

**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**

November/2019 to March/2021



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Datasheet

Institutional Coordination

José Egas
Representative
UNHCR Brazil

Maria Beatriz Bonna Nogueira
Head of Office
UNHCR São Paulo

Sebastian Roa
Senior Field Associate
UNHCR Brazil

Sílvia Corradi Sander
Protection Associate
UNHCR São Paulo

Production

Lyvia Rodrigues Barbosa
Senior Protection Assistant
UNHCR São Paulo

Technical revision

Maria Beatriz Bonna Nogueira
Head of Office
UNHCR São Paulo

Sílvia Corradi Sander
Protection Associate
UNHCR São Paulo

William Torres Laureano Da Rosa
Senior RSD Assistant
UNHCR São Paulo



Acknowledgment

This document aims to strengthen the protection and integration of the Warao indigenous people in the South and Southeast regions of the country through the recording of some of the many efforts undertaken by the hands of several actors from civil society, public authorities, universities, international organizations and host communities operating in the local networks of some of the cities that, temporarily or permanently, have received this population.

It seeks to highlight some of the strategies, good practices, challenges and lessons learned from the daily work of actors from the most diverse sectors and institutions with which the

UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has had the pleasure of collaborating and dialoguing.

The UNHCR expresses its gratitude to the several partners mentioned in this document and to the people who have volunteered on a daily basis to support Warao families for sharing their efforts and, above all, for their commitment towards a culturally sensitive listening of this population, which undoubtedly has represented the main tool for the access to rights and integration opportunities.

To the Warao families and individuals, our gratitude for the opportunity for continuous learning.

UNHCR São Paulo Team



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Context

The humanitarian emergency situation in Venezuela has affected all sectors of society, with a special impact on historically vulnerable populations who, without the means to survive the crisis, have been forced to flee to Brazil and other countries in the region. Among these groups, the forced displacement of indigenous people stands out, which generated a gradual flow to Brazil especially since 2014. With the worsening of the emergency, in 2016, there was a considerable increase in the flow of indigenous people of the Warao ethnicity towards the states of Roraima and Amazonas. As of 2018, these groups began to move to the states of Pará, Maranhão and others in the Northeast region. In 2019, the Midwest and Southeast regions are also reached and, and in 2020 and 2021 new groups have been identified in the South region. By March 2021, UNHCR estimated that about 5,799¹ Venezuelan indigenous refugees and migrants were living in Brazil, the majority (69%) from the Warao ethnicity, in at least 23 states².

The indigenous situation has been one of the biggest challenges in the Brazilian emergency

response to the Venezuelan flow. It involves the arrival of an ethnic group with no history of presence in the Brazilian territory, in a situation of forced displacement, with vulnerabilities and cultural aspects that are still little known and studied in the country. This unique situation, associated with the unpredictability in the movement of such groups in the Brazilian territory, creates additional challenges for the institutions and networks that provide assistance to this population, who must pay attention to the specific needs and dynamics of these indigenous people in order to respond to basic needs related to food, shelter, health and support for the development of livelihoods.

Along these lines, UNHCR has been working to ensure that this population has access to rights and to services in Brazil, in conjunction with governmental actors, the justice system, civil society organizations and groups, fostering protection and local integration in a culturally sensitive way.



¹ The UNHCR registers, through the proGres platform, the entire Venezuelan indigenous population that crosses the Pacaraima border in the state of Roraima. In this process, individual information is collected, such as personal data and specific protection needs of all family members.

² UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES. The Warao in Brazil: Anthropology contributions to the protection of indigenous refugees and migrants. 2021.

Arrival of Warao Groups to the Southeast and South Regions

The movement of Warao groups within the national territory has intensified in the last two years, reaching most of the states of the North and Northeast, and arriving in the Southeast mainly after the second semester of 2019. Since the arrival of the first group to the Southeast, the UNHCR Field Office in São Paulo has supported states and municipalities through networking with government agents, civil society partner organizations, social assistance networks, collectives and community groups. A series of joint activities have been developed, with emphasis on the training of the networks for the culturally sensitive assistance of this population, coordination of working groups and implementation of actions to protect and integrate indigenous refugees and migrants in response to the specific needs of this population.

Through the articulated action with the Working Groups in the municipalities that received Warao families, it was possible to map, especially throughout 2020 and the first months of 2021, the trajectories of the Warao groups that arrived in the Southeast and South regions. It was noticed, in this context, that the groups have used two distinct routes that split from a common path, focused, mostly, on the route via Pará, passing through several capitals of the Northeast region, until reaching the Southeast; and, to a lesser extent, the route via Rondônia, passing through the Midwest and arriving at the Southeast and South. In the same way, it was possible to trace the profile by gender and age of these groups, identifying that, following the general profile of the population Warao in the country, they are composed of numerous family nuclei, in which over 50% of the members are children and adolescents, with a proportion of men slightly above that of women.

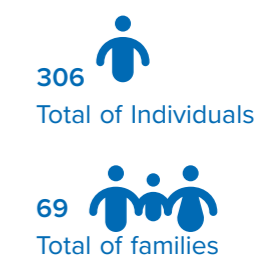
PROFILE OF THE WARAO INDIGENOUS POPULATION MONITORED BY UNHCR SÃO PAULO IN THE SOUTHEAST AND SOUTH BETWEEN DECEMBER/2019 AND MARCH/2021

GENDER X AGE

GENDER	0-4	5-11	12-17	18-35	36-59	60+
♀ MALE	32	39	19	37	19	3
♂ FEMALE	26	30	11	47	12	6

*25 individuals had no information about gender and age.

FAMILY COMPOSITION



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TRAJECTORY OF INDIGENOUS WARAO TO THE SOUTHEAST AND SOUTH

COMMON PATH



SÃO PAULO GROUP



RIO / CAMPINAS / RIBEIRÃO PRETO GROUP



BELO HORIZONTE GROUP



UBERLÂNDIA GROUP



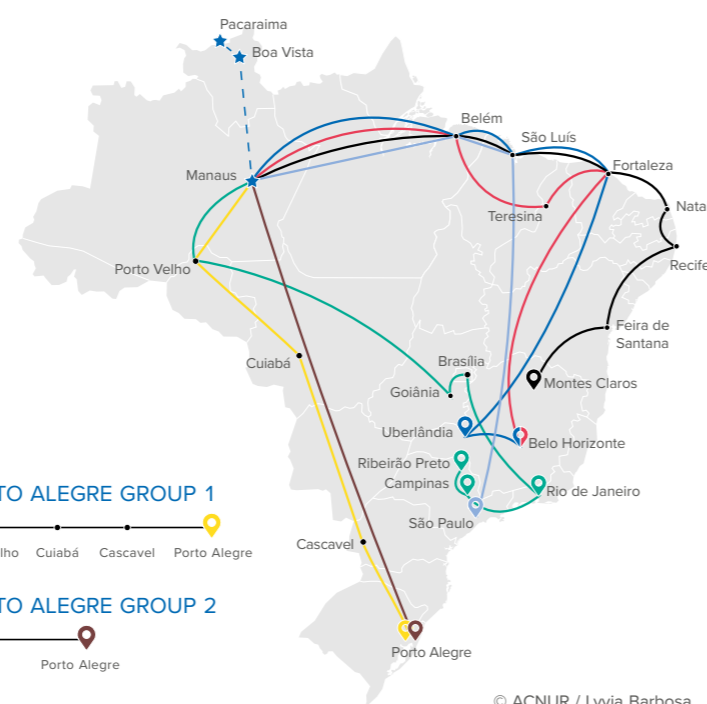
MONTES CLAROS GROUP



PORTO ALEGRE GROUP 1



PORTO ALEGRE GROUP 2



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Operating Strategy

The unique characteristics of the culture and the displacement of the Warao population, as well as the specific needs for protection in urban contexts, require intersectoral work supported by previous information and conceptual alignment that consolidate the performance of the various actors to be involved in coordinated strategies for mitigating risks and promoting local integration. In this sense, UNHCR São Paulo's action strategy aimed at protecting and

integrating Warao people in transit in the Southeast and South of the country has been based on the tripod (i) mobilization and support for the coordination of local networks through **Working Groups**; (ii) support for the elaboration and implementation of **joint action plans**, aimed at the protection and local integration of Warao families and individuals; and (iii) **strengthening the capacities of local actors** through training aimed at interventions tailored to each specific context.



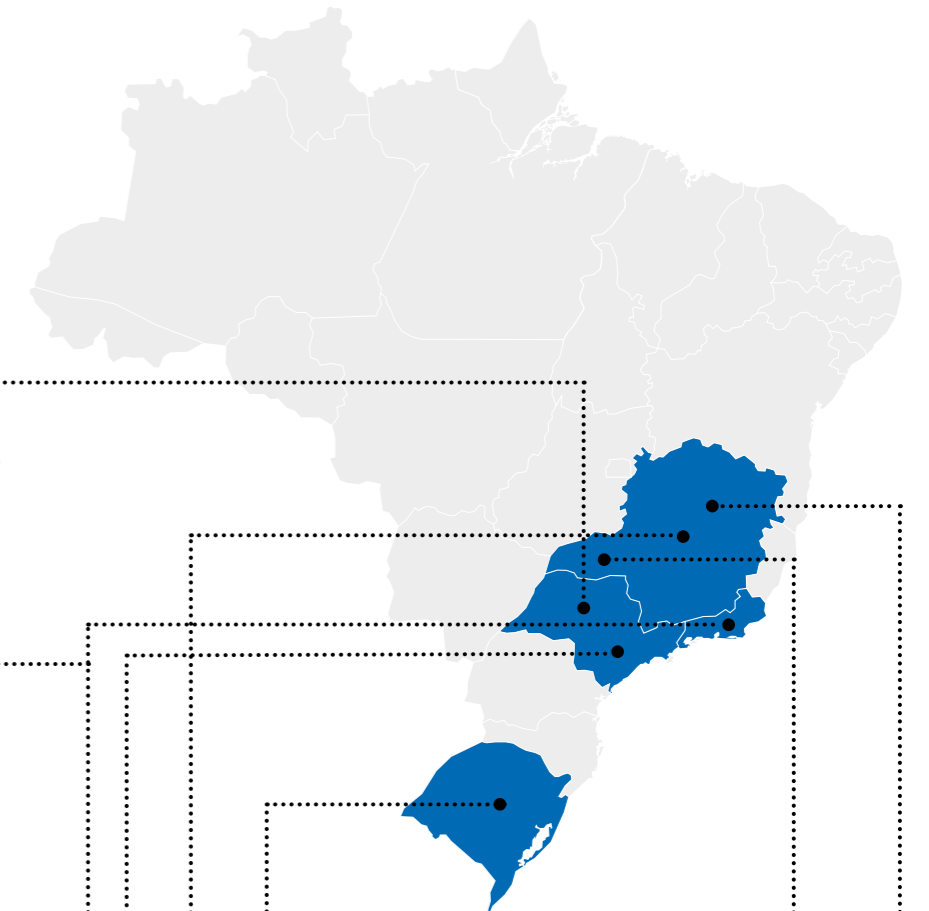
Working Groups

UNHCR São Paulo has worked on the articulation and establishment of Working Groups involving actors of the public authorities, justice system, civil society, international organizations and academia to build interdisciplinary and intersectoral discussion environments that, centered on the community-based protection approach, can guarantee the Warao's active and culturally sensitive listening and their access to rights and services, as well as make integration opportunities available in the local network.

In this perspective, UNHCR São Paulo supported the creation and, in some cases, the joint coordination, of 7 (seven) Working Groups (WGs), playing an important role in sharing guidelines for the reception of this population and sharing of experiences accumulated by the Agency in the protection, sheltering and integration of Venezuelan indigenous people in the country. Between November 2019 and March 2021, 306

Warao individuals have been accompanied by the WGs established in the cities of Belo Horizonte (MG), Campinas/Hortolândia (SP), Montes Claros (MG), Nova Iguaçu/Japeri (RJ), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), São Paulo (SP), Uberlândia (MG) and, recently, Porto Alegre (RS). Through regular meetings of the WGs, it has been possible to develop strategies and Joint Action Plans aimed at protecting and assisting families in each context, with a focus on addressing emergency needs and promoting local integration in the respective municipalities.

With the establishment of institutional links among the members of the WGs, as well as the rooting of referral flows to assist the indigenous groups in some cities and the stabilization of the local integration scenario of the Warao families, some of the WGs, by decision of their members, chose to suspend the periodic meetings, with the possibility of reactivation in the event of new emergency situations or even the arrival of new groups.



SÃO PAULO

- São Paulo Municipal Secretariat for Human Rights and Citizenship
- Reference and Assistance Center for Immigrants
- Federal Public Defender's Office
- Archdiocesan Caritas of São Paulo
- Indigenous Missionary Council
- Indigenous Pastoral
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

RIO DE JANEIRO

- Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance
- Municipal Secretariat of Health
- State Secretariat of Social Development and Human Rights
- State Secretariat of Health
- State Intersectoral Committee for Policies for Refugees and Migrants
- Federal Public Defender's Office
- Federal Public Prosecutor's Office
- Archdiocesan Caritas of Rio de Janeiro
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

NOVA IGUAÇU/JAPERI

- Nova Iguaçu Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance
- Japeri Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance and Labor
- Nova Iguaçu Municipal Secretariat for the Environment, Tourism and Agriculture
- State Secretariat of Health
- State Intersectoral Committee for Policies for Refugees and Migrants
- National Indian Foundation
- Federal Public Defender's Office
- Archdiocesan Caritas of Rio de Janeiro
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

CAMPINAS/HORTOLÂNDIA

- Hortolândia Municipal Secretariat of Social Inclusion and Development
- Campinas Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance, Persons with Disabilities and Human Rights
- State Public Defender's Office
- State Public Prosecutor's Office
- UN Refugee Agency

BELO HORIZONTE

- Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance, Food Security and Citizenship
- Municipal Secretariat of Health
- Belo Horizonte Urbanization and Housing Company (Urbel)
- Federal Public Defender's Office
- State Public Defender's Office
- Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees - Belo Horizonte
- Regional Caritas in Minas Gerais
- Franciscan Service Network
- Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais
- Federal University of Minas Gerais
- Indigenous Committee of Minas Gerais
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

UBERLÂNDIA

- Municipal Secretariat of Health
- State Committee for the Assistance of Migrants and Refugees, for Confronting Human Trafficking and for the Eradication of Slave Labor in Minas Gerais Guardianship Councils
- National Indian Foundation
- Federal Public Defender's Office
- State Public Defender's Office
- Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees of Belo Horizonte
- Support and Assistance Work for Foreign Refugees
- Federal University of Uberlândia
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

MONTES CLAROS

- State Committee for the Assistance of Migrants and Refugees, for Confronting Human Trafficking and for the Eradication of Slave Labor in Minas Gerais
- Municipal Secretariat of Social Development
- Municipal Secretariat of Health
- Caritas Human Rights Reference Center
- Archdiocese of Montes Claros
- Civil society volunteers
- Alternative Agriculture Center of the North of Minas Gerais
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

PORTO ALEGRE

- Municipal Secretariat of Social Development and Sport (Unit for Immigrant Indigenous Peoples and Collective Rights, Reference Center for Migrants and Social Assistance Reference Center)
- Municipal Secretariat of Health
- Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees of Porto Alegre
- Fé e Alegria Foundation
- Anthropology Study Center of Indigenous and Traditional Societies (NIT-UFRGS)
- Brazilian Red Cross
- UN Refugee Agency
- International Organization for Migration

Action Plan

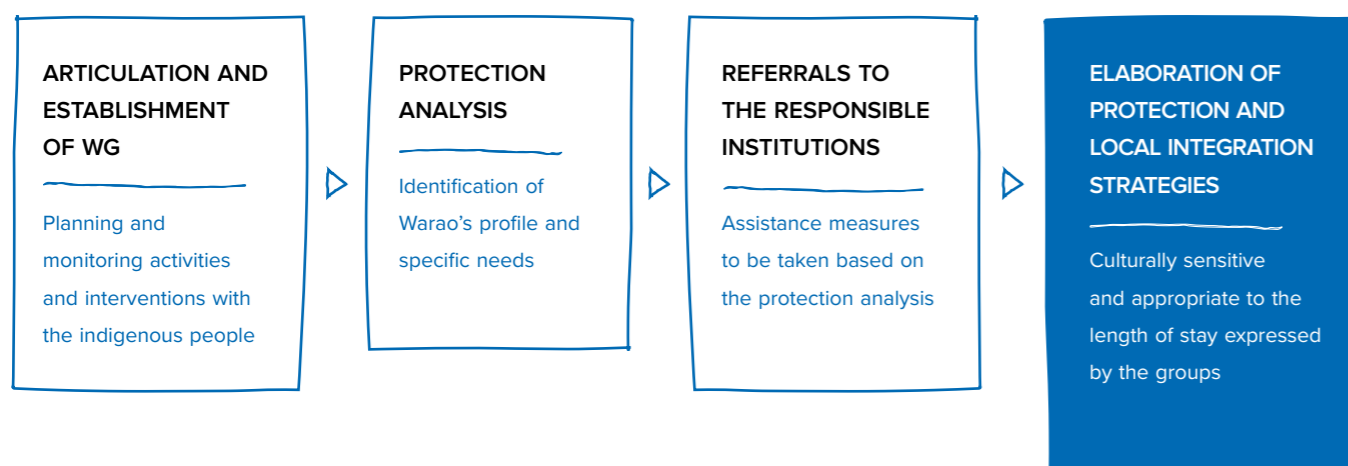
The arrival of forcibly displaced Venezuelan indigenous people from the Warao ethnic group in the Southeast and South of Brazil has posed new challenges to local networks. Communication difficulties, cultural differences, legal and documentary specificities, and the scarcity of family resources are added to the diverse demands for access to food, shelter and health care, among others³.

This scenario made clear the need to develop guidelines to assist local networks in planning and monitoring the assistance to the Warao. In this perspective, UNHCR São Paulo developed an **Emergency Action Plan Model**, designed as a step-by-step approach to the main actions that, as recommended, can guide the actors involved in the identification of protection needs and the establishment of assistance priorities. It intends to support the planning and adoption of measures by the public authorities, with the support of

civil society organizations and groups, from the moment new Warao groups arrive in the territory.

Structured based on a community-based protection approach and on good practices of interventions with the Warao population in other regions of the country, the Plan proposes three main axes. After the establishment of the **Working Groups** composed by strategic actors of the local networks, it is recommended: (i) **carrying out the indigenous groups' protection analysis**, including identification of specific needs related to documentation, health, prevention and response to gender based violence, among others related to the age, gender and diversity profiles; (ii) **immediate referrals to the responsible bodies** for social assistance and health measures, according to needs identified in the protection analysis; and (iii) **elaboration of medium and long-term protection and local integration strategies** suited to the interest of brief or prolonged stay in the city, as identified in interviews with the indigenous groups.

AXES OF THE ACTION PLAN



³ UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES. The Warao in Brazil: Anthropology contributions to the protection of indigenous refugees and migrants. 2021

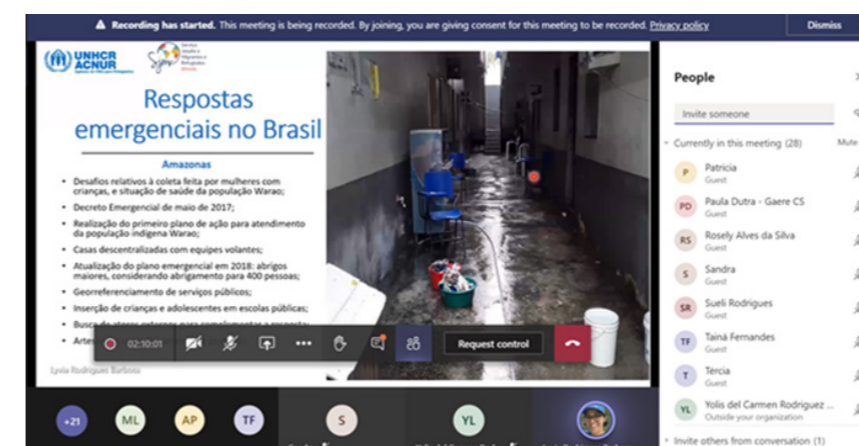
Capacity Building of Local Networks

In addition to close monitoring of local networks, UNHCR São Paulo has committed to support the continued training of government agencies, civil society organizations and other actors who work directly with Warao groups in order to support them in promoting culturally sensitive assistance. In this regard, UNHCR São Paulo held, between November 2019 and March 2020, 7 (seven) training sessions for more than 370 public and civil society actors considered central to the assistance, protection, and integration of this population in the municipalities of Belo Horizonte, Campinas, Montes Claros, Nova Iguaçu, Japeri, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Uberlândia.

The training aims to present the Warao culture to the network, the causes of internal displacement of this population in Venezuela and the forced displacement to Brazil, as well as key guidelines for working with this population. The training also highlights the successful practices and some of the accumulated knowledge in the networks of the North, Southeast and South regions, and the main challenges faced in assisting and supporting the integration of this population. The trainings are oriented to the technical advising of the local WGs.

TRAINING CONTENT IN SUPPORT OF LOCAL WGs

- ▶ ELEMENTS OF WARAO ETHNIC CULTURE
- ▶ COMPARED EXPERIENCES ACCUMULATED BY LOCAL NETWORKS IN THE NORTH, SOUTHEAST AND SOUTH REGIONS
- ▶ DISPLACEMENT IN VENEZUELA AND TO BRAZIL
- ▶ CHALLENGES FACED IN PROTECTING AND INTEGRATING WARAO FAMILIES



Virtual training carried out jointly by UNHCR and SJMR BH to the local network in Belo Horizonte. ©UNHCR/Silvia Sander

Good Practices, Challenges and Lessons Learned



SÃO PAULO

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** Upon being informed, in early December 2019, of the expected arrival of 16 Warao indigenous individuals in the city of São Paulo, UNHCR mobilized the local network to form a Working Group integrated by the Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU), the Reference and Assistance Center for Immigrants (CRAI) and the Coordination for Policies for Immigrants and Decent Work (CPMigTd) of the City of São Paulo, as well as by the Archdiocesan Caritas of São Paulo, Indigenous Pastoral and Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and with the technical support of the anthropologist Marlise Rosa. In dialogue with the WG actors, the Warao group presented its situation and basic needs, which included demands for immediate and safe shelter, health care, food security and sup-

port for income generation. After mapping the initial demands, the members of the WG designed and implemented preliminary and emergency response strategies.

- **Monitoring by specialized services.** Institutions specialized in assisting the refugee and migrant population in the municipality of São Paulo, such as CRAI, CPMigTd, UNHCR and Archdiocesan Caritas of São Paulo, accompanied the group in person during the 20 days period they were in the territory. Priority was given to respond to immediate needs for safe shelter, health care and food security. During the group's stay in São Paulo, home visits were made, with the prior consent of the indigenous families, by the municipality health and social assistance agents, ensuring the necessary monitoring for the identification and timely response to emergency needs.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Housing strategy.** Despite the immediate efforts undertaken by the WG and the existence of public and civil society shelters specialized in serving the refugee and migrant public, providing indigenous families with temporary shelter or provisional housing adequate to their specificities in the context of an urban megalopolis

such as São Paulo represented a central challenge. During the 20-days period, the group went to a hotel in an area considered unsafe in the context of urban violence; was sheltered for few days, after the mediation of CIMI, in the Guarani indigenous land in Jaraguá neighborhood; was sheltered in a public reception center for immigrants; and

passed through a rented one-room property in downtown São Paulo. During this period, none of the alternatives proved to be sustainable to meet the needs and dynamics of the group, evidencing the challenge in identifying, in an urban environment, safe housing with adequate and sustainable typology in the medium and long term.

- The families' perception of urban violence, as well as of the low profitability of collecting money on the streets compared to that obtained in other cities in the North and Northeast of Brazil, resulted in the group's return, on December 20th, 2019, to São Luís do Maranhão. On that occasion, UNHCR informed the intention of families to the São Luís social assistance network for follow-up.

RIO DE JANEIRO / JAPERI / NOVA IGUAÇU

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** The UNHCR was informed by the State Intersectoral Committee for Policies for Refugees and Migrants (CEIPARM), in January 2020, about the arrival of 35 Warao Indigenous individuals in Rio de Janeiro. In conjunction with CEIPARM's coordination, UNHCR established a Working Group with the participation of the Archdiocesan Caritas of Rio de Janeiro, actors from the State and Municipal Public Secretariat of Social Assistance and Health, the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, the Federal Public Defender's Office and IOM. After 26 members of the indigenous group moved to the city of Japeri and, subsequently, to Nova Iguaçu, a new WG was articulated with the participation of CEIPARM, Caritas, the Secretariats of Social Assistance of the two cities, the Public Defender's Office, the State Secretariat of Health, the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) and IOM. Both WGs became crucial for the continuous response to the families' protective needs, as well as for the elaboration and implementation of the local integration strategy.

tered and also the Warao families' perception of the safety dynamics inside and outside the shelter. The families were then sheltered in a farm in the municipality of Japeri, by initiative of a religious group. After about 6 months, due to the risk of eviction of the property where they were and the daily transit of families to collect money in Nova Iguaçu, the WG articulated with the Nova Iguaçu Secretariat of Social Assistance (SEMAS) the inclusion of the families in a municipal public housing program. However, given the difficulty of finding properties with an adequate structure and a value compatible with the housing social benefit, and considering the families' desire to continue to live together, SEMAS ceded and adapted a municipal property where a public school used to work, now deactivated. The group moved to the place in early December 2020 and stipulated, together with the Secretariat, community coexistence rules appropriate to their cultural reality. The families continue to be weekly monitored by the local Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS) and by the Secretariat's civil servants and managers.

- **Access to social assistance and education.** SEMAS closely monitors the families and, after mapping their needs, has registered the entire group in the CadÚnico to receive the Bolsa Família governmental benefit and formed a working group in the CRAS of the territory that conducts weekly home visits to the shelter. Also, all children were regis-

tered in the municipality's social assistance program for early childhood. With regard to education, all school-age children have been enrolled and are following online classes at the shelter using a computer donated by the municipality and an internet connection paid for by the Warao themselves.

- **Documents** The renewal of the entire group's asylum claim protocols before the Federal Police was supported by Caritas and the municipalities of Japeri and Nova Iguaçu. To this date, three members of the group have been recognized as refugees by CONARE.
- **Income generation strategy.** Following the interests expressed by the group in successive consultations, the income generation strategy was divided into two complementary axes. Regarding the women, it was centered in the production and sale of handicrafts made of beads. The raw material has been, until now, donated by Caritas and the Educational and Cultural Foundation of Nova Iguaçu, and the production of the handicrafts has the support of workshops held by the Foundation and IOM, with an intent of creating a sales chain. The adult men expressed interest in entering the formal job market and, through SEMAS and other municipality's partner companies, one of them has been working, for 5 months and under formal employment, in the city urban cleaning company. Two other family members are undergoing job interviews at the City Hall's partner companies through SEMAS intermediation.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Support for the group's self-sufficiency.** Despite the advances and good practices already achieved by SEMAS with the support of the other actors in the WG, the economic self-sufficiency of the Warao group remains a challenge. Joint efforts associating income generation through handicrafts to formal jobs are ongoing.

- **Support of the Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU).** As a member of the WG, the DPU has played an important role in answering to the group's legal needs, including support in raising awareness of key actors as to Waraos' rights. Among others, the DPU, through letters sent to the competent authorities, guaranteed the payment of the emergency aid benefit and the opening of bank accounts for the receipt of housing and Bolsa Familia benefits.
- **Exchange of good practices in the health assistance.** In order to improve the care towards the Warao indigenous people and raise awareness among the health team about their cultural differences, the State Health Committee of the Immigrant and Refugee Populations of Rio de Janeiro organized, with the support of UNHCR, a conversation to exchange experiences among health professionals who are members of the Belo Horizonte WG and members in the health system of Rio de Janeiro, Japeri and Nova Iguaçu municipalities. The families continue to be regularly monitored by the Nova Iguaçu health network and the State Secretariat of Health and, as a result of the exchange of experiences and the ongoing awareness of the teams, the families have been guaranteed access to regular medical monitoring and treatment, by different medical specialties and according to the identified needs. Strategies with greater sensitivity to cultural differences have, as reported in the WG, guaranteed greater adherence to treatments by the Warao families.

However, their own cultural dynamics in managing financial resources and the relationship with formal employment, challenges in setting up the production chain and sale of handicrafts, and limitations arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, continue to pose challenges to the economic sustainability of the families.



Warao families sheltered in Japeri/Nova Iguaçu take part in participatory assessment promoted by UNHCR São Paulo and the Archdiocesan Caritas of Rio de Janeiro. ©PARES Caritas/Luciana Queiroz

CAMPINAS / HORTOLÂNDIA

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** In February 2020, UNHCR São Paulo was informed of the arrival of two groups of indigenous Warao in Campinas, totaling 17 people, both from Rio de Janeiro. In order to support the assistance actions of the Campinas Municipality, UNHCR participated in a meeting with the Municipal Secretaries of Social Assistance and Institutional Relations, and with the Reference Center for Immigrants and Refugees, to present the agency's work and pos-

sibilities for cooperation in the protection and assistance to Venezuelan refugee and migrant indigenous peoples. As a result, the municipality has drafted a protocol to organize the actions of the different public policies involved in monitoring the Warao indigenous group. After the moving of the groups to Hortolândia, a city next to Campinas, and as they remained in transit through Campinas to collect money, in May, 2020 a Working Group was formed by

members of the State Prosecutor's Office and the State Public Defender's Office, the Secretariat for Inclusion and Social Development of Hortolândia, the Secretary of Social Assistance, Persons with Disabilities and Human Rights of Campinas, and UNHCR São Paulo.

- **Awareness of the Guardianship Council.** The Campinas Guardianship Council approached UNHCR to express their concerns and request support regarding the participation of Warao children in collecting money on the streets. In order to support culturally sensitive interventions, UNHCR shared with the counselors good practices and legal guidelines issued by Brazilian authorities in other municipalities, awareness also supported by the Campinas Secretariat of Social Assistance. In summary, it was contextualized that the collection of money on the streets by indigenous Waraos has a different meaning in their culture because it is an adaptive strategy developed in the urban

context that, to a large extent, constitutes their only means of income generation. It was emphasized that this practice is not, in general, understood as derogatory, embarrassing, or unworthy, but rather as a job. The Guardianship Council's interventions began to focus on the families' progressive awareness of the Brazilian legislation that protects children and adolescents.

- **Access to social assistance and education.** Before the movement restrictions caused by the pandemic, the Warao children in Hortolândia were attending school regularly. Even though classes were suspended due to the pandemic, the families were provided access to a food security program linked to children enrolled in public schools, which enabled them to receive food baskets from the Hortolândia municipality, and, for being enrolled in CadÚnico, they also accessed the emergency aid.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Money collection.** With the pandemic and the classes being suspended, the children returned to participate in the money collection activities with their parents. Other preventive and culturally sensitive approaches started to be planned, such as handicraft production as an income generation

strategy aiming at also preventing women and children from going to the money collecting activity on the streets. CRAS was starting conversations with the group in this regard, but at the end of August 2020, the families decided to leave Hortolândia for Brasília, where they had family members.

BELO HORIZONTE

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** In February 2020, a group of 17 Warao indigenous people settled in Belo Horizonte and since then have had the support of a Working Group formed by UNHCR, Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees (SJMR); Federal and the State Public Defender's Offices; Indigenous Committee of Minas Gerais; Federal Public Prosecutor's Office; Franciscan Network; Municipal Secre-

tariat for Social Assistance, Food Security and Citizenship (SMASAC); Municipal Secretariat of Health; Belo Horizonte Urbanization and Housing Company (Urbel); Federal University of Minas Gerais; Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais; Regional Caritas in Minas Gerais and IOM, under the joint coordination of UNHCR, SJMR and the Federal and the State Public Defender's Offices. In view of the

expression of interest of the three Warao families in staying for an indefinite period in Belo Horizonte, a medium and long term action plan for the protection and integration of the families in an urban environment was developed, including a series of joint measures by the members of the WG.

- **Community mediation.** The work developed by the WG includes continuous cultural and linguistic mediation by the SJMR BH Social Analyst, an indigenous Venezuelan of the Warao ethnic group. This work has been essential to ensure the active and culturally sensitive listening of the Warao group in Belo Horizonte, and also in other cities that have received Warao groups, supporting the articulation to the access to services and opportunities available in the local networks.
- **Access to social assistance.** Since the group's arrival to the city, they have been assisted by the Municipal Secretariat of Social Assistance (SMASAC), which, based on the mapping of demands made by the WG, guaranteed the registration of all members in the CadÚnico to receive the Bolsa Família financial aid and established specific flows to ensure regular monitoring within the scope of social assistance programs related to the specific needs of the group.
- **Awareness of health teams.** The health condition of the group members began to be monitored in an exemplary manner by the health team of the Belo Horizonte Municipality, with the support of the cultural mediation of the SJMR BH Warao Social Analyst and technical support from UNHCR São Paulo. Interventions in the health area (such as psychological and prenatal care) have been constantly adapted by health teams to dialogue with the Warao ethnic group's own cultural specificities and beliefs in health care.
- **Housing strategy.** After a period living in street situation and having gone through a public shelter for the homeless population, the group was provisionally sheltered, on

an emergency basis, in a SJMR BH property whose rules and spaces were adapted to suit the cultural specificities of this population. Exceptionally, UNHCR supported with the first three months of housing rent, as a counterpart to the Municipality's commitment to include the families in the housing assistance program for an initial period of 2 years.

- **Income generation strategy.** Following the interests expressed by the group, the income generation strategy was divided into two axes. For women, it is centered on the production and sale of handicrafts. Through the intermediation and support of the SJMR, the Indigenous Committee of Minas Gerais held handicraft workshops accompanied by entrepreneurship sessions with the artisans, taught by a Brazilian indigenous woman from the Ticuna ethnic group. The raw materials have been articulated through donations from members of the WG and resources provided by UNHCR. The handicrafts are being sold in spaces made available through a partnership with the Indigenous Committee, and at city street markets. Adult men showed interest in mechanics courses and in entering the formal labor market. However, in the context of the pandemic, access to formal jobs has not yet been possible.
- **Performance of Public Defenders Offices.** The State and Federal Public Defender's Offices played an important role in addressing the needs of the group and in raising awareness among key actors regarding their cultural specificities. The role of the Public Defender's Office in the area of child protection is noteworthy, including its support in raising the Guardianship Council's awareness of cultural specificities and ensuring the rapid enrollment of children in the municipal school system. The Federal Public Defender's Office, through recommendations and the issuance of official letters, guaranteed the group's emergency shelter in a municipal service, as well as access to emergency assistance and the opening of bank accounts to enable families to receive housing and Bolsa Família financial benefits.

- **Access to culturally sensitive food security.** The group is receiving food baskets and horticultural products from the Belo Horizonte municipality programs and with the support of the Indigenous Committee of Minas Gerais. For cultural reasons, the Waraos usually do not consume some of the products in the standard food basket. In order to provide a diet closer to what they normally consume, the employees of the Secretariat of Health, members of the WG, have been helping the families to exchange the items not consumed for proteins and other products preferred by them.

- **Portuguese as a culturally sensitive host language.** In response to a demand from the families, SJMR sought a partnership with the Pro-Imigrantes project of the School of Letters of UFMG, which developed a culturally sensitive approach in the teaching of Portuguese as host language, including materials specially developed for the Waraos. Since August, adults and children have been attending weekly online classes. The course has been instrumental in the local integration of the group, which is now moving around the city and communicating without the intermediation of the SJMR Social Analyst.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Housing strategy.** Even with the approval of the housing subsidy benefits, the SJMR found it difficult to identify a property for rental by the Warao families, either due to successive refusals by owners to rent properties to indigenous families, or due to the difficulty of finding a location with a typology adequate to the size of the family nuclei. Only after five months of searching, it was possible to rent 2 houses for the families.

- **Support for the group’s self-sufficiency.** After just over a year of continuous and close work with the Warao families, greater independence in urban traffic and communication with the health and assistance network teams are notorious. However, despite the advances and good practices adopted, the network finds that close monitoring remains essential for the promotion of full integration of families and economic self-sufficiency through the generation of income through the production of handicrafts and insertion in the formal labor market.

UBERLÂNDIA

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** In June 2020, the organization Support and Assistance to Foreign Refugees (TAARE) contacted UNHCR São Paulo to inform the presence of 17 Warao Indigenous persons in Uberlândia. Since then, UNHCR, with the support of COMITRATE (State Committee for the Assistance of Migrants and Refugees, for Confronting Human Trafficking and for the Eradication of Slave Labor in Minas Gerais) and under the coordination of TAARE, began mobilizing the local network by contacting actors from the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU), the Municipal Secretariat of Health, FUNAI, the State and Federal Public Defender’s Offices, Guardianship Council, IOM, other civil society organizations and also from the Warao WG of Belo Horizonte, such as SJMR.
- **Awareness of the Guardianship Council.** Since the arrival of the first group of Waraos, the Guardianship Council of Uberlândia demonstrated concerns about the situation of the children who accompanied their parents during the street collection of money. After the sensitization of the local Guardianship Council through the WG, the institution became a great ally of the network in the implementation of protective measures for the Warao indigenous groups in Uberlândia. Together with TAARE, they referred families to update their registration at CadÚnico in order to enable them to receive social benefits, and also requested vacancies for school-aged children to the Municipal Department of Education.
- **Partnership with the Sérgio Vieira de Mello Chair (CSVM).** Due to UFU’s participation and engagement in the Warao WG, the university

formally joined the CSVM, an UNHCR initiative that disseminates refugee-related themes in university teaching, research and extension programs. Through the Chair, several study centers at UFU strengthened their research and academic extension programs aimed at the Warao population, as well as other populations in asylum and migration situation. Currently, UFU is monitoring 7 Warao families and assisting them with the documentation regularization, guaranteeing access to social assistance benefits, and elaborating income generation strategies.

- **Access to health.** The Health Secretariat of Uberlândia has ensured the monitoring of the Warao groups through the Family Health Program, which conducts periodic home visits.
- **Access to social assistance.** Through TAARE, the group was referred to the Social Assistance Reference Center (CRAS), which registered the families in CadÚnico to receive the Bolsa Família benefit, and established specific flows to ensure regular monitoring within the social assistance programs with attention to the specific needs of the group.
- **School monitoring.** Since November 2020, IKMR, UNHCR’s partner organization, has been providing remote educational support, through the Citizens of the World project, to children from three Warao families to help them adapting to the school environment. The educational support Monitoring takes place during after-school hours, through virtual tutoring, focused on complementary learning needs.



Warao children temporarily sheltered at Vila Alberto Hurtado (SJMR BH) perform recreational activity mediated by the local network. ©SJMR-BH



CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Unpredictability of movement.** The movement of the Warao indigenous groups in Uberlândia proved to be very intense, with the reception of several groups that arrived in the city and stayed for a short period of time in rented properties, or that remained in frequent transit between Uberlândia and

the previous cities of residence. In this context, continuous integration measures remain hindered. However, with the sensitized and trained network, it was possible to perceive a fluidity in the prioritization of specific needs and in the referrals made to groups in frequent transit.

MONTES CLAROS

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** In November 2020, the SJMR contacted UNHCR to report the arrival of the Warao group in Montes Claros. Since then, UNHCR, with the assistance of COMITRATE (State Committee for the Assistance of Migrants and Refugees, for Confronting Human Trafficking and for the Eradication of Slave Labor in Minas Gerais) and the Reference Center for Human Rights of Northern Minas (CRDH), began mobilizing the local network by contacting the Municipal Secretariats of Social Assistance and Health, the Archdiocese of Montes Claros, the Center for Alternative Agriculture in the North of Minas Gerais and the IOM. In December 2020, under the joint coordination of UNHCR, CRDH, IOM, Secretariat of Social Development and civil society, two Working Groups were created, namely Social Assistance and Health, and Network Training, to monitor the reception and integration of the almost 100 indigenous people present in the municipality.
- **Support from civil society.** In view of the risk of eviction and the lack of immediately available alternatives in municipal public policies, the Archdiocese, as an emergency measure, sheltered the indigenous people in a deactivated school. Due to high rental costs and current expenses, the Archdiocese signaled the possibility of sheltering the group until May 2021. After this period,

alternatives continue to be negotiated with the public authorities and the local network.

- **Culturally sensitive food security.** The Warao group is receiving donations of food baskets and food collected by the Regional Caritas of Minas Gerais and the Archdiocese in Montes Claros. However, considering that, for cultural reasons, the Warao indigenous people usually do not consume some of the products of the food basket, the network has sought donations from the list of most common food items in the group's diet in order to respect their culinary tradition and avoid food waste.
- **Access to social assistance.** The group is being monitored by the Secretariat of Social Development, which has registered everyone in CadÚnico to receive the Bolsa Família benefit, and established specific flows to ensure regular monitoring within the scope of social assistance programs related to the specific needs of the group.
- **Performance of the Justice System.** In late March 2021, the State and Federal Public Defender's Offices, together with the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office, issued a joint recommendation to the Municipality of Montes Claros requesting the elaboration of a Municipal Plan that ensure the insertion of Warao families in public policies of social assistance, housing, food, health and education.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Food security.** The arrival of new families to the property rented by the Archdiocese, composed mainly of extended family members from the previous groups, represented an increase in the demand for food, supplies and equipment necessary for the preparation and storage of food (such as gas, energy, water, refrigerator and stove). As the donations so far obtained by civil society are not sufficient and sustainable, the network has demanded the inclusion

of the families in the municipal public food security programs.

- **Reception and Housing Strategy.** Due to the provisional character of the current shelter of the Warao families by the Archdiocese, the WG continues to negotiate with the public authorities the development of a medium and long-term sheltering and housing strategy that guarantees the protection of the families living in Montes Claros and enable support to possible new arrivals in the city.

PORTO ALEGRE

GOOD PRACTICES

- **Fostering Networking.** The first group of 14 Warao individuals arrived in Porto Alegre in April 2020 and began to be accompanied by the Anthropology Study Center for Indigenous and Traditional Societies (NIT) at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. The NIT helped families in requesting emergency assistance aid, as well as in the search for housing and in the creation of a sales chain for the handicraft products. With the arrival of new groups to the city in 2021, the Unit for Immigrant Indigenous Peoples and Diffuse Rights (UPIDE), the Reference Center for Migrants and the Reference Center for Social Assistance of the Municipal Secretariat of Social Development and Sport started to accompany the groups through visits to verify their needs and possibilities of inclusion in social programs. In March of this year, the SJMR Reference Center articulated, with the support of UNHCR, the creation of a specific working group within the scope of other existing forums, including the participation of local key actors, to centralize the coordination of protection and integration actions for the Warao families. The first meeting was attended by SJMR

Porto Alegre; services for indigenous and migrant populations and of social protection linked to the Municipal Secretariat of Social Development; the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, the Fé e Alegria Foundation and the Brazilian Red Cross. UNHCR will continue to accompany the WG for continuous support to local teams in developing strategies for assistance.

- **Vaccination against COVID-19.** In view of being a priority group under the National Immunization Plan against COVID-19, UPIDE supported the referral of the Warao indigenous people for vaccination, held in January 2021.
- **Access to social programs.** Through UPIDE, two of the families were included in the Food Security Strategy of the Porto Alegre municipality. The families are also in the process of inclusion in the social rental program and currently have a spot at the Redenção street market - which takes place on weekends in one of the city's main squares - for the sale of handicrafts.

Final Remarks

Working to guarantee the rights and culturally sensitive reception of the Warao indigenous people is known to be a challenging exercise for actors in all areas due to the cultural specificities that affect the support and assistance process. Between November 2019 and March 2021, UNHCR São Paulo concentrated efforts on the articulation of local networks in the states and municipalities in its area of coverage that received Warao indigenous groups in transit. This mobilization aims to support networks with information on the culture and history of forced displacement of the Warao people, as well as to offer tools to help guide and structure protection interventions based on active and culturally sensitive listening of this population.

The Working Groups created and coordinated with the support of UNHCR, always in conjunction with relevant actors and organizations, have therefore constituted a good practice in building a mobilization space for the articulation of public policies on social assistance, health, education, labor and income generation, among other, aimed at ensuring the rights of the Warao individuals. In all interventions, the existing regulations and the realities and specificities of each local network are taken into consideration. Through these forums, it has been possible to foster culturally sensitive care and develop

good practices in responding to the specific needs of these Venezuelan indigenous families.

Additionally, the work with local networks contributes to the refugee and migrant public as a whole, as after the training and discussions in the WGs, different actors have been sensitized on the need to strengthen the support to the specific needs of these populations as a way of guaranteeing the access to rights. An example of this was the partnership and articulation between UNHCR and the Municipality of Nova Iguaçu developed within the scope of the Warao WG, which culminated in the opening of a shelter to receive the unprecedented reallocation of 23 Venezuelan elderly people, from Roraima, in November 2020. Another prominent initiative articulated within the scope of one of the Warao WGs - in this case, in Belo Horizonte - was the creation of a bank account opening pathway at Caixa Econômica Federal for refugees and migrants of different nationalities, as well as the training of the bank employees to address the documentary specificities of these populations.

Throughout 2021, UNHCR São Paulo will continue to monitor and support local networks in the Southeast and South regions, and in the state of Bahia, for continuous and culturally sensitive support to other Warao groups already established or that remain in transit in different cities.



UNHCR conducts participatory assessment with Warao group in Japeri, Rio de Janeiro. © PARES Cáritas/Luciana Queiroz.

Contacts

Maria Beatriz Nogueira
UNHCR Head of
Office in São Paulo,
nogueira@unhcr.org

Sílvia Sander
Protection Associate of
UNHCR in São Paulo,
sandersi@unhcr.org

Lyvia Barbosa
Senior Protection Assistant
of UNHCR in São Paulo,
rodrigul@unhcr.org

acnur.org.br

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