

INTERIORIZATION STRATEGY:

A strategy to support the socio-economic integration of refugees and migrants from Venezuela



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PRESENTATION

Maritza, 57, mother and grandmother, was the 100,000th passenger to access the Interiorization Strategy promoted by Operation Welcome. Having been assisted at the Reception and Support Centre (PRA, by its Portuguese acronym) in Boa Vista, she was then reunited with her husband in Cascavel (PR) five years later. Gabriela, Yelitza, Abraham, Yolesia, Vilda and many others have similar stories.

Currently over 100,300 Venezuelan migrants and refugees have benefited from the Brazilian government's humanitarian strategy, implemented in partnership with the Brazilian Armed Forces, United Nations agencies, state and municipal governments, and over 100 civil society and private sector organizations.

Extreme weather events, natural disasters, wars, economic crises, hunger, but also the desire to experience other realities and seek better life opportunities are among the factors that motivate displacement and migration around the world. There are currently over 4.4 million Brazilians living in foreign countries, and it is a fact that we do like to be treated well. This is what Operation Welcome has been doing for five years with our Venezuelan sisters and brothers, and why it has become an international reference in addressing the migration issue.

From the northern border control at the screening points in Pacaraima (RR), where migratory regularization procedures are carried out, to the reception in emergency shelters, and the offer of voluntary, safe, orderly, and free relocation, there are several actions that set the basis for this humanitarian strategy, and these actions are certainly not limited to Roraima.

Interiorization can be motivated by several reasons, such as family reunification, a job opportunity, or further support from an institution. Either way, the humanitarian strategy continues in the places of destination. In Brazil, the State (and society, as a whole) is responsible for its citizens, and migrants and refugees have the same right to citizenship as Brazilian nationals. Furthermore, we pay special attention to people in vulnerable situations, so that they can be economically and socially integrated and have access to essential services and livelihoods.

The qualification process of the *Cadastro Único* (the unified registry for all social programmes of the Brazilian government), carried out by the Ministry of Development, Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger (MDS) since 1st January 2023, includes

the training of state and municipal managers on how to assist the different populations that access the Unified Social Assistance Service (SUAS) in the country.

In April, we held workshops in Roraima focusing on migrants and refugees, which account for about 20% of the state's population. Also in April, there were 54,510 families with at least one Venezuelan member benefitting from the *Bolsa Família* programme, and a total of 137,317 Venezuelan individuals benefitting from the same programme.

The MDS also coordinates social assistance networks, seeking to achieve the social protection and socio-economic inclusion of refugees and migrants in their destination cities through access to work and professional training initiatives, among others. These initiatives are in line with the Ministry's macro-approach, which includes a partnership with states and municipalities to strengthen SUAS, collaborations with the private sector to insert people in the labour market, and partnerships with various civil society actors to combat hunger and food insecurity, for example.

This document is an overview of Operation Welcome, a strategy that has been perfected over time and that has promoted the integration of thousands of citizens in the country. Here we share the successful stories of individuals who participated in the Interiorization Strategy across 947 Brazilian municipalities. People who have dreams, expectations, and a desire to do their part for Brazil, and who were given a new opportunity to improve their lives. This is a call for us to continue improving this work, which will be further strengthened through the restructuring of public policies to combat hunger and improve social assistance, while also considering the challenges that lie ahead.

Wellington Dias,

Minister of Development, Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger

1. INTERIORIZATION STRATEGY AND NEW LOCAL INTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

In response to the intensified influx of refugees and migrants from Venezuela, as of 2017, Law No. 13,684/2018 allowed for the standardization of emergency assistance measures and established the Federal Emergency Assistance Committee (*CFAE*, in Portuguese) as a deliberation instance in the intersectoral governance of actions and initiatives for the management of humanitarian crises related to displacement flows in Brazil. Operation Welcome was created to provide humanitarian assistance to vulnerable refugees and migrants from Venezuela. The strategy has three main lines of action: Border Management, Sheltering, and Interiorization.

At the same time, the United Nations Secretary-General issued guidelines for UNHCR and IOM to lead the response to the situation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, R4V (Response for Venezuelans)¹, a Regional Interagency Coordination Platform, was created to coordinate the actions of UN agencies and civil society organizations aimed at promoting access to rights, basic services, protection, self-sufficiency and socio-economic integration for this population and its host communities. A national platform was also established in Brazil. This platform currently counts with 55 partner organizations (including agencies, funds and programmes implemented by United Nations agencies and civil society organizations) that offer support to the Brazilian State in different lines of action such as integration, interiorization and humanitarian transportation, sector coordinated by UNHCR, IOM and World Vision.

The *CFAE*² organizes the composition, powers, norms and structure of Operation Welcome. To this end, three federal subcommittees were implemented: i) Reception and interiorization of vulnerable immigrants (coordinated by the Ministry of Development, Social Assistance, Family and Fight Against Hunger - MDS); ii) Reception, identification, and screening of immigrants (coordinated by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security) and iii) Health services for immigrants (coordinated by the Ministry of Health).

The three subcommittees are important for the reception of refugees and migrants and for the implementation of the Interiorization Strategy, which consists of the free and voluntary relocation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants from Roraima to other

1. R4V Platform Portal: <https://www.r4v.info/pt>

2. At the Federal level, an executive secretariat was established within the Chief of Staff's Office, a communication and an information management office were also established, in addition to three federal subcommittees. This structure also includes operational and logistics provisions, involving over 100 partners and instances of the Executive, Legislative and Judiciary Branches, states and municipalities, civil society organizations, private entities, experts and international organizations. All of these actors work together as part of the Operation Welcome Humanitarian Logistics Task Force.

Brazilian states. The goal of the Strategy is to allow people in vulnerable situations to have better integration conditions through inclusion in the labour market, access to public health, education, social assistance, and other services that are part of the reception and integration network in the destination municipalities. Since the beginning of the Interiorization Strategy, Operation Welcome partners and the R4V Platform ensure that people reach their destinations safely.

The MDS plays a fundamental role in the formulation and coordination of policies, programmes and actions related to income, social assistance, social and productive inclusion in rural and urban areas, and provision of assistance to early childhood and elderly populations. The structure of the MDS includes sectors dedicated to combating poverty and hunger, to the management of the Cadastro Único for social programmes, as well as national social assistance, food and nutrition security, socio-economic inclusion and family policies. The Federal Government also shares the management of the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS) with the states, the Federal District and the municipalities. SUAS encompasses social assistance services, projects, and income transfer programmes. In the context of the Venezuelan refugees and migrants, the MDS coordinates the Federal Subcommittee for the Reception and Interiorization of Immigrants in Vulnerable Situations (SUFAl), which includes the federal management of emergency shelters in Roraima and the management of the Interiorization Strategy.

As part of the Interiorization Strategy, the MDS provides support to Venezuelan refugees and migrants through the provision of temporary shelter, in partnership with other Operation Welcome partners, thus playing an important role in their integration in other Brazilian municipalities. The Ministry also coordinates the social assistance network, seeking to achieve the social protection and socio-economic inclusion of refugees and migrants in their destination cities through access to work and professional training initiatives, among others.

In five years, the Brazilian State has relocated over 100,000 people in partnership with a wide variety of organizations. The Integration, Interiorization and Humanitarian Transportation Sector (IITH) organized in this document some cases that exemplify the success of the Interiorization Strategy within the framework of the Interagency Coordination Platform for Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants (R4V), and in its role as a collective space for building responses to the Venezuelan population in complement to and in coordination with the Brazilian State.

2. GOOD INTEGRATION PRACTICES FOR RELOCATED VENEZUELAN

2.1 Reception and integration of vulnerable groups

Families, pregnant women, LGBTQIA+ community, survivors of gender-based violence, people with disabilities (PwDs), and people with health conditions³ are relocated through the institutional modality, as part of the Brazil Without Borders programme. Refugees and migrants are inserted in the health, social assistance, and education networks and in the labour, market following a Family Development Plan. During the reception period, families are also referred to professional training and Portuguese courses, as well as information sessions on labour rights, sexual and reproductive health, the Unified Health System (SUS), and the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS). Group discussions, sessions to exchange knowledge and strengthen community ties between families, women, and between Venezuelan and Brazilian people are also organized.

Other projects developed by **SOS Children's Villages** and **UNHCR** also draw on partnerships with the local private sector for the insertion of Venezuelan migrants in the labour market and to hold income generation workshops. The goal is to create exit strategies so that the families can leave the shelters with stability, autonomy and dignity. These projects are operated from Brasília (DF), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), São Paulo (SP) and Porto Alegre (RS).

SUCCESS STORY



Yelitza, an elementary school teacher, arrived in Brazil with her teenage son in 2018. They lived on the streets of Boa Vista for six months, but when Operation Welcome was instituted, they were part of the first group of 50 Venezuelans relocated to the Children's Villages of Rio de Janeiro (RJ).

Now a pillar of her community, Yelitza started working in that same institution, offering guidance to 80 Venezuelan families living in the Itanhangá community (RJ). She also develops her own project to disseminate the Venezuelan culture and identity and, in

3. An Interiorization modality which consists in the displacement of beneficiaries from emergency shelters in Roraima to Interiorization reception and integration centers.

February 2023, she took another important step in her success trajectory by enrolling in a university course to become a Social Assistant.

“When I arrived in Brazil, I was very scared, I felt that we were refugees and migrants without rights, without a voice, and that we had no one to do justice for us. Now I feel very happy and proud. God has given me a life lesson to prepare me so that I could help other people with support from various organizations. I work with receiving refugees because I lived this experience myself. We have value, we must be respected, and we need humane treatment.”

The **Bom Samaritano Reception Center** in Brasilia (DF) is part of the “**Integration Through Employment**” programme, an AVSI Brazil initiative in partnership with the **Migration and Human Rights Institute (IMDH)**, with the support of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), UNHCR and the Federal Government. The Center is part of civil society’s contribution to the interiorization of Venezuelan refugees and migrants, and provides humanitarian assistance, training and labour and socio-cultural insertion, with a special focus on women, children and people in highly vulnerable situations, promoting local integration with autonomy and dignity.

SUCCESS STORY

Abraham used to live in Venezuela with his family working as a street vendor, but his living conditions became increasingly difficult. Without making enough money to buy food, he and his wife Minerva decided to leave for Colombia. The situation they encountered was not easy as well. Abraham managed to buy a motorcycle, and started working as a waste collector, but the money was still not enough to make ends meet. When a friend who lived in Brasília encouraged them to come to Brazil, the family went on a four-day walk, until they reached Pacaraima and were sheltered by Operation Welcome. After sometime waiting for an interiorization opportunity, the family finally arrived in Brasília, where they found a better perspective for the future, thanks to the work of the Bom Samaritano Center. Abraham is currently employed, and his son is enrolled in school.



The **Acolhe Brasil Programme** is an initiative by the **Jesuit Migrant and Refugee Service (SJMR)** which has supported the interiorization of Venezuelan migrants since 2018

through coordination between parishes and civil society partners, organizing spaces and reception shelters in several cities in the country. Interiorization processes are only achieved through **networking, with local and national partnerships to welcome forcibly displaced people** and support them in their labour and social integration in Brazil. Between 2019 and March 2023, **935** people were relocated in Brazil through the four different Interiorization modalities.

SUCCESS STORY



Leydi was one of the beneficiaries of the *Acolhe Brasil* programme, she tells her story first-hand.

“In 2017, my family and I arrived in Brazil, more specifically in Roraima, in the city of Boa Vista. We stayed in Boa Vista for a year, but we really wanted to continue growing and to get to know other parts of Brazil. That’s when the opportunity to be relocated to Bahia with the support of SJMR appeared. We met many welcoming people there. It was a great experience. Then we decided to go to Jataí (GO), where we have been now for four years. We all work in different companies: I work in a telecommunications company, Vivo, my father and my brother work in construction, and my mother works at a very good local company. We will always be grateful for this opportunity.”

Since 2021, **334 Venezuelan refugees and migrants** who participated in the Interiorization Strategy through the institutional modality have been sheltered by the **Pastoral Service for Migrants (SPM)**, with support from **IOM, the UN Migration Agency, the Migrant House in Conde (PB)** and the **Scalabrini Migration Center, Florianópolis (SC)**, which also counts with the support of the Scalabrini Association at the Service of Migrants. The Venezuelans also receive support from SPM’s and IOM’s multidisciplinary teams to facilitate their socio-economic integration in Paraíba and Santa Catarina.

SUCCESS STORY

Sergio Rodriguez and his family arrived in Brazil in 2019, full of hope and motivation to start their lives anew. With professional training in international cuisine, Sergio lived in Boa Vista for a year, where he worked in some local restaurants, before deciding to participate in the Interiorization Strategy and moving to Conde, in the state of Paraíba.

“I was well received by the SPM and IOM teams. My family and I received all the necessary support, and I was able to participate in income generation and financial support initiatives. Now, I am opening my own restaurant, where I can show my work and Venezuelan cuisine here in Paraíba”.



2.2. Training and labour insertion of women

The MOVESE (**Economic Empowerment of Refugee and Migrant Women**) programme was inaugurated in Brazil in 2021. The programme is implemented by UN Women, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNHCR, with support from the Government of Luxembourg. The programme seeks to ensure that the policies and strategies implemented by governments, companies, and public and private institutions serve to strengthen **economic rights and development opportunities for Venezuelan refugee and migrant women**. The private sector is one of the programme’s main allies.

Private companies sign a Letter of Commitment for the Economic Empowerment of Refugee and Migrant Women and then develop action plans with goals and indicators on one or more of the following topics: 1. Employability and integration of refugee and migrant women in the workplace; 2. Supply chain as an ally of diversity; 3. Corporate social responsibility in support of communities; 4. Communication that does not reinforce stereotypes and empowers women.

SUCCESS STORY

At the age of 40 and with over a decade of experience as an environmental manager, Lisbeth came to Brazil in search of opportunities. It was in Rio de Janeiro that Lisbeth attended the training offered by MOVESE and got a job offer. Participating in the Interiorization process in the employment-based modality gave her the security she needed to start over.

At her new job, not only does she learn from her colleagues, but the contact with different cultures and life experiences promotes empathy, stimulates group work and benefits the diverse teams with which she has contact on a day-to-day basis.

“I am working with public service, and I love it, I like talking to people, helping them. And not only that, I also have some administrative responsibilities. It has been a wonderful experience.”



The **Empowering Refugee Women** programme is a joint initiative by **UNHCR, UN Women and the UN Global Compact Brazil** to encourage the access of refugee and migrant women to the Brazilian labour market through **capacity building, private sector awareness and interiorization**. The project began in São Paulo and, in 2019, expanded its operation to Boa Vista and started offering **training for women in emergency shelters and the possibility of being relocated** with their families through the job placement modality.

In 2020, the project began to offer classes targeting refugee and migrant women with disabilities, chronic diseases and/or special needs, women over 50, and the LGBTQIA+ community. So far, a total of **418** women have been trained, and a total of **252** refugee women were employed through the project; **515** people were relocated from Boa Vista to other cities in the country.

SUCCESS STORY

Gabriela arrived in Brazil from Venezuela in 2018, accompanied by her mother and husband. The journey of the family was not easy. After being in Brazil for three months, the family was relocated to São Paulo, where Gabriela participated in the Empowering Refugee Women project and was hired to work in the human resources department of a large company. She is one of the examples of the importance of promoting and generating jobs for people with disabilities, and her insertion in the labour market made it possible for the family to settle down and reunite with their daughter, Frida, who was still in Venezuela.

“At first nothing is easy. But here in Brazil, there is a law that protects people with disabilities and that requires companies to hire them. If you look, you can find a job. I’ve worked in two companies, and I have nothing to complain about either of them. There are many refugees and migrants who want to work. In addition to having access to an income, making a living, and supporting ourselves, we also want to contribute and learn.”



In order to give a voice to the protagonism of refugee and migrant women who seek to overcome challenges and pursue their dreams and a new life in Brazil, **IOM** launched a mini-series of videos where women give first-hand testimonies about their inspiring stories. **The seven women pictured** in the series talk about their experiences and achievements, reinforcing the central role of Venezuelan women who live and work in Brazil.

SUCCESS STORY

Rosimari arrived in Brazil in 2018 and participated in the Interiorization Strategy promoted by Operation Welcome. This was how she was able to make her first dream come true: to live and work in Rio de Janeiro (RJ). Like her mother, who was a cashier in Venezuela, she was hired to work in the same position at a local supermarket, thanks to a partnership between **IOM** and **Caritas Rio de Janeiro**, in a labour market insertion project. “I still want to fulfil another dream, which is to bring my family to live with me here in Rio,” she explained.



2.3 Integrated follow up in the destination city

The **Welcomed Through Work** project aims to improve the living conditions and promote the dignity of Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Brazil. One of the most important actions implemented by the project is the access to jobs in several Brazilian cities through the employment-based modality of the Interiorization Strategy⁴.

The project contributes to the Interiorization Strategy by promoting the hiring of men and women in the private sector and operationalizing their travel to the city of destination with their families. During the **initial three months in the destination city**, the participants also receive **psychosocial support and are accommodated in rented and furnished houses**. They also receive **food and hygiene products** for the first month. To date, **2,630** Venezuelans were relocated by the project, and **1,135** were hired by the private sector.

4. Consists in the displacement of beneficiaries who have signalled work opportunities in other Brazilian regions.



SUCCESS STORY

Geraldo and Yolesia were relocated with their three children, son-in-law and two granddaughters. While her husband was working as a cook in Venezuela, Yolesia crossed the Brazilian border with her children and a granddaughter. At first, as local shelters were overcrowded, the family slept on the streets for a month. After the birth of her granddaughter, she and her family were sheltered at the São Vicente 1 Federal Shelter in Boa Vista. There, they learned about the selection process organized by AVSI Brasil and the Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees (SJMR) to work in the food industry in Santa Catarina, with a right to housing, a subsistence allowance and social support, provided by the **Welcomed Through Work** project. The family was approved in the selection process and is currently settled in the state. The entire family now works for a large local hotel.

2.4 Partnership with the private sector

The **Integração** project carried out with the **BRF Company** in Chapecó (SC) has been essential for the sustainable integration of refugees and migrants in the city. An example of this was the creation of an informative booklet on how to get high school diplomas validated, as part of the project's effort to disseminate important information. As a result, **70** refugees and migrants who already worked at BRF were able to have their diplomas validated.

Through this **partnership with the BRF Institute, World Vision** was also able to provide **75** relocated refugee and migrant families with financial support, and **143** Venezuelan individuals with professional training and Portuguese language courses. Initiatives such as this are important so that the integration process goes beyond the hiring stage and continues with the provision of tools for the professional development of refugees and migrants.

SUCCESS STORY

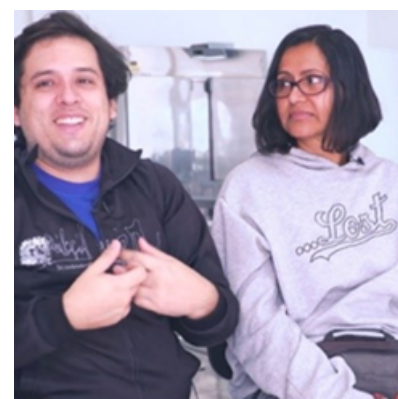
Keilis arrived in Brazil at the age of 19, after having to give up her studies in Venezuela due to high tuition and food prices. “At first, I made an effort and managed to pay for my tuition, but soon I had to choose between studying or buying food,” she recalled. She attended a business administration course and got a job as a production secretary at BRF. Through the Integração Project, World Vision mobilizes partner companies in order to offer vocational courses to the displaced population who, like Keilis, arrived in Brazil in search of a better life.



The **Connect Brazil** Platform allows Venezuelan refugees and migrants to **search for job vacancies offered through Interiorization or in their place of residence**. The platform also records the individual’s professional experiences and a history of family actions. **Agência Adventista de Desenvolvimento e Recursos Assistenciais (ADRA)** expresses that it is often easier to relocate people who already have family members employed. For this reason, the organization has a partnership with **IOM** to promote the interiorization of Venezuelan refugees and migrants through the employment-based modality, complemented by the family reunification modality, in coordination with **Operation Welcome**. Other practices involve renting accommodations for people who have been temporarily employed, the training of companies that have hired relocated people, and incentives to motivate the companies to keep hiring refugees and migrants. In addition to the private sector, the project also engages with social assistance departments, philanthropic entities and churches for the donation of furniture and household items, and with the Federal Police and Brazilian Federal Revenue Office for the issuing of documentation.

SUCCESS STORY

Shtainer is a single mother of two young children and holds a degree in industrial engineering. Through Interiorization she was able to access employment and housing in Rio Grande do Sul. She currently works in the administrative sector of a department store, with work hours suitable for motherhood, and her children are attending daycare and school. She says the project has really made a difference for her, and that today she has a stable life. Like Shtainer, Emanuel, whose son is



autistic, was supported by the project and now works as a cook at a hospital. This job is not only important for him because of the opportunity to be professionally recognized, but also because it gives his son access to a healthcare plan.

2.5 Integration of the Indigenous population

The partnership between **IOM** and the **Secretariats of Economic Development, Labour and Income (SEDET)** and **Social Development (SEDES) of the Federal District** and the **National Learning Service (SENAI)** promoted the participation of 33 Indigenous Venezuelan refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations – mostly of the Warao ethnic group – in the **1st RENOVA-DF cycle of 2023**. Through this partnership, for each new cycle, 50 refugees and migrants in vulnerable situations are appointed to participate in the initiative. Renova-DF is a professional qualification programme that offers training in the field of construction through electrical courses, as well as other courses in gardening, blacksmithing, among others. Each course lasts three months, with a workload of 4 hours per day, totalling 240 hours. During this period, participants work in the renovation of public buildings in the Federal District, putting into practice the knowledge acquired. For this they receive a scholarship which is equivalent to a minimum wage, in addition to transportation aid, and insurance in the case of accidents.

SUCCESS STORY



Vilda left Venezuela in search of new opportunities for her family. A new home and the opportunity to grow were among the main goals of this Indigenous woman of the Warao ethnicity. After living in Brazil for two years, it was in the Federal District that Vilda and her family were able to settle down and flourish. “The children are in school, and the women are working,” she explains.

2.6 Financial assistance in the Interiorization Strategy

Since 2021, World Vision has benefited over **630** Venezuelans with **financial assistance for interiorization** through the **Ven, Tú Puedes project**. The purpose of this aid, known as Cash-Based Intervention (CBI) is to support Venezuelan refugees and migrants and their families in the first month of moving to a new city in Brazil. The aid takes into account rent, food and transportation costs.

In addition to receiving financial support, relocated refugees and migrants receive support with the preparation of their professional curriculums, the issuing of work permits, preparation for job interviews, and referrals to specific job vacancies. A World Vision protection team also monitors the situation of these people for three months after interiorization to guarantee their local integration.

SUCCESS STORY

Giovani was living in Boa Vista when he took a Portuguese course with World Vision, which secured him a formal job upon its completion. He and his family were relocated to Rondônia through the employment-based modality. In addition to the referral, he received information about the Brazilian labour market, Portuguese training, and financial assistance during his first month in the new destination. Giovani's goal is to settle down in Brazil, stay with his family and buy a home in the country. For him, the Portuguese language course was essential to improve his communication and integration in the country.



Through its social programmes, the Federal Government provides families in situations of vulnerability and extreme poverty – including refugees and migrants – with access to social assistance, health, education, employment and income services and benefits. The **financial assistance** implemented by **UNHCR** does not seek to replace Brazilian programmes, but to offer financial resources that support access to rights and autonomy for those forcibly displaced.

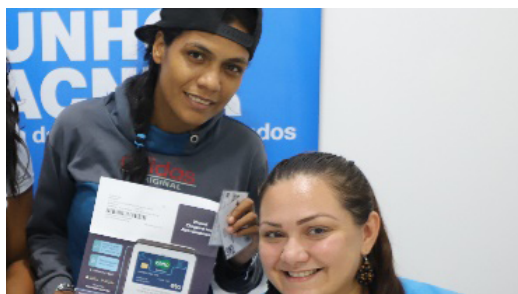
In the case of the Interiorization Strategy, whenever people in situations of high vulnerability receive a job offer, UNHCR offers financial assistance during their first month in the destination city, so people can have their basic needs met until they receive their first salary.

SUCCESS STORY

Glenda, a member of the LGBTQIA+ community, left Venezuela in search of a job to help her grandmother, who is sick.

“I suffered a lot of discrimination and mistreatment for being who I am. My grandmother was the only one who did not turn her back on me and always supported me. But she became very ill, she was between life and death, and my salary in Venezuela was not enough to take care of her health.”

The young woman arrived in Brazil determined to get a job, and already in her first month in Boa Vista, she received financial assistance from UNHCR, and boarded an interiorization flight on March 08, 2023, through an initiative promoted by Operation Welcome to encourage the hiring of women in a company in the food industry in the state of Paraná.



“This is my first job in Brazil, and it has made all the difference in my life. I am very grateful because I can support myself and help my grandmother in Venezuela. Everyone has treated me very well in the company and I am learning a lot,” says Glenda, who works in the kitchen of the company.

2.7 Coordination and integration with the local network

Promoting a fairer and more equitable society for refugees, migrants and the host community is the main goal of the actions developed by **IOM** and the **municipal governments of Esteio and Caxias do Sul in the state of Rio Grande do Sul**. This partnership seeks to strengthen migration governance in the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the socio-economic inclusion of this population in the region. Among the initiatives, the **Traveling Opportunities Space** stands out as a good practice in the provision of assistance to refugees and migrants. The project offers different labour insertion services, such as recruitment for job vacancies, migratory regularization, and registration on the Connect Brazil labour insertion platform, in addition to registration with the Rio Grande do Sul Work and Social Action Foundation and with the National Employment System (FGTAS/Sine). Since 2019, the actions carried out by IOM in partnership with local governments have already supported the hiring of over **1,200 people** in the state.

The municipality of Esteio has been a positive reference for organizing actions to support refugees and migrants. It has supported the Federal Government in the reception and organization of services for the socio-economic inclusion of relocated refugees and migrants. The partnership between the Ministry of Development (MDS) and the municipality of Esteio has been in place since 2019.

SUCCESS STORY

“We have learned from IOM and other UN agencies how to structure public policies for refugees and migrants. We are working so that these people can live autonomously. We hope they can dream of a future again,” says the mayor of Esteio, Leonardo Pascoal. Currently, Esteio counts with approximately 1,000 immigrants of eight different nationalities living, producing and collective collaborating with the city’s local development.

Liaison between different levels of government, actors and organizations is essential to ensure the effective integration of refugees and migrants. This is the case of the municipality of Nova Iguaçu (RJ), where the Municipal Social Assistance Secretariat (SEMAS) sought assistance from UNHCR and MDS to design an unprecedented reception strategy for the elderly refugee population.

Initially supported by federal resources, SEMAS structured the **Jardim Paraíso Immigrant Reception Centre**, to provide not only shelter but also the inclusion of this population in other local public services, such as the **Social Assistance Reference Centre (CRAS)** and the **Basic Health Unit (UBS)**. The centre also implemented recreational activities, such as movie sessions and debates. A series of meetings were also held with the population of the municipality to raise awareness about the new neighbours.

In November 2020, the municipality received **25 elderly people**, who had been living in the Roraima shelters for a long time. Some of them were able to get married and reunite with their families, others got jobs or started their own businesses. In March 2023, when Brazil reached the milestone of 100,000 people relocated, the municipality received the second group of **15** elderly Venezuelans.

Indalecio, 65, is part of this group and gave a speech on arrival: “I am sure that you feel in your soul the same joy that I feel.” Fernando and José Ramon were also welcomed in the city’s public shelter. With extensive professional experiences, determination, and a willingness to learn, they arrive in the city in search of professional and personal fulfilment.



3. CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout the five years of Operation Welcome, the challenges and lessons learned by the organizations that participate in the Interiorization Strategy are countless. The interiorization modalities were important for the integration of different profiles of refugees and migrants, especially those who have difficulties in finding employment or do not wish to remain in Roraima.

The arrival of more vulnerable profiles who had additional difficulties in accessing work opportunities and social integration, such as single-parent women, large families, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, the elderly, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and people with health conditions have challenged those involved in Operation Welcome to adopt an intersectional approach. This approach is based on the understanding that Venezuelan people are not only at risk of suffering from xenophobia due to their nationality, but also from gender inequalities, racism, ageism, homophobia, among others, which can affect their experience in Brazil.

Building from the good practices described in this document, different partners have been working on raising awareness among the private sector, informing about who refugees and migrants are, their rights under Brazilian law, and about the advantages of hiring and integrating them into the companies' diversity and inclusion policies. An additional strategy was to ensure that companies sensitized to specific issues, such as gender inequality, employability of the LGBTQIA+ community and of people with disabilities, among others, employ refugees and migrants with the same profiles as Brazilians in their workforce. For example, the strategy aims to ensure that companies that already promote gender equality by hiring Brazilian women also hire Venezuelan women. Even if the companies do not have any job openings available, they can commit to supporting refugee and migrant women in other ways, such as through corporate volunteering or by adding women entrepreneurs' products to their supply chain.

However, mobilizing the private sector is not a solution. Other challenges must be faced so the journey can be successfully completed. The lack of housing, especially in small towns, the lack of financial resources to support relocated people with their initial expenses (rent, security deposit, furniture, etc.), the lack of daycare centres, the lack of a support network, and slow and overly bureaucratic processes can compromise interiorization. Thus, the organizations work not only to provide financial assistance to cover the initial expenses of relocated Venezuelans, but also raise awareness about the theme of asylum and migration in the host communities, while contributing to local development and the strengthening of local public policies.

The lack of knowledge about the asylum and migration issue is not a problem only in the private sector. In public services there are also many questions about documentation and the legal status of Venezuelans in Brazil, as well as their rights to access health and social protection services, among others. That is why it is equally important to build a dialogue with municipal and state governments to advocate for more inclusive public policies designed to meet the needs of these populations, to train public managers and technically support education, health, social assistance, economic development, and human rights secretariats, among others, especially in cities with a concentration of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Despite the importance of the opportunity to travel to reunite with a family member, secure a job, or access the support of an institution in the new destination, traveling to another city alone does not mean integration. The reception of families goes far beyond guaranteeing basic needs and also involves subjective factors, such as self-esteem, hope, confidence and autonomy. People on the move or forcibly displaced, especially those who have lived in shelters for a long time, sometimes find it difficult to adapt to a destination city.

For this reason, dialogue with the host community is essential for building welcoming initiatives in the workplace, in schools, and in all social environments, in order to ensure a lasting integration process. Organizations should seek to support the cultural and social integration between the Venezuelan and Brazilian populations, while encouraging the preservation of the culture of refugee and migrant populations, thus promoting the construction of a multicultural society.

The milestone of over **100,000** refugees and migrants participating in the Interiorization Strategy is an achievement by the Federal Government in its strategy to support integration, in partnership with several organizations. This report tells stories of the support that some of these organizations – like the Adventist Development and Assistance Agency (ADRA), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), AVSI Brazil, the Institute for Migration and Human Rights (IMDH), UN Women, the UN Migration Agency (IOM), the Global Compact Network of Brazil, the Jesuit Service for Migrants and Refugees (SJMR) and World Vision - have provided to Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

4. INTERIORIZATION STRATEGY PANEL

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