livelihoods, can generate situations of restlessness, discomfort and increased stress, and consequently increases the incidences of gender-based violence, especially for girls and women.

UNHCR RESPONSE

Strengthening and adapting shelter support and reinforcing local health responses

Shelter: UNHCR and IOM conducted the Training of Trainers (ToT) in Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM) in Boa Vista, with the support of the global CCCM Cluster and in the framework of the R4V coordination platform. This training was attended by 18 humanitarian field professionals from UNHCR, AVSI, IOM, FFHI and FSF.

In the month November, UNHCR allocated 225 refugees and migrants to different shelters in Boa Vista. These include persons who were previously living on the streets and in Tancredo Neves shelter, which was deactivated due to Operation Welcome ongoing efforts to restructure its shelter strategy in Roraima.

Due to critical WASH conditions, the municipality of Manaus decided to temporarily close the Tarumã Centro shelter and find a new site to receive indigenous population in the central area of the city. UNHCR and other UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA and IOM) are providing technical support to the municipality, in order to ensure that the affected communities take part in the process through proper consultations.

Ensuring protection and supporting integration processes

Integration: On 18 November, UNHCR offered a first-of-a-kind training about employment and inclusion of refugees and migrants with disabilities in Brazilian labour market, for over 40 participants from 15 different organizations engaged in Operation Welcome in Boa Vista. The training was conducted by the specialized consultancy firm from São Paulo called *Turma do Jiló*, hired in the framework of the project “*Empoderando Refugiadas*”.



For the first time in *Operação Acolhida*, a group of 18 elderly refugees and migrants with specific needs were able to participate in the Voluntary Internal Relocation Program. They were relocated to the city of Nova Iguaçu, in the estate of Rio de Janeiro as result of advocacy coordinated by UNHCR Boa Vista and São Paulo, the Municipal Social Assistance Secretariat and the Ministry of Citizenship. They were welcomed in a shelter equipped with UNHCR donation to support their stay in the site.

A total of 1,239 refugees and migrants were voluntarily relocated from Amazonas and Roraima states to other parts of Brazil by bus or flight. 873 individuals were relocated through family and social reunification, 108 were matched with employment and 258 were received in shelters managed by R4V partners.

On 26 November, UNHCR alongside IOM, the Central Bank of Brazil and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security released the 3rd edition of the booklet *Financial Information for Refugees and Migrants*. The publication was made available in [Portuguese](#), [Spanish](#), [English](#), Arabic and French and contains information about opening bank accounts, exchange, remittances, loans, scam prevention among other topics.

Gender and GBV: On 25 and 26 November, within the 16 Days of Activism campaign, events organized by UNHCR, UNFPA, IOM and UNICEF were held in the indigenous shelters in Tarumã Açú 1 and 2, involving 158 refugees and migrants indigenous Warao. The events included a range of different activities around the theme of gender-based violence within the Warao community, such as group conversations and cinema sessions. UNHCR’s partner Instituto Mana and the NGO Aldeias Infantis SOS also participated in the event.



Also, in November, UNHCR in partnership with UNFPA and the Jesuit Refugee and Migrant Service (SJMR) held two sets of focus group discussions with LGTBI PoCs in Boa Vista. The first set covered topics such as prevention of and response to GBV, access to in sexual and reproductive health and rights, self-care, national and international legal frameworks for LGTBI protection. The second set aimed at promoting the self-esteem and wellbeing with trans women and cis women engaged in survival sex in the city of Boa Vista and to provide them with information on available protection services that they can disseminate amongst other women who are also at risk.

Documentation and Registration:

In November, in Boa Vista, UNHCR Brazil and partners registered 1,237 persons in proGres v4. This number reflects the ongoing registration efforts targeting the population living in the spontaneous occupation Ka'Ubanoko for CBI and shelter allocation. Moreover, it includes registration activities conducted at the bus station Support Space to map persons at risk of refoulement.

UNHCR rolled-out the Global Distribution Tool (GDT) for the first time in the Americas on 19 November in Rondon 1, a shelter of Operation Welcome managed by UNHCR's implementing partner AVSI. The GDT uses distribution lists extracted from proGres v4 and biometrics to quickly and accurately verify the identity of assistance collectors, reducing duplications and risks of fraud. The roll-out in Roraima started with soap distribution and is ongoing in all other shelters of Boa Vista and Pacaraima until the process will be finalized by end of January 2021.

Over the last month, UNHCR's teams at Manaus Bus Station (PRA) and Documentation and Interiorization Centre (PITRIG) supported the pre-documentation of 1,616 asylum-seekers and 663 refugees already recognized by the Brazilian government.

Scaling up and adapting strategies for Communication with Communities (CwC)

CwC: Over 11,000 Venezuelans were reached in Boa Vista with information on the issuance of the *Portaria* no. 518 of 12 November, which extends the restriction of access to Brazilian territory for additional thirty days, and foresees consequences for irregular entries such as deportation and denial of access to legal documentation and consequently public services. UNHCR developed posters on this matter and displayed those in support spaces, shelters, Bus Terminal and PITRIG.

Five awareness-raising sessions on the importance of, and procedures for, renewal of documentation were conducted by the Warao outreach volunteers (OVs) trained by UNHCR in their communities in Belém and Ananindeua, impacting directly over 500 people living in shelters, private houses, and occupations.



In Manaus, UNHCR's partner Instituto Mana held "educommunication" workshops with 30 youth and adults in indigenous shelters engaging in Radio Yakera Jokonae broadcasts. The activities were focused on education for media; the use of media in education; production of educational content; and democratic media management.

In Pacaraima, through the four WhatsApp groups INFORMA-TE, UNHCR's partner AVSI reached 1,149 persons (including Venezuelans and members of the host community) with information materials on COVID-19 prevention and response.

UNHCR's Help Platform registered 10,568 sessions between 1 and 30 November, being 71% of those new visitors.

Ensuring the most vulnerable have access to basic items

Food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution: In São Paulo, UNHCR and implementing partner IKMR delivered half a ton of meals to 350 families of refugees and migrants produced by local entrepreneurs. The action was accompanied by the São Paulo State Ministry of Justice and had the participation of the Red Cross, the Public Defensor (DPU) and UNINOVE students.



In Boa Vista UNHCR donated 2,808 soap bars to refugees and migrants from Venezuela living in shelters. This distribution is part of UNHCR's partnership with the UNILEVER group to bring dignity and personal hygiene care to refugees world-wide. Besides that, UNHCR has delivered backpacks containing hygiene kits and hand sanitizers to beneficiaries participating in the interiorization program and traveling to Brasília and Juiz de Fora under the shelter-to-shelter modality.

Expanding the provision of life-saving cash assistance

Cash-based assistance (CBI): In November, UNHCR supported 67 families with CBI to cover their basic needs during the first months of their relocation to other states of Brazil. The families will travel through the employment-based modality of the interiorization strategy.

In the last week UNHCR protection unit in Boa Vista distributed 88 CBI cards of which 20 resulted from assessments of spontaneous demands in PTRIG and 63 corresponded to the response for non-indigenous families in Ka'Ubanoko.

The capacity building phase of “*Novo Caminhar*” pilot project has been concluded. The project, which is being conducted in partnership with UNHCR's partner Jesuit Migrant and Refugee Service (SJMR) aims at fostering exit strategies for refugees and migrants living in shelters. In this framework a booklet on financial planning, household budget management, peaceful coexistence, access to public services and social protection network was developed. On 24 November, families who used to live in shelters and spontaneous settlements received the first of three instalments of CBI for housing and will be monitored for the next months to ensure a safe transition to this new step towards self-reliance.

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