

Monthly Situation Overview II: Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants living outside of shelters, Boa Vista city



UNHCR
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REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

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BACKGROUND

Since early 2015, populations have been leaving Venezuela due to social, economic and political turmoil. It is estimated that 54,000 people have entered Brazil, of which 25,000 are currently in the northern city of Boa Vista, capital of Roraima state.¹ Throughout 2018 the rate of arrivals has increased, stretching the city's capacity to provide access to basic services. There are currently information gaps on the needs and vulnerabilities of Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants in the city, particularly those living outside of shelters managed by humanitarian actors.

REACH, in support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and partners, is conducting regular area-based assessments to assist humanitarian planning and response. This report follows an initial baseline conducted in the city² and aims to provide an update on vulnerabilities and priority needs of affected populations.

KEY FINDINGS

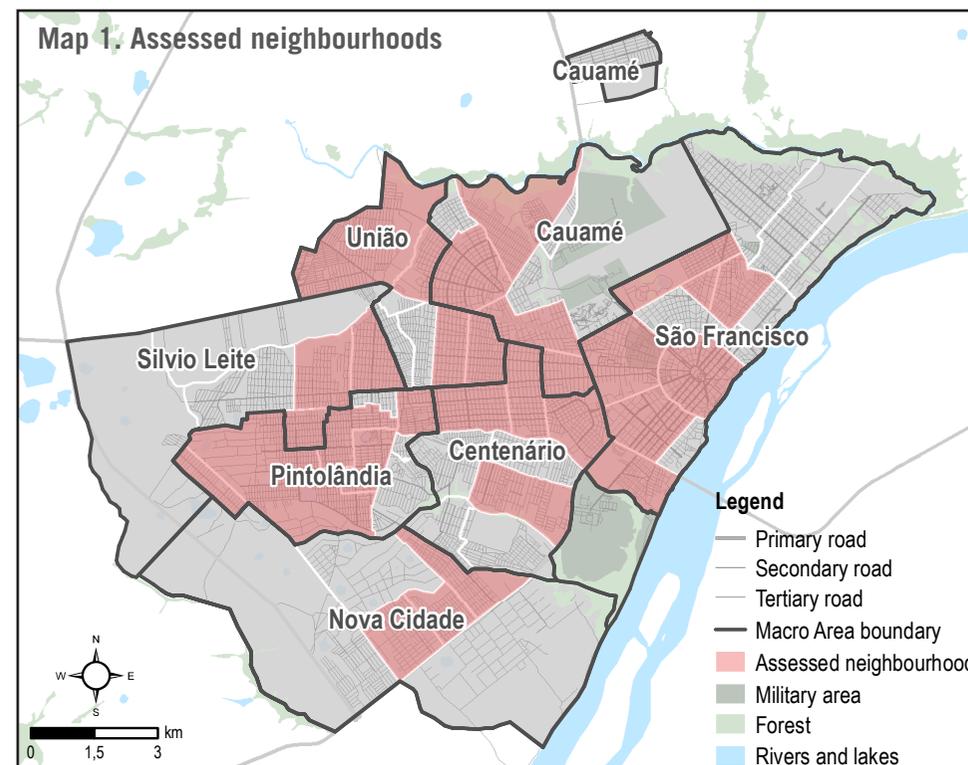
- **Improved access to livelihoods, as well as improved employment conditions, was highlighted by FGD participants as a priority need for Venezuelans living across Boa Vista.** The majority reportedly lack information on job opportunities as well as their labour rights.
- **Shelter is reportedly becoming more difficult to access.** During the month of July, FGD participants indicated increasing challenges faced when renting housing, due to rising rental prices and perceived discrimination by landlords.
- **The population living in vulnerable conditions³ did not appear to decrease during July.** Whilst some populations had moved from these locations into managed shelters which had free spaces due to the voluntary relocation programme,⁴ newly arrived populations continued to transit through or remain in these conditions.
- **Venezuelans in Boa Vista reportedly generally have access to health and education services.** However, FGD participants indicated that services are becoming increasingly strained resulting in delays in accessing services as well as issues with the quality of service provided.
- **FGD participants indicated a desire for increased integration with host communities.** Although relations are generally without tension, they noted that cultural and language exchanges and events, as well as information campaigns, would help reduce perceived discrimination and increase tolerance.

1. Boa Vista Municipality, July 2018.

2. June baseline report available here: [English](#), [Portuguese](#)

3. This includes public spaces, tents, open air, makeshift shelters, unfinished or heavily damaged buildings with limited access to basic services. Due to the transitory nature of much of the population living in these conditions, information on each vulnerability case can be considered relevant at the specific time of data collection only, and aggregated information is indicative only.

4. Programa de Interiorização (in Portuguese) is a government-led voluntary relocation programme, implemented with the support of UN agencies, that aims to facilitate the integration of Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants in the Brazilian society and labour market. The programme includes transportation elsewhere, housing, and integration support.



METHODOLOGY

REACH conducted primary data collection between 13 July and 6 August 2018 in 29 of 57 neighbourhoods in Boa Vista city (see Map 1 above). Data was collected through 29 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with a total of 203 Venezuelan asylum seekers and migrants (114 women and 89 men). Participants were selected from their neighbourhood of residence and chosen based on their knowledge of multi-sectoral needs of populations. Further, cases where people were living in vulnerable conditions were verified through direct observation and data collection in the locations reported by FGD participants. Given the methodology used, the information presented here should be considered indicative only.

DEMOGRAPHICS

According to data collected by the Municipality of Boa Vista,⁵ the majority of Venezuelans currently living in Boa Vista are aged 15 to 60 years (74%), and over half of Venezuelans in Boa Vista are male (57%). Both FGD and KIs indicated that little to no indigenous groups are currently living outside of shelters in Boa Vista other than in Pintolândia macro area.⁶

DISPLACEMENT

In July, areas of origin of Venezuelan FGD participants remained similar to participants assessed in June. The majority were from the Northeast region (56%, primarily Monagas and Anzoátegui states), followed by Bolívar state in the south (19%) that shares a border with Roraima state (Brazil).

Similarly, push factors for leaving Venezuela and pull factors attracting populations to Brazil remained the same as the previous month. The most commonly reported push factors were economic factors such as inflation, unemployment and low wages, as well as the lack of food and basic services in Venezuela, in particular health and education, followed by increasing insecurity. The most commonly reported pull factors were the geographic proximity and lower cost of travelling to Brazil in comparison to other destinations, as well as the fact that it is possible for Venezuelan nationals to cross the border without a passport.

SHELTER

As during the previous month, Venezuelans are reportedly living primarily in shared rented housing, though with hundreds observed in vulnerable shelter conditions across the city (see map 2 on following page). Whilst in June it was reported that some Venezuelans were residing in spaces granted by host community members or sharing homes with Brazilian families, this was less commonly reported during July.

Further, across the city, it has reportedly become increasingly difficult for Venezuelans to rent houses, due to perceived discrimination by landlords and increasing rental prices. In Centenário macro-area, FGD participants reported that landlords perceive Venezuelans to be less likely to be able to meet rental commitments, and as such, some landlords give preferential rates to Brazilians.

5. Data was collected between 28 May and 9 June through interviews with 9,000 Venezuelans; sampling was not representative.

6. There is currently one shelter (located in Pintolândia macro area and called by the same name) accommodating Venezuelan indigenous populations currently living in Boa Vista. Factsheet with July information is available here: [LINK](#)

LEGAL STATUS

The legal status of Venezuelans living in Boa Vista did not change significantly between assessments conducted in June and July, with the majority reportedly registered with the Brazilian Federal Police.⁷ According to FGD participants, the most common legal status is to be registered as asylum seekers. This legal pathway requires less documentation and the process is perceived to be easier than others.

The second most common legal status of Venezuelans in Boa Vista is reportedly the temporary residence. FGD participants indicated that Venezuelans often prefer this documentation as it is perceived to facilitate local integration, ease return to Venezuela (mainly in order to send money and food to their family members), facilitate local integration and allow greater protection due to its longer validity.⁸ However, the temporary residence process requires more documentation and typically takes longer than the asylum seeker application.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

In Boa Vista, Venezuelan FGD participants reported to have little information about their legal rights and accessible legal services in cases of violation of their rights. Information is commonly obtained through informal sources, in particular personal acquaintances and social media (Facebook and Whatsapp groups). According to FGD participants, in July, there was increased access to mobile internet, through both public and private connections. This was considered a priority for FGD participants as it enables them to follow up with their legal documentation process as well as communicate with friends and family members.

LIVELIHOODS

Venezuelans living in Boa Vista face substantial challenges to accessing livelihoods opportunities, primarily due to a perceived discrimination and language barriers, as well as an absence of certain documentation and lack of jobs available in the city. Further, they are also exposed to significant labour risks such as lack of safety equipment provided for work, sexual and moral harassment (in the case of women) and traffic accidents⁹ either while working or commuting.

According to FGD participants, for the majority of Venezuelans the primary livelihood opportunities available are informal. Typically, Venezuelans reported to work from 10 to 15 days in informal activities paid on daily basis, at a wage varying between 20 and 50 BRL.¹⁰ The most commonly reported occupations for men were stonemasons, carpenter and gardener, while women reportedly work mainly as cleaners, hairdressers, manicurists and street vendors.

7. Federal Police is the body responsible for the registration of foreign nationals.

8. Under Brazilian legislation (2017) Venezuelans nationals have the right to apply for temporary residence in Brazil, which is valid for 2 years, whereas asylum seeker status needs to be renewed annually.

9. Due to common types of employment of Venezuelans (street vendors, roadside gardeners), the fact that many use bicycles rather than cars to travel, as well as reported targeting of Venezuelan pedestrians or cyclists by intimidating acts using motorised vehicles.

10. 1 BRL = 0.26 USD.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Health

As was the case in June, the majority of FGD participants reported that although they do not have major issues accessing health services, there is some perceived discrimination towards them by both hospital staff and Brazilian clients. Further, reflective of the increasing strain on services, in July participants started to report issues related to health service capacity, such as long queues for health services and facing long delays between initial diagnosis and subsequent treatment. This excess of demand was particularly notable in Cauamé macro-area, reportedly due to the high concentration of Venezuelans in this area.

Education

FGD participants reported that children were generally able to access education services, though those without the required identification documentation commonly faced difficulties and delays in registration. Further, a lack of places is reportedly becoming an increasing issue, particularly in Centenário, União, Cauamé and Pintelândia macro-areas. Participants also noted that integration of students could be improved in some schools, as there were reports of bullying or discrimination towards Venezuelan students by both students and teachers.

Humanitarian assistance

In July, FGD participants and vulnerable populations reported that there had been an increased demand for food and other assistance over the past month. As such, in some areas such as near the Jardim Floresta managed shelter and along the Rua 13 de Setembro in São Francisco, vulnerable populations are reportedly receiving less assistance when compared to June. As in June, the most commonly reported aid actors providing this type of assistance were religious institutions, followed by civil society actors including non-organised host community members.

Separately, over the past two months, there has reportedly been increased access to government assistance programmes, such as the Bolsa Família¹³, as more people have more information about these programmes through various means. Overall, participants noted that the priority need of Venezuelans living across the city was increased access to livelihood opportunities.

PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

In general, FGD participants reported that the relations with host communities had not changed significantly since June and were generally positive, with generosity and cordiality noted as the

predominant attitudes of Brazilians towards Venezuelans. However, isolated incidents of tension or aggression continued, particularly in União, São Francisco and Cauamé neighbourhoods. The most common incidents reported were perceived distrust and discrimination, verbal harassment, and intimidating acts using motorized vehicles against Venezuelan pedestrians.

To facilitate integration into communities and improve relations with host communities, Venezuelan FGD participants were particularly interested in cultural and language exchanges or projects. Some participants also indicated that information campaigns would be beneficial, to increase host community awareness of the reasons for Venezuelan movement to Boa Vista, as well as to promote tolerance and fair treatment.

PROTECTION

Vulnerable population

As shown in Map 2 and the macro area maps on the following pages, large numbers of Venezuelans continued to live in public spaces, tents, open air, non-used public buildings or abandoned/damaged houses. Throughout July, parts of these populations reportedly moved into managed shelters, which had spaces available as some previous residents left to participate in the voluntary relocation programme. However, the influx of population into the city continued on a reportedly daily basis, resulting in overall increased numbers of people living in these conditions.¹⁴

Protection concern for children

As reported in June, child labour¹⁵ was reportedly prevalent across the city, most commonly in São Francisco, Cauamé and Pintelândia macro areas. The most common type of labour reported in FGD discussions was child begging, with some sporadic reports of street vending and plastic waste collection.

About REACH

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organisations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH aims to strengthen evidence-based decision making by aid actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis before, during and after an emergency. By doing so, REACH contributes to ensuring that communities affected by emergencies receive the support they need. All REACH activities are conducted in support to, and within the framework of, inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information, please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org. You can contact us directly at: geneva@reach-initiative.org and follow us on Twitter: @REACH_info.

13. Social welfare programme of the Brazilian government which provides financial aid to families in return for families ensuring children attend school and are vaccinated.

14. Due to the transitory nature of much of this population, information on each vulnerability case can be considered relevant at the specific time of data collection only, and aggregated information is indicative only.

15. Child labour is defined as labour that deprives children of their childhood, potential and dignity, and that is harmful to physical or mental development (ILO).