

Title: Resilience in the face of COVID-19 in the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force of Brazil on the border with Venezuela

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Summary

The economic, political and social crisis in Venezuela has already caused the migration of more than 6 million venezuelans, which represents about 20% of the population by 2021. Since 2018, Brazil has been welcoming these migrants, instituting a Humanitarian Logistics Task Force (HLTF), called Welcome Operation. This Operation was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The present study aimed to describe the health situation and the actions to face the pandemic addressed to protect the military and migrants health of Welcome Operation.

Methods-Results

This exploratory study used quantitative and qualitative techniques, with descriptive analysis. In 2020, field collection was carried out in Boa Vista, Roraima, and key actors of the 9th Contingent were interviewed (deployed between September 2020 and January 2021). In the field research, visits to the shelters of the 5,000 venezuelans welcomed were made and the functioning of health support and the main health challenges were mapped.

From 18th to 22nd of October 2020, there was a major outbreak of COVID-19 among the military, in with 20% of the troop was affected, causing a low operability. The follow-up of the COVID-19 case series among the military in the operation, indicating the moment of the mentioned outbreak. In comparison, the reports collected indicated that in the previous contingent the number of suspected cases was estimated at 180 (30% of the troops).

In total 15% of migrants were infected, which demonstrates a similar incidence to the troops, with an approximate lethality of 1.3%. The HLTF implemented an innovative initiative to face the pandemic through the creation of the Protection and Care Area (PCA), a kind of quarantine and integrated field hospital. The PCA served over 11,000 people by November 2020, reducing the impact of the pandemic.

Conclusion

Even with the high initial impact of the pandemic on the military contingents and on sheltered migrants, it was possible to verify the effectiveness of the innovative confrontation measure that took place at the Protection and Care Area (PCA), reducing the spread of outbreaks and avoiding deaths.

Keywords: Biosafety; Welcome Operation; COVID-19.

