

BRAZIL OPERATION

COVID-19 RESPONSE

MAY 2021



Temporary Reception, Documentation and Relocation Centre (PITrig) was opened at the Operation Welcome's Base in Manaus – AM.

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

As of 31 May, Brazil reached a total of 16,545,554 confirmed cases and 461,931 deaths from COVID-19. A total of 59,010 deaths were recorded from the new coronavirus and May became the third deadliest month since the start of the pandemic in Brazil, in March 2020.

In May, the Office of the Presidency, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, and the Ministry of Health updated twice the Ordinance that extends exceptional and temporary entry restrictions to the country. Ordinances 653/2021 and 654/2021 included India in a flight ban alongside UK and Northern Ireland, and South Africa and clarified maritime crew disembarkation procedures. Both decrees maintain the determination that exceptions to the land and sea entry ban do not apply to Venezuelans.

During the Plenary sessions of the Quito Process, which led to the signature of the joint Declaration of the Lima Chapter, it was announced that Brazil would be assuming the next Pro-Tempore Presidency during the second semester of 2021. The Brasilia Chapter will start on 22 June with the Presidency's handover ceremony.

Due to heavy rains and the increased level of the rivers in the region, a severe flooding in Manaus left five people injured - among Venezuelans and Brazilians humanitarian workers and militarys, and caused significant damages to Operation Welcome's infrastructure of the PITrig and the ATM. Ninety-one Venezuelan refugees and migrants were safely relocated to Vila Olímpica and followed with their interiorization flights. UNHCR and its partner Fraternidade Internacional ensured relocation activities continue to be provided from Vila Olímpica, for the next 60 days. A temporary PITrig was opened on 11 May at the Operation Welcome's Base in Manaus.

In addition, a fire broke out at the El Dorado Hotel in Manaus, where at least 119 people, the vast majority being Venezuelan and Brazilian families lived. Although the Firefighters authorized the use of the building, the owner decided to close El Dorado Hotel as a prevention measure to new fire incidents. UNHCR, state and municipal authorities, partners, and other UN agencies ensured a coordinated needs assessment to provide protection and assistance to the affected community.

KEY RISKS AND GAPS

Access to territory and asylum: Entry restrictions result in increasing numbers of Venezuelans crossing irregularly the border into Brazil in extreme vulnerable situations, exposed to human trafficking, exploitation and abuse. Moreover, with no clear path to regularization and documentation, refugees and migrants are facing additional challenges to exercise their rights.

Socio-economic impact: High unemployment exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, cuts and reductions to social programmes and sharp price increases on basic food staples combine to make many Venezuelan refugees and migrants unable to sustain their livelihoods.

Increasing number of Venezuelans with expired documentation: Despite efforts by the Federal Police to extend the validity of expired documents until September 2021, employers and service providers are generally not aware of this measure and do not easily accept expired documents, adversely impacting on refugees and migrants' access to services or job opportunities.

UNHCR RESPONSE**Strengthening shelter support and ensuring access to basic items and health services**

Shelter: In May, 884 refugees and migrants were allocated to Operation Welcome's shelters in Roraima. Also, UNHCR in close coordination with partners FSF, FFHI, AVSI, SJMR, and IMDH opened the complaint boxes located in shelter, partner offices and support space of PITrig in Boa Vista, completing a total of 13 boxes with a total of 122 messages which were referred accordingly.

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 May, 22 people were accommodated in the municipal shelters.

Food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution: In May, UNHCR delivered 3,196 family and individual hygiene kits, 2,237 family cleaning kits, 17,174 bars of soap, 340 mattresses, 397 waterproof mattress covers, 3,155 packs of diapers, 350 jerrycans, 350 buckets, 2,434 mosquito nets and 536 solar lamps to support refugees and migrants sheltered in Roraima.

In Pacaraima, UNHCR and Associação Internacional Canarinhos da Amazônia Embaixadores para a Paz (AICAEP) supported 58 families with 116 food baskets, covering the needs of 260 individuals for two months.

On 25 May, as prevention measures to diseases due to the rainy season in Manaus, UNHCR and the Municipal Secretary for Women, Social Assistance and Citizenship (Semasc) jointly carried out a distribution of hygiene and cleaning kits, mosquito nets, and hammocks to 30 indigenous people living in Tarumã-Açu 1 shelter.

Ensuring protection and supporting integration processes

Integration: During the month of May, a total of 1,228 refugees and migrants were voluntarily relocated from Amazonas and Roraima states to other parts of Brazil by bus or flight. UNHCR supported the Fit For Travel (FFT) process for all these individuals and oversaw the institutional modality relocation of 129 individuals.

On 6 May, UNHCR and Aldeias Infantis SOS Brasil released the report "Brasil sem Fronteiras", which highlights positive outcomes of the joint socio-economic integration project through the institutional modality for Venezuelan refugees and migrants in various cities across Brazil.

In Manaus, UNHCR and Hermanitos held a two-day workshop with key information on labor insertion opportunities in Brazil, focusing on professional qualification for the labor market and job interviewing techniques for 34 refugees and migrants.

On 25 May, UNHCR, UN Global Compact and UN Women launched the VI edition of the project "Empowering Refugee Women" which will continue to mainstream the inclusion of persons with specific needs, such as women with disabilities, chronic diseases and LGBTIQ+ people. For 2021, a four-week vocational course on sales and customer services will be provided for 80 Venezuelan women with the aim to support participants and their families to fulfill their socio-economic potential

through the employment-based modality of interiorization.

In May, UNHCR provided financial assistance through multi-purpose cash grants to 565 families (1,849 individuals), 96% of them being of Venezuelan nationality.

Protection: In May, 967 refugees and migrants contacted UNHCR Manaus protection line for queries related to access to documentation, urgent material support, financial assistance, and other protection issues. Based on the reduced capacity of the PITrig and the limited slots offered by the Federal Police, UNHCR referred 186 asylum seekers and 83 refugees for documentation procedures during the month.

A registration exercise conducted after the fire incident at Manaus' El Dorado Hotel made it possible for UNHCR and partners to provide support to the 32 families residing in the building with financial assistance; NFIs (including stoves, mattresses, kitchen sets, cleaning and hygiene kits); documentation; relocation to safe shelters; referral to the social assistance network; and immediate response to GBV cases.

On 26 May, the *Espaço da Pessoa Refugiada e Migrante* was inaugurated with the support of UNHCR and the Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights (SEJUDH). Before the opening, UNHCR provided capacity building sessions to Pará public servants of SEJUDH, covering themes on protection response to persons with specific needs and GBV, access to documentation and SISCONARE.

On 27 May, UNHCR and the Association of Federal Judges of Brazil (AJUFE) organized an online session for about 25 federal judges to provide an overview of UNHCR's mandate, the legal framework for refugee protection, as well as the situation of refugees and other persons of concern in Brazil and the role of the Judiciary in refugee protection.

UNHCR formalized a new partnership under the Cátedra Sérgio Vieira de Mello (CSVM) with Centro Universitário Curitiba (UNICURITIBA), which became the 28th Higher Education Institution in Brazil to be part of the CSVM.

Indigenous: On 3 May, 30 social workers of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and the Secretariat of Health of Montes Claros participated in a training held by UNHCR and IOM. Topics on cultural aspects of the Warao ethnic group, their forced displacement dynamics in Brazil, UNHCR's protection response for this population, and best practices were covered.

Following UNHCR's efforts to support the protection of Indigenous Warao in Montes Claros (MG), the municipality allocated financial resources for shelter and nutrition interventions to the 79 Indigenous refugees and migrants living in the city.

On 6 May, the Indigenous Training and Cultural Center ("Centro Cultural e de Formação Indígena") was opened in Boa Vista, next to Jardim Floresta indigenous shelter. The place was renovated to offer educational and professional training for indigenous refugees and migrants living in the city and will serve as a reference for cultural activities as well as professional, education and language courses.

UNHCR organized a 3-day activity in the context of the georeferencing project with five Indigenous Warao communities living in the metropolitan area of Belém. The development of maps aimed to enable Indigenous refugees and migrants to better familiarize with available public services and facilitate access to them, enhancing their autonomy. Each community received two maps and key information pointing out available services in their neighborhoods and, more broadly, in the city.

On 31 May, in a live event broadcasted at UNHCR's YouTube channel, UNHCR launched a report on best practices and lessons learned, together with local protection networks, in the protection response for indigenous populations in the South and Southeast of Brazil. On the same day, forty-one indigenous from Pintolândia shelter in Boa Vista received from UNHCR



and FFHI a hand-delivering notification of recognition of refugee status. The notification, which is usually sent by email by CONARE, was an exception for the indigenous population who is not so used to digital tools of communication.

Documentation and Registration: In May, in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, UNHCR and partners registered in proGres v4 3,209 persons and generated 1,369 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 and partners supported the documentation of 768 individuals at the Reception and Documentation Centres (PITrig) in Boa Vista and Pacaraima, including 287 asylum seekers who entered Brazil before border restrictions came into force.

Strengthening public awareness and Communication with Communities (CwC) strategies

In the framework of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT), UNHCR participated in live talks events from Rio Grande do Norte and Santa Catarina on challenges and good practices in supporting LGBTIQ+ refugees and migrants. In Boa Vista, community events at the Pricumã, Rondon 2 and São Vicente 2 shelters took place on 18 May, promoting awareness-raising activities and disseminating information through Radio Lab, reaching about 3,000 refugees and migrants.



Volunteers from Radio Lab “La Voz de los Refugiados” in Boa Vista participated in a three-day training organized in Brasilia by Operation Welcome in partnership with UNHCR. The activities were held by the Brazilian Army Forces radio station Verde Oliva 98.7 FM, conducted by the Army Social Communication Center team (CCOMSEX). Thirteen volunteers, between indigenous and non-indigenous Venezuelans, travelled to Brasilia and had the opportunity to learn about radio content production, media languages, and communications techniques.

Contacts:

Chiara Orsini – Associate Reporting Officer (orsini@unhcr.org)

Natália Neves – Donor Relations Associate (neves@unhcr.org)

Parceiros do ACNUR no Brasil – UNHCR partners in Brazil



UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the support of:
 O ACNUR, a Agência da ONU para Refugiados, agradece o apoio de:



With the support of the following organizations and private sector partners:
 Com o apoio das seguintes organizações e parceiros da iniciativa privada:



O ACNUR Brasil agradece o grande apoio e parceria com todas as outras agências da ONU, autoridades brasileiras (a nível federal, estadual e municipal) e organizações da sociedade civil envolvidas na resposta de emergência e nos programas regulares da operação brasileira.