In December, seven Waraos from Pará passed the entrance exams to undergraduate programmes in the Federal University of Pará.

Photo: Aldeias Infantis / Leila Silva

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

As of 31 December, Brazil reached a total of 7,675,973 confirmed cases and 194,949 deaths from COVID-19.

On 4 December, Operação Acolhida officially closed the field hospital of the Area of Protection and Care (APC) in Boa Vista. Since its inauguration, on 18 June, the hospital assisted 5,942 persons, of whom 4,731 were hospitalized for at least 12 hours. This included 658 Venezuelan refugees and migrants, while the remaining users were Brazilian nationals.

On 11 December, the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Presidency, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Health issued Ordinance 615/2020, which extended by an additional period of 7 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. On 17 December, Ordinance 630/2020 was issued, now closing the land borders for an undetermined period of time and requiring up to 72 hour PCR for those entering Brazil by air.

On 16 December, UNHCR and AJUFE (Association of Federal Judges) signed a Cooperation Agreement that will facilitate joint trainings to ensure the effectiveness of rights for persons of concern to UNHCR, as well as their broad access to justice. The agreement will allow, for example, for the continuous training of Federal Judges in topics such as asylum and human rights.
In December, the Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) opened a selection process with dedicated vacancies for refugees, stateless persons and humanitarian visa holders in their undergraduate courses.

On 17 December, the Interiorization dashboard was launched by the Ministry of Citizenship during the Federal Committee on Emergency Assistance. The dashboard is the result of a joint initiative of UNHCR, IOM and the Ministry of Citizenship (MC) and counts with information from Operation Welcome and UNHCR’s ProGres v4 system.

**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.

**Increasing number of undocumented Venezuelans:** Protracted border closures has led to increasing number of undocumented Venezuelans, who faces challenges to access rights and services. Many are living in precarious conditions and cannot meet their basic needs of food and shelter.

**UNHCR RESPONSE**

**Strengthening and adapting shelter support and reinforcing local health responses**

**Shelter:** UNHCR and IOM conducted a 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 20 humanitarian field professionals from UNHCR, AVSI, IOM, FFHI and FSF. As a result, Roraima now counts with a total of 39 CCCM trainers. The same activity was held in Manaus, which now counts also with 39 CCCM trainers who are humanitarian field professionals from AVSI, Cáritas Arquidiocesana de Manaus, Instituto Mana, the Municipality and the State Government.

During the month of December, UNHCR allocated 345 refugees and migrants to different shelters in Boa Vista. These include persons who were previously living in the Bus Station of Boa Vista, focusing mainly on persons with specific needs including persons with critical medical conditions, pregnant women, families with children below 2 years old, elderly persons and persons with security risk due to the profile.

Due to structural damage and security reasons, the Municipality of Manaus has decided to close the Tarumã Centro shelter. The Federal Public Ministry (MPF), the Municipal Secretary for Women, Social Assistance and Citizenship (SEMASC), UNHCR, Instituto Mana, Caritas Manaus and indigenous leaders have jointly developed a strategy to support indigenous families who would leave the structure. As result, a total of 7 families (30 individuals) moved to private houses (rentals) and were included in the Municipal Passport for Social Inclusion project, through which they will be
supported for a period of one year, guaranteeing the necessary assistance for the families until they achieve self-reliance. The families were also supported by UNHCR through the donation of kitchen sets, mattresses and hammocks, mattress covers, stoves and hygiene kits.

On 24 December, 127 Venezuelan indigenous who were living in the Janokoida shelter in Pacaraima were relocated to the Jardim Floresta shelter, which was previously adapted to serve the indigenous refugee and migrant community with hammocks, areas for leisure and cultural events, and space for the production of handicrafts.

Ensuring protection and supporting integration processes

Integration: Seven indigenous Warao living in Belém passed the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) 2020 entrance exam for undergraduate courses in Pharmacy, Literature and Pedagogy, as a result of UFPA’s first special selective process for foreigners in a situation of socioeconomic vulnerability.

From 14 to 23 December, CONARE conducted a field mission to Roraima to interview indigenous asylum-seekers who lack Venezuelan identity documents. With logistical, technical and financial support from UNHCR and partner FFHI, which coordinates the existing two indigenous shelters, a total of 69 indigenous asylum-seekers were interviewed. Two CONARE Eligibility Officers conducted 42 eligibility interviews in Pacaraima (Janokoida shelter), and 27 eligibility interviews in Boa Vista (Pintolandia shelter).

On 10 December, 29 Venezuelan women living in Rondon 2 and Pricumã shelters in Boa Vista (including two women with disabilities) concluded a vocational training on customer service and sales provided in the framework of the “Empoderando Refugiadas” project. In 2020, this initiative enabled 59 women to obtain Brazilian professional certificates that prepared them to be internally relocated under the job-placement modality. As of now, 20 women head of households have travelled with their families (79 persons in total) and are now working in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Santa Catarina. It is expected that by January, up to 120 persons will have benefitted from the interiorization Programme thanks to “Empoderando Refugiadas”.

During the month of December, a total of 1,286 refugees and migrants were voluntarily relocated from Amazonas and Roraima states to other parts of Brazil by bus or flight.

On 3 December, approximately 250 people participated in the fifth Instagram Live of the campaign “Proteja o Trabalho”, promoted by UNHCR, ILO, IOM and the Sub secretariat for Labour Inspection. The session featured the theme “workers with disabilities” and an informative booklet on this topic is now available at the campaign’s website along with other materials.

Also on 3 December, 50 persons attended the webinar “Companies with Refugees: Good Practices that Transform” promoted by UNHCR, the Global Compact and the Tent Foundation. The participating companies included BRK Ambiental and Foxtime Human Resources, who presented their project that offers technical professional training in the maintenance of hydro-sanitary installations for refugee women, aiming to facilitate their insertion in the labour market. A case study on this project was included in the Empresas com Refugiados platform and can be accessed here.

Gender and GBV: In Mucajai Municipality (Roraima), UNHCR, UNFPA and Casa da Mulher Brasileira (CMB) conducted a capacity building session for 40 local authorities covering GBV basic principles, humanitarian key standards, Maria da Penha Law and the forced displacement– GBV nexus. The participants are functionaries of the civil and military police, CRAS and CREAS.
In Boa Vista, 33 humanitarian workers participated in the first session of the “Bravery is not Violent” workshop, an initiative aiming to strengthen the construction of positive masculinities and rethinking attitudes and values that can lead to the commitment of men in combating violence against women.

On 11 December, UNHCR in coordination with UNFPA and Roraima’s State Coordination for Public Policy for Women (CEPPM), conducted two training sessions on Maria da Penha Law and assistance to women survivors of domestic violence, reaching 186 key actors for the prevention and response to SGBV – including military police, civil police, fire department, social assistance and social care network, judiciary, the public defender’s office, health workers and the State Education Secretariat.

In Manaus, UNHCR, UNFPA, and Instituto Mana together with 20 persons from the Venezuelan LGBTI and host community participated in a photography workshop carried out by the photography association “Café Preto”. This initiative resulted in a photo exhibition held at Centro Cultural Povos da Amazônia on 10 December.

**Documentation and Registration:** In December, in Boa Vista, UNHCR Brazil and partners registered 1,303 persons in proGres v4. This number reflects the ongoing registration efforts targeting the population living in the spontaneous occupation Ka'Ubanoko and at the Bus Station for shelter allocation.

Also in Boa Vista, UNHCR assisted 290 individuals in filing asylum claims and 245 individuals in renewing their asylum seekers protocols. Moreover, 162 Venezuelans who were recognized as refugees were supported informalizing their permanent residence request.

In Manaus, 800 asylum-seekers and 198 refugees already recognized by the Brazilian government accessed UNHCR assistance through the support spaces of Operação Acolhida. A total of 634 asylum-seekers were supported with regularization procedures and another 166 were supported to access health services, interiorization and formal employment.

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

**CwC:** In December, the U-Report Uniendo Voces chat bot went live. Uniendo Voces since December. Through interaction with the chatbot “Gigante”, young refugees and migrants can access updated content on rights and services available. Communication is done through Whatsapp and Facebook Messenger. The project is an initiative from R4V and is coordinated by UNHCR together with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in partnership with Viração Educomunicação.

In Pacaraima, through the four INFORMA-TE WhatsApp groups, UNHCR’s partner AVSI reached 1,119 Venezuelans and members of the host community with informational materials on COVID-19 prevention and response.

UNHCR’s Help Platform registered 12,761 sessions between 1 and 31 December, 72% of which were new visitors.

**Ensuring the most vulnerable have access to basic items**

**Food and non-food items (NFIs) distribution:** In Boa Vista, UNHCR delivered 244 packages of baby diapers and 100 family cleaning kits. In addition, 35 buckets, 35 jerrycans, 60 solar lamps and 40 mattresses with covers were delivered to support plans to reopen Jardim Floresta shelter. São Vicente shelter received 35 cleaning kits for families, 35 hygiene kits for families with UNHCR bags, 10 mattresses and 20 protective mattress covers.
On 19 December, the outreach volunteers’ team with the support of Caritas and the Armed Forces held an “Arepazo” at the Bus Station of Manaus (PRA) - an activity through which arepas, traditional to Venezuelan, were distributed to each provisionally sheltered person, benefiting approximately 200 refugees and migrants. This initiative was led by the OV’s who work in the region of the Manaus bus station and was designed to strengthen community bonds, as well as the relationship of the OVs with beneficiaries. The outreach volunteers also used the activity to talk about the support they provide with information and counselling for refugees and migrants in their communities in the city of Manaus.

On 24 December, more than three thousand toys were distributed to children in the nine shelters for refugees and migrants in Boa Vista as a surprise on Christmas Eve. The toys were obtained through the support of the Public Ministry of Labor (MPT), with the donation of various items.

**Expanding the provision of life-saving cash assistance**

**Cash-based assistance (CBI):** In December, UNHCR supported 143 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.

Due to a demand for drivers from Brazilian companies making vacancies available as part of the employment based modality of interiorization, UNHCR, along with the army, supported 59 persons to validate their Venezuelan driver’s license in Brazil by providing CBI to cover the costs associated to authentication. Once these procedures are completed, these persons can be interiorized and hired as drivers.

**Contacts:**
Meghan Frohener – Associate Reporting Officer (frohener@unhcr.org)
Natália Neves - Donor Relations Associate (neves@unhcr.org)