

The role of NGOs in the venezuelan migration crisis: A critical study



<https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2023.002-005>

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an analysis of the role of the international agencies IOM and UNHCR in the

Operation Welcome, created by Brazil to receive Venezuelan immigrants in Roraima. The main objective of Operation Welcome is to mitigate the effects of the migratory flow from Venezuela, which is facing a political, economic and social crisis. To put the planning and execution of the operation into practice, the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force (FT Log Hum) was conceived, which relied on the continuous and timely advice of a joint staff composed of members of the Army, Navy and Brazilian Air Force. International organizations, such as IOM and UNHCR have increased their presence in the state of Roraima to meet the needs of venezuelan migrants arriving in the country. The study aims to understand the work of these international agencies in the context of the Operation Welcome, through a qualitative methodology based on documental and bibliographic review. The study presents a historical context of the trajectories of IOM and UNHCR and analyzes the role of these organizations in the context of the Operation Welcome through a critical analysis. The research contributes to the advancement of academic knowledge in the area and is of great relevance to the academic community and actors involved in the humanitarian response.

Keywords: Migration, Operation Welcome, ACNUR, OIM.

1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the political, economic and social crisis that Venezuela is currently facing, the country is experiencing a large migratory flow. With a roughly 1,486km border with the neighboring nation, Brazil has become a viable option for those looking to escape this crisis. To mitigate the effects of this migratory process in the northern region of the country, the Brazilian State has employed multiple actors and implemented government actions. (Cruz 2020)

Through Ministerial Directive No. 3, of February 28, 2018, issued by the Minister of Defense, Operation Welcome was created, with the purpose of carrying out the humanitarian reception of Venezuelan immigrants in the State of Roraima. To put the planning and execution of the operation



into practice, the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force (FT Log Hum) was created, which aimed to ensure continuous and timely advice to the operational coordinator of the task force, through a joint staff composed of members of the Brazilian Army, the Brazilian Navy, and the Brazilian Air Force.

This General Staff is responsible for uniting the efforts of the federal, state, and municipal governments with regard to emergency assistance measures to welcome Venezuelan citizens and for interacting with other international agencies and civil society organizations. (Mattos *et al.* 2021)

In addition, prominent international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a global benchmark in promoting humane and orderly migration, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a world leader in the protection and assistance of refugees, displaced persons and stateless persons around the world, have increased their presence in the state of Roraima to meet the needs of Venezuelan migrants arriving in the country. These organizations use their resources to improve preparedness and strengthen their capacity to respond to this new situation. (Sanjurjo 2023)

Faced with this scenario of cooperation between national and international, civil and military agencies, all with the objective of better welcoming the Venezuelan people in Brazilian territory, the following research question arises: what is the role of the main international agencies in the face of the Venezuelan migration crisis? The aim of this study is to understand the work of IOM and UNHCR in the context of Operation Welcome.

In order to achieve this goal, this study begins with the first section that presents the emergence and development of international organizations, including key concepts, theories, definitions, and classifications. In sections two and three, we provide a brief historical background of the trajectories of IOM and UNHCR, respectively, from the twentieth century to the present day. In sections 4 and 5, we present and analyze the role of international organizations in all phases of Operation Welcome, followed by a conclusion in which we clearly summarize and highlight the main findings and contributions of this study, including its main findings, limitations, and suggestions for future work.

The methodology adopted in this study will be exploratory and qualitative, with the objective of critically understanding the performance of IOM and ANCUR in Operation Welcome. For this, we will use strategies such as description, analysis and interpretation, based on a documentary and bibliographic review. This methodological choice allows a detailed analysis of the information obtained, seeking to understand the nuances and complexities of the performance of these international organizations in a critical way. In addition, this approach allows for a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomena studied, contributing to the advancement of academic knowledge in the field.



This study on the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Operation Welcome is of great relevance for several reasons.

First, the context of Venezuelan migration to Brazil has been one of the biggest migration crises today, and Operation Welcome is a humanitarian response that involves several international agencies. In this sense, understanding how these agencies have acted and collaborated with each other is of great importance for the academic community and for the actors involved in the humanitarian response.

In addition, the research can contribute to the advancement of knowledge about the work of international organizations in situations of migration crisis and to improve humanitarian response strategies for the future. The study is aimed at students, teachers, researchers and practitioners interested in humanitarian and forced migration issues. Finally, the choice of IOM and UNHCR as the object of study was based on their relevance and role in Operation Welcome, as well as their specific histories and mandates, as well as their leading role in actions involving Venezuelan migrants.

2 INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

International organizations are created by states that come together on a voluntary basis to pursue common interests through continuous cooperation. The formation of these organizations is established through treaties, and their members maintain a societal relationship. According to Article 2, § 6, of the Charter of the United Nations, participation in these organizations is voluntary, implying that the UN does not have the power to impose its authority on States that choose not to be part of it.¹ (Seitenfus 2012)

The twentieth century was marked by events that had major impacts on international politics and global security, such as the two World Wars and the Cold War. These events have revealed the need for greater cooperation and coordination between countries for the prevention of conflicts and the promotion of peace and security. As a result, many world leaders began to seek ways to establish international cooperation mechanisms to deal with global and regional issues, such as trade, the environment, health, education, food security, migration, human rights, among others. (Macedo and Pereira 2007)

Organizations play an increasingly important role in international politics, acting in various areas such as trade, environment, health, human rights, development and peace. They are made up of different actors, such as States, civil society organizations, businesses, UN agencies, and other entities, who work together to achieve common goals and have the ability to provide collective solutions to global problems, as well as establish international norms and standards that can be applied worldwide.

¹ This aspect of international law is known as voluntarist, which establishes that states are sovereign even to impose limitations on their own actions. On voluntarism and the foundations of Public International Law, see more in MAZZUOLI, 2021.



International organizations can be divided into two groups according to the state of government involvement: Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs).

These organizations can have varying degrees of effectiveness and efficiency in their operations, due to challenges such as a lack of financial resources, a lack of political support, and a lack of coordination among members. Despite this, they are still essential to the functioning of the international system and to the search for solutions to global challenges. (Barth 2012)

Networks of transnational "epistemic communities" have expanded and resulted in the institutionalization and development of dozens of IGOs and INGOs that have become vital actors in diplomacy, foreign policy, trade, technology, and transportation. Prior to the First World War, IGOs were notoriously Eurocentric, while the activities of many INGOs, particularly in peace initiatives, were more forward-looking, with visionary rather than deliberately pragmatic profiles. (Barth 2012)

Also according to this author, despite the violence and brutality of the conflicts, international exchange was not totally interrupted. Indeed, the vital need for international cooperation for peacekeeping and conflict resolution has become even more evident. Cultural and intellectual exchange was one of the main areas of activity of the INGOs in the interwar period. In 1922, the Committee for Intellectual Cooperation was established in Geneva, and in 1926, the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation was founded in Paris, from the creation of these structures, the INGOs became legitimate international actors at the state level. Belgium became the first state to legally recognize international organizations in 1919.

Within the framework of the Versailles peace negotiations, signed after the First World War, a commission was formed that drew up the general outlines of the organization that would become the League of Nations, this League was part of the Versailles Peace Treaty and was founded on January 10, 1920, after the ratification of the Treaty by the individual states. In its first year, it had 32 member states, of which more than two-thirds were non-European. The basic task of the League of Nations was to maintain the international order as it had been established at Versailles.

In addition to the General Assembly and a permanent secretariat based in Geneva, the Security Council was one of its main instruments. It had four major powers with permanent seats (Britain, France, Italy, Japan) as well as non-permanent members whose number changed over time. (Reinalda and Bob 2013)

For these same authors, the League achieved some success during the 1920s, such as: organizing plebiscites in Silesia (1921) and the Saar region (1935); resolved border disputes between Poland and Lithuania, Finland and Russia, as well as between Bulgaria and Greece; guaranteed Albania's territorial integrity vis-à-vis Italy, Greece and Yugoslavia; and administered the former



German colonies under the mandate system, as well as providing important guidance for dealing with refugees and the protection of minorities.

On the other hand, the League has failed to live up to the high expectations placed on it, in particular its inability to prevent armed conflict. It took no action when Japan, a member of the Security Council, attacked Manchuria in 1931, and did not offer sufficient resistance to the Spanish Civil War in 1937, as well as the numerous treaty violations committed by Nazi Germany.

The first armed attack by one League member against another occurred when Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1934/1935, then the USSR joined the League of Nations shortly after the German withdrawal in 1933 became the only state to be expelled from the League after the attack on Finland in 1940. In the interwar period, the importance of IGOs and INGOs increased in relation to their number, their influence, and their areas of responsibility. However, in the years leading up to 1939, they were as incapable as they were before World War I of resolving the international crises that escalated into a world war. (Reinalda and Bob 2013)

The horrors of the Second World War only made the need for international cooperation more obvious, as well as drawing as a fundamental lesson from the interwar period, the acceptance of the fact that international security was also based on sustainable economic and social cooperation. (Seitenfus 2012)

On August 14, 1941, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt agreed to the Atlantic Charter and Roosevelt's actions anticipated the basic outline of the subsequent UN Charter. The 26-nation agreement to the Atlantic Charter was a significant step forward for the post-war international order.

The Second World War was characterized, from July 1944 onwards, by an unprecedented volume of plans and proposals from post-war international agencies. The establishment of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the eventual World Bank (WB), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) laid the foundation for the international economic order, after the war, to participate in the construction of an international system.

Their negotiations began as early as November 1943 in Moscow. The post-war order under the auspices of an IGO with global participation was further elaborated at the conferences at Dumbarton Oaks (August-October 1944) and Yalta (February 1945). (Seitenfus 2012)

On June 26, 1945, 51 states, of which only 1/5 were European, signed the Charter of the United Nations, successor to the League of Nations. The United States was the first country to ratify the charter on July 28, 1945. As well as the League of Nations, several influential international organizations have belonged to the United Nations IGO, such as the International Court of Justice, the World Health Organization, and the International Labour Organization.



After their historical contextualization, it is possible to define IGOs as not only international organizations, but intergovernmental organizations, which emerge through formal organizations of agreements between States, where they are the fundamental elements of all IGOs. (Seitenfus 2012)

Characteristics of IGOs include regular general assemblies and plenary sessions, a permanent secretariat, and an identifiable headquarters. These organizations are usually headed by leaders, whose positions can vary considerably (Secretary-General of the United Nations, Director-General of the World Health Organization, President of the World Bank, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, etc.).

In addition, it is important to highlight that international organizations have their own legal personality, which places them as subjects of public international law. This means that they have the ability to enter into treaties, hire officials, acquire property, and exercise other rights granted to them under international law. That legal personality is guaranteed by international treaties and agreements, as well as by the rules of public international law. In this way, international organizations are recognized as entities with their own rights and obligations, which can be held liable in the event of non-compliance with their obligations at the international level. (Mello 2009)

The term "international organization", however, goes beyond the various forms of intergovernmental cooperation, it is also part of it, private organizational forms of transnational groups and associations, these transnational private networks are called INGOs. (Herz and Hoffman 2004)

This includes, first and foremost, any international organization that is not established by an agreement between governments, INGOs can therefore be defined as voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit, non-religious, and non-military organizations.

They aim at the pursuit of political, social, economic and other objectives, they do not depend on political parties and State instruments, in order to assume commitment to altruistic objectives, that is, those that exceed the particular interests of the organization. INGOs are based on a "special kind of authority" that requires no legitimacy from an external body and is based on self-defined goals and expertise. (Herz and Hoffman 2004)

It should be noted that INGOs and IGOs are not always clearly distinguished, as both are characterized by regular meetings of representative members, specific decision-making procedures, and the existence of a permanent secretariat. States often send official representatives to INGOs and vice versa, just as many IGOs accept private actors and associations. In this context, INGOs are never completely free from government influence, as their activities are carried out within a legitimate governmental legal framework, in many cases, they operate in areas that are regulated by the state. (Herz and Hoffman 2004)

In this context, INGOs such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), both working in Operation Welcome in



Roraima, even though they have consolidated rules and procedures, it was necessary to make adjustments and adaptations, due to Brazil's own laws on the subject.

3 IOM AND ITS HISTORY

The IOM, or as it was initially known, the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME), was born in 1951 out of the displacement of Western Europe after World War II. Mandated to help European governments identify resettlement countries for the estimated 11 million people uprooted by the war, it provided transportation for nearly a million migrants during the 1950s. (IOM 2023)

A succession of name changes from PICMME to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) in 1952, to the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) in 1980 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 1989, reflects the organization's transition over half a century from a logistics agency to a migration agency.

While IOM's history traces man-made natural disasters over the past half-century, with Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Chile in 1973, Vietnam in 1975, Kuwait in 1990, Kosovo and Timor in 1999, and the tsunami in Asia and earthquake in Pakistan in 2004/2005, the belief that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society has generated international acceptance. (IOM 2023)

From its roots as an operational logistics agency, it has broadened its scope to become the leading international agency working with governments and civil society to advance understanding of migration issues, encourage social and economic development through migration, and advocate for the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

As a "Migration Agency", IOM has become the reference point in the heated global debate on the social, economic and political implications of migration in the 21st century (IOM 2023).

IOM, in its more than 70-year history, has contributed to social and economic development through migration and by defending the dignity and well-being of migrants. To confirm this trajectory, here is the organization's timeline:

In 1951, at the initiative of Belgium and the United States, an International Conference on Migration was convened in Brussels, resulting in the creation of the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movements of Migrants from Europe (IPCME). The IPCME quickly becomes the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM).

As early as 1956 and 1957, ICEM assumed responsibility for the resettlement of some 180,000 Hungarian refugees who had fled to Austria and Yugoslavia. And in the same period, ICEM organizes the processing and emigration of more than 406,000 refugees, displaced persons and economic migrants from Europe to foreign countries. (IOM 2023)



In the following decade, in 1964, ICEM initiated Development Migration Programs aimed at recruiting and placing highly skilled migrants in developing countries in Latin America. In 1968, ICEM organized the resettlement of 40,000 Czechoslovak refugees from Austria, totaling in the 1960s 1 million migrants directly assisted by ICEM.

In 1974, ICEM promoted a forum for international discussion and exchange of experiences between governments and other organizations on migration issues. In the same year, it launched the Talent Return Program for Latin Americans living abroad and months later, the committee began a resettlement program for Indo-Chinese refugees and displaced persons. (IOM 2023)

In the 1980s, the ICEM Council changed the name of the Organization to the Intergovernmental Committee on Migration (ICM) in recognition of its growing global role, given the 3 million migrants served directly by ICM. In 1983, BWI extended the Development Migration Program to qualified citizens of African countries. Two years later, the Migration for Development Programs are extended to Asia, totaling 4 million migrants served directly by ICM. It is worth noting that since 1975, one million Indo-Chinese refugees have been assisted, so at the end of the 80s, the BWI received its current name, International Organization for Migration (IOM), after the amendment and ratification of the 1953 Constitution.

Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, IOM repatriated migrants stranded in the Middle East. From September 1990 to January 1991, IOM returned 165,000 people to Egypt and several countries in Asia, during which time there were already 5 million migrants directly assisted by IOM. (IOM 2023)

In 1991 and 1992, IOM assisted in the return of some 800,000 displaced Iraqi Kurds and provided logistical support and medical assistance to displaced populations in the former Yugoslavia. In addition to initiating the Yugoslav Emergency Program (YEP), for evacuation and family reunification of displaced people from the former Yugoslavia, which over the next eight years, served more than 130,000 people.

Through the evacuation of the Kurdish population from northern Iraq, in just over three months, 6,000 people have been resettled in the United States. In the same period in Europe, IOM helped more than 190,000 Bosnian refugees return home, reaching the astonishing milestone of 10 million migrants served by the Organization.

In 1998, the organization provided shelter assistance for Hondurans displaced by Hurricane Mitch and a year later, it organized the Humanitarian Evacuation Program transporting some 80,000 Kosovar refugees from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to more than 30 host countries. In the second half of 1999, IOM began to return the Kosovars home. (IOM 2023)

Already in the 2000s, as Timor-Leste stabilized after the popular vote for its independence, IOM organized the return of some 140,000 refugees by sea, land and air. A year later, over a six-month



period, the NGO helped repatriate 25,000 Sierra Leonean refugees to Guinea, who had fled conflict, fueled by the sale of blood diamonds in Sierra Leone and Liberia.

During the December 2004 tsunami tragedy in the Indian Ocean, IOM launched its largest emergency response in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. And in 2010, in response to the 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Haiti, the organization teamed up with the international community to provide shelter and humanitarian assistance, later expanding its mission to help combat the spread of cholera in the country.

In 2011, more than 200,000 vulnerable African and Asian migrant workers stranded in the Middle East were evacuated, while an increase in violence following the Arab Spring led to the fall of regimes in Egypt and Libya. In 2013, IOM participated in a total of 18 regional consultative processes on global migration to promote cooperation among member states. (IOM 2023)

In June 2016, the IOM Special Board, composed of its Member States, endorsed the move to join the United Nations and in September of the same year, this agreement was signed between IOM and the UN. And a year later, IOM led the inter-agency humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees fled to escape violence in Myanmar.

In 2018, the United Nations General Assembly endorsed the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), the first UN global agreement on a common approach to international migration in all its dimensions. IOM has taken on the role of coordinator of the United Nations Network on Migration, which was established to support the implementation, monitoring and review of the GCM.

In 2019, IOM, UNHCR and the European Commission organized an International Solidarity Conference to mobilize support and meet the needs of some 4.5 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants who have left their country as a result of political turmoil, socio-economic instability and humanitarian crisis. (IOM 2023)

On the other hand, it is important to highlight existing complaints from NGOs about the work of the IOM. Firstly on the issue of mandate, since IOM does not have a protection mandate, it is defined as all activities aimed at achieving full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the spirit of the relevant laws. (Georgi and Schatral 2011)

Unlike UNHCR, for example, the IOM is neither mandated nor obliged by an international law treaty such as the Geneva Convention on Refugees, to protect the rights of the people with whom it works. (IML/LAD 2007)

As a result, because IOM lacks the authority and independence that a mandate to protect international law would give it, IOM primarily serves the interests and wishes of its donors and member state governments. IOM is often portrayed and criticized as a donor-driven agency, for which the monetary value of a project tends to supplant ethics or political considerations. One reason for this



reliance on donors is that IOM collects about 96% of its overall budget through projects and grants, mostly temporary, funded by member states or other intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). (ICVA 2004)

Thus, the International Organization for Migration has played a crucial role in providing assistance and promoting the well-being of migrants for more than 70 years. However, it is evident that their dependence on the acquisition of new projects and donors results in significant competition with NGOs, raising questions about their real concern for the defense of human dignity and the well-being of migrants.

4 UNHCR AND ITS HISTORY

UNHCR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was created in December 1950 by resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. It began operations in January 1951, with an initial three-year mandate to resettle European refugees who were homeless after World War II. Her work is based on the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees.

The 1967 Protocol reformulated the 1951 Convention and expanded UNHCR's mandate beyond European borders and to people affected by World War II. In 1995, the General Assembly designated UNHCR as responsible for the protection and assistance of stateless persons worldwide. And in 2003, the clause requiring the UNHCR to renew its mandate every three years was abolished. (UNHCR 2023)

In recent decades, forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels, recent statistics reveal that more than 67 million people in the world have left their places of origin because of conflict, persecution and serious human rights violations. Among them, approximately 22 million have crossed an international border in search of protection and have been recognized as refugees. The population of stateless people (people with no formal link to any country) is estimated at 10 million people.

UNHCR has helped tens of millions of people restart their lives through its humanitarian work, and has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize twice (1954 and 1981). Today, the agency has almost 12,000 staff and is present in some 130 countries with more than 460 offices, through partnerships with hundreds of non-governmental organizations, UNHCR provides assistance and protection to more than 67 million men, women and children. The agency is supported by voluntary contributions from countries, as well as donations from the private sector and individual donors, and its annual budget exceeds \$7.5 billion. (UNHCR 2023)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has been in existence for more than 70 years, and during that time, it has fulfilled its mission of providing assistance and protection to refugees around the world. To ratify this trajectory, here is its timeline:



In 1951, UNHCR's inaugural mission was to assist about one million civilians, mostly Europeans and including refugees in a camp in Germany, who remained displaced after World War II. Its predecessor, the International Refugee Organization, helped a million people, including Europeans, from camps in Germany, Austria and Italy resettle in other countries, especially the United States.

When the Hungarian uprising broke out in 1956, UNHCR faced its first post-war emergency, organizing aid for more than 200,000 people who had fled that country, some of whom remained in Austria, where the agency financed housing projects.

In Africa, the first modern refugee crisis occurred in the late 1950s, during Algeria's struggle for independence from France. The agency has provided assistance to 200,000 refugees who have fled to neighboring countries.

After the end of colonialism, conflicts arose in many parts of Africa in the 1960s, including Rwanda, where the agency was called upon to intervene once again. In most successful operations of the 1960s, the agency worked on the rural integration of refugees into countries of asylum.

The flight of Vietnamese refugees began after the fall of Saigon to North Vietnamese forces in 1975. An estimated three million, including the Vietnamese boat people who arrived in Malaysia in 1978, fled after the various conflicts in Indochina. In the late 1970s, Thailand became the first country of asylum for refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, where tens of thousands of Cambodians fled during and after the brutal Khmer Rouge regime.

Amid a cycle of repression and violence that hit Central America in the 1980s, more than 300,000 people received assistance through UNHCR.

The exodus of more than 6 million Afghans began in 1979. People fled to places like the Ghazi Refugee Village in Pakistan, organized by UNHCR. (UNHCR 2023)

Nearly 1.5 million Mozambicans fled the civil war to neighboring countries in the 1980s, receiving assistance and education through the NGO. In 1992, UNHCR began helping them return home in the largest refugee repatriation in African history. Through the same program, some 41,000 refugees from Namibia returned home in 1989 after more than 15 years in exile.

By the end of 1991, some 750,000 Somalis were sheltering in UNHCR camps in the Hararghe region of Ethiopia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, conflict erupted in several areas of the former empire, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee to a collective center run by UNHCR.

In 1992, UNHCR was present when civil war broke out in the Central Asian nation of Tajikistan, where at least 20,000 people were killed, half a million people were displaced, and 60,000 civilians fled to Afghanistan. (UNHCR 2023)



After years of exile and a 13-month repatriation operation completed in 1993, tens of thousands of Cambodians have started a new life with food rations, tools, land or a cash donation provided by UNHCR.

Within days of NATO's air strikes on Serbian positions in 1999, nearly a million civilians fled or were forced into exile from Kosovo.

The end of the 20th century was marked by an exodus of refugees from East Timor, when an international force restored order, many of the displaced were able to return home with the help of UNHCR.

A UNHCR concentration post near the northern Pakistani city of Peshawar supported Afghan refugees as they prepared to return home in 2002.

One of UNHCR's resettlement programmes was launched in late 2007 in eastern Nepal, where refugees from Bhutan ended up staying in seven camps, totalling 40,000 refugees resettled by the end of 2010.

The crisis in Africa's Great Lakes region has also involved Burundi, where 270,000 Rwandans have sought safety at the UNHCR camp in Mugano.

UNHCR's Hagadera camps in northeastern Kenya's Dadaab district in 2009 were considered the most crowded in the world, housing nearly 300,000 even though they were built for only 90,000 refugees. (UNHCR 2023)

On the other hand, during the Kosovo conflict, UNHCR was called an opportunistic agency for having carried out unreliable work on human rights abuses. After all, in the months leading up to NATO's bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, UNHCR regularly exaggerated the number of people internally displaced by the Kosovo conflict and publicly advocated for more forceful international intervention, raising doubts about the agency's impartiality. (Suhrke et al. 2000)

As soon as the refugees arrived, after the first NATO bombings, UNHCR was quick to declare that the displaced were victims of deliberate expulsions by the Serbian regime. Although the agency is not suited to such statements, they were undoubtedly appreciated by NATO, which sought to justify its use of force. It is worth noting that NATO members provide the largest share of UNHCR's budget. (Barutciski 2002)

Still on the Kosovo crisis, it is possible to observe the UNHCR's eagerness to please its Western donors. In response to the exaggerated rumours about the destruction of identity documents belonging to fleeing refugees, UNHCR could have challenged the unreliable reports or unrealistic expectations of donor governments. However, the agency actually encouraged these expectations with its own statements, when ideally in this situation would be to arrange for the registration of refugees when they cross the borders into Albania and Macedonia. (House of Commons 1999)



In the long run, this misperception of UNHCR by engaging in politics has far more detrimental effects on refugee protection than any argument designed to justify institutional opportunism. In other words, this confusion allows any capitulation to donor pressure to be disguised as an innovative and flexible response. (Barutciski 2002)

5 IOM IN THE VENEZUELAN MIGRATION CRISIS IN RORAIMA

In April 2018, the United Nations Secretary-General instructed IOM and UNHCR to lead and coordinate the regional response to the plight of refugees and migrants from Venezuela.

One of IOM's first actions was data collection, as part of the process of monitoring flows from Venezuela across the border with the state of Roraima. As a result, in April 2019, IOM released a report that has information on the profiles of the Venezuelan population, levels of education, occupation, health and protection, this document helped in the preparation of the Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for the promotion of dignified migration, based on respect for the rights of migrants. (R4V 2019a)

In September of the same year, IOM carried out documentation activities for migratory regularization and delivery of hygiene kits, during an integrated action aimed at Venezuelan indigenous people of the Warao tribe organized by Operation Welcome (FT Log Hum). (R4V 2019b)

In order to raise awareness among the Brazilian and Venezuelan populations about breast cancer prevention, IOM, in partnership with the Roraima State Department of Health (SESAU - RR), carried out several actions during the month of October. The Pink October campaign was held in Boa Vista and in the border municipality of Pacaraima. (R4V 2019c)

In March 2020, IOM's service caravan traveled through the interior of the state of Roraima to provide pre-regularization services and inform the refugee and migrant population about access to rights and services on issues such as labor exploitation and human trafficking. The caravan aims to facilitate access to migratory regularization for this Venezuelan population that resides in other municipalities in the state. (R4V 2020a)

IOM and UNHCR, in June of the same year, announced the resumption of refugee resettlement departures. The temporary suspension of resettlement travel, necessitated by disruptions and restrictions on international air travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, has delayed the departure of about 10,000 refugees to resettlement countries. Throughout this period, IOM, UNHCR and partners have continued to process and counsel refugees and resettle dozens of emergency and urgent cases. (R4V 2020b)

In August, the IOM, in partnership with the Municipal Health Department of Boa Vista, reinforced the medical team of the local network with professionals to care for patients in the Basic



Health Unit opened in the Protection and Care Area. An ambulance, funded by IOM, also ensured the transport of patients between health facilities, local hospitals and the APC. (R4V 2020c)

It is important to note that even during the pandemic, Operation Welcome conducted the Strategy for the Internalization of Venezuelan refugees and migrants without interruption. With the support of IOM, other UN agencies and civil society, the activities were carried out with the necessary COVID-19 precautions. Through this strategy, Venezuelans who were residing in Boa Vista and Manaus were transferred to other states in Brazil. This strategy allows Venezuelans present in the border region, and who wish to stay in the country, to restart their lives in other locations, also alleviating the occupation of shelters and structures in the state of Roraima. The Brazilian Air Force is responsible for transporting most people, but IOM's purchase of air tickets on commercial flights has allowed it to provide more flexibility and expand the scope of the strategy, in addition to serving specific cases that sometimes require special attention. (R4V 2020d)

IOM operates in all stages of relocation with Operation Welcome, assisting in the verification of the beneficiaries' documentation, in the verification of documentation, in medical consultations prior to travel, as well as in the active search for job vacancies in the places of destination and in the ground transfer when necessary to complement the air leg, as we can see in figure 1. In addition to this support, the Organization provides 600 air tickets every month to complement the capacity of Operation Welcome. (R4V 2021a)

Figure 1 - Overview of the migratory routes used throughout South America.



Source: IOM, 2023b.



In June 2021, a joint action by IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and UN/WOMEN under the coordination of the Ministry of Citizenship, produced a newsletter on the 2021 emergency aid in Spanish, aimed at guiding the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population about their rights. (R4V 2021b)

In late 2021, IOM and UNHCR launched a US\$1.79 billion regional plan to support the growing needs of refugees and migrants from Venezuela and their host communities in 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. At that time, the number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela worldwide stood at six million, most of whom are in Latin American and Caribbean countries. (R4V 2021c)

In June 2022, IOM, in collaboration with Operation Welcome and the Ministry of Citizenship, carried out periodic monitoring of spaces inhabited by the Venezuelan refugee and migrant population outside federal shelters, including squares, public roads, and occupied or ceded buildings, in Boa Vista and Pacaraima. In addition to the general profile, data related to the infrastructure of the places of residence, public safety, integration, health, food and communication with the communities are presented to provide evidence for an evidence-based humanitarian response. (R4V 2022)

The Brazilian strategy innovated the voluntary relocation of Venezuelan refugees and migrants from the border state of Roraima to other Brazilian cities, benefiting more than 100,000 people since its inception five years ago. That's equivalent to nearly a quarter of the 425,000 Venezuelans living in Brazil.

Individuals and families have been relocated from Roraima to more than 930 Brazilian cities, where they find better opportunities to develop their quality of life, contribute to local development, and achieve autonomy and integration. (R4V 2023a)

Even with the understanding of their regulatory functions, that is, the IOM dedicated to the protection of voluntary migrants and the UNHCR dedicated to forced displacement and the rights of refugees and stateless persons, it is clear from the results presented that, in several situations, the two organizations work together. While this joint collaboration can enhance humanitarian aid, in some cases, this partnership is not as effective. (Albuquerque 2021)

6 UNHCR IN THE VENEZUELAN MIGRATION CRISIS IN RORAIMA

In 2018, the situation in Venezuela drastically impacted the operating environment in Brazil. The humanitarian crisis has led to an increase in the number of Venezuelans arriving in the country and the need for protection and assistance. In July of that year, the emergency level was raised from level 1 to level 2. The state of Roraima, which received about 800 people daily, declared a state of emergency. In response, UNHCR has stepped up its operations, consolidating its presence in Boa Vista,



Brasilia, Manaus, Pacaraima and São Paulo, as well as supporting federal and local authorities. (Silva 2022)

The federal emergency response focused on welcoming and documenting new arrivals, providing emergency shelter for the most vulnerable, and a voluntary internal relocation program to move Venezuelans from Roraima to other parts of Brazil. UNHCR provided support for biometric registration and documentation and coordination of shelter activities. (UNHCR 2018)

In 2019, UNHCR supported the government's emergency response and co-led the regional inter-agency coordination platform for refugees and migrants from Venezuela (R4V) to address the humanitarian crisis caused by the large number of arrivals. The operation also continued its activities in search of protection and solutions for UNHCR persons of interest of other nationalities. (Silva 2022)

Many people of interest to UNHCR have had limited livelihood opportunities and have been living on the streets. Efforts have also been stepped up for certain groups of people, such as unaccompanied and separated children, victims of human trafficking, LGBTQIA+ people at risk, people with health problems, and the elderly. The increased arrival of indigenous people in the northern states required culturally appropriate responses, including sleeping arrangements and information in relevant languages. While many Venezuelans benefited from access to social programs, access to specialized health services remained a challenge. The favorable protection environment in Brazil allowed Venezuelans to be recognized as refugees through a procedure based on the Cartagena Declaration. It is worth remembering that the border with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela closed in March 2020, due to COVID-19, preventing access to the territory and documentation. (UNHCR 2019)

Individuals who entered irregularly were ineligible to apply for asylum or regularize their status, and therefore faced increased risks of deportation, exploitation, and abuse. They also lacked access to essential services and opportunities for self-sufficiency. While initially denied access to government-provided humanitarian assistance, an increase in arrivals from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in the state of Roraima in the last quarter of 2020 prompted a shift in approach, allowing exceptional access to shelter for highly vulnerable people. (Silva 2022)

Despite these efforts, the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic have remained significant, as gender-based violence and mental health problems have skyrocketed, while widespread food insecurity has led to rising levels of malnutrition and growing misery, especially among the most vulnerable. Unaccompanied minors, single-headed households, women and girls at risk of gender-based violence and trafficking, indigenous populations, the elderly, people with chronic illnesses, and the LGBTQI+ community have all been highly affected. (UNHCR 2020)

In 2021, UNHCR's response focused on supporting and complementing the humanitarian response of Brazilian federal and local authorities. The response addressed people at increased risk,



focusing on the dissemination of information and access to documentation, rights and services, strengthening the provision of assistance, including temporary shelter, through local protection networks and public service providers.

The constant arrival of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, especially of Venezuelan nationality, continued throughout the year, with different dynamics imposed by the evolution of the pandemic, after all, land borders remained closed between March 2020 and June 2021. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of legal entries into Brazil and a significant increase in the number of interested persons, resorting to unauthorized crossing points, to gain access to Brazilian territory. I emphasize that, due to the pandemic, the government's resettlement program was also suspended with no new arrivals in Brazil.

UNHCR also continued to support the strategy of voluntary internal relocation, known as "internalisation", which has remained one of the main pillars of Operation Welcome. New research has indicated that the unemployment level of relocated people has been reduced from 30% to 18% compared to at-risk people who have remained in shelters in Roraima, confirming that Operation Welcome's relocation strategy has offered significant socio-economic opportunities for individuals to integrate across the Brazilian territory. (Silva 2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities caused by inadequate food intake and nutritional levels, housing conditions, and limited access to healthcare, education, and employment. In particular, indigenous peoples continued to face additional challenges in accessing dignified livelihoods and services. The number of concerned people who lost their income and were at risk of eviction increased and there was a need for UNHCR to scale up its cash assistance programme.

In this regard, UNHCR worked closely with its partners to provide timely information on the Government Emergency Assistance related to COVID-19, as well as to assess the most vulnerable cases and support with cash assistance those who were still waiting for the government grant or who could not cover the needs of the family with the amount received. According to official sources, more than 54,000 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants accessed the government's social assistance program by the end of 2021, while UNHCR was able to reach more than 7,700 vulnerable individuals through cash assistance. (UNHCR 2021)



















Significant population movements to Brazil are expected to continue to occur, especially from Venezuela, as the causes of displacement remain unchanged and the situation turns into a protracted crisis. However, specific protection risks, such as gender-based violence (GBV), labour exploitation, and human trafficking, are likely to increase as the population becomes more vulnerable and deprived, and refugee protection policies may be overshadowed by political considerations and new restrictive migration policies, especially as the country approaches national elections. (Silva 2022)



The government's commitment to the humanitarian response remains ongoing. Strong partnerships and a multisectoral approach involving federal, state, and municipal authorities in key locations, as well as with national human rights institutions, civil society, academia, the private sector, and development actors will continue to provide opportunities to preserve an enabling protection environment. (UNHCR 2022)

In order to provide up-to-date and relevant information, R4V has created a list of contacts and leaders who interact through the R4V Brazil Platform. To illustrate the variety of activities of the international organizations studied (Chart 1), it depicts a leadership contact list, where it shows a symbol, a sector of responsibility, the leading organization of the corresponding sector, and the contact details of those in charge.

Table 1: R4V Brazil Contact List and Leadership

Lista de Contatos Lideranças R4V Brasil			 
	Abrigamento Distribuição Alimentar	ACNUR OIM AVSI	Pedro Brandão - brandao@unhcr.org Elene Baetker - ebaetker@iom.int Ana França - ana.franca@avsi.org.br
	Educação	UNICEF UNESCO	Cynthia Ramos - cyramos@unicef.org Mariana Alcalay - m.alcalay@unesco.org
	Proteção	ACNUR SJMR	Helôisa Miura - miurah@unhcr.org Luyandria Maia - luyandria.maia@sjmrbrasil.org
	Proteção à Criança	UNICEF Aldeias Infantis	Ana Carolina Costa - accosta@unicef.org Sérgio Marques - sergio.marques@aldeiasinfantis.org.br
	Violência Baseada no Gênero	ACNUR UNFPA	Eliana Moreno - morenoas@unhcr.org Patrícia Melo - pamelob@unfpa.org
	Tráfico de Pessoas	OIM UNODC	Natália Maciel - nmaciel@iom.int Sávia Souza - saviasouza@un.org
	Saúde	OPAS/OMS UNFPA	Marcus Duto - quiomar@paho.org Caio Oliveira - caoliveira@unfpa.org
	Integração Interiorização Transporte Humanitário	ACNUR OIM Visão Mundial	Paulo Sérgio Almeida - almeidaps@unhcr.org Michelle Barron - mbarron@iom.int Ângela Mota - angela_mota@wvi.org
	Nutrição	UNICEF	Gerson Filho - gdacosta@unicef.org
	WASH	UNICEF ADRA	Rodrigo Resende / Gabriel Marasís - rdesousa@unicef.org e gmarasís@unicef.org Isabella França - isabella.franca@adra.org.br
	CVA	ACNUR OIM	Cecília Alvarado - alvaradc@unhcr.org Guilherme Ditero - guotero@unhcr.org
	Indígenas	ACNUR OIM	Vanuza Nunes - nunesper@unhcr.org Jennifer Alvarez - jealvarez@iom.int
	CwC	ACNUR UNICEF OIM	Eliana Moreno - morenoas@unhcr.org Marco Prates - momprates@unicef.org Tehany Barros - tebarros@iom.int
	Grupo de Apoio Comunicações	ACNUR OIM	Vanessa Beltrame - beltrame@unhcr.org Juliana Hack - jhack@iom.int
	Gestão da Informação	ACNUR OIM	Marketa Jerabek - jerabek@unhcr.org Cinthia Barros - cbarros@iom.int
	Coordenação	ACNUR OIM	Paola Bolognesi - bolognesi@unhcr.org e Pedro Brandão - brandao@unhcr.org Socorro Tabosa - stabosa@iom.int e Ana Gama - agama@iom.int

Fonte: R4V (2023b)



It is noted that in the 16 sectors of humanitarian aid to the Venezuelan people, the joint leadership of IOM and UNHCR are present in 8 sectors.

This large amount of joint work is the result of the search for protagonism, necessary to keep its donors and achieve more. However, this dispute generates successive clashes between UNHCR and IOM, with conflicts of interest in developing specific response projects. In this condition, the scenario found is one of wear and tear in the face of operational planning in coordination, resulting in a recurrent dilemma in relation to the projects executed, with a clash regarding the purposes, in the search for donor countries that can finalize their institutional actions. (Albuquerque 2021).

7 CONCLUSION

This article sought to know, in a critical way, the work of two international agencies, highlights in world humanitarian aid. Thus analysing how IOM and UNHCR carry out their functions within the scope of Operation Welcome. Thus, this research sought to present the objectives of these international agencies, addressing their actions around the world from their origin to the present day.

That said, following the theoretical foundation of the International Organizations, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, consolidated through their respective histories, chronologically presented, it has contributed significantly to the understanding of the responsibilities and *modus operandi* of each agency in the face of the Venezuelan migration crisis.

Based on this understanding, it is possible to see that the agencies, despite having different mandates and objectives, as one seeks to promote an orderly and humane management of migration, while the other aims to protect the rights and well-being of refugees, often work together, complementing each other's work, sometimes competing for attention and donations.

Cooperation between national and international agencies, both civilian and military, is critical to the success of humanitarian operations, such as Operation Welcome. The presence of IOM and UNHCR in the state of Roraima has been of great importance in meeting the needs of Venezuelan asylum seekers arriving in the country. These organizations have used their resources to improve preparedness and strengthen their capacity to respond to this new situation.

Therefore, this perception, combined with the interpretation of Table 1, which shows that in 50% of the humanitarian aid sectors there is cooperation between IOM and UNHCR on behalf of the Venezuelan people, reinforces the idea that the joint work of these agencies can enhance the results of their actions.

Thus, it is clear that the organizations studied have a complex and crucial role in protecting the rights of refugees and migrants. However, dependence on donors and involvement in political conflicts can lead to a misperception of their mission and undermine the protection of the most vulnerable.



Allied to this, the competition for resources can put both agencies in competition for attention and focus on their actions, to the detriment of the actions of other agencies.

It is critical that impartiality and a focus on protecting the rights of migrants and refugees are kept at the forefront, avoiding external pressures that could interfere with the fulfilment of their regulatory functions. In this regard, collaboration between IOM and UNHCR should be carefully evaluated in order to ensure its effectiveness in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

This study arouses interest in deepening the investigation of conflicts of interest between the organizations involved and, based on their respective vocations, proposing strategies that allow taking advantage of the maximum potential of each organization, minimizing friction and without compromising the attraction and retention of donors. In addition, it is interesting to highlight the role of the Federal Government in mediating this competition and search for resources.

To achieve this goal, other data collection techniques, such as interviews or questionnaires with the operational agents of both organizations working together, should be employed.



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