

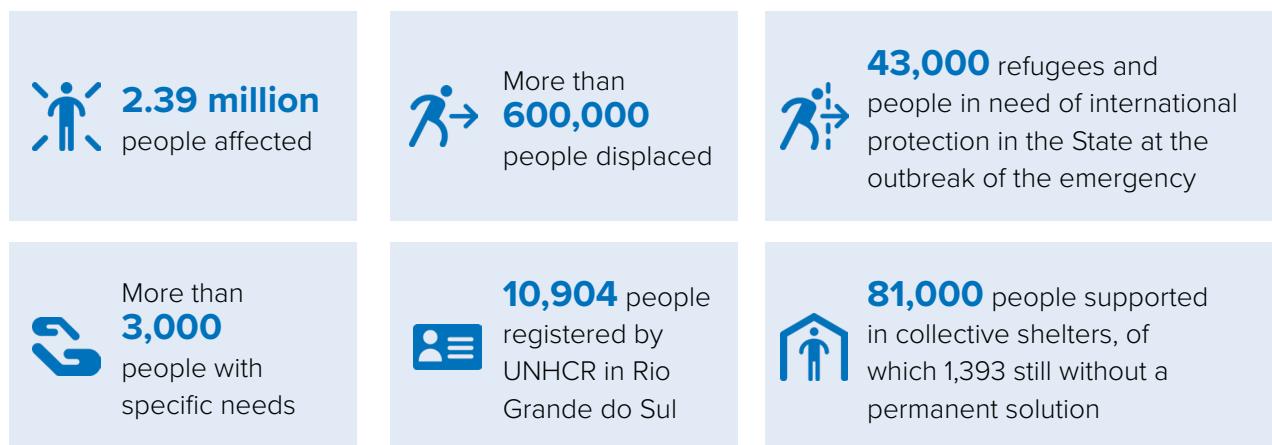


Brazil Floods Emergency Six-Month Impact Report

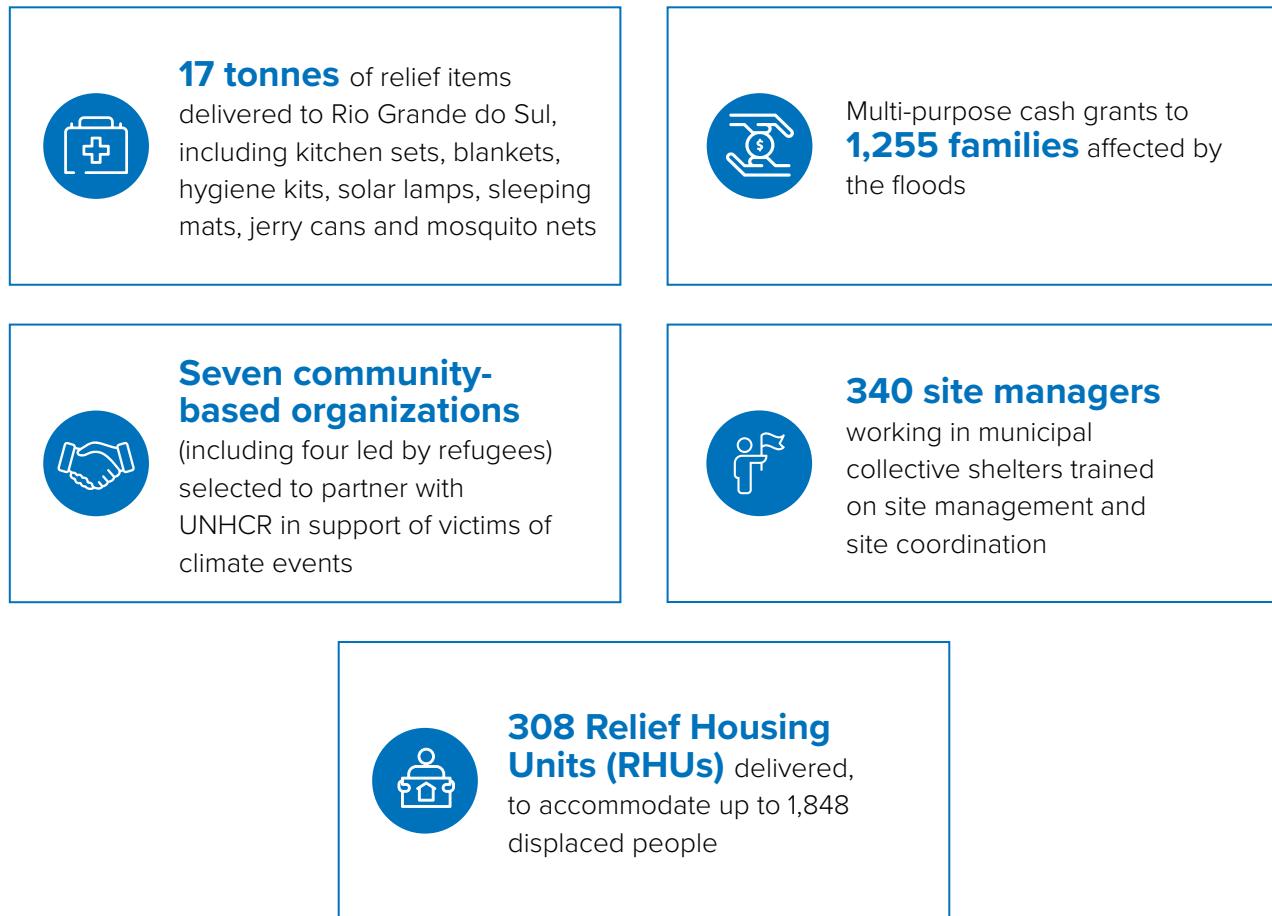
MAY - NOVEMBER 2024

Key figures

Overall affected population



UNHCR response



Humanitarian context

In the last week of April 2024, the state of [Rio Grande do Sul in southern Brazil](#) faced unprecedented heavy rainfall and extreme weather conditions lasting several weeks. Around 96 per cent of the cities in the state were impacted by the events, with many experiencing unprecedented floods. Entire neighbourhoods were flooded out and roads, communications networks and water systems were damaged.

Overall, nearly 2.4 million people have been affected by these climate events, and 183 people were reported killed. [At the peak of the emergency](#), nearly 600,000 people were displaced with more than 80,000 sheltering in official facilities across the state. Some 43,000

refugees and people in need of international protection were estimated to be living in Rio Grande do Sul when the rains hit, mainly Venezuelans (67 per cent), Haitians (28 per cent) and Cubans (3 per cent).

Now, six months after these historic climate events, although the acute phase of the emergency has passed, significant challenges persist in bringing services and quality of living back to pre-events standards. UNHCR, under the UN Resident Coordinator and coordinated with the local authorities, continues to support national and local government recovery efforts.

UNHCR's response

Core relief items

At the outbreak of the emergency and in response to the request for assistance from the Government of Brazil, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency immediately mobilized emergency relief items using prepositioned stocks in Panama City, Bogota, and Boa Vista.

From the beginning of the emergency, UNHCR has [provided 17 tonnes of relief items](#) to benefit affected people, Brazilians and people in need of international protection, including sleeping mats, blankets, hygiene kits, solar lamps, kitchen sets, jerry cans and mosquito nets.

Shelter

Relief Housing Units

UNHCR has provided 308 Relief Housing Units (RHUs) to the Government of Rio Grande do Sul

(200 provided by Gerdau), to accommodate more than 1,800 people (up to six people per unit) displaced by the rains and floods.

These RHUs can be rapidly distributed and assembled in a matter of hours. Each unit has a lockable door, a solar-powered light and basic living amenities, offering a safe and dignified shelter for affected families. RHUs will remain in the State as a preparedness measure provided by UNHCR to authorities for future emergencies.

Capacity building in Humanitarian Reception Centres and collective shelters

From the onset of the emergency, UNHCR conducted visits to collective shelters to provide technical guidance to local authorities on integrating protection measures into the shelter response. These technical discussions with local stakeholders provided the foundation for creating tailored training materials, which were then included in a larger initiative to train



Danubia Maiara Nunes do Amaral and her daughters are living a Relief Housing Unit (RHU) in Recomeço since July 2024, after they lost their house due to the floods. Danubia reports that the RHU provides her family with more safety and privacy after spending two months in collective shelters. © UNHCR/Vicente Carcuchinski

those managing shelters. In collaboration with government and UN agencies, this initiative enhanced the capacity of over 340 individuals responsible for managing collective shelters. The training offered both technical guidance and practical tools for the effective management of shelters housing individuals displaced by the events. The capacity-building sessions equipped site managers with the necessary technical resources to address key challenges in collective shelters, including site planning, information and data management, community engagement, security and the provision of services.

UNHCR's primary focus in building the capacity of site managers was to ensure the protection of individuals in collective shelters and the identification of their specific needs, as well as the prevention and effective response to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Furthermore, UNHCR provided technical assistance on site planning, shelter construction and site management to regional and municipal authorities to support the establishment of

three Humanitarian Reception Centres (CHA) for sheltering and assisting displaced families by the events. The centres, established in Canoas and Porto Alegre are designed to provide dignified care to families who lost their homes. The majority of RHUs provided by UNHCR have been constructed in these Centres.

Protection services

Community outreach

UNHCR maintains direct and regular communication with community-based and refugee-led organizations throughout Brazil to ensure that we have a proper understanding of their needs and can provide appropriate support. As part of the emergency response, UNHCR is working hand in hand with these groups and local actors to ensure that there is support provided from the ground up as well as providing valuable top-level coordination.

Additionally, UNHCR selected seven community-based organizations, four of which are led by

refugees, to partner with UNHCR in support of victims of the floods in Rio Grande do Sul. The organizations represent refugees and people in need of international protection including Haitians and Venezuelans. They cover Canoas, Esteio, Porto Alegre and the region of Vale do Taquari. These organizations are disseminating information to relevant communities, promoting Portuguese and vocational courses, identifying vulnerable individuals and needs within the community, and referring people to protection services.

UNHCR also extended support to members of the Warao community, and indigenous people from Venezuela residing in Rio Grande do Sul. In collaboration with the Serviço Jesuítico a Migrantes e Refugiados (SJMR), UNHCR helped 44 individuals to lodge asylum claims or renew their documentation. Additionally, 20 Warao families, comprising 80 individuals, received essential relief items, including sleeping mats, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, solar lamps, and hygiene supplies.

Information dissemination

Providing information to refugees and displaced people about their documentation status, rights and obligations enables them to advocate for themselves and access the support they need.

To facilitate this, UNHCR participated in several state and municipal-level outreach programmes, “one-stop shops”, or Caravanas de Direitos led by the State Public Defense Office and the General Attorney’s Office. UNHCR provided people in Alvorada and Caxias do Sul with counselling on social benefits and access to asylum, renewal of documentation and referral of people with specific needs to services.

UNHCR participated in other such one-stop shops, or Multirões, throughout Porto Alegre organized by local authorities, providing information on government social benefits and access to asylum procedures, renewal of documentation as well as referrals to specialized services.



A member of an RLO supported by UNHCR speaks with a Haitian woman in Lajeado, Rio Grande do Sul as part of a community outreach exercise to provide refugees and people in need of international protection with core relief items and information on social benefits, access to asylum and more. © UNHCR/Joana Lopese

Sharing information on digital platforms in the languages of affected people is also extremely valuable at the outbreak of an emergency and in response moments. UNHCR published a guidebook (on paper and online) for refugees and other people in need of international protection with key emergency contacts, information on how to access government benefits, how to report incidents of violence or discrimination, and how to identify scams and false information. The information is also posted on social media channels and is available in Portuguese, English, Spanish, French and Haitian Creole. From May to October 2024, some 132,000 new users visited the [UNHCR dedicated HELP website](#), which provides information and resources on asylum procedures, legal assistance, education and other services for refugees, asylum-seekers, and stateless people.

Legal protection and access to services

Legal recognition and documentation are critical to ensure that refugees and people in need of international protection are granted their rights and have access to essential services.

As well as providing vital legal and protection information via the community outreach initiatives mentioned above, UNHCR continued to directly register refugees and people in need of international protection, through our registration and case management system, with 13,355 individuals registered by November. Registration and identification of people in need of international protection is key to identify individuals with specific needs and facilitate access to assistance, including core relief items, cash assistance and other targeted assistance and protection services. Via the registration exercise UNHCR identified more than 3,000 people with specific needs (for example people with disabilities or survivors of gender-based violence) and recorded the age, gender, and nationalities of affected people to whom UNHCR's services were provided.

Cash assistance

The provision of cash remains one of the best and most dignified ways to directly assist refugees as well as provide support to local communities. Money spent in local shops and services stimulates the local economy and boosts job creation. Moreover, in emergencies, it allows affected people to use the money according to their identified needs, including food, water, healthcare and shelter.

In Rio Grande do Sul, UNHCR provided [cash assistance](#) to 1,255 families (3,054 people) affected by the flooding. This is carried out in close coordination with UNHCR partners and local authorities to avoid duplication of services, and to boost existing public efforts, reaching refugees and the host community.

Preparing for the future

Preparation is critical to mitigate the impact of any potential disasters, whether natural or man-made. UNHCR and the Government of Rio Grande do Sul work together for contingency planning and the development of protocols for risk and emergency situations. The [memorandum of understanding](#) signed by both parties will help strengthen preparedness and response for future climate disasters, ensuring that refugees and people in need of international protection are included in planning and response from the beginning. UNHCR is also discussing similar agreements with other Brazilian states.

Such planning is especially critical as Brazil is extremely vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis—in the past 10 years, 93 per cent of Brazilian municipalities have been [affected](#) by some type of natural disaster. Against this background, UNHCR Brazil is prioritizing environmental actions to reduce the long-lasting impacts of climate change on natural resources that directly affect displaced and host communities.

Ongoing needs

Six months after these historic climate events, although the acute phase of the emergency has passed, more than 1,300 people are still living in collective shelters, and many others still face the challenges arising from the impact of the rains and floods. While some public services have resumed, finding suitable housing arrangements for a number of those displaced is still a challenge. The impact of the events on public infrastructure and services and on communities are still visible and will require coordinated actions and a whole-of society approach to overcome.

Reconstruction efforts are a long-term project. Those displaced by the floods need ongoing assistance to ensure that their homes, public

infrastructure, community services and schooling are restored to a high quality.

Longer-term psychosocial support is also essential. The floods have added extra stress for refugees and other new arrivals to Brazil who were already experiencing mental health challenges due to the separation from their homes and the stressful circumstances of their flight. They will need to be connected to social programmes and psychological care that can help them feel less isolated and feel part of their community.

Climate Resilience Fund for Refugees

UNHCR's climate programming extends beyond responding to climate- induced disasters.

With [three out of four forcibly displaced people living in climate-vulnerable settings](#), UNHCR is also focusing on strengthening resilience and adaptation. Our activities range from disaster preparedness and early warning systems to

constructing shelters designed to withstand extreme weather events.

Contributions to the [Climate Resilience Fund for Refugees](#) will enable UNHCR to step up its efforts, investing in projects that enhance resilience, mitigate risks and promote sustainable solutions in climate- vulnerable displacement settings.

Donor acknowledgement

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors for this emergency response. Donors that contributed \$100,000 or above to the Brazil floods emergency response:

European Union | United States of America | Gerdau/Instituto Gerando Falcões and other private donors in Brazil | LATAM Airlines Group SA | Sweden for UNHCR

UNHCR extends its gratitude to all donors who have contributed unearmarked, softly earmarked and country-level funding benefitting UNHCR's responses in Brazil so far in 2024:

Australia | Belgium | Brazil | Canada | China | Denmark | France | Germany | Ireland | Japan | Republic of Korea | Luxembourg | Netherlands | Norway | Sweden | Switzerland | United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | United States of America | Australia for UNHCR | España con ACNUR | Private donors in Italy | Japan for UNHCR | Private donors in the Republic of Korea | Private donors in the Netherlands | Sweden for UNHCR | UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe

Flexible funding: a lifeline in emergencies

Flexible funds help UNHCR to prepare for the unpredictable, to kick-start an emergency response, and to help displaced people in forgotten or under-resourced crises. They also enable UNHCR to plan and manage resources efficiently and effectively to help save and transform lives.

Without flexible funding, we would not be able to properly prepare for any new emergency that may arise. Without flexible funding, the first phase of our emergency response, which delivers thousands of emergency supplies, essential shelter and protection assistance to families in need, would struggle to get off the ground.

Flexible funding is especially important as our emergency response develops, and we provide longer-term support to displaced people and their host communities. When emergencies fade from the spotlight, flexible funding enables us to help those who are suffering most.

We could not do our job without such invaluable support, and we count on donors' continued solidarity for people affected by emergencies in 2024.

Cover photo: A UNHCR staff member conducts interviews at a temporary shelter in Porto Alegre, Brazil, to assess the needs of vulnerable people. © UNHCR/Vanessa Beltrame