



**COVID
-19**

Priorities of the Protection Sector Brazil



Introduction

This document aims to set out the priorities of the R4V Protection Sector in Brazil in light of the COVID-19 emergency. Maintaining continuity and quality in the delivery of essential assistance and protection services in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic requires organizations to quickly adapt, leveraging their capacities and established networks within both communities of refugee and migrants, as well as host communities.

This proposal is based on (i) the key messages issued by the R4V Regional Protection Sector, (ii) the contributions sent by different organizations in the forefront of this emergency, and (iii) the mitigation measures that are being daily announced and/or implemented by federal and local authorities. Priorities are designed upon the mitigation measures adopted by Brazil, considering that protecting refugees and migrants is the primary responsibility of States.

- **Border Monitoring and mitigation measures on restrictions to Freedom of Movement**

The implementation of restrictive measures related to the response to COVID-19, such as the closure of borders and limitation of freedom of movement might hinder the access of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to national response systems, protection and security. Protection Sector members shall continue with border monitoring activities in order to assist the federal government in meeting humanitarian and international protection standards. Furthermore, counselling and assistance services should be provided to Venezuelans who could not continue their journey to third countries and found themselves stranded in Brazil due to travel and border restrictions. Needs should be assessed and referrals to shelters and other public services conducted. Border monitoring should take place to identify and act in cases of human trafficking, gender-based violence, children at risk and family separation, among other protection concerns.

- **Access to Accurate Information**

Conduct Information sessions, targeting not only sheltered population but also those living in informal settlements and densely populated urban areas and disseminate through virtual and/or printed material, information about preventive measure related to the COVID-19 pandemics, protection services, referral pathways and public policies available. In addition, the Protection Sector will periodically prepare information materials to reach refugees and migrants throughout the country. These materials will inform how Brazilian Government decisions (decrees and other legal measures), both in a national and local level, affect the day-to-day lives of refugees and migrants. The materials will, furthermore, address key protection concerns given the Covid-19 pandemic, especially the increase in violence against children and GBV. Production and dissemination of information materials shall respect the cultural

background and language requirements of indigenous populations and the specific protection needs of particularly vulnerable groups.

- **Support in Documentation**

Operação Acolhida decided to suspend the majority of services in all three Documentation Centres in Pacaraima, Boa Vista and Manaus. Hence, maintain minimum presence in documentation centres is essential to providing information, identifying vulnerable cases, coordinating with the Federal Police to receive urgent cases and continue conducting shelter allocation for vulnerable cases. In other locations, information on the status of documentation service delivery should be available to all refugees and migrants and updated constantly in close cooperation with Federal Police and other local partners. In addition, special focus should be given to birth registration services, so that parents are able to register their babies despite the pandemic.

- **GBV Prevention Measures**

Increase the capacity to identify, follow-up and provide support to cases of gender-based violence, especially regarding (i) the identification of higher risk cases which might escalate into femicide; (ii) protection against the increase of GBV due to isolation in the home and other restrictive measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic; (iii) situations of intrafamilial violence or risk of sexual violence, (iv) crossing of borders through informal steps; and (v) increasing negative coping strategies e.g. survival sex. Also, due to the increase of GBV cases, Protection Sector members should prepare a calendar of activities to support the prevention GBV among girls, boys, men and women with an age, gender and diversity approach, updating shelter procedures, disseminating information on the available reporting channels, and strengthening relevant partnerships

- **Child Protection Measures**

The closure of schools has significantly hindered the full realization of the rights to education and to food and nutritional security to many children. Many refugees and migrants are unable to benefit from e-learning opportunities or can secure adequate food ratio in the absence of school meals. Furthermore, in a context of confinement, children are especially vulnerable to violence and can be at risk of exploitation, for instance through child labor or trafficking. Special efforts are needed to ensure their protection where families face social and economic stress. A multi-sectoral response should be sought to ensure that children and caregivers' needs are addressed holistically. Multi-sectoral interventions should prioritize: (a) advocacy to ensure child protection services remain available and accessible, with the necessary adaptations given social distancing requirements and safety health measures; (b) standard procedures for documenting and referring children's cases that may need follow-up always applying best interest approach; (c) clear, coordinated protocols to prevent/reduce family separation and other forms of child protection risks; (d) on-call child protection services for unaccompanied and separated children and adolescents, including during temporary deprivation of parental care due to the disease; (e) reduce stigma and social exclusion that may result from the disease; (f) and clear, coordinated, child-friendly community messaging on violence prevention and response measures given children's unique risks and

vulnerabilities related to the outbreak, including the dissemination of complaint mechanisms and channels, as well as adapted referral pathways, so that victims and witnesses of violence, especially children, adolescents and women, know where and how to seek help.

- **Anti-Trafficking Measures**

The disruption of economic activities and livelihood options, limited functioning of the network of assistance of victims of trafficking may impact the number of cases of trafficking and other related crimes such as labour exploitation. Protection Sector is working closely with the Anti-Trafficking Subsector to disseminate information material on the increasing risks of labour exploitation due to unemployment and loss of livelihood; updated lists of national referral mechanisms (online) available for victims of trafficking and labour exploitation; and raising awareness on the possibilities of rising exploitation within vulnerable groups as children and women.

- **Map, Mobilize and Support Protection Services**

Organizations should work together in mapping out all the local actors and organizations, being them public, private, NGOs or Academia, that are offering or intending to offer assistance for Venezuelan refugees and migrants during the COVID-19 crisis. These actors and organizations, if not already part of the R4V platform, will be encouraged to mutually cooperate with R4V organizations to assist refugees and migrants in accessing federal, state and municipal protection programs and services, including social, legal, economic or other aiming at mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the Communication Working Group and CwC, the Sector will provide Venezuelan refugees and migrants across the country with recent information about the functioning of local networks, including specialized services targeting groups with specific protection needs based on their age, gender or diversity profiles. The Sector will also work together with partners to ensure the timely provision of assistance and guidance to Venezuelan refugees and migrants with protection needs, including the management of protection cases as applicable.

- **Increase Online trainings**

Together with the Integration/Interiorization Sector, consider increasing the availability of on-line courses and trainings on protection-related topics for private and public stakeholders in different states and municipalities across the country. E-learning platforms have a wider reach and easier access by local actors within a context of restricted movement. These trainings shall support in building local capacity, strengthening public policies for refugees and migrants and expanding protection networks and services.

- **Targeted Advocacy**

Together with federal and local stakeholders and concerned R4V Sectors, the Protection Sector to lead a campaign to sensitize local governments on asylum seekers and refugees' rights, aiming at ensuring that this population will not face any obstacles in accessing public services, specially health and social assistance services and subsidies. Advocacy will also be conducted for the maintenance of essential services and policies benefiting refugees and migrants and for the designing of contingency plans for urban shelters and similar

settlements. Furthermore, advocacy actions aimed at the Child Protection System will include violence prevention and response messages, to ensure essential child protection services continue available and accessible for witnesses and victims of violence.

- **Continued assessment of Protection Impacts**

Develop a needs assessment scheme based on an age, gender and diversity approach through which members will work together with local actors to gather information about the protection impacts on Venezuelan refugees and migrants. This information will feed the situational analysis of the COVID-19 crisis vis-a-vis its protection impacts, serving as a base to ensure a tailored protection programming and delivery.

- **Protection to Indigenous Groups**

Together with the Indigenous and the CwC Working Groups, the Protection Sector will lead advocacy efforts with local public, private or civil society actors to ensure the special protection needs of indigenous populations are addressed both in shelter and out-of-shelter contexts, including while in transit through different cities of Brazil. Efforts will aim at increasing prevention of contamination by the COVID-19, respecting their culture traditions, ensuring access to health and social assistance public services, subsidies and other available support networks, and preventing and responding to violence against indigenous children and adolescents.