

**Regional Protection Sector  
of the Interagency Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela.  
(March 2021)**

**Contribution to the annual report of the Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples  
to the General Assembly on the Situation of Indigenous Peoples living in Urban Areas**

**I. Scope of the Regional Protection Sector.**

Within the Platform the Regional Protection Sector gathers 106 partners (between UN Agencies and NGOs) in 17 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It is composed by 3 subsectors: Child Protection, Gender Based Violence and Human Trafficking and Smuggling and 1 working group: Support Spaces. It is mandated to consolidate a protection- solutions oriented strategy response that addresses protection needs increasing participation from refugees and migrants as well as host communities strengthening national systems and responses.

**II. Engagement of the Regional Protection Sector with Venezuelan Refugees and Migrants from indigenous peoples currently settled in Brazil, Colombia, and Guyana.**

Indigenous peoples from Venezuela have been identified, assisted, and protected through the work of national sectors (Colombia and Guyana) and the indigenous working group in Brazil<sup>1</sup>. In 2020 these communities were prioritized by the Sector as one of the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic due to language barriers, lack of access to basic services, absence of consultation processes, lack of documentation and, most important, absence of adequation of national programs, public policies and legal frameworks to their specific needs within a collective rights approach.

**Identification of main protection needs and gaps lead to the development of a regional working plan aiming to:** i) improve the characterization of protection gaps and needs, ii) increase visibility of the situation, iii) promote comprehensive response from guaranteeing approaches that meet international standards, iv) advocate for increased and effective response as well as concrete actions to mitigate existing risks of cultural and or physical extinction. Concrete actions to increase advocacy and protection of indigenous refugees and migrants from Venezuela are included in the aforementioned plan as well as on the [2021 Refugee and Migrant Response Plan](#) of the Platform.

**III. Major issues requiring protection interventions.**

The Regional Protection Sector has identified the following protection issues in Brazil, Colombia and Guyana:

**1. Regarding government programmes, the following gaps need to be addressed:**

- Formalization of access to collective territories and housing in urban areas

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<sup>1</sup> It is estimated 5,500 indigenous refugees and migrants (mainly Warao, Eñepa and Pemón) concentrated in the northern states of Amazonas, Roraima and Pará, but have also established themselves in 13 additional states.

- Strengthening self-determination and autonomy in the framework of collective rights.
- Prevent evictions of indigenous peoples in urban areas, often leading to street conditions and begging, by adjusting Government programmes of social assistance and habitat to the needs of indigenous communities and ensure their right to adequate housing. Complement existing shelter exit strategies in order to promote resilience and self-sufficiency in host communities.
- Ensure a collective dimension in the programmes to guarantee collective rights that are specific to indigenous communities, in particular cultural rights.
- Improve their registration in host countries, including birth registrations, regularization processes and access to social protection programmes, including overcoming the language barrier and addressing cases of discrimination. In the three countries, data collection about indigenous people coming from Venezuela is poor.
- Guarantee effective consultation processes, including indigenous women and adolescents, when essential aspects of their lives are being subject of decision promoting consequently adequation of programs, public policies and legal frameworks.
- Ensure access to international protection when requested with no affectation linked to double nationality situations.
- Create the conditions to promote organizational networks as well as effective participation mechanisms to address their needs and agree on effective mechanisms to access existing offers.
- Increase access to public services, including access to safe drinking water and health services.
- Promote coexistence and integration programs with host communities and other indigenous communities in host countries.

2. **Protection risks:** indigenous communities are exposed to domestic violence, trafficking in persons, gender-based violence, sexual and labour exploitation, illegal adoption of minors, substance, and alcohol addictions, as well as violence in areas under the control of armed groups. They are disproportionately affected by the pandemic of Covid-19, thus increasing their vulnerability in accessing economic, social, and cultural rights in host countries. Access to vaccination plans regardless of migratory status remains a priority for 2021. The closure of borders remains as a topic that deteriorates the situation as many individuals continue to cross the border by alternative ways.