

MIEUX

Case Study

Brazil (2019)

Funded by the
European Union



Implemented by
ICMPD



ICMPD

International Centre for
Migration Policy Development

How to read this case study?

MIEUX Thematic Areas



Migration and
Development



Legal Migration
and Mobility



Irregular Migration
and Trafficking in
Human Beings



International Protection
and Asylum Policy



Horizontal
Interventions

Ten features of good practice in MIEUX Actions

- 1 There should be ownership on the part of the partner country
- 2 Actions should provide an opportunity to be innovative in their context
- 3 Actions should be able to be replicated
- 4 Actions should provide tangible results
- 5 Actions should be endorsed at a high level
- 6 Actions should be integrated into existing priorities
- 7 Actions should be based on the highest levels of experience
- 8 Actions should complement and be in synergy with other initiatives
- 9 Actions should provide EU added value
- 10 Actions should act as a catalyst for the acquisition of knowledge through the exchange of experiences

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IN MIGRATION

Brazil (2019)

Faced with unprecedented levels of vulnerable migrant children arriving at the Northern State of Roraima, the Federal Public Defender's Office of Brazil requested support from MIEUX to acquire new competencies in the assessment of international protection cases involving minors, regardless of whether they are accompanied or not.

Context

Brazil is the sixth country of destination for Venezuelan refugees in South America,¹ with 200,000 arrivals since the start of the political crisis, including nearly 40,000 in 2018 alone.² Venezuelans enter Brazil through one of its most isolated and least developed regions. At the only land border crossing point between the two countries, Pacaraima, a small city in the state of Roraima, on average 600-800 Venezuelans cross the border every day, arriving increasingly in **vulnerable conditions** and requiring urgent assistance with documentation, shelter, food and health services. The majority of migrants continue their journey to Boa Vista, Roraima's capital, and to Manaus, the capital of the Amazonas state.

In order to better manage the migration flows and propose a better future for the Venezuelan refugees, an inter-ministerial programme called "Operation Reception" (*Operação Acolhida*) was launched in 2018. It aims at providing a structured response to the increasing numbers of migrants arriving in Roraima and Amazonas, and proposing solutions for better integration. It includes a one-stop-shop approach at the border crossing point, where all the key Brazilian institutions and international organisations are represented, and an *interiorização* (relocation) provides refugees the possibility to relocate to another Brazilian state offering more job opportunities and family reunification.

- 1 There should be ownership on the part of the partner country
- 4 Actions should provide tangible results
- 5 Actions should be endorsed at a high level
- 10 Actions should act as a catalyst for the acquisition of knowledge through the exchange of experiences

MIEUX
FEATURES

1 *Ibid.*

2 See: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/68917> and <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/vensit>. [Both accessed 26 August 2020].

As it was the first time Brazil had been confronted with such an important migratory flow, the Government **lacked the capacity to interview migrant children** and refer them in an appropriate manner. It was in the midst of this unprecedented migratory situation that the **Federal Public Defender's Office** (*Defensoria Pública da União* (DPU)) asked for MIEUX's support in 2018. The institution is tasked with the legal protection of the most vulnerable groups of the population. It provides legal assistance to Brazilians and foreigners in precarious situations in order to defend their cases in court or through administrative proceedings requiring legal representation. Since the start of the Venezuelan migratory crisis, the DPU has taken a prominent role in the protection of vulnerable migrants, including a permanent office at the border in Pacaraima. DPU officers are well regarded public lawyers, but they lacked training on interviewing migrant children, a task only a few had to perform in the past. It was in this context that the DPU requested MIEUX's support in **assessing the situation and enhancing the capacity of its staff** to interview migrant children and adolescents, and especially those separated or unaccompanied.

Action Design

The MIEUX Action started with a **fact-finding mission** in July-August 2019 to the key location for first-entry and secondary movements (Boa Vista, Manaus and Pacaraima), as well as Brasilia for institutional meetings. The team, composed of three Portuguese experts from the public sector and academia, developed a mission report which included the main conclusions of the many meetings held, as well as some key recommendations. The report was later presented in September 2019 at a **two-day workshop** in Brasilia, in which all the main stakeholders involved in child protection were invited, from operational and institutional levels.

The second part of the Action focused on **enhancing the interviewing techniques** of DPU officers and other public servants involved in the reception and handling of migrant children. A second MIEUX expert team was formed, with two EASO-certified Dutch specialists who drafted a **manual on interviewing techniques**. This manual formed the basis for a series of two-day **training sessions** delivered to more than 70 Brazilian officials in November-December 2019 in Boa Vista, Brasilia, Manaus and São Paulo. The participants were able to learn more about methodologies, tips and the main pitfalls to avoid when interviewing minors. The experts emphasised the training with practical exercises and simulations so the participants could replicate some of the tools learnt with their colleagues back at their duty stations.

Impact

- The contact created during the MIEUX Action between Brazilian authorities, Brazilian CSOs, international NGOs and international organisations reinforced the communication channels and allowed key stakeholders to meet and discuss practical issues together. The **first mailing list** of actors involved in the protection of migrant children was subsequently created.

- With the DPU lead and support of the experts, a **new workflow** for child protection at border crossing points was developed by the key actors, in particular for the detection of THB and protective measures for unaccompanied minors.
- Due to a lack of documentation, many babies born in Brazil of Venezuelan migrants have not been registered in the local hospitals despite the *jus solis* law in force in Brazil, resulting in a **risk of statelessness** for many children. A Roraima State judge participating in the workshop organised by MIEUX took action and rectified this situation at State level, offering simplified procedures for migrant parents to register their children; therefore claiming the right to Brazilian nationality for the child and better access to social services.

Challenges

- The *Operação Acolhida* observations outlined the many efforts of the Brazilian Government in the reception of Venezuelan refugees. The one-stop-shop approach and the relocation mechanism, as well as the overall logistics in place at the border crossing points, are lessons learnt that could apply in any situation of mass influx in border areas. However, the MIEUX team also observed that refugees were at the mercy of different types of threats, and especially the most vulnerable groups (pregnant adolescents and young women, unaccompanied minors, people with impairments and others). Indeed, the experts pointed out on several occasions the risks of **THB, especially for the purposes of sexual exploitation**: a topic that has only recently gained importance on the Federal Police's agenda as a cross-border crime.

Practices

- **Mainstreaming ownership into capacity building activities.** Whilst the first day of the workshop held in Brasilia in September 2019 centred on an exchange of best practices from the EU and Brazil, the second day was designed as a more practical event where MIEUX experts went from discussants to moderators, allowing DPU officers to take the reins of the discussions, and eventually proposing and agreeing on a changed workflow for operations at the borders concerning child protection, counter-trafficking and indigenous children.
- **Adapting deliverables to the local context.** The manual on interviewing techniques was the Action's key deliverable. It was distributed to all the training participants in advance so they could refer back to the theoretical knowledge during the sessions. However, it was drafted from a European perspective, with examples seen by officers working in EU MS and at the external borders of the Schengen Area. It was decided by MIEUX and the DPU to invest time to **adapt the document to Brazilian reality**, adding examples and tips extracted from the participants' questions, discussions and feedback. The DPU was very satisfied with the end result and informed MIEUX about their plan to distribute it to their public defender

counterparts in the LAC region.

- **Mixed selection of participants according to roles and levels of government.** The selection of participants from federal, state and local levels included public lawyers, psychologists, social assistants, asylum caseworkers and CSOs. The nature of their functions and purpose of the interviews they conduct with migrant children is very different as they can be to determine asylum, define protection measures, formulate a personalised protection plan, facilitate family reunification, etc. The sessions were therefore tailored to this diverse audience, so all could learn and take new practices back to their workplaces.
- **Possibility to replicate the training internally.** The experts designed the sessions so as to offer the participants the possibility to **replicate some of the practical exercises** back at their offices and share the practical knowledge with their colleagues. This was highly appreciated by the participants and it had a very positive impact on the group's participation. This practice also increased the sustainability of the Action.

Lessons Learnt

- For this Action, the **length of the initial fact-finding mission** was extended to two weeks, doubling the average amount of time for a MIEUX Action. It was a very positive experience as it allowed time for the team to fully grasp the situation of children in migration at borders, but also within the Brazilian child protection system. Lengthening the time of the mission meant that the team had the opportunity to witness the larger operation put in place by the Brazilian Government for the reception of Venezuelan refugees, thus better understanding the challenges faced by the Brazilian public authorities, and being ready to intervene with other stakeholders in the future. It was also an opportunity to share the knowledge on Brazilian practice in migrant child protection with stakeholders in other countries of the LAC region.
- The **large pool of collaborating actors**, including public institutions, international organisations and CSOs, was a very positive lesson learnt from this Action. It allowed the MIEUX team to create strong and lasting contacts in the country.
- **Adapting the deliverable to the reality** of the requesting authorities was a key feature in this Action's lessons learnt. Keeping the theoretical basis but adapting the practical examples to the national context was crucial to conducting an effective interview.



www.mieux-initiative.eu



Migration EU Expertise



@mieux_migration



mieuxmigration

Since launching operations in 2009, the Migration EU expertise (MIEUX) Initiative has provided space to request capacity development activities and EU expertise, allowing the sharing of knowledge and practices between peers working in institutions in and outside of Europe.

The adoption of the Global Compact on Migration and the creation of the UN Network on Migration coincided with MIEUX's ten-year anniversary. To mark the occasion, MIEUX undertook a comprehensive analysis of its achievements, methodologies and practices.

By delving into MIEUX's portfolio of over 100 interventions, this series of case studies intend to offer a glimpse of the broad range of tools, methodologies and approaches that can inspire or be used by governments and migration and development practitioners to advance a cooperative and sustainable international architecture of migration.