# Protection and Assistance to Afghan Refugees in Brazil

SPECIAL EDITION – NOVEMBER 2023

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BETWEEN JAN/22 - SEPT/23

**8,967**

entered Brazil

*Source: Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (STI)**

AS OF OCT/23

**157**

active asylum claims

*Source: National Committee for Refugees (Conare)*

AS OF OCT/23

**1,043**

recognized refugees

**792** only in 2023

*Source: National Committee for Refugees (Conare)*

Learn more at **acnur.org.br/afeganistao**

## OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Since December 2020, Brazil recognizes the serious and widespread human rights violations taking place in Afghanistan, which has enabled facilitated procedures for granting refugee status to Afghan nationals.

In September 2021, Interministerial Ordinance n. 24 guaranteed the safe entry of Afghan nationals into Brazil through a humanitarian visa program that has since made possible to authorize 12,966 visas, out of which 11,122 have already been issued. However, in September 2023, the Brazilian government introduced a new Ordinance that brings significant changes to the reception policy for Afghans. It establishes that, starting in October, visa issuance will be conditioned to the reception capacities of civil society organizations that are previously approved by the Brazilian government. Furthermore, visas will only be granted at the Brazilian Embassies of Iran and Pakistan.

UNHCR is providing technical assistance to government authorities for the definition of the sponsorship scheme outlined in the policy, which will be initially valid until December 2024.

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FROM NOV/22 - OCT/23

**3,910**

people assisted by PAAHM

**698** families

FROM NOV/22 - OCT/23

**2,800**

people referred to the local shelter network

**95%** of the Afghans arriving at the Guarulhos International Airport make use of the services provided by PAAHM

## SUPPORT UPON ARRIVAL

Upon arriving at the Guarulhos International Airport, Afghans can access the services provided by the Advanced Post for Humanized Assistance to Migrants (PAAHM). At this facility, they receive essential information about their rights in Brazil, guidance on asylum procedures and can be referred for shelter accommodation locally.

As part of the longstanding partnership between UNHCR and the PAAHM, established back in 2015, UNHCR has taken steps to enhance the services offered at the facility so it could continue to provide timely support to the growing number of Afghan arrivals. Since July 2022, **UNHCR has contributed with the hiring of 11 cultural mediators and interpreters**, counting currently with five of these professionals of Afghan nationality to provide culturally tailored support. Moreover, UNHCR works with the PAAHM for data collection and analysis related to the services provided, which allow for the identification of trends and provide evidence for the development and implementation of initiatives and public policies.

**Sistema de Tráfego Internacional (STI) is a Federal Police system developed to record data on people entering and leaving the country through border control posts (land borders, ports and airports). In this way, all types of possible entry visas are registered by the system.*

## SHELTER

Once the PAAHM identifies a person's need for shelter, it mobilizes the public shelter network of the state of São Paulo which currently counts with **13** shelters for a total of **957** slots.

SÃO PAULO

### CAE Ebenézer
**Management:** *SMADS and CEBASP*

***Vacancies:*** *200* | ***Entries:*** *1002*

### Casa de Passagem (Mooca)
***Management:*** *SEDS and Cáritas Brasileira Regional São Paulo/CROPH*

***Vacancies:*** *50* | ***Entries:*** *186*

### Casa do Migrante
***Management:*** *Missão Paz*

***Vacancies:*** *110* | ***Entries:*** *247*

### Repúblicas
**Management:** *SEDS and Cáritas Brasileira Regional São Paulo*

***Vacancies:*** *50* | ***Entries:*** *149*

GUARULHOS

### Povos Fraternos I and II
**Management:** *SDAS, Núcleo Batuíra, Serviço de Promoção da Família*

***Vacancies:*** *38* | ***Entries:*** *254*

### Povos Fraternos III
**Management:** *SDAS, Núcleo Batuíra, Serviço de Promoção da Família*

***Vacancies:*** *62* | ***Entries:*** *240*

### Terra Nova
***Management:*** *SEDS and ASBRAD*

***Vacancies:*** *50* | ***Entries:*** *184*

### Todos Irmãos
***Management:*** *UNHCR, SDAS, Cáritas SP and Cáritas Guarulhos*

***Vacancies:*** *27* | ***Entries:*** *428*

### Cemeando Shelter
***Management:*** *SDAS e Cemear*

***Vacancies:*** *70* | ***Entries:*** *122*

POÁ

### Aldeias Infantis Poá I and II
**Management:** *UNHCR and Aldeias Infantis SOS*

***Vacancies:*** *90* | ***Entries:*** *230*

MORUNGABA

### Vila Minha Pátria
**Management:** *Junta de Missões Nacionais da Convenção Batista Brasileira*

***Vacancies:*** *180* | ***Entries:*** *349*

**SMADS** - Municipal Secretary of Assistance and Social Development of São Paulo

**SEDS** - State Secretary for Social Development of São Paulo

**SDAS** - Secretary of Development and Social Assistance of Guarulhos

**CEBASP** - Educational Community Sítio Pinheirinho

**CROPH** - Regional Coordination of Human Promotion Works

**ASBRAD** - Brazilian Association for the Defense of Women, Childhood, and Youth

Despite continuous efforts to accommodate everyone, the number of arrivals outpace existing capacities and some newly arrived overstay at the airport while waiting for a vacancy. UNHCR has been working closely with authorities to expand the shelter network and ensure dignified reception, while also adapting shelter conditions to existing needs.

In September, UNHCR supported the transfer of the remaining 75 people temporarily staying in Praia Grande – a space that, although no longer operates as such, has sheltered about 237 people with UNHCR's daily support – to "Acolhimento Cemeando", a site managed by the municipality of Guarulhos with resources from the Ministry of Social Development. Additionally, UNHCR continues to provide direct financial support to three shelters – Todos Irmãos, Poá I and Poá II – that altogether can accommodate some 120 Afghan refugees.

Since their opening, the three UNHCR-funded shelters - Poá I and II and Todos Irmãos - have provided shelter and protection support to **658 Afghan refugees**.

### WORKING GROUP ON SHELTER MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION

UNHCR coordinates the Working Group on "Shelter Management and Coordination", which brings together shelter teams operating in the Afghan refugee reception network, in addition to public authorities from the state of São Paulo and the municipalities of São Paulo and Guarulhos.

Established in February 2023, this Working Group has become an important forum for capacity development and definition of common shelter procedures, allowing all stakeholders to discuss shelter needs and document the good practices developed by the network. Among its main achievements, the Working Group was responsible for the creation of a database to timely identify openings within the shelter network, expediting the referral process, and reducing the amount of time Afghan refugees have to wait at the airport for accommodation.

BETWEEN FEB/23 - SEP/23

**40** members

**16** meetings held

**32** working hours

**10** Standard Operations Procedures established

### CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SHELTER TEAMS

BETWEEN FEB/23 - SEP/23

**195** shelter staff trained

UNHCR also provides training to shelter teams on topics such as Gender-Based Violence, Child Protection, Communication with Communities, Humanitarian Principles and Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the context of cultural mediation, among others. These trainings equip professionals with the knowledge required to better address refugees' specific needs, thereby improving the overall quality of support and contributing to a more inclusive response.

UNHCR also conducted **specialized training for 17 cultural mediators working in the shelters**. These sessions, spanning three modules of 3 hours each, offered mediators the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of humanitarian values, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, among other topics. One notable aspect of these trainings was the involvement of a UNHCR colleague from Pakistan who conducted the sessions in the mediators' native languages, Dari and Pashto, facilitating a deeper understanding of the content delivered.

Finally, UNHCR has been offering technical support for shelter coordination and management through a specialized team that conducts on-site visits and maintains constant communication with management personnel. This support encompasses the promotion of management tools, assistance with complex protection cases, risk identification and referrals, community engagement, and support for collaboration with various actors in the public network and private sector.

BETWEEN JAN/23 - OCT/23

**105** visits

focused on **shelter coordination and management** to the spaces where Afghan refugees are accommodated

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION

UNHCR and its partners have developed Communication with Communities (CwC) initiatives to ensure that Afghan refugees have timely access to reliable information about their rights and available services in Brazil. This includes information on documentation procedures, access to housing, health services, socioeconomic integration, among other significant topics. Along these lines, UNHCR has also prepared tailored messages to clarify the new visa policy criteria and differences between available legal pathways. These materials are being disseminated in various languages through UNHCR Help page (ajuda.acnur.org) and other channels, such as WhatsApp and in printed materials. In particular, the HELP page with details of the new ordinance has been the most visited webpage of the Platform, reaching 1,700 hits in only one week, with the page in Farsi in first place, showing the effectiveness of the platform in passing on reliable information.

IN OCTOBER/23

**5** focus groups to design CwC materials

conducted by UNHCR with Afghan community members to strengthen access to **reliable information** and **foster a more harmonious social environment**

UNHCR also fosters close engagement with the Afghan community to gain a deeper understanding of their social perceptions, cultural differences, protection needs, including gender-based violence prevention and child protection. Such engagement serves to enhance social cohesion and promote community-based protection, ultimately working to create a more supportive and safer environment for Afghan refugees.

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## LOCAL INTEGRATION

Cultural and language differences, coupled with the experiences of displacement, continue to hinder Afghans' access to employment and their achievement of effective socioeconomic inclusion. In light of this, UNHCR works to expand livelihoods opportunities for this population.

In collaboration with the NGO Educação Sem Fronteiras, UNHCR is offering Portuguese language classes for Afghan refugees living in the shelters so that they can develop their language skills, thereby increasing their autonomy and improving their employability prospects.

NGO Missão Paz, one of São Paulo's most traditional refugee and migrant support organizations, has provided local integration services to Afghan nationals mainly through its **livelihoods programme implemented in partnership with UNHCR.**

BETWEEN SEP/21 - NOV/23

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **225** people supported with language training | **201** people provided with employment counselling | **77** people referred to job placement opportunities | **26** people hired by partner companies |

AS OF AUG/23

**739 Afghan nationals** are registered as workers in the Brazilian formal job market

*Source: Ministry of Labour databases.*

UNHCR also actively engages with the private sector to shed light on the importance of hiring Afghan refugees. In July, UNHCR and the American Chamber of Commerce for Brazil (Amcham Brasil) promoted a dialogue with private companies aiming to support longer-term solutions for Afghan refugees both through institutional partnership and labour inclusion. The focus was to present the profiles of this population in Brazil and discuss socio-economic opportunities that could benefit from further engagement of the private sector to enable Afghans' effective inclusion. Around 50 participants attended the meeting. Also in September, UNHCR presented the situation of Afghan refugees to over 50 stakeholders at a webinar promoted by Grupo Mulheres do Brasil, one of Brazil's leading gender and social equality action groups.

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To further support Afghan families to achieve their self-reliance, UNHCR provides some of them with financial assistance to cover their most basic needs while they move forward to improve their professional skills and Portuguese proficiency and look for job opportunities. Since the beginning of 2023, **58 Afghan families (about 282 individuals) have received cash support.**

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## ANTI-XENOPHOBIA CAMPAIGN

To generate awareness on the needs and the potential for integration of Afghan refugees in Brazil, UNHCR – through its Private Sector Partnerships team – launched the campaign "In a new direction: refugees from Afghanistan rewrite their lives safely in Brazil". Through moving stories of those who have been forced to leave their homes, the campaign also aimed to increase financial support for the expansion of shelter capacities and integration opportunities.

Using social media posts and other engagement actions, UNHCR invited the Brazilian public to share welcome messages for Afghan refugees. At the campaign closure, Brazilian actress and High-Profile Supporter, Letícia Spiller, visited the UNHCR-funded shelter Poá to read a selection of those welcome messages to refugees. The initiative helped UNHCR to reach different audiences and forge strategic partnerships, for example, with Santos FC women's football team - during a match, players wore shirts with their names written in Dari - and Brazilian Muslim influencer Mariam Chami who posted a video about the campaign.

The campaign helped change the Brazilian media narrative on refugees from Afghanistan. Previously, this theme often appeared in the news to denounce the presence of Afghan refugees camped at Guarulhos International Airport. Since the campaign, which also aimed to mitigate xenophobia against this population, it has become more common for the media to portrait Afghan refugees in Brazil from a different perspective, telling refugees' stories and looking at their challenges as well as initiatives to integrate these people.

Learn more about the campaign at **acnur.org/portugues/refugiados-do-afeganistao-no-brasil**

Partnerships

UNHCR Brazil's donor countries and global programs with flexible funds that support the humanitarian response in the country

UNHCR Brazil private donors