Situation Overview

Hygiene and living conditions of Venezuelan refugees and migrants reaching Brazil through the bordering city of Pacaraima are deteriorating quickly as the number of people living in the streets have multiplied 15-fold between June and August, after reopening of the borders closed since March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today, 2,065 people live in the streets of the 19,000 inhabitants city while they wait for documentation to continue their journey into the country, a situation unseen since the most acute moments of the Venezuelan migration outflow in 2017 and 2018.

The upsurge in the number of displaced people in the border – over 4,000 people if counting families in informal settlements (mainly indigenous communities) – results from a pent up demand intensified by the resumption of regularization processes paused since 2020, which caused a steep increase in the number of undocumented families. In average, refugees and migrants are waiting over a week for regularization with very poor access to proper health, water and sanitation services.

Situation is particularly acute for unaccompanied, separated and undocumented children (UASC). Waiting time for case resolution is over a month due to the increased number of cases that need support from the Childhood and Youth Court, the Office of State Public Defender and the Federal Police to guarantee protective measures. Demand, however, it will likely increase in the short and medium term. Until July, UNICEF had identified and supported 2,635 children and adolescents in this situation, while 1,577 were identified in all 2020.

Moreover, the crisis is compounded by the slower pace of the relocation process led by the Federal Government to other parts of Brazil, due to the COVID-19 outbreak. As a result, in a year, sheltered population in Roraima state almost doubled. All 14 shelters of the Government-led humanitarian response, Operação Acolhida, are working above capacity. Authorities activated phase III of the Contingency Plan – supported by the UN – leading to the opening of two additional large shelters (one planned for October), requiring setting up of basic services, and reinforced support from government and agencies. At present, 5 of the shelters in Roraima are exclusively for indigenous populations (Warao, Pemon Taurepang and Eñepa communities), which represent 26% of the 8,734 sheltered population.

With hundreds of families still arriving daily, untreated wastewater and solid waste piling up in the streets of Pacaraima have become the norm, challenging federal and municipal services and increasing tensions with host community.
Summary of Programme Response

Given the upsurge in migration influx and the increase in demands for basic services, humanitarian support needs to be scaled up as hundreds of families continue to cross the border each day and screening and transit centers (known as PITRIG) are working at the limit of their capacity. UNICEF plans to scale up ongoing actions in Pacaraima, targeting children, adolescents, women and their families (benefiting at least 4,000 people) as well as reinforcing actions in capital Boa Vista articulated with local, state and federal partners.

WASH and Communication for Development (C4D)

In the context of the Venezuelan migration outflow, UNICEF provides installation and maintenance of handwashing stations and water trucking services in informal settlements. In shelters, it provides quality monitoring, treatment and sanitation services (including installation, maintenance and/or monitoring of structures) with the engagement of community committees and WASH monitors, reaching an average of 11,000 people with drinking water and supply of hygiene items and household bleach. In Pacaraima, however, the present situation requires additional interventions targeting families on the move in the streets, providing sanitation facilities, access to safe water, garbage bags and containers and promoting safe and hygiene behaviour through WASH monitors and community mobilizers.

Health

UNICEF works in and outside shelters with mobile and fixed primary health care teams providing consultations and monitoring of reproductive and maternal-child health. Health mobilizers also perform proactive monitoring of suspect cases of COVID-19 and vaccination among refugee and migrants’ families to ensure their immunization cards are updated (3,323 children benefitted between Jan and June). In Pacaraima, UNICEF will be committed to provide health assistance and direct support to the vaccine rollout strategy in the border as to respond to a major bottleneck: with many refugees and migrants arriving without any proof of vaccination, a complete set of immunization must be provided by the Brazilian Army Task Force, which is limited both in human resources and supplies.

Child Protection

From January to July, 2,635 undocumented, separated and unaccompanied children were identified (majority in Pacaraima) and supported. The most common cases are children and adolescents that migrate with extended family members who are not their legal guardians and without documentation to prove family ties. This situation requires a system of qualified interviews and best interests’ determination to regularize custody. The specialized Child Protection teams (composed of psychologists, social workers and legal advisors) also offer information and support for family reunifications, seek alternative measures to institutionalization, refer and directly support regularization of guardianship and migratory status and issuance of documentation. Given the current situation, it is essential to strengthen child protection and immigration service providers to support documentation for UASC, advocating for a reduced waiting time for case management in Pacaraima.

Education

Super Panas are Child-Friendly Spaces combining education and protection interventions by providing integrated non-formal education activities and psychosocial support for refugee and migrant children and adolescents while also linking them to public services. It involves 142 professionals in the field reaching over 10,000 boys and girls (Jan-June). However, Super Panas in screening and transit centres (PITRIG) are currently unable to meet the heightened demand,
while opening of new shelters means children and adolescents will need further support to access their rights to education and protection in the epicentre of the Venezuelan migration outflow in Brazil.

**Humanitarian Coordination**

Besides federal, state and local authorities, UNICEF’s humanitarian response is also coordinated with all UN agencies – particularly UNHCR and IOM – and civil society organizations in the field, through the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), avoiding duplication and enhancing synergies at local and national levels. UNICEF coordinates the Education (i), Nutrition (ii) and the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (iii) sectors, the Child Protection (iv) subsector and the Communication with Communities Working Group (v).

**Media**

- [VIDEO] **UNICEF Representative for Brazil, Florence Bauer, in the border**

As part of the regional Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) for children on the move from Venezuela, UNICEF Brazil’s appeal to address the needs of the refugee and migrant populations in Brazil in 2021 totals $13,794,000 USD, **out of which only 3.9 million USD (29%) have been funded**. UNICEF calls for support to upscale interventions and guarantee the rights of Venezuelan children, adolescents, and their families, especially in the humanitarian response in the city of Pacaraima, the main entry point for refugees and migrants in Brazil.

**Who to contact for further information:**

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