



© UNHCR / Diana Díaz

NATIONAL ROUNDTABLES OF CONSULTATION WITH VENEZUELAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES 2021: GUYANA

Barima-Waini



BACKGROUND

The Regional Protection Sector, in coordination with the national sectors in Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Colombia, and the Working Group with Indigenous Peoples in Brazil, developed a strategy in 2021 to strengthen the response to protection risks faced by Venezuela's indigenous peoples in host countries.

A total of 4 regional sessions were held with the participation of indigenous leaders and authorities in which 8 areas that impact indigenous peoples were identified:



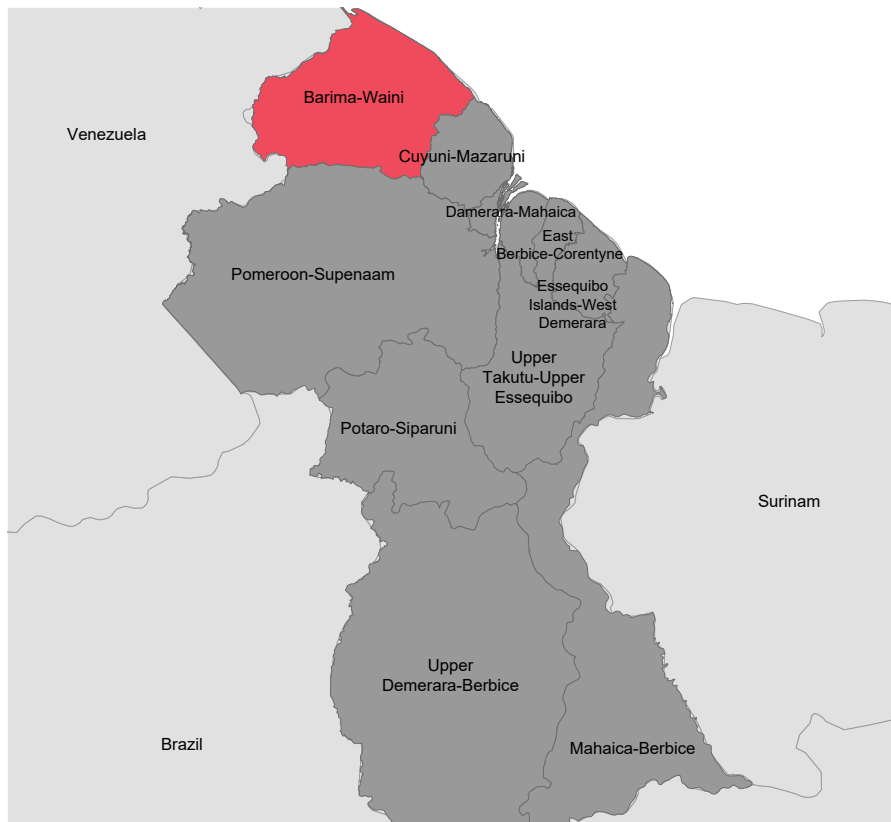
To identify impacts and proposals for each of these 8 areas between October and November 2021, 10 national roundtables were held (4 in Brazil, 1 in Guyana, 1 in Trinidad and Tobago, and 4 in Colombia) with the participation of 168 delegates from 15 ethnic groups.

In the case of Guyana, the National Roundtable was held between October 18 and 22, 2021 with delegates from the Warao indigenous people.

In 2022, with the overall goal of advancing the response, the Regional Sector will organize a regional encounter with Venezuelan indigenous people, a capacity building course on leadership, and a virtual capacity building session for organizations that work with indigenous people.

The Sector will articulate with other thematic R4V Sectors to reach possible actions to mitigate risks.

This document is a close-up to the perception, knowledge, information that indigenous delegates have about each one of the 8 areas discussed. The impacts and proposals presented here are a transcription of what was mentioned by the participants during the sessions.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Regional Protection Sector would like to thank UNHCR and IOM, co-leads of the Sector at the national level for their support and backing in holding the roundtables and the advocacy actions carried out in 2021. In addition, we would specifically like to thank the indigenous leaders of the Warao People, who participated in the National Roundtable, for their availability, commitment to the situations faced by their communities, and their courage.

This process of strengthening the protection needs of Venezuela’s indigenous peoples in Latin America and the Caribbean is part of the Sector’s commitment to promote a response to population groups that have been disproportionately impacted due to their ethnicity, occupation and/or status.

More information:

LORENA NIETO

nieto@unhcr.org
 UNHCR / Co-lead of the Regional Protection Sector

JUAN CARLOS PACHECO

juancarlos.pacheco@hias.org
 HIAS / Co-lead of the Regional Protection Sector



**“WE LEFT EVERYTHING IN
VENEZUELA AND EVERYTHING DIED.”**

Differentiated inclusion in regularization processes, obstacles with accessing documentation, and applying for refugee status.

IMPACTS

- Difficulties with accessing registration related to the lack of information, language barriers, costs and limited understanding of the procedures.
- Lack of official documentation to comply with migratory requirements, which impacts on their mobility.
- Difficulties with accessing documentation, particularly for children without birth registration due to the lack of access to birth certificates in Venezuela.
- Obstacles with accessing the official migrant registry operated by government entities.
- Barriers in accessing vaccination due to lack of documents.
- Lack of resources and transport for visiting government entities. The migrant indigenous communities are located in isolated places and cannot afford the costs of transportation.
- Low presence of competent authorities in the areas where the indigenous population is located.
- Difficulties with accessing work and education for children due to lack of official documentation.
- Risks of labor exploitation and becoming victims of trafficking and smuggling networks.
- Lack of knowledge about the procedures and requirements for accessing asylum systems.

PROPOSALS

- Identify leaders who can represent Venezuelans before government authorities provide guidance on procedures to access public services.
- Visits by entities (inter-institutional brigades) to indigenous communities to provide information on procedures, requirements and available services.
- Prioritize access to documentation so that the indigenous population can access social benefits.
- Develop broad coverage English language courses to facilitate communication with authorities and improve access to procedures.
- Receive support from organizations to improve/expand communication channels with government authorities.
- Simplify procedures and requirements, taking into account the capacities and traditions of indigenous peoples, as well as existing difficulties in Venezuela in terms of access documentation.
- Improve the distribution of information on how indigenous people can access documentation. This information should exist in the Warao language.
- Hold training workshops with the Warao population on their rights and clarify doubts about existing procedures.

Access to territory in host countries and access to adequate housing with decent living conditions that considers the cultural practices and traditions of indigenous peoples.

IMPACTS

- Impacts related to the dispossession of territory in Venezuela by authorities, illegal armed groups for political reasons and territorial interests.
- Forced displacement of communities from their places of origin due to increased crime (theft of animals, motors, boats, etc.).
- Threats against traditional authorities and community leaders
- Expropriation of the property (houses, crops, animals) of families that left Venezuela.
- Health and protection risks for families that have been forced by the relevant government entities to live in swamp areas, particularly for children.
- Worsening of the living conditions of indigenous peoples and increased effects on their mental and physical health.
- Inter-andintra-cultural conflicts due to coexistence issues in shelters/mixed settlements. The Warao indigenous people face conditions that include overcrowding and a generalized lack of services, food and procedures. This situation affects their internal regulations and the positioning of traditional authorities.
- Lack of access to daily sustenance due to indigenous peoples' lack of territory to carry out traditional activities.
- Family separation related to people staying behind to protect families' land and assets in Venezuela.
- Alternatives for land access related to the Tushaw indigenous peoples, but this requires that the Warao hand over all authority to the chiefs of this indigenous people.
- Weakening of the organizational structures of the Warao indigenous peoples.

PROPOSALS

- Promote organizational processes and exchanges of information among families about alternative ways of life.
- Organize the management of materials so that communities are responsible for building their houses on the ceded land (distribution of chainsaws, shovels, axes, rubber boots, machetes).
- Having the necessary tools for planting.
- Identify land that can be ceded to families that are living in shelters and have a high level of risk in dialogue with Tushaw authorities.
- Fishing kits for women so that they can ensure the provision of food for the children (including small boats).
- Strengthen Warao leaders so that they can represent indigenous interests and assist in negotiations with Guyanese authorities.

Risks to indigenous peoples linked to the presence of armed actors and organized crime groups using a differential approach through development/support of community strategies to mitigate these risks.

IMPACTS

- Indigenous women who work as sex workers are murdered. The information they are given about job offers is false.
- Men and women are taken to the mines in boats. They come from Chalti and are not paid. When they manage to escape, they return to the communities without money and are very affected.
- People from the communities have been sold to the owners of the mines and plantations. They are given food and lodging, but are not paid. These sites are protected by people with guns.
- The language barrier and fear of deportation, coupled with a lack of knowledge about institutional mechanisms and roles, limit victims' possibilities of accessing justice and protection alternatives.
- Venezuelan indigenous people, Guyanese and the British owners of the mines are involved in these recruitment actions.
- In urban areas, there have been reports of the sexual abuse of indigenous women by Rastafari men.
- Complaints are not made due to fear of possible reprisals that the aggressors may take against members of the indigenous population.
- The people who come to communities to "recruit" the population are not the same people who are in charge of the camps. They claim to have no knowledge of the agreements/offers made by those who organized their "work" and refuse to pay.

PROPOSALS

- Priority and confidential mechanisms to access justice with specific focal points. This would involve the provision of medical, psychological and legal counseling services with the support of Warao translators.
- Economic alternatives to mitigate exposure risks and ensure food security for communities.
- Communication campaigns in the Warao language to inform communities about existing risks and recruitment strategies used by trafficking networks.
- Mechanisms for reporting missing persons with follow-up mechanisms and information for families.
- Institutional brigades for the dissemination of existing services for survivors of violence, trafficking and smuggling networks and situations of abuse and exploitation with the participation of Warao translators.
- Training sessions on the country's institutional structure, roles and responsibilities, as well as the rights of the Warao people in Guyana.
- Family reunification measures and support for mothers who are heads of households to reduce the risks they face.
- Design of community mechanisms for monitoring at-risk cases and disappearance in order to be able to file complaints and monitor cases with support from government entities.
- Disseminate existing information through community networks as a measure to prevent other indigenous people from becoming victims of these networks.

Intimate partner violence, risks related to custody processes, threats and obstacles for the exercising of leadership.

IMPACTS

- Lack of follow-up by authorities after a person reports mistreatment or abuse.
- Suspected payments made by perpetrators to authorities to discourage following up these reports.
- Participants mentioned having witnessed child abuse.
- Sexual harassment and violence in informal settlements and shelters. The location of these sites in urban centers and near bars increases the risk of exposure for the indigenous population, particularly due to the absence of surveillance systems and low levels of security in shelters and settlements.
- Impact of the situations experienced by indigenous people in their countries of origin, transit and destination on their mental health. This is particularly the case for pregnant and lactating women, with additional risks to their physical health.
- Increase in intimate partner violence due to the consumption of psychoactive substances, alcohol abuse, role reversals and pressure caused by families' lack of income, limited basic services and food insecurity.

PROPOSALS

- Establishment of support networks for pregnant and breastfeeding women who, in addition to their mental and physical health, face situations that involve the malnutrition of their children.
- Activation of programs to overcome food insecurity and acute malnutrition and improve access to food.
- Establishment of security systems/protocols in settlements and shelters as well as reporting mechanisms for cases of sexual harassment and violence, recruitment and other protection risks.

Specific risks for special protection groups such as women, children, adolescents and youth, members of the LGBTQI community in host countries, mitigation alternatives and access to community and institutional protection mechanisms. There is a need to address risks for people living and working on the street, drug use, gender-based violence, recruitment, use and involvement by illegal armed groups, illegal adoptions and custody processes in mixed-race marriages.

IMPACTS

- Increased barriers in terms of access to information for elderly adults and people with disabilities because of language they are written in and the modality used for their dissemination. Lack of mobile services that reach the places where these population groups live.
- Exposure to risks for people with disabilities who do not have support networks, do not speak the language and have no access to transport. This is also the case for older adults.
- Single women with children have increased difficulties finding alternative employment because they do not have access to child care for their children. As a result of living in informal settlements and shelters, they are also more exposed to risks of sexual harassment and violence. There are no public daycare centers or safe places to leave their children while they work.
- The most vulnerable population groups resort to begging in the streets to generate some income in order to buy food for themselves and their dependents. They face risks such as human trafficking and smuggling and drug use.
- The absence of specific procedures to facilitate access to documentation, regularization and international protection for the most vulnerable population groups such as the elderly and children reduces their chances of accessing national protection systems.
- Lack of specialized services for these groups and their specific needs.
- Absence of community/organizational processes that can support the needs of these population groups.
- Because of these challenges, there are abandoned older adults in some Warao communities in Guyana.
- Separated and unaccompanied children face greater risks, including child abuse, from those who take care of them. Some of them end up on the streets exposed to drug use, trafficking networks and sexual and commercial exploitation.
- Single or widowed parents often face difficulties with caring for children and/or are at greater risk of labor exploitation because of their desperation and acceptance of any type of employment.
- For communities located in more isolated areas (rivers, canyons), access to health services is more complex, which means that they face increased risks in emergency situations.
- Hospital capacity in Guyana is very limited. There are no facilities to effectively respond to an emergency or serious situation.

PROPOSALS

- Access to social support based on an individual's age or disability.
- English classes for adults, primarily vulnerable people.
- Access to official documentation and social benefits for the most vulnerable population.
- Inter-institutional brigades to raise awareness with communities about the services available and facilitate access, especially those related to health and specialized services.
- Carry out assessments to identify the needs of each vulnerable group and define specific response actions.
- Promote community meetings for the collective analysis of risks and needs, identifying the needs of vulnerable groups and defining possible actions.
- Strengthen community organization through training and capacity building, the joint design of support and accompaniment networks and communication channels for the exchange of information and assistance.
- Access to specialized services such as prosthetics and mental health care.
- Emergency procedures for handling cases of people with serious illnesses, disabilities and those who are unable to move from their communities.



Income-generating alternatives linked to the traditional and cultural practices of the peoples, as well as bilingual/trilingual education systems that contribute to the preservation of indigenous peoples. Incorporate indigenous teachers into the education system and guarantee both basic primary and secondary education and alternatives to facilitate access to higher education. Develop pathways for gaining employment that take into account traditional practices.

IMPACTS

- Due to the conditions in the settlements (located alongside rivers and canals), communities do not have access to basic services (electricity, water) nor internet, which is an obstacle to access to education.
- Very few indigenous people own a tablet or cell phone.
- Because of the pandemic, formal education and labor integration activities were put on hold. This was exacerbated by the lack of technology among the indigenous population.
- There have been psychological impacts on children due to not being able to interact with other children their own age.
- Lack of preparation for social integration due to lack of contact and not being able to speak the language.
- Additional tensions within families due to the barriers that parents face in communicating, supporting their children with school materials, understanding the procedures for accessing educational systems and complying with the requirements for their enrollment.
- Families face food security problems, which means that they do not have the minimum conditions to guarantee access to education for their children.
- The communities and settlements are located far from schools. Roads are not in a good condition and cannot be crossed during the rainy season. These conditions affect Warao children's access to school and increase protection risks for these children.
- Social problems and intimate partner violence in the communities have an impact on the mental health of children and adolescents. Some of them have ended up using drugs and alcohol and require support through rehabilitation and mental health support programs.
- The indigenous communities do not have the means to ensure their subsistence. Those who live on dry land are located far from rivers and cannot fish; hunting is not possible because they do not have the necessary items. Access to food in these areas is scarce. Families generally eat cassava.
- The families living in the swamps are also unable to fish because of the presence of animals, their lack of boats and no equipment. The water in these swamps is polluted.
- Access to food in the settlements is complex. There is no regular distribution of food and no gasoline to go out to and fish. Cases of acute malnutrition have been reported that have caused the death of indigenous children.
- In order for indigenous communities to survive through their traditional activities (hammocks, fishing, housing, herding), they need tools and seed capital to get started.
- Access to the labor market is limited by language and paperwork. Those who have found alternatives have faced situations involving labor and sexual exploitation and have even disappeared.

PROPOSALS

- Characterization of the skills and capacities of indigenous communities to identify alternatives in the labor market.
- Promote engagement between the Warao and Tushaw indigenous peoples for the identification of possible exchanges and the joint development of economic activities,
- Carry out awareness campaigns and outreach with host communities to identify income generation alternatives that mitigate the risks of labor and sexual exploitation.
- Strengthen community-based protection mechanisms to avoid risk situations and promote the identification of economic alternatives that will help combat the problems of food insecurity and malnutrition.
- Provide literacy and English courses.
- Promote alternatives for course completion and access to higher education (scholarships).
- Hire Warao teachers for the education system so that they can implement bilingual programs that contribute to the preservation of the culture (accreditation of degrees obtained in Venezuela).
- Establish temporary schools in settlements and shelters using innovative educational approaches to prevent abandonment of education, hire Warao teachers and mitigate the effects of migration on children and adolescents.



Shelter entry/exit strategies, consultation processes, community and organizational processes, internal regulations and self-governance and self-determination systems; intra- and intercultural conflict management.

IMPACTS

- The departure from Venezuela had an impact on community and organizational structures. Communities are dispersed, do not talk to each other and are thus weakened.
- Due to the absence of organizational structure and leadership, support from entities and organizations is limited to those who speak English and can communicate with the Tushaw and the authorities. This has generated tensions and conflicts in communities.
- Communities are not getting the support they need. Agencies are overwhelmed.
- In Venezuela, the communities had chiefs and leaders who represented all of the population and monitored their situation. This included conducting censuses and identifying abandoned families, orphaned children and women heads of households. They were responsible for organizing everything. When the Warao left Venezuela all of that work was lost.
- The temporary presence of families in the communities has also affected organizational processes. There is no spirit of permanence, of commitment.
- Although some communities have maintained their leadership, their arrival in Guyana has meant that the chiefs of the communities are Tushaw and are not from the Warao people.
- Within the communities, socioeconomic problems, mental anguish and food insecurity have led to an increase in the use of drugs and problems with coexistence.

PROPOSALS

- Strengthen the Warao people in the areas of leadership, technical capacity and knowledge of existing structures in Guyana to reduce their dependence on the Tushaw people and avoid future confrontations.
- Promote conditions to facilitate joint work with the Tushaw, involve the Warao people in the consultation spaces the Tushaw have with the government and seek alternatives such as the cession of territory to guarantee the Warao's food security.
- Promote the strengthening of leadership with tools for the peaceful resolution of conflicts to help mediate the problems experienced in the community.
- It is important to promote organizational structures for the management of tensions, carry out advocacy actions with government authorities and improve relationships with organizations.
- Strengthen the relationship between the Curi and Warao indigenous peoples. Bring these communities closer together, promote exchanges and offer support.
- Generate awareness processes between the Warao and the English to improve local integration conditions.
- Carry out advocacy actions for the improvement of access to public assistance programs with the relevant authorities.

- Inform the Warao about government entities in the country, their roles and responsibilities.
- Promote organizations that speak English and Spanish and can advocate on behalf of the Warao people.
- Training on human rights, legal frameworks and the rights of indigenous peoples delivered in the Warao language.
- Promote engagement between Warao families that require access to land and the respective Tushaw authorities.
- Promote training sessions on the rights of indigenous peoples in Guyana with support from the Tushaw authorities.
- Promote advocacy actions with the National Tushaw Council to improve communication channels and highlight the situation faced by the Warao people with national authorities.



Victimization, discrimination and stigmatization, community response channels, levels of awareness of the current situation faced by Venezuela's indigenous peoples, the causes of their migration, skills, traditions and capacities.

IMPACTS

- Discrimination against the Warao because they do not speak English, which limits their access to basic services, institutional channels, protection from police and employment.
- Fear among the Warao in terms of approaching and interacting with Guyanese and also with non-indigenous Venezuelan families.
- Reduced (when available) salaries for Warao indigenous people compared to the daily rates paid to Guyanese and non-indigenous people.
- The needs of indigenous people are taken advantage of and they are subject to labor exploitation, humiliation and degradation.
- The Warao indigenous people are blamed for the lack of employment available in Guyana.
- There is no police response to acts of violence, abuse and exploitation reported by the Warao. There is no follow-up or support.
- Gender discrimination in the area of employment. Warao women only have access to cleaning and domestic work.
- There is a lack of government agencies for reporting these issues. There is a lack of worker protection.

PROPOSALS

- Accessing formal employment would reduce job discrimination
- Activities to improve understanding, knowledge and reciprocity between the Guyanese population and the Venezuelan Warao people to address their difficulties (social cohesion).
- Communal activities between Guyanese, Venezuelans and Warao to facilitate the mutual learning of English, Spanish and cultures.
- Hold meetings that allow the Warao people to share their culture and traditions and raise awareness with the Guyanese about the reasons they had to flee Venezuela.
- Training and capacity building for public officials, specifically the police, with the support of Warao translators.



**“WE ARE NOT RECEIVING HELP, EVERYONE
SCATTERED, AND WE WERE LEFT ALONE.”**

AVAILABLE RESOURCES ON THE RESPONSE TO THE SITUATION OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF VENEZUELA

STRATEGIC AND PROTECTION ANALYSIS DOCUMENTS:

Use the icons to access the information.



Sector's Strategy for Indigenous



Reports



Consults



Virtual Library

ADVOCACY ACTIONS

HIGH LEVEL FORUM ON THE SITUATION OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF VENEZUELA

Use the icon to access the video



- [Eñepa cultural video in Colombia](#)
- [Inga cultural video in Colombia](#)
- [Wayuu cultural video in Colombia](#)
- [Yupka and Inga cultural video in Colombia](#)
- [Yupka and Wayuu cultural video in Colombia](#)
- [Warao cultural video in Trinidad and Tobago](#)
- [Warao cultural video in Guyana](#)

HIGH-LEVEL SIDE EVENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CONFERENCE IN SOLIDARITY WITH REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS FROM VENEZUELA

Use the icon to access the video.

