



PROTECTION BRIEF

BRAZIL

OCTOBER 2024

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Operational Context & Analysis

Brazil has in place a progressive and inclusive protection and solutions framework for refugees and other forcibly displaced individuals, ensuring equal access to rights and services alongside its national citizens. With an open-border policy, Brazil guarantees the admission, registration, and documentation of those in need of international protection. Brazil hosts the largest number of Venezuelans recognized as refugees in Latin America and the Caribbean.

As of July 2024, Brazil has recognized 144.463 refugees and provided alternative protection pathways to 572.877 persons in need of international protection, the majority of whom are Venezuelan (474.217) and Haitian (89.455) nationals. Additionally, there are 75,998 pending asylum applications, primarily from individuals originating from Cuba (26.225), Venezuela (15.065) and Angola (8.696).

Brazil stands as a regional leader, implementing *prima facie* simplified refugee status determination procedures under the regional refugee definition of the 1984 Cartagena Declaration (contemplated in its national legislation as those fleeing serious human rights violations) for individuals from Venezuela, Burkina Faso, Iraq, Mali and Syria. The National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) has also granted refugee protection to individuals persecuted due to their diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as women and girls at risk of female genital mutilation.

Furthermore, Brazil has established a humanitarian visa and temporary residence permit policy for nationals of Afghanistan, Haiti, Syria, and Ukraine. Temporary residence permits are also available for Venezuelans who choose not to apply for asylum, ensuring access to protection and legal status for a wide range of individuals in need.

In Brazil, refugees can choose between accessing the asylum system or applying for a residency as a complementary form of protection. Both options ensure freedom of movement, access to formal employment, education, healthcare, and social assistance. However, only those who apply for asylum are explicitly safeguarded against refoulement, eligible to obtain travel documents, granted expedite access to naturalization, and exempt from presenting documents from their country of origin in various civil procedures. These additional safeguards significantly ease their integration into Brazilian society.

Despite an overall favorable environment, the proportion of those living below the national poverty line is still considerable, especially if compared with host communities (40% vs 30%).¹ Research conducted by UNHCR and other institutions indicates that refugees in Brazil experience

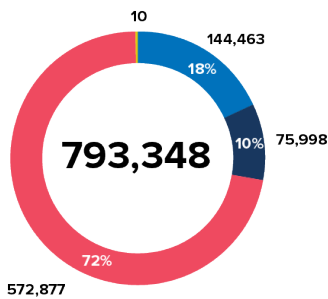
¹ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/?Text=&Goal=10&Target=10.7>

higher rates of unemployment, informality, and underemployment compared to the local population, alongside lower average wages.²

Over 11,000 indigenous Venezuelans currently residing in Brazil have been identified by UNHCR and partners. Compared to the overall Venezuelan population, they face compounded challenges accessing basic rights and services, including higher rates of food insecurity (58% vs 52%), health care needs (75% vs 59%) and out of school children (21% vs 15%).³ Language barriers and limited formal education of adults (indigenous refugees are 5 times more likely to have no formal education when compared to the general Venezuelan population in Brazil), significantly affect their prospects for successful integration.⁴

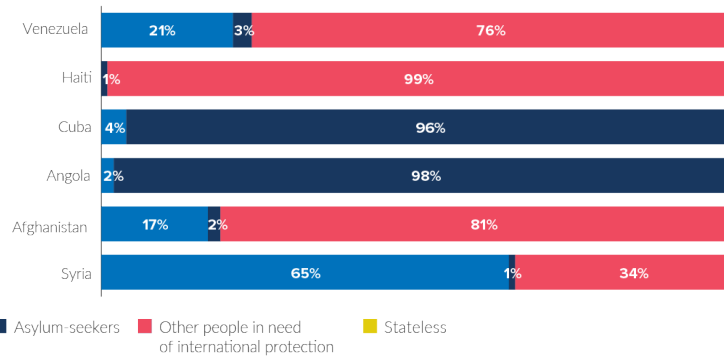
Protection brief in graphics

Population category

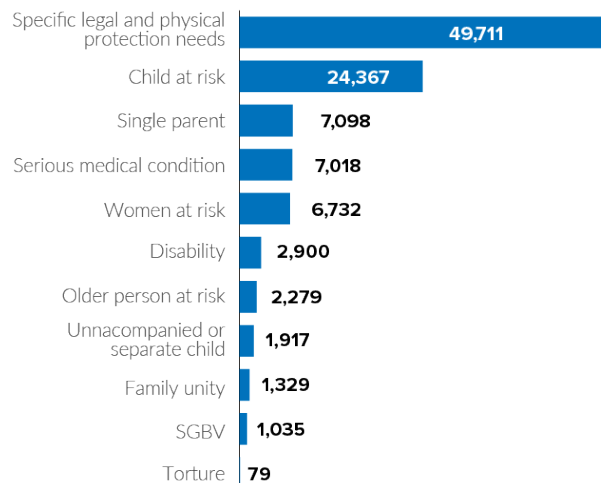


Population category

Breakdown by nationality



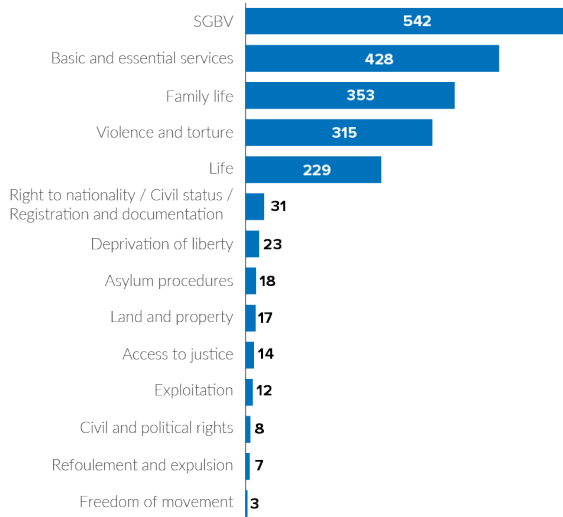
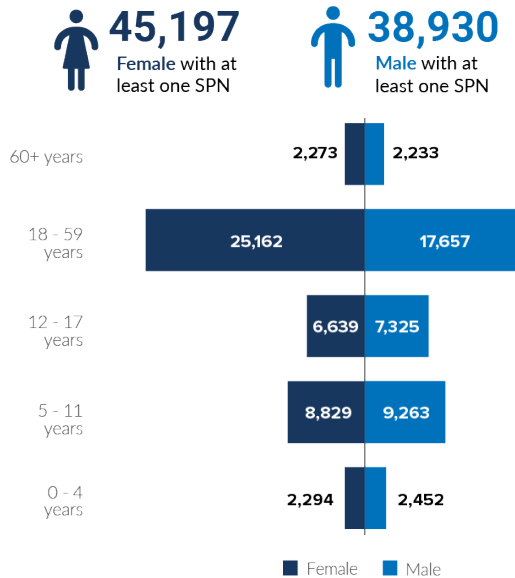
84K Individuals with one or more specific needs



² World Bank and UNHCR (2021), *Integration of Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants in Brazil*, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/498351617118028819/pdf/Integration-of-Venezuelan-Refugees-and-Migrants-in-Brazil.pdf>; ACNUR & Ministerio do Trabalho e Emprego (2024), *Informe sobre o mercado de trabalho formal para Haitianos no Brasil*, <https://www.acnur.org/br/sites/br/files/2024-11/informe-mercado-trabalho-formal-haitianos-brasil-jun-2024.pdf>; ACNUR & Ministerio do Trabalho e Emprego (2024), *Informe sobre o mercado de trabalho formal para pessoas refugiadas afegãs no Brasil*, <https://www.acnur.org/br/sites/br/files/2024-11/informe-mercado-trabalho-formal-pessoas-afegas-no-brasil-junho-2024.pdf>

³ R4V (2023), *Refugee and Migrant Needs Analysis*, <https://r4v.info/rmna2023/> p. 85

⁴ *Idem*.

Number of protection incidents registered
2K Total of Incidents⁵

Individuals with at least one specific needs:
 Breakdown by age and gender


Protection risks

Protection Risk I

Discrimination and stigmatization. Racism and xenophobia are mentioned by refugees and other people in need of international protection as serious obstacles to their local integration into the Brazilian society. Adults report that discrimination hinders their access to dignified housing and the formal labor market,⁶ while children refer to being bullied in school because of their origin.⁷ In Roraima state, the primary entry point for Venezuelans into Brazil, 44% of refugees and migrants reported experiencing discrimination due to their nationality. This was most prevalent in the workplace (37%), during job searches (30%), and while attempting to access healthcare (24%), education (21%) and also while looking for housing (20%).⁸

As per a recent assessment conducted in 21 Brazilian states, 15% of Venezuelan refugees and migrants reported having suffered discrimination and stigmatization in the previous 12 months. Out of these, 80.4% were discriminated because of their nationality, 8.2% for their ethnicity, 5.2% for their age, 3.5% for having a disability and 2.4% due to their sexual orientation and gender identity.⁹ On the other hand, according to the same source, 33% of indigenous Venezuelans experienced discrimination and stigmatization, mainly due to their nationality (51.1%) but also for their ethnicity (31.9%), and to a smaller degree because of their age (6.3%).¹⁰ This overlapping of discrimination causes not only affects the ability of these populations to access dignified livelihoods, but also to exercise their fundamental rights, such as access to health and education.

⁵ For the purpose of this analysis, the category that refers to “basic and essential services” regards denial of, or unequal access to basic services, the category “family life” is linked to family separation or inability to exercise family unit, and “life incidents” are linked to enforced disappearance.

⁶ ACNUR (2023), *Diagnosticos Participativos*, <https://www.acnur.org/portugues/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Diagnosticos-Participativos-2023-.pdf> pp. 7; 9.

⁷ Idem, p. 13

⁸ Caritas-REACH (2022), *Avaliação Baseada em Área (ABA) em Boa Vista, Roraima*, <https://caritas.org.br/storage/arquivo-de-biblioteca/March2023/Ir3dz5ULhRAzNV4wqkwi.pdf>, p.14

⁹ R4V (2024), *Microsoft Power BI*

¹⁰ Idem.

Discrimination and xenophobia disproportionately affect also afro-descendent refugees, who report discrimination based on race/ethnic origin, and not just on nationality.¹¹ Haitian nationals, for instance, report significantly more instances of racism compared to other South American refugees and migrants.¹² This exacerbates barriers to accessing a broad range of rights and services¹³ and leads to greater vulnerability to both low skilled and temporary jobs, particularly when compared to Venezuelans who arrived in Brazil under similar circumstances.¹⁴

Protection Risk II

Access to dignified housing. In Brazil, a significant proportion of refugees and other forcibly displaced people can only afford precarious and overcrowded dwellings, located in impoverished and marginalized communities, often controlled by organized crime.¹⁵ According to UNHCR's data, only 15% of refugees have secured tenure right to housing and/or land, 27% live in physically safe and secure settlements with access to basic facilities, and 54% feel safe walking alone in their neighborhood after dark.¹⁶ In comparison, 65% of the Brazilian population owns the house in which they live - although 14% lacks the documentation to prove tenure rights¹⁷ - 72% lives in physically safe and secure settlements,¹⁸ and 52% feels safe walking alone in their neighborhood after dark.¹⁹

In these vulnerable conditions, any shock to the household economy -such as job loss, illness, or climate related events- significantly impacts on refugees' ability to cover the rent and utility costs (water, electricity), leaving them at heightened risk of eviction.²⁰ Climate related incidents are becoming recurrent in the Brazilian context, such as floods and landslides in the south, as well as droughts and wildfires in the center and the north of the country.²¹ For instance, southern Brazil has seen an increase of up to 30% in average rainfall over the last three decades²² and, as of September 2024, 59% of the Brazilian territory was affected by the most severe drought since nationwide measurements.²³

In this scenario, 19% of Venezuelan households reported being at risk of evictions from rented housing in the three months prior to their interview, with a higher incidence in Roraima (26%) and Amazonas (29%), the two states hosting the highest proportion of refugees and other forcibly displaced people in Brazil. As per the same study, 10% of the indigenous households surveyed were evicted during the three months prior to the interview, which makes them almost five times more likely to face actual eviction when compared to the total surveyed population (2%).²⁴ The risk of eviction has been also systematically reported by refugees also of other nationalities, including Haitians, Colombians, and Cubans.²⁵

¹¹ Estou Refugiado, Qualifest (2021) Refugiados no Brasil, https://www.institutoqualibest.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Estudo_Perfil-Refugiados-Brasil_Relatorio.pdf p. 30

¹² ACNUR (2024), cit. p. 18

¹³ Reinaldo Venâncio da Cruz Neto (2017) No Brasil, xenofobia tem cor e alvo: A realidade do deslocamento humano de haitianos ao Brasil, através do Estado do Acre, pós-catastrofe natural no Haiti em 2010, <https://acervodigital.ufpr.br/handle/1884/64891>

¹⁴ ACNUR & Ministerio do Trabalho e Emprego (2024) cit.

¹⁵ ACNUR (2023), cit. p. 8

¹⁶ UNHCR (2024). Brazil: Results Monitoring Survey (RMS) – UNHCR. (2024). Annual Results Report 2023: Brazil. (link)

¹⁷ Agência IBGE Notícias, « Domicílios próprios predominam, mas 13,5% deles não tem documentação » [https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-noticias/2012-agencia-de-noticias/38544-domicilios-proprios-predominam-mas-13-5-deles-nao-tem-documentacao#:~:text=A%20maior%20parte%20da%20popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o,2016%20\(67%2C8%25\).&text=A%20condi%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20de%20domic%C3%ADlio%20alugado,20%2C2%25%20em%202022.](https://agenciadenoticias.ibge.gov.br/agencia-noticias/2012-agencia-de-noticias/38544-domicilios-proprios-predominam-mas-13-5-deles-nao-tem-documentacao#:~:text=A%20maior%20parte%20da%20popula%C3%A7%C3%A3o,2016%20(67%2C8%25).&text=A%20condi%C3%A7%C3%A3o%20de%20domic%C3%ADlio%20alugado,20%2C2%25%20em%202022.)

¹⁸ IBGE (2021) Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios Contínua, - Vitimização: Sensação de segurança, https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv101984_informativo.pdf, p.2

¹⁹ Idem, p.3

²⁰ ACNUR (2023), cit. p. 8

²¹ INPE, "Dangerous climate change in Brazil" https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ccst.inpe.br%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2Frelatorio%2FClimate_Change_in_Brazil_relatorio_ingl.pdf&psig=AOvVaw0sQIGsQl9kCmL1D4ZrNAle&ust=1729802339880000&source=images&cd=vfe&opi=89978449&ved=0CAQQn5wMahcKEwiAubWTrqWJAxUAAAAAHQAAAAQBA

²² Presidência da República, « Southern Brazil has seen an increase of up to 30% in average annual rainfall over the last three decades », <https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2024/05/southern-brazil-has-seen-an-increase-of-up-to-30-in-average-annual-rainfall-over-the-last-three-decades>

²³ Associated Press, "During Brazil's worst drought, wildfires rage and the Amazon River falls to a record low" <https://apnews.com/article/brazil-drought-amazon-wildfires-smoke-heat-7d96dbbf5c4339050fb24bbbde6c3b82>

²⁴ R4V (2024), cit.

²⁵ ACNUR (2023), cit.



Sona Tahery, a young Afghan woman, found safety in Brazil after fleeing severe restrictions on women's rights and access to work in her home country. After spending a year as a refugee in Iran, she arrived with her sister and brother-in-law, seeking a new beginning. Now, at Todos Irmãos Shelter in Guarulhos, she is rebuilding her life with dignity and hope. ©UNHCR// Diego Baravelli

Protection Risk III

Gender equality and access to rights for refugee women and girls. Refugee women and girls face significant barriers to the realization of their rights due to gender roles and power disbalances. Regardless of their nationality, women and girls face higher unemployment rates, less access to education opportunities, greater exposure to gender-based violence and additional caregiving responsibilities.²⁶ Members of the LGTBQIA+ community face discrimination and stigmatization due to their sexual orientation and gender identity, and experience barriers in their access to dignified livelihoods with some of them, especially transgender women, resorting to survival sex as one of the few viable means to earn a living in the country.²⁷

In terms of economic violence, only 21% of Venezuelan women of working age access the formal job market, compared with 42% of men, and the situation is even worst for young women aged 18 to 26 who are single head of household (13%).²⁸ Moreover, women in the formal job market earn an average salary that is 7% lower than men, a gap that widens up to 32% at higher and post graduate levels.²⁹

As far as physical and sexual violence is concerned, 18% of Venezuelan women and girls do not feel safe in their communities, a proportion that is three times higher in Roraima and Amazonas states, compared with the rest of the country.³⁰ Among the places that are perceived as most insecure, respondent mentioned: the way to school (44%), community and religious spaces (44%), shelters (35%) and their own homes (28%).³¹ A recent study also found that in the state of Roraima, 9% of key informants witnessed some form of sexual violence against children.³²

²⁶ ACNUR (2023), cit. p. 14

²⁷ Idem, p.17

²⁸ R4V (2024), cit.

²⁹ Informe sobre o mercado de trabalho formal para venezuelanos refugiados e migrantes no Brasil [Informe sobre o mercado de trabalho formal para venezuelanos refugiados e migrantes no Brasil (Março.2024) (acnur.org)]

³⁰ R4V (2024), cit.

³¹ Idem

³² UNICEF (2024), Inter-sectoral Multi-partner Rapid Needs Assessment with a focus on Children, publication forthcoming

Refugee women and girls living in Brazil also report additional forms of gender-based violence that significantly affect their access to fundamental rights, with a negative impact on their physical and emotional well-being, as well as local integration prospects. In this sense, some Afghan women have reported a strict control exerted by male family members, which translates into their confinement in the domestic realm.

Protection Risk IV

Trafficking in persons, forced labor or slavery-like practices. Although asylum seekers, refugees, and other forcibly displaced persons have the same labor rights as nationals in Brazil, they encounter several obstacles to their economic integration. The experience of displacement, coupled with high levels of unemployment, informal labor, and poverty, heighten the risk of this population to fall prey of human traffickers. According to official data, between 2021 and 2023, 355 refugees and migrants of all nationalities were rescued from forced labor or slavery-like practices in Brazil from various economic sectors, primarily in timber trade, cassava cultivation, clothing manufacturing, road transportation, and tobacco.³³

Two per cent of surveyed Venezuelan households reported that at least one member had been deceived, manipulated, coerced into debt, or received false promises intended to force them to travel or migrate.³⁴ Additionally, one per cent of households reported at least one of its members being held against his\her will by someone other than the country's authorities, which may suggest the possibility of human trafficking.³⁵

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to exploitation for various purposes of human trafficking, including sexual exploitation, domestic forced labor, illegal adoption, and organs removal.³⁶ Refugee women and girls in Brazil sometimes have to resort to survival sex, or cash-in-hand domestic labor to make a living in Brazil, which increases their exposure to human trafficking networks.³⁷ In addition to these risks, domestic workers face numerous safety and health hazards related to their tasks and the environment they work in. These include chemical and ergonomical hazards, but also psychosocial risks, including violence and harassment, which are pervasive in the sector. The impact of these risks is amplified when domestic workers provide their services in the informal economy, which is the case for most refugees and other forcibly displaced populations in Brazil.³⁸

³³ General Coordination of Inspection for the Eradication of Slave Labor and Human Trafficking (CGTRAE) of the Undersecretariat of Labor Inspection (Ministry of Labor and Employment).

³⁴ Idem

³⁵ Idem

³⁶ Ministério da Justiça e Segurança Pública, Escritório das Nações Unidas sobre Drogas e Crimes (2024). Relatório Nacional de Dados 2021-2023, Publication forthcoming.

³⁷ Relatório Situacional sobre Tráfico de Pessoas e contrabando de Migrantes, Organização Internacional para as Migrações, 2024 (Publication forthcoming)

³⁸ ILO (2022), Guidance on occupational safety and health for domestic workers and employers to prevent and mitigate COVID-19, <https://www.ilo.org/media/376556/download>



On World Refugee Day, refugees and local families in Porto Alegre's Sarandi neighborhood shared a meal and received support. The event, organized by UNHCR partners, acknowledged the solidarity shown during recent floods and celebrated the rebuilding of lives by refugees from Venezuela, Haiti, Colombia, and Afghanistan, among others. ©UNHCR/Ricardo Ara.

Challenges & Opportunities

Since 2018, Brazil has supported refugees and migrants from Venezuela through a comprehensive humanitarian federal initiative known as “Operacao Acolhida”. The Operation primarily focuses on the northern State of Roraima, the main entry point for Venezuelans into Brazil, where reception, documentation, shelter, and other forms of humanitarian assistance are provided.

From Roraima, the Government implements a voluntarily internal relocation program (interiorização) to facilitate the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants. As of October 2024, over 141,000 Venezuelans have been relocated to some 1,000 municipalities across other Brazilian states. The continued influx of Venezuelans into Brazil – which have been on the rise since 2023 – has required the Government and the humanitarian community to continue focusing on the humanitarian response in Roraima, while moving toward the integration of “Operacao Acolhida” within the regular national protection system, reducing duplications and ensuring the sustainability of the response.

In addition to Venezuelans refugees and migrants, Brazil hosts individuals from various countries, including from Cuba, Haiti, India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Nepal and Bangladesh; which places additional strain on local protection networks, particularly in border states and cities with international airports, in the absence of a national response mechanism beyond “Operacao Acolhida”.

In addition to being a destination for nearly 800,000 people in need of international protection, Brazil is increasingly used as a transit country by individuals from various nationalities intending to reach the north of the continent through the Darien jungle or Europe through the French Guyana. In this context, Brazil plays a crucial regional role and has the potential to offer effective legal and socio-economic integration opportunities for displaced populations, which will contribute to the reduction of secondary movements.

To this end, the Government is set to launch Brazil's first National Policy on Migration, Asylum and Statelessness. Developed through an extensive participatory process involving concerned populations, the policy aims to streamline access to rights and services at federal, state, and municipal levels. This will support the effective reception and integration of these populations into the Brazilian society. Additionally, the Government has also adopted a Plan of Action to address the protection and integration challenges faced by the Haitian population.

Moreover, Brazil is launching a Resettlement, Admission, and Humanitarian Reception Program for Afghan refugees through Complementary Means and Community Sponsorship. Authorities, with the active support of UNHCR, are now developing Standard Operating Procedures for its implementation, and planning ways to identify and train the civil society organizations who will be responsible to receive these refugees in Brazil and support them in their local integration journey.

The government of Brazil has taken steps towards the recognition of the central role played by local authorities in protecting and promoting local integration of forcibly displaced persons. In November 2023 the Ministry of Justice and Public Security has launched the "National Network of Welcoming Cities - Red Nacional de Cidades Acolhedoras" with the objective of strengthening dialogue and actions around public policies and programs for migrants, refugees and stateless people. UNHCR has since 2020 been supporting the Cities of Solidarity initiative in Brazil helping sharing experiences among the network of cities forming part of initiative and has recognized best practices from 17 municipalities.

In recent year, Brazil has experienced an increasing number of climate disasters, which have been more frequent and severe and have been affecting a growing number of people, including populations already displaced in Brazil. The Government is developing a Climate Plan as well as risk reduction, adaptation, and resilience plans, which takes into account displacement impact; while the legislative branch is discussing bills to regulate and respond to internal displacement.

Substantial progress has been made by Brazil toward implementing the 2019 GRF pledges which focused on the improvement of the asylum system and the provision of complementary forms of protection. In 2023, the Government made 10 additional pledges at the GRF, covering the following topics: improvement and facilitation of the right to family reunion; participation of people in need of international protection in decision making and consultation processes; creation of resettlement and complementary pathways programs; strengthening of asylum systems and improvement of refugee access to health, amongst others.

IFC and UNHCR have been working together since 2018 to create innovative solutions to overcome the challenges faced by refugees and migrants in Brazil. The two organizations sought to explore potential ways to engage the private sector in providing solutions with a primary focus on employment, affordable housing and financial inclusion. IFC and UNHCR, in partnership with the Brazilian Banking Association (FEBRABAN) and the Brazilian Central Bank, prepared a guide to inform financial institutions about the profiles and specific documentation of refugees and migrants and their financial needs.

Additionally, 22 private companies pledged to hire 1,200 refugees and to support 15,000 refugees with trainings and job placement by 2027. Currently, Brazil formally employs around 200,000 refugees and people in need of international protection. Of these, more than 12 thousand are employed by 55 companies and organizations that are part of the Companies with Refugees Forum, an initiative started in 2021 by UNHCR and the UN Global Compact – Brazil Chapter. The

Forum promotes strategies to support the refugee population in Brazil through employment and income generation.

Call(s) to Action

The Brazilian state is commendably recognized for its efforts in providing protection to refugees and other forcibly displaced populations, in line with international, regional, and national legal frameworks. Brazil stands as a beacon of hope for refugees in the region, demonstrating exemplary commitment and leadership in humanitarian response, and striving to go ensure the successful local integration of displaced individuals.

UNHCR calls upon the international community to boost the support for Brazilian authorities by increasing financial and technical assistance to UNHCR and other humanitarian actors. This support is crucial for sustaining and expanding Brazil's protection and assistance programs, ensuring the rights and needs of refugees and other forcibly displaced people are met, and Brazil's exemplary efforts in this field are fully supported and sustained.



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