

Brazil Country Strategy Evaluation

UNHCR Evaluation Office

Purpose	Contribute to learning on the strategic relevance and effectiveness of UNHCR's interventions, assess the extent to which capacities, structures and processes are fit-for-purpose, and document lessons and recommendations to improve our work for and with forcibly displaced and stateless persons and host communities in Brazil.
Evaluation type	Country Strategy Evaluation
Methods	Documentary review, semi-structured interviews, group discussions, online surveys, field visits and direct observation.
Implemented	2024-2025, by AVICENA Health & Social Projects
Scope	Country specific 2021-2024
Commissioned by	Evaluation Office

Evaluation Context

During the period under review, Brazil strengthened its role as a host country, driven by an unprecedented influx of forcibly displaced persons, which reached 793,338 by July 2024 — primarily from Venezuela (622,113), as well as from Haiti (90,183), Afghanistan, and other countries.

Brazil has a progressive legal framework for refugee protection, including the 1997 Refugee Law (Law 9.474/1997) and the 2017 Migration Law (Law 13.445/2017), which are in line with international and regional commitments such as the Cartagena Declaration. These laws provide refugees and asylum seekers with access to documentation, public services and work permits.

UNHCR has been a key partner of the Government of Brazil since the start of the Venezuelan refugee situation, supporting the creation, implementation, management, and monitoring of Operation Welcome, a large-scale national response. UNHCR's involvement includes support to reception, documentation and resettlement activities, as well as the extension of assistance to other nationalities and vulnerable groups. UNHCR is also co-leading the R4V platform and has been working with national and local authorities, civil

society and the private sector to enhance protection and socio-economic inclusion. UNHCR's strategy has shifted from an initial emergency response to a more comprehensive approach focused on strengthening public policies for protection and integration.

Key Findings

UNHCR's collaboration with the Government of Brazil has been essential in shaping a large-scale humanitarian response.

UNHCR's sustained engagement, particularly through Operation Welcome, has provided critical protection, assistance and integration support to Venezuelan refugees and migrants. The operation has been a model of humanitarian-military cooperation, ensuring access to documentation, reception facilities and voluntary internal relocation. While this cooperation has facilitated a structured response, restrictive global asylum policies and the increasing complexity of mixed migration flows pose ongoing challenges. Ensuring that Brazil's response remains inclusive and in line with international protection standards requires continued engagement with national and local authorities, especially as new groups of displaced people arrive.

UNHCR's support to the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) has helped strengthen Brazil's national asylum system.

UNHCR has played a crucial role in advancing national asylum procedures through technical assistance, staff training, legal advice, and the implementation of sorting stations and digitalisation of procedures. These efforts contributed to enabling prima facie recognition of Venezuelan nationals, improving case management, accelerating processing times, and improving overall efficiency. However, challenges remain, including persistent disparities in access for non-Venezuelan applicants and growing backlogs. The evaluation found that high staff turnover and limited institutional continuity affected the sustainability of improvements. While UNHCR contributed to adapting federal asylum policies, its influence was more limited at the local level, especially in Boa Vista and Pacaraima.

UNHCR's advocacy has helped increase the visibility of refugee and migrant issues in Brazil.

UNHCR has successfully integrated refugee and migration issues into national and local agendas by engaging with public institutions, communities, and the private sector. The organization has supported the development and implementation of employment programmes, legal pathways, and economic inclusion initiatives. This includes backing the Refugee Entrepreneurs Platform, co-developing tools and guidance, and facilitating partnerships to expand access to credit, training, and employment services for refugees and migrants. Voluntary internal relocation

and job placement programmes have supported socio-economic integration for many refugees. However, barriers such as labour market discrimination, gaps in legal documentation, and limited economic opportunities in host cities continue to slow long-term integration.

The focus on emergency response has sometimes limited progress toward long-term protection solutions.

UNHCR's historical emphasis on large-scale humanitarian responses, while necessary, has at times deprioritized structural reforms and durable protection solutions. UNHCR has been instrumental in addressing immediate humanitarian needs, such as shelter and cash-based assistance, but the transition to durable solutions, including local integration and self-reliance programmes, has been slower. The shift in priorities from emergency relief to development-oriented programming requires a more integrated approach that includes strengthening public services, ensuring access to long-term housing, and expanding education and vocational training opportunities.

Funding imbalances and heavy donor dependence pose risks to sustainability.

During the evaluation period, UNHCR Brazil faced funding challenges characterised by three key trends. (1) A recurring gap between planned needs and available resources revealing a structural disconnect between strategic planning and resource realities. (2) Despite efforts to diversify funding sources, the operation remained heavily dependent on a single donor — the United States — leaving the organisation vulnerable to changes in donor priorities. (3) There was a growing imbalance in budget allocation, favouring administrative and staff costs over operational delivery, limiting flexibility to invest in long-term integration efforts. While these shifts partly reflect efforts to maintain core capacities in the face of resource constraints, they underscore the need for more strategic resource prioritisation and continued diversification to ensure the sustainability and responsiveness of the operation.

Recommendations

The evaluation recommends the following actions:

Strategic dimension

1. Capitalise on the Government of Brazil experience to strengthen its position in regional and international fora on refugees and international protection, in a context of humanitarian funding crisis and where it would be necessary to review the UNHCR mandate received from the UN Secretary-General in 2028 to co-manage the response to the Venezuela situation.
2. Promote the consolidation of the functioning of the national asylum system based on the highest

Operational dimension

3. Promote the mainstreaming of refuge and international protection in government institutions and public policies (sub-national focus), in a context of growing mixed movements.
4. Continue working with the Government of Brazil towards the transformation of Operation Welcome from a specific emergency humanitarian response to Venezuelan displacement into a mechanism for responding to forced displacements of population, integrated into public institutions and policies.
5. Strengthen the localisation approach of UNHCR Brazil's strategy and actions (with a sustainable response perspective).
6. Rethink the role of the UNHCR with regard to displacement caused by extreme weather events.
7. Strengthen the socio-economic integration of especially vulnerable refugees and migrants.

Organizational dimension

8. Review the mechanisms for organising and distributing the workforce between offices and improve internal and external communication.
9. Strengthen efforts to diversify UNHCR's funding model in Brazil and increase Brazil's contribution as a member state to corporate funding.
10. Improve the quality and accuracy of the planning (budget and programme) and results monitoring framework.
11. Improve the quality of Results Monitoring Surveys to ensure their reliability as an essential tool for COMPASS-based monitoring planning..

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