

HRP Alliance in action:

Strengthening research capacity among migrant populations in the Americas



The HRP Alliance supports research capacity strengthening by bringing together institutions conducting research in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). At the center of the HRP Alliance are seven regional 'hubs' to empower and stimulate the research capacity of SRHR partner institutions, providing regional leadership through scholarships, training, fellowships and institutional mentorship. This story shows the importance of putting effort and investment towards understanding the dynamics and challenges of vulnerable groups, such as migrant populations. The hub for the Americas did not shy away from making migrants their primary target group, training local researchers to reach the often-neglected populations in research. Empowering young researchers, while mapping the SRHR challenges of migrants, is the success for the Americas hub.

Welcome meeting and orientation for new HRP Alliance Fellows, Campinas, Brazil February 2022



Data collection occurring in Roraima, Brazil, with Venezuelan refugees

Throughout the Latin American Region, [access to health care systems](#) and services can be fragmented with some vulnerable populations not being able to access healthcare. For example, many countries in the region are dealing with fragmented and under-sourced health systems which have been [shown to lead to poor outcomes and unequal access to SRHR services](#). These challenges are multiplied for migrants, facing additional barriers such as language, legal status and discrimination. In 2018, The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) established [mass migration as a regional priority](#), in light of the [millions of Venezuelans](#) leaving their country as refugees and migrants. This migration crisis was, at the time, one of the largest migratory movements in the world. This crisis, and the near absence of locally generated knowledge on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of migrants in the region prompted an innovative collaboration with the HRP Alliance hub for the Americas at the

Centro de Pesquisas em Saude Reprodutiva Campinas (CEMICAMP) in Brazil. CEMICAP played a crucial role in supporting targeted research to uncover and address the barriers to SRHR services for migrant populations across the Americas.

With HRP Alliance support, CEMICAMP combined technical training with hands-on research support, through a small research impact grants programme, innovated to respond to the specific challenges faced by migrants in the region.

[Barriers](#) to implement SRHR programmes in the region can be attributed to insufficient and unstable funding, strong regional differences and the absence of high-quality data and quality indicators. Another issue is the unequal access to SRHR services, including a lack of trained personnel and adequate services and availability for specific population groups such as adolescents, women in rural areas, indigenous communities, migrants and people identifying as LGBTIQ +.

Given their role as a hub, CEMICAMP leveraged its strategic partnerships with the University of Campinas to provide essential training for health professionals. These efforts ensured that researchers and practitioners alike were equipped to address systemic gaps in SRHR services, particularly for migrant populations.

Using the opportunity provided by the HRP Alliance's research impact grants scheme, the hub at CEMICAMP was able to lead this initiative focused on building local research capacity and generating evidence to inform health system responses. Eleven projects across eight countries, including Brazil, Colombia and Ecuador, were selected from 66 applications. These studies investigated key SRHR barriers and facilitators for migrants, such as language barriers, discrimination and health system inadequacies, while also identifying protective factors like inclusive policies in specific contexts.

One notable outcome was the publication of findings in a special [PAHO Journal Issue](#). The articles presented findings from the diverse topics explored through the research projects, including access to maternal health services, sexual and gender-based violence and abortion services



Charles M'Poca Charles, HRP Fellow, defends his PhD thesis

for Venezuelan migrants. For example, research conducted in Brazil highlighted how systemic barriers like out-of-pocket costs hindered access to HIV/AIDS treatment among Venezuelan migrants, while universal health system policies acted as facilitators. Similarly, studies in Guatemala and Mexico revealed limited SRHR information and heightened vulnerability to sexual violence among migrant women and girls.

CEMICAMP provided end-to-end support to grantees, from developing research protocols to securing ethical approvals and preparing manuscripts. This support was provided through mandating participation in a comprehensive online training course covering research methodologies and implementation.

The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Many highlighted how the support from CEMICAMP allowed for bridging critical knowledge gaps, empowering them to undertake research projects with rigor and confidence. Nelly Alvarado Ascencio, the principal investigator for the research team in El Salvador, even received a national

“ I feel honored that my work is being recognized, this would not have been possible without HRP Alliance’s support. Their guidance and provision of training and resources allowed me to explore the critical issues migrant populations face in terms of SRHR. ”

Nelly Alvarado Ascencio



scientific research prize in 2024 in El Salvador because of her research on migration and health. “I feel honored that my work is being recognized, this would not have been possible without HRP Alliance’s support. Their guidance and provision of training and resources allowed me to explore the critical issues migrant populations face in terms of SRHR.”

The success of CEMICAMP’s model has significant implications for other regions experiencing similar SRHR challenges. The publication of the PAHO Journal special series serves as a critical resource for policymakers and researchers, showcasing evidence-based interventions that can inform SRHR policies and practices globally. Through comprehensive support to research groups – financial, human resource, institutional, this initiative not only

addressed immediate knowledge gaps but also laid the groundwork for sustainable improvements in SRHR research capacity across the region.

Ultimately, CEMICAMP’s impact extends beyond research publications and training programmes. It represents a paradigm shift in how regional hubs can address complex health challenges for specific groups who are often overlooked when conducting research due to geographic dispersion, language barriers, fear of repercussions and possible cultural differences. Luis Bahamondes, the hub’s Principal Investigator, concludes: “The hub’s work has not only advanced SRHR in Latin America but also set a benchmark for what can be achieved when local expertise is empowered, and regional challenges are met with targeted, context-sensitive solutions.”



HRP Alliance hub Principal Investigator from Hanoi Medical University in Viet Nam, visiting the team at the HRP Alliance hub at Centro de Pesquisas em Saude Reprodutiva Campinas in Brazil

Contact us:

UNDP/UNFPA/UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction based at the World Health Organization

20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland • Email: hrpalliance@who.int • Website: <http://www.who.int/hrp>

HRP Alliance in action: Strengthening research capacity among migrant populations in the Americas
WHO/UHL/SRH/2025.3

© World Health Organization 2025. Some rights reserved.

This work is available under the [CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/) licence.

June 2025