The May/June edition of The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) report on indigenous refugees and migrants in Brazil updates the registration data and population profile, in addition to the actions developed by UNHCR in these months.
With a historic record number of people being forced to abandon their homes globally, totaling more than 82.4 million people, World Refugee Day calls for a reduction in the conflicts that these flows of refugees may generate, as well as efforts to protect these groups in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. For indigenous populations, the impacts of displacement are doubled, not only because of their relationship with the territory in which spiritual and survival practices are developed, but also because of the violation of human rights in their communities of origin, facing several additional challenges in the processes of seeking international protection.

With this in mind, UNHCR, together with its partners and indigenous communities, developed a series of activities in Brazil to recall these challenges and promote reflections with the host society and indigenous refugee communities in the various cities where UNHCR has operations.

These actions make it possible to create relationships and spaces for intercultural dialogue on customs, language, dances, in order to promote knowledge about the nearly 6,000 indigenous refugees and migrants in Brazil, expanding their access to the universal rights ensured by the Brazilian constitution.

Check below some activities developed to celebrate World Refugee Day:
Boa Vista

On June 17 and 18, seven Warao artisans who participate in the joint income generation project between UNHCR and A Casa – The Museum of the Brazilian Object participated in a fair at the Shopping Garden Roraima shopping mall, in a commercial exhibition of their work to the public.

Manaus

UNHCR and Mana Institute carried out various activities in indigenous shelters on the occasion of World Refugee Day. Among them, there was the celebration of the one-year anniversary of the Warao Radio Yakera Jokonae community project in indigenous shelters. The ones in the shelter shared their experiences as indigenous refugees and talked about Warao culture and crafts. The children participated in the #YouthWithRefugees art contest promoted by UNHCR at a global level, which has the theme “Together for Sport”.
UNHCR ACTIVITIES WITH THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT INDIGENOUS POPULATION IN BRAZIL

Boa Vista

On May 6, the Cultural and Indigenous Training Center was inaugurated in Boa Vista, next to the Jardim Floresta shelter, which was renovated to offer educational and professional training to refugee and migrant indigenous people living in the city. As another result of the partnership between UNHCR and Fraternity International (FFHI), and within the scope of Operation Welcome, the Center was designed to become a reference in cultural activities and in professional, educational and language courses that enable further development of the skills and capabilities of indigenous refugees and migrants, contributing to better quality of life, social inclusion and opportunities for income generation.

On May 31 there was a joint effort with the UNHCR protection and registration team to renew the protocol to request refugee status in the Pintolândia Indigenous Shelter. 94 sheltered indigenous persons were given the pre-documentation to renew expired protocols. On the same day, 41 persons received from the UNHCR team the CONARE notice of the recognition of their status as refugees. In total, more than 760 indigenous Venezuelans were recognized as refugees in Brazil.

On June 15, UNHCR together with UNFPA, FFHI and sheltered indigenous women developed the activity “Collecting Myths”, in which they discussed the use of menstrual cups, and deconstructed myths regarding the female body. The goal is to bring these discussions to indigenous women in the shelters and encourage the creation of conversation circles.

Manaus

On May 25, UNHCR and the Municipal Secretariat for Women, Social Assistance and Citizenship (Semasc) jointly distributed essential items to indigenous families residing in Shelter Tarumã-Açu 1. In total, 30 indigenous people were given hygiene and cleaning kits. The exercise also included the distribution of mosquito nets and screens to improve disease prevention conditions due to the rainy season in the Amazon.

In June, the first edition of activities in Sexual and Reproductive Health with indigenous adolescents in Manaus was completed. Led by UNHCR, UNFPA and Instituto Mana, the initiative aimed to promote Education in Sexual and Reproductive Health and mechanisms to prevent and identify situations of gender-based violence. The meetings had the support and endorsement of community members.
Between June 16 and 27, 14 artisans supported by the joint income generation project between UNHCR and The Museum of the Brazilian Object participated in the First Indigenous Handicraft Fair at the Shopping Via Norte Shopping Center. The event was a partnership between SEMASC and the institution ‘Mãos Que Criam Artes’ to support indigenous artisans impacted by the pandemic in their income-generating activities. In addition to the Warao artisan group, indigenous people from eight different Brazilian ethnic groups participated in the event.

In partnership with the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae-AM), The Museum of the Brazilian Object helped 11 indigenous craftswomen gain access to the National Artisan License. With this license, Warao artisans will have access to tax incentives, can issue invoices, and will be able to participate in national and international craft fairs. The Museum of the Brazilian Object will continue to register Warao artisans in Manaus, and it is expected that soon all artisans involved in the project will have access to the license.

Belém

Based on the demands of the Warao indigenous people who expressed their need to better understand and access Brazilian public services, UNHCR carried out an activity for map georeferencing in the Metropolitan Region of Belém, with the support of local protection networks. In all, five groups of Venezuelan refugees and migrants mapped the public health, transport, education and social assistance services available in the regions where they live. UNHCR shared with the communities the maps in print and digital versions, which will work as consultation and dialogue tools for the Warao community and the local protection networks that provide services to this population. The activity was mediated by Warao messengers from the community-based protection project carried out by the organization SOS Children’s Villages in partnership with UNHCR and benefited more than 500 indigenous persons living in Belém and the Metropolitan Region.

In order to strengthen the capacities of the seven community promoters who work in the Children’s Villages community-based protection project, UNHCR promoted in May a community-based protection training, the code of conduct for work in humanitarian aid contexts and communication with communities.

In May, UNHCR began a partnership with the International Institute of Education of Brazil (IEB) to promote the inclusion of refugees and indigenous migrants of the Warao ethnic group in the labor market. The pilot project will focus on the indigenous people welcomed by the city of Belém in the municipal shelter and foresees the mapping of the labor profile, job training and construction of individual and collective life plans with a focus on productive insertion.
ARTICULATION OF LOCAL NETWORKS, CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING

During the third quarter, approximately 20 training sessions were held for just over 600 public agents from at least 90 municipalities in the states of Roraima, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Bahia, Pará, Rio Grande do Norte, Piauí, and Mato Grosso do Sul.

The unique characteristics of the culture and displacement of the Warao population, as well as their specific protection needs in urban contexts, require intersectoral work supported by prior information and conceptual alignment that leverage the actions of different local actors. In this sense, UNHCR has sought to support the Warao by strengthening local networks in the municipalities and states that are now welcoming these indigenous families. The trainings focused on themes such as protection of indigenous refugees, intercultural sheltering components, community protection.

Southeast/South Regions and Bahia

Minas Gerais:
- On May 3, UNHCR trained 30 employees of the Montes Claros Secretariats of Social Assistance and Health, in partnership with IOM. The training addressed the Warao culture, challenges, guidelines and successful practices in assisting this population.
- On May 18, UNHCR sensitized 8 employees of the Reference Center for Human Rights (CDRH-Norte) and the Reference Center for Women in Montes Claros. The sensitization focused on the presentation of the Warao culture, the theme of gender-based violence (GBV) in contexts of forced displacement and good practices when dealing with situations of GBV in the Warao community.
- On May 27, UNHCR also participated in the training of Law school students in the Tutorial Education Program (PET) of the Federal University of Uberlândia, within the scope of the Sérgio Vieira de Mello Chair, with an emphasis on protecting indigenous refugees of the Warao ethnic group and the challenges of their integration in Brazil.

Bahia:
- On June 10, UNHCR trained 43 employees from the Vitória da Conquista City Hall, who work in various sectors. The training addressed the context of refugee in Brazil and in the world, the rights and duties of refugees and migrants and their access to public policies, and elements of Warao culture, the context of their displacement and coming to Brazil, and the accumulated experiences that can be compared by networks of the Southeast and South regions.

Espírito Santo:
- On May 18, UNHCR held training for 15 members of the newly formed Working Group for the protection and integration of Warao indigenous people in Guaraiparí, which involved State and Federal Public Defenders, employees of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and the State Secretariat for Human Rights, as well as professors from the Federal University of Espírito Santo. The session presented the Warao culture, the causes of internal displacement of this population in Venezuela and forced displacement to Brazil, as well as basic guidelines to work with this population and the main challenges faced in assisting and supporting their integration.
- On June 10, UNHCR hosted, as invited by the Espírito Santo Secretariat of Labor, Assistance and Social Development (SETADES) and with the support of the State Defender’s Office, the livestream “Technical support for the refugee and migrant population - Warao indigenous peoples of Venezuela” to the Secretariats of Social Assistance of the 78 municipalities in the state, with the aim of strengthening their capacities in serving the Warao indigenous groups. The livestream was attended by State Secretary Cyntia Figueira Grillo, and the UNHCR Representative in Brazil, José Egas.
On June 26, UNHCR carried out training with 55 civil servants and employees in the municipality of Serra, members of the Secretariats of Social Assistance, Human Rights, Environment, Education and Health, in addition to civil servants from the Federal and Military Police. The training introduced the Warao culture to the network, the causes of internal displacement of this population in Venezuela and forced displacement to Brazil, as well as basic guidelines to work with this population, successful practices and lessons learned in the networks in the North, Southeast and South regions, and the main challenges found when assisting and supporting the integration of this population.

Launch of the Report on Support of the Warao Indigenous Population in the Southeast and South of Brazil

On May 31, UNHCR released the report “UNHCR’s Work with Local Networks in Support of the Warao Indigenous Population in the Southeast and South of Brazil: Good Practices and Lessons Learned” in a livestream which was attended by a Warao, representatives of thematic Working Groups from the municipalities of Belo Horizonte (MG), Montes Claros (MG), Nova Iguacu (RJ), Porto Alegre (RS) and Uberlândia (MG), and IOM. The publication presents data on the Warao populations monitored by UNHCR São Paulo between November 2019 and March 2021, and describes the advisory work carried out with local networks in 10 municipalities to ensure the protection of these indigenous families in transit, in addition to giving visibility to some of the strategies, best practices, challenges and lessons learned from local experiences.

Northeast Region:

Between June 30 and July 2, UNHCR in partnership with the International Fraternity Federation (FFHI) and the Ministry of Citizenship, developed a training model for 40 people from municipal teams about management of emergency shelters for indigenous people living in Teresina (PI). The goal of this training was to share good practices, and offer tools and methodologies used in emergency contexts, based on international and national experiences in adapted and intercultural humanitarian responses. At least three more workshops should be offered in other states in the Northeastern and Midwestern regions of the country.

Belém:

Training sessions for SEJUDH and Secretariats of Social Assistance: On May 10, 11 and 18, UNHCR in partnership with the Secretariat of State for Justice and Human Rights (SEJUDH) offered training sessions on legal frameworks for the protection of refugees, specific protection needs (addressing children, persons with disabilities, senior citizens and LGBTQIA+), gender-based violence, administrative procedures for the recognition of refugees, filling out the SISCONARE and historical and anthropological issues of the Warao people for employees of the Space for Refugees and Migrants. More than 50 workers participated, who work directly with the protection of refugees and migrants from various munici-
On May 26, UNHCR and the Secretariat for Justice and Human Rights (SEJUDH) inaugurated the Space for Refugees and Migrants in Belém, a space that will assist in the information and documentation process for refugees and migrants residing in the State of Pará. In addition, it will help individuals have more autonomy and ensure their rights are respected. A highlight of the event was the Technical Cooperation Agreement signed between Pará State Government, through SEJUDH, and UNHCR, which provided the equipment for the space and promoted training activities to the team of workers. The new Space for Refugees and Migrants in Belém is located at R. Vinte e Otto de Setembro, 339 – Campina, Belém. Office hours are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and additional information can be obtained by calling +55 (91) 4009-2700.

Training sessions for FUNPAPA: On May 11 and 12, UNHCR conducted training sessions on humanitarian principles, protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, rights of indigenous populations, community communication and community-based protection for the Municipal Shelter and Social Assistance workers of Belém. One of the main goals was to discuss with workers of the protection network about the role they play as protection agents, working directly with refugees and indigenous migrants. In total, 57 people attended these sessions.

Breakfast with journalists: On June 9, UNHCR Belém delivered training for journalists as part of the 2021 World Refugee Day celebrations. The activity consisted of a breakfast with journalists to dialogue and improve the relationship with the media.

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FOCAL POINTS PER CITY

Email and contact information of local focal points:
Pacaraima – Tania Dias – dias@unhcr.org
Boa Vista – Iamara Ribeiro – deandr@unhcr.org
Manaus – Juliana Serra – serra@unhcr.org
Belém – Gabriel Tardelli - calilmai@unhcr.org
Brasília – Sebastian Roa – roa@unhcr.org
São Paulo – Lyvia Barbosa – rodrigul@unhcr.org

In addition, UNHCR conducted a training session to raise awareness of refugee and migrant rights and asylum-related issues, with the goal of reducing xenophobia. In all, 15 journalists and 2 community prosecutors participated in the event.

Boa Vista:

On June 9, UNHCR developed an intercultural training for FFHI teams and external actors, with the participation of focal points on indigenous issues from Belém, São Paulo and Manaus. The training also included the participation of the Iniskran Institute, and the testimony of two indigenous women currently sheltered in Jardim Floresta Shelter, who shared a part of their personal trajectories.

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