

COVID-19 RESPONSE IN BRAZIL AND SOUTHERN CONE COUNTRIES



ICRC

BRASILIA REGIONAL DELEGATION / JUNE-JULY 2020



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In light of the pandemic, the ICRC Regional Delegation adapted its modus operandi by instituting new activities into its neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian work in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.

We are working with authorities, partners and affected populations to prevent and mitigate the effects of COVID-19. Some of our principal activities include supporting the prison systems in the five countries, the National Societies in the region and relatives of missing persons and migrants. We are also promoting a targeted application of the Safer Access methodology, including self-protection strategies for essential public service workers who are on the front lines during this humanitarian crisis, and created the “Value the Essential” campaign in order to raise awareness about the vulnerability of these professionals.



Among other actions, donations of:

- Masks, alcohol gel and 70% isopropyl alcohol to Safer Access partners in Fortaleza (CE).
- Surgical gloves, masks and aprons to the hospital in Pacaraima (RR).
- Masks to the Ceará Penitentiary Management System and the Fortaleza Juvenile Correctional System.
- We also provided support to 48 families of people displaced by violence and relatives of missing persons (CE and SP) through emergency income.

REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

SUPPORTING PENITENTIARY SYSTEMS

- **Helping to create virtual spaces so that each region can exchange experiences and offer mutual support between prison systems in response to COVID-19** at detention centers in the five countries of the region.
- **Providing technical support when needed and requested by prison authorities:** coordinating a regional webinar on healthiness in detention facilities involving eight countries.
- **Participating in the National Webinar on Health in the Prison System in Brazil – Practices and Challenges in Addressing COVID-19**, coordinated by the National Penitentiary Department (DEPEN), with a presentation by an ICRC detention physician in Colombia.
- **Enhancing initiatives to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and helping to train young people and teens** of the juvenile correctional system in Fortaleza (CE), Brazil, on basic sewing skills through the donation of materials for making 12,400 protective masks.
- **Donating 110,000 protective masks and 6 sewing machines** to the Secretariat of Penitentiary Administration (SAP) in Ceará, northeast of Brazil.
- **Sharing recommendations and documents on preparing, preventing and controlling COVID-19 at detention facilities** in Ceará, Boa Vista and Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil, including guidelines regarding the entry of food, objects and materials into these facilities during the pandemic.
- **Donating material for making masks and nasal clips** to the Rio de Janeiro State Secretariat of Penitentiary Administration, in Brazil.



SUPPORTING NATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETIES

The ICRC provides technical advice and financial support in cooperation with the International Federation of the Red Cross and the National Red Cross Societies in the five countries. Partnered with the National Societies, we have adapted our responses to continue offering the Restoring Family Links (RFL) services and to assist authorities in ensuring that family contacts are maintained during this pandemic.

- **The Brazilian Red Cross** disinfected all correctional facilities in Fortaleza (CE) and ensured that alcohol gel was made available to every employee, in cooperation with the ICRC. The organization also provided support to the CVB-AM's First Aid efforts (managing the isolation area of PITRIG – the Interiorization and Documentation Center – in Manaus), as well as its “Health Education” endeavors with the general public in the state of Amazonas; The ICRC has also lent its support to the CVB-SP concerning the management of missing persons.
- **The Argentine Red Cross** assisted the public health system, provided psychosocial care to individuals, and reconnected people who have been separated because of the pandemic, delivered nutritional assistance and counseling to community meal centers, distributing protection and hygienic equipment. It also continues to monitor the migrant population that has been impacted by COVID-19 and the indigenous peoples in the northern part of the country with the supply of drinkable water.
- **The Chilean Red Cross** distributed food kits, hygiene and protection material to migrants and vulnerable populations, in addition to providing psychosocial assistance to elderly people through the “Talk to me” platform.
- **The Paraguayan Red Cross** has been providing support to the health system at the border, performing temperature controls, conducting activities to raise awareness about wellbeing, sexual and reproductive health and RFL activities for people in shelters, as well as continuing to supply sanitizing, protection and food kits. In addition, it remains involved in all its activities aimed at dengue prevention in vulnerable communities.
- **The Uruguayan Red Cross** distributed food, sanitizing and protection kits to the elderly, migrants, vulnerable communities and young detainees. It also offered courses on health and self-protection methods.



COMMUNICATION SERVICES FOR MIGRANTS



- **Introduction of an RFL hotline for the migrant population in Roraima**, allowing the service to be extended to people located outside the official shelters/sites of the Operação Acolhida (Operation Welcome).
- **Ongoing provision of family contact services for unaccompanied migrant minors** in Boa Vista (RR).
- **Over 5,000 communication services performed by ICRC teams in Brazil** – including phone calls, free internet access and battery charging – for migrants in Pacaraima and Boa Vista (RR) on the border between Brazil and Venezuela, and in Manaus (AM) in order to continue efforts focused on restoring contact between family members.

SUPPORTING POLICE, SECURITY AND ARMED FORCES

- **Sharing practical recommendations related to COVID-19 with police and security forces from all five countries**, providing information on: self-protection and protecting the troops, engagement with the National Red Cross Societies and health professionals, and the use of force during disasters based on international human rights standards related to the duties of police and security forces. In Fortaleza (CE), the recommendations were shared with the Military and Civil Police of Ceará and the Municipal Guard of Fortaleza.

PROMOTING IHL

- **The ICRC continues to support distance education in International Humanitarian Law (IHL) in cooperation with universities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay.** The organization has been offering a number of initiatives, including assistance to scholars and students in establishing the International Humanitarian Law Clinic at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul. The intent is to create a teaching, research and legal assistance center focused on IHL that will bring in students, teachers and professionals from the field to specialize in the subject and promote its content throughout Brazil.

SUPPORT FOR MANAGING THE DEAD AND PREVENTING MISSING PERSONS

- **Providing technical assistance to federal and local authorities in Brazil** on: centralizing data related to unidentified or unaccompanied persons, maintaining contact between patients and their families, and the importance of mourning rituals for relatives of the deceased.
- **Participation in virtual international forensic seminars.** At the 11th National Meeting of Forensic Medical Services, held in Mexico and hosted by the ICRC Delegation in the country in partnership with the Mexican Forensic Medical Services, the ICRC worked with the Rio de Janeiro Medico-Legal Institute to develop institutional coordination plans focused on implementing effective measures for managing the deceased in light of COVID-19.
- **Donations of 60 body bags to the Municipality of Pacaraima (RR) and the Roraima Department of Health (SESAU)**, allocated to the Hospital de Pacaraima.
- **Technical support towards drafting the Contingency Plan for managing the deceased** in Roraima, north of Brazil.



ACTIVITIES IN BRAZIL

STRENGTHENING RESPECT FOR ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES PROFESSIONALS

- **Actions taken to emphasize respect, appreciation and care for the physical and mental health of social workers, medical and education professionals** in the six Brazilian cities that have partnered with us to establish the Safer Access to Essential Public Services (AMS) methodology: Duque de Caxias, Fortaleza, Florianópolis, Porto Alegre, Rio de Janeiro and Vila Velha.
- **Sharing recommendations related to Safer Behaviors and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support** adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic for essential public services authorities partnered with the ICRC in implementing AMS.
- **Support actions for professionals providing essential public services.** Producing theme-based webinars on education, health and social assistance for AMS partner institutions used to create a space for listening, support and sharing experiences and best practices on how to mitigate the impacts of violence in providing and having access to services.
- **Value the Essential campaign.** An initiative by the ICRC during the COVID-19 crisis that seeks to recognize and appreciate professionals working in essential services, as well as all the people who play a role in minimizing the effects of the pandemic on communities and the general public. Read more about the initiative at www.valorizeoessencial.com.br

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

- **Transfer of emergency funding for three months to 14 families displaced by the violence in Fortaleza (CE)**, who have been identified as being highly vulnerable by the State Public Defender of Ceará and who were beneficiaries of a pilot project between this institution and the ICRC in 2019.
- **Donations of 1,500 masks and 100 liters of alcohol to help support the social assistance centers** run by the Fortaleza city government that provide relief to homeless people. These centers face a high risk for contamination.
- **Introduction of a rapprochement process for a tri-party prevention program in Fortaleza (CE)** involving community leaders, the Brazilian Red Cross (CVB) and the ICRC for disinfecting areas where there is a high volume of people circulating in communities affected by violence and who, as a result, are vulnerable to COVID-19 contamination. The project also involves a publicity campaign on prevention.

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY MEMBERS OF MISSING PERSONS

Relatives of people who went missing before COVID-19 are in an extremely vulnerable situation, considering their physical and mental health was fragile even before the pandemic.

THE ICRC IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- **Direct support to over 40 relatives of people in São Paulo and Ceará who have gone missing due to a variety of reasons** by providing personal attention and remote educational and psychosocial group activities. This initiative is handled by a multidisciplinary team that applies diverse and creative methodologies through the use of audio and video. The activities help to break the isolation, along with promoting and strengthening mutual support between family members. They also prevent them from taking risks, becoming static or falling ill due to the uncertainty related to their relative's disappearance and the impacts from the pandemic.
- **Technical support to the relevant authorities to help them augment their ability to address** the specific needs of the families of missing persons in São Paulo, Ceará and Rio de Janeiro.
- **Regular interaction with key authorities at the federal and state levels (SPA, RIO and FOZ) to mobilize and support actions aimed at preventing the increase of disappearances** in the context of COVID-19 (49 meetings with authorities – 10 representatives).
- **Financial assistance to 36 family units** (relatives of 34 missing persons from São Paulo and Ceará) to support their basic needs and ease any difficulties they may have in gaining access to health care and medication due to the pandemic (families in extremely vulnerable situations).
- **Referrals of relatives of missing persons and family organizations for assistance through the program involving donations of basic food staples and hygiene kits** by the Brazilian Red Cross in São Paulo.
- **Personal attention and hold remote group sessions for the relatives of missing persons we monitor in São Paulo and Ceará** in order to prevent risks stemming from the uncertainties exacerbated by the pandemic. Continuing the monitoring program in a virtual manner.
- **Promotion on the participation of federal and local authorities in a regional event on search mechanisms for people who disappeared** during the COVID-19 crisis.

WATER AND SANITATION FOR MIGRANTS AND BENEFICIARY POPULATIONS



- **Conducting projects to improve the water supply in Pacaraima schools, an initiative that will benefit more than 2,400 students and education professionals.** The ICRC continues to work remotely to improve the water supply and sanitary facilities at community venues in Pacaraima and at the Monte Cristo Agricultural Penitentiary in Boa Vista.
- **Donations of hygiene, cleaning and personal protection items to the Roraima Department of Labor and Social Welfare (SETRABES)** on behalf of the Young Men's Shelter in Boa Vista (50 beneficiaries).
- **Donations of hygiene, cleaning and personal protection items to the Health Secretariat of Roraima (SESAU),** allocated to the Hospital de Pacaraima.



SUPPORT FOR OPERATION WELCOME

- **Sharing recommendations on how to prevent violent behavior in health care** that are targeted towards health professionals at the Protection and Care Field Hospital (APC) in Boa Vista.