



# Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees

## **Brazil Roundtable Report**

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# Roundtable on Solidarity, Coexistence and Integration of Refugees in the City of São Paulo

Hosted by UNHCR

June 3, 2015 São Paulo, São Paulo - SP, Brazil

## Introduction

As part of a global project on urban refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Brazil hosted a roundtable on the integration of refugees in the city of São Paulo on June 3, 2015. This roundtable was the second in a series of roundtable events held in selected cities in each of the five geographic regions. The first roundtable event focussed on coexistence in Gauteng Province, South Africa. The roundtables are part of the “Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees” project, an initiative designed to reinforce UNHCR’s implementation of its *Policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*.

UNHCR recognizes that well over half of the world’s refugees and asylum-seekers live in urban and peri-urban areas and that their ability to peacefully coexist in these cities is fundamental to their well-being. UNHCR understands that refugees and asylum-seekers cannot make a living or contribute to the social, economic and cultural life of a city without the support of their neighbours and the many different government agencies and offices of the host country. The roundtables are an opportunity to convene many stakeholders from various sectors of the municipal government and civil society to discuss the most positive ways to integrate refugees into the city.

The São Paulo roundtable was co-facilitated by the UNHCR Representative, Andrés Ramirez, and a well-known TV personality, social activist and native to São Paulo, Cazé Pecini. The goodwill and interest of a high profile individual such as Cazé Pecini for the São Paulo roundtable came at an opportune time in Brazil.

Just two years ago, the Government of Brazil, with the support of UNHCR and other international and civil society organisations, led the first National Conference on Migration and Asylum (COMIGRAR). The goal was to gather various stakeholders, including migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, stateless persons, government officials, civil society activists and international organisations, for a consultative process to discuss migration issues and challenges for local integration in order to formulate inputs for the *Migration and Asylum Policy* and the *National Plan on Local Integration*.

***7,700 recognised refugees of 81 different nationalities live in Brazil. 25 per cent of them are women.  
– CONARE, 2015***

As a result of these consultations, the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE, *Comitê Nacional para os Refugiados*) renewed its commitment to promoting local integration initiatives in addition to maintaining its mandate as the eligibility body addressing the country’s refugee status determination procedures. In addition to CONARE’s commitment to integration at the federal level, state level bodies are also involved in integration for refugees.

State Committees for Refugees were put in place in the states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul in order to establish *Local Integration Plans for Refugees and Migrants*. The São Paulo roundtable was an opportunity for UNHCR to bring federal, state and municipal actors, as well as refugees, together to advance the integration of refugees in Brazil's society and economy.

## **The Context**

Despite being a “nation of migrants”, Brazil became a source of emigrants as of the 1970s. Back then, it was a country troubled with economic crises, especially following the downfall of a military dictatorship in the mid-1980s, and immigration was virtually non-existent. Now, it is the largest economy in Latin America and the seventh largest in the world, with a low unemployment rate and a strong, growing, urban middle class. At the same time that Brazil began its economic ascent, many other countries in the rest of the world have been confronted with internal and regional conflict, catastrophes and political and economic instability which generated refugees and migrants.

***In 2014, Brazil received more requests for asylum than Australia and almost the same amount as Canada. Brazil received the largest number of requests for any country in Latin America.***

***– UNHCR Brazil, 2015***

Brazil has experienced a dramatic increase in total asylum requests in the past few years and yet foreigners only make up only 0.8 per cent of its total population of more than 200 million people. The country has become the main recipient of extra territorial asylum claims in the Americas region. Over 29,000 persons have applied for asylum in 2014, while in 2010 the total number of asylum-seekers was 550. This swift increase in asylum claims and foreign nationals in Brazil can be explained by a number of reasons.

The first reason pertains to the issuance of “humanitarian visas” by Brazilian embassies. In 2013, CONARE issued *Normative Resolution #17* allowing Brazilian Embassies to issue travel visas for humanitarian purposes through facilitated procedures for individuals affected by the Syrian conflict. Since then, Brazil has accepted more Syrian refugees than any other country in the region. So far, almost 2,077 Syrians have been registered in the country and 6,000 more have been granted visas.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the facilitated acceptance of Colombians for temporary residency is a reason for the increase in residency applications. The accession of Colombia to the *Mercosur Residence Agreement*<sup>2</sup> also had an impact in the regional context. According to this agreement, Colombian nationals may apply for temporary residence in Brazil, and after two years they will be able to request permanent residence. Since Colombia’s accession to the *Mercosur Residence Agreement*, the vast majority of Colombians prefer to apply for residency in Brazil instead of asylum. Indeed, there is a decrease of 60 per cent in the number of asylum claims by Colombians between 2012 and 2014. This decrease stands in stark contrast to the general rise in the number of asylum claims in Brazil: the general number has increased 363 per cent in the same period.

The post-earthquake migration of Haitians is another reason for the increase of foreign nationals in Brazil. Brazil received an unprecedented influx of Haitians following the

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<sup>1</sup> CONARE figures, August 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Mercosur (*MERCado COMún del SUR*) is a customs union of four Southern-cone countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay) established under the 1991 Treaty of Asunción. Formed on the pattern of the European Community’s Treaty Of Rome, it allows duty free inter-Mercosur trade and levies a common external tariff (0 to 20 per cent) on non-member countries. Its associate countries are Chile, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia and Ecuador.

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aftermath of the 2010 earthquake. The monumental catastrophe ravaged Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital city, causing millions of Haitians to flee their homes and thousands to leave the country. Many of those have chosen to take to the sea, paying smugglers, known as "coyotes", up to 4,000USD to transport them on a treacherous voyage through the Dominican Republic to Panama and then on to Ecuador and either passing through Bolivia, Peru or Colombia before reaching Brazilian cities such as Brasília and Tabatinga in the states of Acre and Amazonas.

For a temporary solution to their migratory status, Haitians have applied for asylum when entering the country. Even though the Government of Brazil does not officially recognise Haitian migrants as refugees because they do not fit the definition of the *Brazilian Law 9.474/1997*, the Government of Brazil does acknowledge their need for humanitarian support. As a result, more than 10,000 humanitarian visas have been granted to Haitian nationals. According to data from the Federal Police, 24,515 Haitian nationals have entered Brazilian territory in 2014, while 16,982 have applied for asylum in the same period. The total number of Haitians currently in Brazilian territory is 39,762.

By mid-2015, the total number of recognized refugees in Brazil was 8,400 (25 per cent of whom are women). Recognized refugees come from 81 different countries, mostly from Syria, Colombia, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). There are 1,093 from Colombia; 1,480 from Angola and 844 from the DRC.<sup>3</sup> For the first time in years, the largest population of refugees is from Syria instead of Angola or Colombia.

With Brazil's expanded economy and its compassionate approach to extending visas and residency permits to vulnerable populations, it is not surprising that so many people have sought this state's protection. Moreover, Brazil has a history of regional leadership in protection. In 1997, the Government of Brazil promulgated the first comprehensive refugee law in South America.

This favourable protection environment for refugees in Brazil continues today and is evidenced by the Ministry of Justice's recent organization of the COMIGRAR. The conference was a historical landmark because, for the first time ever, an institutional mechanism was put in place for the Brazilian government to receive migrants and refugees' inputs at the national level. COMIGRAR's final text will provide useful guidance for the elaboration of a *National Plan on Local Integration of Migrants and Refugees*, a process expected to begin in 2016.

In 2014, Brazil hosted the final event honouring the 30th anniversary of the *Cartagena Declaration*.<sup>4</sup> The ministerial event took place in Brasília on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. Some 300 participants from various countries reflected on the achievements made, the challenges faced by the region, and, the gaps that still exist in the international protection system of refugees and stateless persons. The event culminated in the adoption of the *Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action*, which sets forth agreements and concrete actions for the next decade.

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<sup>3</sup> CONARE figures, August 2015.

<sup>4</sup> The *Cartagena Declaration on Refugees* was adopted by the Colloquium on the International Protection of Refugees in Central America, Mexico and Panama on November 22, 1984. The declaration is a non-binding agreement but has been incorporated into refugee law in various countries.  
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With the confidence of having been a leader in asylum, the Government of Brazil was ready to sit at a roundtable and discuss the challenges and opportunities of integrating so many new arrivals in its cities. These new arrivals have illuminated the Government of Brazil's need to strengthen its migrant and refugee policies and to examine and improve upon the existing protection and reception networks and government structures that are in place in its cities. The majority of the refugees in Brazil reside in the city of São Paulo, a multi-cultural, mega-city.

***Currently, the State of São Paulo is home to more applicants for refugee status than any other state in Brazil. In turn, the city of São Paulo is the city with the largest number of applicants distantly followed by the cities of Campinas and Guarulhos.***

***– CONARE, 2015***



## **The Roundtable Format in Practice**

UNHCR brought together key members from the Government of Brazil along with respected community figures and refugees to speak about the various aspects of local integration in Brazil and specifically in the city of São Paulo. Other important stakeholders from faith-based organisations, community-based organisations, international NGOs, and academics, were also invited to attend and contribute their perspectives to the roundtable.

The event was structured as a series of panels in the morning and early afternoon. Each panel allowed for questions and comments from the plenary. When all the panel presentations were over, the plenary broke into separate groups to discuss solutions for documentation, health, education, housing and cultural challenges faced by refugees.

The roundtable event took place at the São Paulo Cultural Centre, a community gathering space in the heart of the city. The space was offered to UNHCR for free at the request of the municipal authorities, an ideal arrangement that indicated the city's commitment to discussing integration.

After the co-facilitators, Cazé Pecini and Andrés Ramirez, welcomed the participants and introduced the goals of the discussion, the event commenced with a panel of officials from three different levels of government. Paulo Guerra, Associate Director of the Department of Foreigners and Representative of CONARE represented the federal government. Floriano Pesaro, São Paulo State Secretary of Social Development provided the state perspective, and Paulo Illes, Coordinator of Policies for Migrants at the São Paulo Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights, shared the views of city officials. Each official discussed his perspective on integration and the efforts his institution is making to address the growing demands placed on them by the new arrivals. This panel of government officials spurred a deluge of questions and comments from the plenary. There was not sufficient time to address all of the questions from the plenary so the participants were asked to write them down. All of the questions can be found in Annex 4 to this report. The questions serve as an indication of the concerns of this gathering of diverse stakeholders.

The next panel consisted of two refugees, Miracle Panzu of the DRC and Majd "Miguel" Soufan of Syria, who shared their individual experiences of coming to and living in São Paulo. Majd expressed his gratitude toward Brazil, as one of the few countries to grant Syrian refugees visas to travel safely with a valid visa. Majd also articulated the frustration he felt when he tried to find a home to rent with the government-issued identity document, the Provisional Protocol (*Protocolo*).<sup>5</sup> He was also frustrated by his inability to transfer his academic credentials from Syria and enrol in a Brazilian university to continue his studies. Majd arrived alone and did not know anyone in Brazil. He was immediately assisted by Arab associations and Caritas who eventually helped him with his documentation.

Miracle also spoke of her struggles with the non-recognition of the Provisional Protocol she was issued. It caused her to be dismissed from her first job and kept her from being able to

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<sup>5</sup> When a person applies for asylum before the Federal Police, the Provisional Protocol (*Protocolo*) is the first document issued. This grants further access to the Tax Number (CPF, *Cadastro de Pessoa Física*) and Work Permit (CTPS, *Carteira de Trabalho*). Nowadays, CONARE hasn't been able to process the huge influx of cases, so the Protocol's valid date was extended from six months to one year. Asylum-seekers face many challenges – even though the Protocol is a valid document, its paper format doesn't resemble an official document, which hinders access to various services such as bank accounts, job opportunities and health system. Building Communities of Practice for Urban Refugees – Brazil Roundtable Report – UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service

enrol her daughter in the local public school. Both accounts illustrated the difficulties that refugees encounter when they first arrive in Brazil despite their gratitude toward their host.

Following the personal stories of Miracle and Majd, the next panel spoke to the refugee protection situation in Brazil and beyond in order to enrich the roundtable participants' understanding of the current context for refugees. Andrés Ramirez illustrated the severity of the refugee issue by juxtaposing the situation in Brazil with broader global displacement patterns. Father Marcelo Monge, Director of the Caritas Archdiocese of São Paulo, spoke about Caritas's programmes for refugees in the city and how the organisation helps to orient them to public policies and the rights they enjoy in Brazil.

Following a break for lunch, a panel of five representatives from various sectors of both the refugee and host community presented for five minutes each on the challenges to integration that confront refugees in São Paulo. Sheikh Mohamad Al Bukai, of the local Islamic organisation OASIS, recounted his need to suddenly attend to the needs of the hundreds of Syrian refugees arriving at his mosques, the only places in Brazil that resemble home to them. Father Paulo Parisi of the Catholic faith-based organisation, Missão Paz, spoke of the organisation's efforts - in conjunction with those of Caritas - to help new arrivals, especially the Haitian population. He also advocated for more reception spaces and housing options for asylum-seekers.

Érico Lima de Oliveira, from the Federal Public Defender's Office (*Defensoria Pública da União*), emphasized the need to strengthen the judicial capacity at all levels of the court system. He also made the case for the creation of more legal aid resources for migrants and refugees who need assistance with documentation, naturalisation and the regularisation of their status. He emphasized the importance of coordinating these efforts with CONARE in order to issue the correct documents to migrants and refugees as soon as they arrive in Brazil, especially for those who arrive through airports.

Mirta Castellón, a former Colombian refugee and representative of the Assistance Centre for the Worker (*Centro de Atendimento ao Trabalhador*, CAT), recounted the Centre's work in welcoming new arrivals and sensitizing employers to eliminate what she refers to as the 'attitude barrier' in addition to helping refugees learn the skills and level of Portuguese they need to be placed in the job market.

Last on the panel was Olenga Nkoyi, a social agent from the São Paulo NGO Family Health Association and former employee of the Municipal Secretariat of Health. He shared his concerns that newly arrived refugees are housed in shelters with the homeless and drug addicts, under the most deplorable conditions. He emphasized that health begins with safe and dignified housing, and by taking into account the mental well-being of refugees upon arrival.

Directly following the five presentations, all of the participants were asked to break into five working groups to brainstorm and provide recommendations on how to improve the integration of refugees through these six key sectors: documentation, health, education, housing, employment and culture. To kick-start the discussion, each group was given a list of citations that pertained to their specific topic from three key documents: the *Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action* (2014); the *Final Report* from the 2014 COMIGRAR consultations; and UNHCR's 2009 *Policy on refugee protection and solutions in urban areas*.

The School of Social Development of the State of São Paulo (EDESP) helped to compile the points discussed in the working groups. After an hour of discussion, each group documented their recommendations and presented them to the plenary.

## **Findings**

The following findings were synthesized from the plenary and working group discussions throughout the day. They are listed by themes that have been identified as the most pressing for refugees and asylum-seekers in São Paulo. The findings describe the problems refugees and asylum-seekers face and the complexity of the systems they confront. The Findings section of the report is followed by the Recommendations that the working groups made to solve some of the problems faced by refugees and asylum-seekers.

### **1. Documentation – The need for easily obtained and recognized Brazilian documents**

Obtaining valid, recognised identity documents from the Government of Brazil continues to be the biggest obstacle to integration. The Provisional Protocol is neither recognised by employers nor by school officials. The Protocol alone is not sufficient to allow refugees to enrol at universities and continue their studies. According to Caritas São Paulo, less than one per cent of the refugees they process are illiterate and most of them have their high school degrees. Thus being able to access tertiary education is important to them.

***On renewing documents: “I can ask for a new document, but I get to keep mine. Here, now, for refugees, they have to give their documents, and then wait for the new document. There should be an increase in the time of validity to two, three, or even five years.”***

***– Group participant***

The group working on the topic of documentation produced many specific suggestions for improving the quality of documents issued to refugees. Their suggestions included expanding upon the transparency and predictability of the issuance process and guiding local institutions to accept the documents. The working group pushed for more support from the top tier of the government to expedite the documentation process and create awareness about the validity of the documents.

***“Political will and public administration – we need to improve, for example, access to the information available to the Federal Police about the rules that exist for refugees and immigration.”***

***– Group participant***

The working group was critical of the quality of document processing services at the airport done by sub-contractors, the ambiguity of the text on the Protocol, and the vulnerability of people, especially women, who are without documentation. The group emphasized the importance of awareness-raising for refugees and that it would benefit the recognition of the documents, such as the Protocol, throughout society. They suggested a government sponsored information campaign during the “noble hour,” the evening hour of telenovelas.

***“The Protocol should be good for everything.”***

***– Group participant***



## **2. Health – Improving awareness amongst providers and overcoming the language barrier**

The working group on refugee access to health also emphasized the importance of raising awareness and building capacity amongst health care providers as well as of orienting refugees toward health care services. Not knowing how to speak Portuguese emerged in this group and throughout the day as a major barrier in accessing services. Language skills and discrimination were brought up as barriers in many interventions during the day of the roundtable. This working group suggested contracting Brazilians or Portuguese speaking refugees to work as interpreters at the hospitals.

## **3. Education – Awareness, language and regularizing access**

Once again the language barrier and the need to orient public officials emerged as the primary issues that need to be overcome in enabling access to education. This working group suggested producing an orientation video for schools. They also called for CONARE to approve a resolution to regularize access to education for refugees.

***“Basic education – There should be an orientation document for all of the public servants, managers, professors and the educational community that says who to receive and welcome. It should give the necessary orientation keeping in mind basic education.”***  
– Group participant

## **4. Housing – The importance of a dignified solution from the start**

This working group reported that refugees need to be sheltered in a dignified manner immediately upon arrival, not only out of consideration for their well-being but also to promote their social interactions and integration into the neighbourhoods of São Paulo. For a lack of better options, refugees are often forced to go to shelters and when that is the case, this group would like to see that the shelter workers are better trained to receive refugees. At the same time, they would like Portuguese classes to be available to refugees staying in shelters. Some suggested sending refugees to collective housing complexes (*repúblicas*)<sup>6</sup> instead of shelters. Others pointed out that homelessness is becoming rampant in Brazil and “exclusivity” for refugees needs to be carefully considered.

Transitioning refugees out of a shelter and into an independent living arrangement is also a concern because of the steep rental costs in the city. The Brazilian minimum wage is barely enough to cover the fundamental needs such as rent and food in major cities like São Paulo where the cost of living is high. This working group suggested that refugees should be coached on how to prepare for this reality.

## **5. Employment – Private sector networks and labour rights up front**

The working group on employment underlined not only the need to include private sector stakeholders in similar discussions but also the necessity to inform companies about the skills and talents that refugees bring with them and emphasizing that this can later translate into economic gains for these companies. Similarly, refugees should also be informed about

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<sup>6</sup> *Repúblicas* are similar to student dormitories.  
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their labour rights. Last, in reference to the barriers that impede refugees from entering the formal sector, the group recommended that the Protocol be made to look less makeshift and be standardized to match other official documents.

#### **6. Culture – Exchanges plus the importance of language**

This working group on culture defined the term ‘culture’ as being “multi-faceted, and multi-conceptual”. In their view, religion, language, ethics and education should all be factored into the discussion on culture. This working group also highlighted the need to conduct awareness-raising with Brazilians on what a refugee is and how they are different from migrants. The group also called for more initiatives to promote Portuguese language acquisition and to incorporate elements of Brazilian culture into those classes. They also championed a two-way, rich and symbolic exchange of cultures and recommended more events where artistic, cultural and culinary practices could be shared.

## **Recommendations**

The following is a summary of the recommendations made by the working groups during their presentations to the plenary:

1. **Documentation**
  - a. Expedite document issuance.
  - b. Decentralise services.
2. **Health**
  - a. Hire more bilingual health workers, capable of attending to the needs of refugees.
  - b. Create mental health programme for refugees.
3. **Education**
  - a. Offer Portuguese classes to foreigners.
  - b. Support the National Education Council and the Ministry of Education to facilitate access to education and the recognition of diplomas from foreign countries.
4. **Housing**
  - a. Create more vacancies in shelters for refugees.
  - b. Build capacity of public servants about the needs of refugees.
5. **Employment**
  - a. Provide orientation on refugees to private companies and look for more job vacancies for refugees.
  - b. Offer professional training and technical courses for refugees.
6. **Culture**
  - a. Include information about the cultural diversity of refugees in the curriculums of Brazilian schools.
  - b. Develop cross-culture sensitization campaigns about the cultural richness of refugees in Brazil.

The **unedited** working group inputs, transcribed and translated from the sheets of paper were the points agreed upon were originally written, can be found in Annex 5. They are accompanied by the rapporteurs' summary for each group. Please note that we did not receive the unedited working group inputs for the discussions on documentation.

## **Conclusion**

Refugees in Brazil enjoy a political climate today that welcomes them. Although the will is there, dedicated coordination efforts amongst the federal, state and municipal levels need to be strengthened to actualize this goodwill in a country as vast and diverse as Brazil. State and municipal agencies are critical in disseminating CONARE's vision and commitments to receiving refugees in Brazil.

Decentralizing the issuance of documents for refugees would improve their lives and spread awareness on the definition and criteria for their status. Training public servants such as airport personnel, police, shelter staff, social workers, teachers and hospital workers who are the initial contacts for refugees on the definition of refugee status and the assets that refugees bring to Brazil would also ease their integration. For an individual, protection and assistance is most meaningful at this neighbourhood or "concrete roots" level.

Despite the teeming vibrancy and economic leadership of Brazil, many of its own citizens live below the poverty line and homelessness is an obvious status for many residents of mega-cities like São Paulo. Thus, the onus will be on refugees to visibly and pro-actively contribute to the economy and civil society in order to integrate. A priority in doing so is learning Portuguese in order to participate fully in their communities. Appreciation for the generosity and cultural wealth of Brazil will also help their integration.

Fortunately, the refugee community in São Paulo has found a way to sing the praises of Brazil loud and strong. The São Paulo roundtable concluded with the premier of a music video called "Refugees in Brazil" (*Refugiados no Brazil*), promoting a message of "*somos um*" (we are one), created by the city's refugee community with the support of UNHCR and Caritas. "Refugees in Brazil" was made to raise awareness about refugees to the general public. The messages, music and images of the video were pitch perfect and a positive and inspiring way to end the roundtable.



## **Annex 1: A Case Study**

### **Refugee Protection by the Social Assistance System in Brazil: A Case Study of Terra Nova Shelter**

School of Social Development of the State of São Paulo  
(*Escola de Desenvolvimento Social do Estado de São Paulo*)

Social protection in Brazil is defined by the 1988 Federal Constitution and the Organic Law of Social Assistance. In order to organize the social assistance services in a decentralised manner, the Ministry of Social Development of Brazil created the Unified Social Assistance System (SUAS). By consolidating efforts and resources at three different levels (federal, state and municipal), SUAS has contributed to establish a new paradigm in the provision of social assistance.

Therefore, the current system of social assistance is a Constitutional guarantee, surpassing the old, bureaucratic and segmented structure that lacked integration among different levels of government. There is a central focus on the family and in strengthening community ties, considering the local context. Public participation forms a fundamental principle in the new paradigm, through the construction of a participative and decentralized network that offers services, programmes and projects organized by complexity, territory, considering regions and size of municipalities.

Currently, SUAS actions are organized along two main axes of complexity. The Basic Social Protection aims at preventing risk situations by developing and strengthening family and community ties. It targets families and individuals who live in socially vulnerable conditions, such as poverty, deprivation, and weak community or family ties. The actions within this axis are implemented in the Social Assistance Reference Centres (CRAS), a public state unit located in areas with high rates of social vulnerability and risk. There are currently 1,049 CRAS's distributed in almost every municipality of São Paulo. The axis of Special Social Protection aims at protecting families and individuals facing a scenario of vulnerability in two complexity levels: medium, when rights are violated but family and community ties remain intact, and high, for individuals who find themselves without any family/community reference or are threatened to be removed from their family/community core. The institution responsible for protecting this group of people is the Specialised Reference Centre of Social Assistance (CREAS), public units at the municipal or regional level which provide an integral protection package. There are currently 254 CREAS units throughout the State of São Paulo and 39 are foreseen.

Through these two main axes, the social assistance network provides several social assistance projects aimed at improving the population's quality of life, with actions focused on meeting their basic needs.

In the context of a global humanitarian crisis, the growing number of asylum-seekers and refugees in Brazil has had a strong impact in migratory influx in the State of São Paulo. Over the past five years, the number of asylum requests registered in São Paulo has increased more than 1,000%. According to CONARE, 310 requests were filed in 2010 and 3,612 in 2014. São Paulo is the state that is home to the highest number of asylum-seekers and

refugees in Brazil (3,809) and the city of São Paulo has become the main entry port for refugees in Latin America.

The State of São Paulo has engaged in addressing this demand. Even though refugees were not originally included under the SUAS protection, the São Paulo Secretariat of Social Development granted this population with the status of high social vulnerability and risk. Through a positive interpretation of the legislation, the State of São Paulo created the first state-run shelter focused in the specific needs of asylum-seekers and victims of human trafficking.

The Terra Nova (Newfound Land) shelter was created on October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014. The house can provide shelter to 50 persons, ensuring space for individuals and families. As prescribed in the SUAS, the service is mainly targeted at family cores with children up to 18 years old, pregnant women as well as individuals who have been subject to national or international human trafficking, with a particular focus on the LGBT population. The aim of Terra Nova is to provide a safe environment for vulnerable individuals by overseeing their process of becoming autonomous and developing ties with society. Hence, the shelter projects ensure the empowerment of the individuals, assuring their own rights and referrals to public policies.

The time spent in the shelter varies according to individual conditions that are constantly monitored. When individuals are received they are introduced to the supervisors and socio-educational tutors, who review conduct rules and explain main rights and duties.

Psychological assistance carried out on a one-to-one basis. The team of psychologists supports individuals to develop and monitor their 'Life Project'. Activities are developed and carried out in groups, encouraging the creation of new ties between individuals, the sharing of traumatic feelings and experiences in a subjective manner.

Terra Nova also provides the users with legal assistance and mentoring on Brazilian Law and their rights in the country, referring them to obtaining documents, as well as monitoring their migratory situation.

The social team of Terra Nova promotes social protection and access to public services that meet individual needs and contribute to the development of their autonomy in the country. For instance, services include adult education, Portuguese language courses, and referral to the job market. In order to engage the users, roundtables on various integration themes are conducted.

Throughout the first year several challenges were faced. The vulnerable and traumatic situation of most of the newly arrived users was extreme and precarious. They required protected from various forms of exploitation, prejudice and xenophobia. Up to June 2014, 114 users have already been hosted by Terra Nova shelter, 67 of whom have exited the house in a high-quality manner (*desligamento qualificado*), with an average length of stay of 55 days. This process has allowed the users to have time to reach their autonomy, having basic knowledge of the Portuguese language, to be included in the labor market. Moreover, 19 users were referred to other organizations that provide specific services for the family profile.

In its first year of operation, 'Terra Nova' is a pioneer initiative of the State Government of São Paulo aiming to protect and accommodate vulnerable individuals that found São Paulo as a possibility of a new home.

### **Success Story**

\*Names were changed for privacy and confidentiality reasons.

The couple, Omar and Sayde, accompanied by their children, Adel and Jamile, fled from the war in Syria to Brazil. Newcomers to São Paulo, the family arrived at Terra Nova sent by the NGO Caritas. Without traces of empathy, the family only communicated with the staff on what regarded psychosocial care. The girl Jamile interacted exclusively with family members. Adel demonstrated an aggressive behavior, complaining and crying a lot.

A week after their arrival at Terra Nova, Omar, in the midst of an argument with his son, assaults him. The team worked with the father, explaining that aggression of children is a crime before Brazilian law. Omar explained that this was common in Syria. By understanding the cultural and legal difference, the father commits not to hurt Adel anymore. He confessed that he was very stressed by the bad behavior his son was having since they left their country. He did not know how to handle the situation. The team has stressed the need to focus on dialogue and the creation of ties within the family and in the new community.

After the incident, the family commits to attend all events organized by the house. These activities bring them closer and enable them to comprehend their journey. The family missed their old life and their old home. Soon, the children begin to act like their age again, playing and interacting with other children in the house and at school. With all documentation in hand, the father starts working again. In the beginning, he would fix machines for food production, having quickly switched to making their own Arab food to sell it in restaurants. The house staff respects his new routine, as he often needs to leave the house early in the morning and return to it late at night. A great trust was established by guiding him on how to start save his money for a qualified exit of the house. Gradually, the feeling of sadness and nostalgia was replaced by great appreciation of the newfound home. "I love São Paulo" and "Syria in the heart of São Paulo" are phrases that begun to arise in the course of psycho-pedagogical activities.

Omar's brother comes to Brazil and is accepted by Terra Nova, he starts working with him in their business. After 7 months of the family's arrival at Terra Nova, Omar can finally earn enough money to rent a house, where moves his family to start a new life and new home.

## **Annex 2: Roundtable Concept Note**

Typically at the mention of refugees, the iconic image of make-shift camps built under emergency situations and in the most inhospitable of border regions comes to mind. At present, however, more than half of the world's refugees live in urban areas, in keeping with migratory trends of greater proportions. In the face of the largest humanitarian crisis of the century, the number of persons seeking asylum and protection around the world has increased exponentially.

It is estimated that 866,000<sup>7</sup> persons applied for asylum in 2014 alone. In the same year Brazil received more than 11,000 new applications for asylum. UNHCR estimates that there are more than 16 million refugees in the world today. Brazil hosts a little over 7,600 of these refugees. It is important to note that the rise in immigrant populations in Brazil is still very small compared to the total national population; the total of foreigners does not surpass 0.8% of the total population. São Paulo, one of the largest cities in the world, is home to millions of people of diverse origins, and the majority of the refugees that live in Brazil reside in the city of São Paulo. Approximately 40% of the refugees in Brazil live in the capital.

As we are now confronted with a growing population of refugees in urban centres, it is important that we strengthen our protection and reception networks, bringing together national, state and municipal structures, as well as the wide variety of civil society organisations that are actively engaged and have contributed to the development of these networks. It is within this context that UNHCR is hosting a roundtable event to create a space for dialogue between the local community and the refugee community. The objective of the event is to discuss the best ways in which refugees and asylum-seekers can integrate themselves into the local urban context and contribute to its social, economic and cultural development.

Throughout the course of its history, Brazil has demonstrated its international solidarity with respect to migration and that has, in turn, shaped Brazilians' own social identity. The following are some issues that we would like to raise during the event:

- *How do you define the coexistence of refugees in Brazilian society, from the perspective of the city of São Paulo? In general, what has been done to promote the coexistence and integration of refugees in São Paulo?*
- *What have refugees done and could do to contribute to their own coexistence and integration?*
- *What has the host community done and could do to contribute to the coexistence and integration of refugees?*
- *What is the role of the municipal and state government in supporting the coexistence and integration of refugees?*
- *What is the role of NGOs, community associations, religious organisations and other members of civil society in improving coexistence and integration?*

To respond to these questions, UNHCR has invited government, civil society, and representatives of refugee communities to present on panels that will discuss the various dimensions of coexistence and integration in the city of São Paulo.

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<sup>7</sup> Number of asylum-seekers registered in the 44 industrialised countries. UNHCR Asylum Trends 2014 (Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/551128679.html>).



### **Annex 3: Roundtable Agenda**

<b>03 June 2015</b>	
09:00 - 9:30	<b>Participant Registration and Welcome Coffee</b>
09:30 - 09:45	<b>Event Introduction</b>
09:45 - 10:15	<b>Opening Panel</b> Andrés Ramirez, UNHCR Representative in Brazil Paulo Guerra, Associate Director of the Department of Foreigners, Representative of the National Committee for Refugees Floriano Pesaro, São Paulo State Secretary of Social Development Paulo Illes, Coordinator of Policies for Migrants, São Paulo Municipal Secretariat of Human Rights
10:15 - 10:30	<b>Questions and Answers</b>
10:30 - 11:00	<b>Debate: Individual Refugee Accounts</b> Miracle Panzu (Democratic Republic of Congo) Majd 'Miguel' Soufan (Syria)
11:00 - 11:20	<b>Questions and Answers</b>
11:00 - 12:00	<b>Debate: Landscape of Refuge</b> Andrés Ramirez, UNHCR Representative in Brazil Fr. Marcelo Monge, Director of Caritas Archdiocese of São Paulo
12:00 - 13:00	<b>Lunch (Citron Restaurant – 1st Floor)</b>
13:00 - 13:50	<b>Panel: Integration Challenges</b> 1. Sheik Mohamed, OASIS 2. Fr. Paolo Parisi, Missão Paz 3. Érico Lima de Oliveira, Defensoria Pública da União 4. Mirta Castellón, Centro de Apoio ao Trabalho (CAT) 5. Olenga Nkoyi, Social Agent
13:50 - 14:50	<b>Working Groups</b>
14:50 - 15:10	<b>Coffee Break</b>
15:10 - 16:10	<b>Working Group Presentations</b>
16:10 - 16:40	<b>Closing Remarks</b> Andrés Ramirez, UNHCR Representative in Brazil
16:40 - 17:00	<b>Video Screening of “Refugiados no Brasil” (Refugees in Brazil)</b> Conversation with the participants of the project

**Facilitators: Cazé Pecini (Presenter) and Andrés Ramirez (UNHCR Representative in Brazil)**

## **Annex 4: Questions to the Government Panel**

The following questions have been transcribed, translated and left unedited. Due to issues with legibility, certain words have are missing and denoted by the [...] symbol.

### **General Questions for the Panel**

- The municipal government knowing that the majority of migrants or refugees live in São Paulo. What are the preparative measures taken to facilitate the [...] in the establishments of higher learning, both public as well as private...? Also, what are the preparative measures taken regarding the lack of knowledge about the qualifications of migrants (refugees) to facilitate integration?
- How do you think [...] to better the coexistence and the integration for refugees?
- How has the coverage of the press been? Positive or negative? (with regard to the question of refugees and migrants)
- How do you think [...] to better the coexistence and the integration for refugees?
- How has the coverage of the press been? Positive or negative? (with regard to the question of refugees and migrants)
- How do you think [...] to better the coexistence and the integration for refugees?
- How has the coverage of the press been? Positive or negative? (with regard to the question of refugees and migrants)
- A large part of the asylum-seekers are qualified workers and Brazil has lost the opportunity to absorb them into the job market due to the difficulties related to the validation of diplomas, the impossibility of obtaining the CNH without the RNE, among others. I would like to know what the members of the panel think could be done to find a solution to this, in the three spheres of government.
- Was a representative from the Federal Police invited? Since it is the entrance gate for refugees → legal limbo
- Subject under the laws of refugees or Brazil. I am a victim of racism or Brazil. We don't have or right. Like the beings et the other problems the work 2) the university 3)
- It is necessary to implement a national program of public policies aimed at the migratory influx before the new legal proposition is there the prospect of a regularisation of all immigrants residing in Brazilian territory?
- My question is about the housing for refugees and the time given to them to integrate. Lack of lawyer in Caritas
- The network for social protection is still not prepared to receive the immigrants. The tools that we have today receive the immigrants and asylum-seekers and give a treatment for housing and homeless and are obliged to

stay in the street all day long without anything to do. What would be the alternative given this problem.

- My question is as follows: From the application to the integration, the time is long for the processing of files. There is among the asylum-seekers though who have diplomas, who ask to continue their studies or find a decent job, that which is elsewhere become very difficult [...]. Why demand only that those who have the right to [...] of a university are those who possess a permit an RNE? Why wait until the integration that takes time to recognise the [...] of schools or look to benefit the refugees [...]? For that which is work, wouldn't it be [...] recognise or take into account the level or the experience of the person has had and develop to its fair value, to avoid to the latter to be forced to recommend a lower [...]?

### **Question for the Ministry of Justice**

- You spoke about the dialogue with civil society, something that has been taking place for years, but what is the effective proposal of dialogue with States and municipalities, having as the aim [...] and integration and coordination of actions driving at social, economic, cultural and political inclusion, both for immigrants and for refugees?

### **Questions for Paulo Guerra**

- How does documentation work for women immigrants and refugees because they are forgotten for being a minority.
- The improvements regarding documentation of refugees are done only for the newly arrived or also for [...] here in Brasil. And how is it that the older ones are being forgotten, the new ones arriving are becoming regularized before?
- What measures are foreseen in order to reduce terms and decentralize the work of CONARE and the proceedings for refuge? Is the installation of offices of CONARE in São Paulo and other capitals to be expected? Is the broadening of social participation in the composition of CONARE to be expected?
- You mentioned that CONARE plans to increase the number of eligibility agents that today are a total of 5. I would like to know when this increase will take place and how many people will be included in that team?
- Can you repeat the increase in the applications for refugee status between 2010 and 2014?
- Since the process of the regularisation of documents [...] for the reasons that CONARE knows. Why? Why not decentralise the works of study or the eligibility proceedings [...] of [...] refuge that each state take care of the proceedings of the files in its jurisdiction.

### **Question for Floriano Pesaro**

Taking into consideration the purchasing power and the social situation of Brasil. With 79 Reais that the government gives for an immigrant or a refugee, according to the social policy of Brazil, this sum of money can help to do what? Pay rent, the [...], buy clothes, etc.?



## **Annex 5: Working Group Recommendations**

### **1. Documentation**

#### **Rapporteur's Summary**

The group consisted of 14 people, out of which 8 were refugees. The group started the discussion from a text that systematized data and brought the summary of three important documents: the Declaration and Action Plan of Brazil, COMIGRAR 2014 and the UNHCR policy on urban refugees.

Issues raised by the group:

- The group ratified all that was discussed in COMIGRAR 2014 and raised the delay in moving forward with respect to the targets pointed out in the conference.
- In general, the group questioned how to quicken the issuance of documents and how to make the services more accessible. The process of obtaining the documentation, especially in Sao Paulo, is very slow. The group's proposals were of an administrative nature: the idea is to reform the processes, inserting more agile electronic processes. Therefore, the following suggestions do not depend on changes in legislation, but in the processes.
- According to all the refugees, the problems they face with documentation make integration very difficult. The experience with electronic booking system of the Federal Police and Ministry of Labor is complicated for many – websites are not user-friendly, especially for immigrants who do not speak Portuguese, and next available slots are usually one to two months away. The decentralization of service was suggested, by creating a service with the quality of Poupatempo (institution run by the Government of Sao Paulo, present in many neighborhoods, that provides, in one place, various public services to citizens).
- Dialogue with the Federal Police: this is crucial to advance issues related to the documentation. The following topics were discussed:
  - Lack of unified information: the steps for obtaining the documentation are widely disseminated in official sites (mostly in Portuguese), but in practice the Federal Police requests different documents than the ones listed.
  - Distance of their service: the Federal Police only attends documentation cases for refugees in the Regional Superintendency of São Paulo, located in Lapa district, away from the urban center and with limited access to public transportation.
  - Outsourcing: The group has expressed its concern on the fact that the Federal Police outsources their service. Incoming asylum-seekers are attended by outsourced staff who do not speak other languages and is usually not properly sensitized to distinct foreigners and refugees. For instance, a Colombian refugee is usually treated as a Mercosur migrant, who is entitled to a different residence process. A representative of the Department of Justice of the State of São Paulo explained that this is done in an attempt to facilitate the permanence of the individual in the country.
  - Qualified service: According to the group, the Federal Police needs to improve the quality and humanity of its service. No staff speak foreign

languages. The attendance of refugees and foreigners requires the Federal Police to hire employees who speak more languages. Problems with communication further aggravate the situation, as the guidelines in the Federal Police are all in Portuguese. Moreover, many refugees have felt some form of discrimination during the process, e.g. racism.

- Provisional Protocol: this issue was widely discussed. Many group members brought the report that refugees lose jobs when presenting the document. The protocol is not accepted in higher education institutions. Furthermore, the problem persists when one needs to renew the RNE, as a protocol is generated again while the new RNE is not ready. The group decided on the following suggestions:
  - To raise awareness of civil servants and general public: awareness-raising initiatives that promote the validity of the document, as most Brazilians do not know about it.
  - To improve the appearance of the document: it is important to think of ways to provide the document with a more credible appearance than a piece of paper. It was proposed that it has to be closer to a conventional document format, size-wise and with plastic. One of the group members brought the example of Argentina, where the document is called: “Temporary Residence” and has the appearance of an identity card. The group suggested the creation of a “Provisional RNE”. The Provisional Protocol is used by the applicant for a long time as the asylum request has taken a long time to be considered, up to three years in some cases.
  - Decrease the registration number of the protocol, which is currently too long.
- The CTPS was recognized as a document of extreme relevance. It is the guarantee for social inclusion.

#### Summary of proposals:

- To summarize the text of COMIGRAR and its goals, without losing its essence.
- To make the access to documentation easier and more decentralized, with electronic proceedings.
- To improve the appearance of the Provisional Protocol. As the protocol ensures the identification of the person in the country, it must be a document that conveys credibility, more similar to an ID of a Brazilian national, for example.
- To increase awareness on the validity of the documentation for employers, civil servants, and to general public.
- To decrease the numbers and change the name, rather than Provisional Protocol, call it Provisional RNE, for example.
- To make information on documents more accessible, including in foreign languages.
- To improve the quality of the service provided by the Federal Police – with sensitized agents who speak other foreign languages rather than only Portuguese.
- To increase the responsiveness of CONARE to decide on cases.

## 2. Health

### Transcript of Participant Inputs

1. Expand access to official documents such as [...]
  - Have knowledge of what is said in the Brazil Declaration and Plan of Action

Jorge presents → [...]

Presenter: Mari, CRAI

Manager of health of prompt service → [...] and of immigrant, citizen [...]. She will be cared for even without documentation.

Olenga is a health agent → [...] refugee and support is important. Assume a [...] of the SUS. Examples of [...] that came to Brazil for treatment. Complain of the [...] but [...] that the problem is also for Brazilians.

Work in Sé by [...] by UBS. The [...] goes until you. [...] health goes to you and should be like [...] UBS. Impair him, because colleagues think that the [...] worked for the Federal Police.

→Greatest difficulty is the language question.

There are not many bilingual service providers.

→Difficulty for people that have to take [...]/

→Difficulty to [...] know how to explain what one is feeling.

[...] SUS [...] without fixed address.

UBS of the Sé

They already have an agent of [...] in the Story of Reception >> Missão (Immigrant house)

Name, surname, name of mother and father (by ... and ... SUS)

There is a health unit that makes health agents available that don't go to the house to check the address.

→Lack of unity of the [...] for refined of [...] SUS. It was not supported in the question of [...] of the [...],it is not possible that the [...] of reference [...] all [...].

→The way in which the Sé works should be replicated by other UBS.

→[...] – The [...] the gynecological care at the Sé are carried out [...].

- Friend translators charge \$ for [...] translation within the health centre.
- Olenga, [...] of health and only of the language.
- The State should provide translators/bilingual agents at least in the health centres that care for the most foreigners.
- There should be [...] a law that establishes a quantity x of agents that [...] another language.
- Mapping of languages for refugees, in the Sé, by [...], if [...] little Syrians.

## HOUSING + HEALTH

- Mix in the reception homes 1 refugee with little in situations of one.
- [...] doesn't know how to do [...]. Specialisation of centre. Refugee went to 8 hospitals.
- Lacking care [...] free.
  - Have a dentist, but asked for [...] or address.  
(Barra Funda UPS Hospital)

## MENTAL HEALTH + PRECARIOUS HOUSING

- Refugee [...].
  - Conc of migrant – Friday talk with psychologist e [...] arrived.
  - Congolese community [...] two persons [...]/[...].
  - Congolese community conducts visits [...] Sundays.
- Problem = requirement of [...] he residence
  - Health agent makes appointment through [...].
  - Sensitisation of health agents about migrants and refugees.
  - Develop materials in various languages about orientation of utilisation of the [...] of health.

## Rapporteur's Summary

The main objective of the Working Group was to discuss what has been done related to the refugees' health and to propose guidelines to improve the actions taken in this regard. The meeting began with a discussion on some official documents. The Brazilian Action Plan, the COMIGRAR 2014 recommendations and the UNHCR's Urban Refugees Policy were analyzed. It was identified the need for a wider dissemination of the information contained in these documents to both refugees and professionals that provide assistance to the refugee population.

## General information

- A Health Service Manager from the Sé Region commented that the Brazilian Health System follows the principle of equity. Therefore, it does not matter if a person is a migrant or a Brazilian, everyone is attended regardless if the person holds valid documentation or not.
- When asked about how refugees obtain access to health, a refugee claimed that, when entering a new country, a refugee immediately needs government protection. Still, he reported delay in hospital care lines, a current complain of Brazilians as well. The refugee also mentioned that he noticed differences on the health treatment in Brazil, and one of them is that in his home country, a person must go to the doctor to find treatment. In Brazil, according to him, there are health workers who provide home care.
- Another refugee reported that many immigrants are afraid of the Family Health Workers' visits because they fear they might be deported due to the lack of valid documents to live in Brazil. In response, a health worker explained that no matter the situation of a person in the country, their main goal of the Public Health System is to promote health for everyone and not to supervise the legal status of a patient.
- Refugees also reported difficulty in scheduling appointments and the lack of dental care. They also stressed that due to their experience of war and violence, they require psychological counseling, which they were not able to find in the Public Health System.

The group also discussed the difficulty of using medicines correctly due to language constraints. In addition, a professional from AMA Sé (Ambulatory Medical Care from the Sé region) highlighted that once refugees and migrants usually do not have a permanent address, it is difficult to link the refugees' registration and health background to one specific Basic Health Unit (UBS), as required by the protocol of the Brazilian Public Health System, which hampers the face-to-face monitoring.

Still, she explained that the Sé region is different from other parts of the city, since it serves the Homeless Population. Therefore, in that case, the SUS card emission can be self-declaratory, which also facilitates the refugees' situation.

Throughout the debate, the lack of bilingual professionals in the health care system was one of the main points raised. A health worker reported that she notices that migrants and refugees are quick learners when it comes to language issues. However, a refugee argued that they usually do not know any Portuguese by the time they arrive in Brazil.

Some of the participants of the Working Group reported that there are foreigners that charges refugees/migrants to translate medical appointments. A professional pointed out the risk of overloading the few employees who speak other languages. Other health professional pointed out the need to respect the refugees' culture. Arab women who do not speak English, for example, need translators in their gynecological appointments.

Finally, an AMA professional proposed that a mapping of the most spoken languages by area of the city be made. As an example, she affirmed that the Sé region has a history of receiving Africans.

## Recommendations:

- Provide bilingual health professionals to attend refugees and migrants;
- Provide the SUS guidebook in multiple languages;

- Increase trainings for health professionals in order to both disseminate information about refugees and train them on how to deal with cultural and religious diversity;
- Expand the Central Region (AMA Sé) work, which provides migrants/refugees care without documentation or proof of residence;
- Hire refugees/migrants to work in health services, assisting in translation measures. Establish a quota for refugees, just as happens to people with disabilities;
- Exempt refugees/migrants from having to schedule appointments and tests;
- Respect each other's culture in the health care system;
- Ensure mental health services access such as psychological counseling for refugees/migrants;
- Facilitate refugees' and health professionals' access to documents like: the Brazilian Action Plan, the COMIGRAR 2014 recommendations and the UNHCR's Urban Refugees Policy.

### 3. Education

#### Transcript of Participant Inputs

##### 1. Recommendation to Higher Learning: Sergio Vieira de Mello Chair

We already have the legal instruments to facilitate, yet regulation is missing.

Regulation of Article 44 – Regulate who?

Two pieces of advice with normative power:

- CONARE – MEC representative within CONARE; that CONARE should have resolution to regulate
- CNE – and a resolution of the National Education Council

Regulation of Law 9.474/97 – Article 44

Allow facilitated access of refugees to higher education

And plus: not only refugees, but also that CONARE give solutions to asylum-seekers

Refugee account: There are few scholarships offered to refugees (just three in each) university and the selection process does not favour them.

##### 2. Discuss selective processes and retention of refugees in universities – correction of exams in a different way; not taking into consideration strictly the level of Portuguese.

As such, sensitisation is necessary; universities already have autonomy.

Refugee account: Lawyer in his country of origin but here cannot access the job market.

##### 3. Recognition of diploma (also in the realm of article 44), the regulation should also be referred to CONARE.

#### Profile of the Thematic Group

- Refugees – Congo, Pakistan, Syria
- Social worker
- Journalists
- Lawyer
- Parliamentary advisor of the Governor of the State of SP / State Committee for Refugees
- University professors / researchers (anthropology, sociology)
- Secretary of Education of the State of SP
- CRAIs



Problem identified: Basic education is fundamental

Account: Son has not yet received diploma because school does not recognize the Protocol  
∴ lack of knowledge on the part of the school in relation to the recognition of the documents of refugees and their authenticity.

4. Recommendation: Create a booklet for refugees about their rights in relation to the access education for the public servants in the area of education in relation to the rights of refugees.

Reinforce the diversity of the curriculum of schools and stimulate [public] servants to be better prepared to work with the public of interest.

As such, cooperation between federal and state government in the instruction of Portuguese and the creation of booklets in different languages.

### **Rapporteur's Summary**

Demands and difficulties raised by the participants:

- The language and the lack of knowledge about the history of Brazil are barriers to entry in the Brazilian educational system;
- Refugee's demands should be urgently included in the agenda of the three spheres of government;
- The difficulty of getting a degree equivalency in Brazil;
- Slowness of different levels of Government regarding the procedure of regulating refugees' access to Brazilian universities;
- Difficulty in obtaining course completion certificates in Brazil if they possess the Protocol because its authenticity is taken as questionable;
- Refugees should be warned at least one month in advance of the holding of a meeting like this, so they have time to systematize their demands and present them at the meeting.

Proposals arising from the group:

- Forwarding a request to the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE), calling for the regulation of Article 44 of Law 9474 of July 22, 1997, which deals with the recognition of certificates, diplomas and requirements for obtaining resident status and the admission in academic institutions at all levels, aiming at including in CONARE's agenda a draft resolution to regulate refugees' access to universities (which is already guaranteed by Article 44, there is a lack of regulation) and get this regulation also by the CNE (National Education Council); since both - CNE and CONARE have normative power;
- Increasing the number of places designated for refugees at Brazilian universities;
- Promoting greater coordination between federal and state governments to promote the Portuguese teaching for refugees in the public school systems, and strengthen the importance of addressing the diversity issue in schools;

- Creating a guidebook in different languages for refugees approaching their rights regarding access to education and another one for civil servants working for the education sector on the rights of refugees; so that the PoC are more aware of their rights and the public servants are more prepared to deal with refugees' needs.

## 4. Housing

### Transcript of Participant Inputs

\* Debate about if the treatment should be separated and specifically in relation to the homeless. Some actors, including refugees, think that the conditions in the shelters should be directed for ALL, including Brazilians, to facilitate local integration.

PROPOSITIONS: \* More vacancies in the shelters;

\* Housing in 2 phases: 1) Immediate reception (for more than 4 months); 2) Permanent reception (facilitation of rents / flexibility with documents / facilitation of purchase of property);

\* Call the attention of the public authorities to the necessity of distributing abandoned land and including refugees in that distribution;

\* Capacitation of the authorities working in the public shelters so that they understand the specific protection needs of refugees;

\* Mapping of migrant homes / public hotels;

\* Sensitization with approaches/a focus on gender, age and diversity: pay attention to the specific vulnerabilities of children and displaced women;

\* Elaboration of the Integrated State Programme that things of the management, the reception and follow-up of cases.

→ Deputy of Alesp says that he will bring the issue up for discussion and pressure the Governor.

### Rapporteur's Summary

Recommendations:

- Change the reception conditions, creating public shelters specifically tailored for refugees and asylum seekers, thus avoiding that vulnerable asylum cases are sheltered in the same spaces as the homeless population.
  - The Secretariat of Social Development of the State of Sao Paulo expressed its disagreement regarding this point, under the argument that the social assistance/public housing policies must aim at universal excellency, comprehending nationals and non-nationals beneficiaries alike.
- Train and qualify the teams in charge of the asylum seekers and refugees' reception and care, in order to ensure the respect for the specific protection needs of this population.
- Difficulties in the search for housing aggravated by problems with language, requested documentation for rental, and geo-social knowledge of asylum-seekers and refugees.

- With regard to the shelter, the maximum time allowed for permanence is insufficient to enable the population's self-reliance and integration.
- Use the federal railway's estate, which is currently vacant, for the construction of shelters for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Use vacant buildings in São Paulo's downtown for the construction of shelters and housing for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Establish CDHU (Company of Housing and Urban Development)'s quotas for refugees.
- Specify services specifically tailored for immigrants and refugees.
- Allow requests related to housing to be presented at express/decentralized documentation centers (Poupatempo, Expresso Cidadão, Na Hora, etc.).
- Advocate for the federal, state and municipal institutions to claim more responsibility for issues related to housing, unburdening the NGOs and other civil society organizations.
- Develop Temporary Housing program for immigrants and refugees.
- Increase the number of services targeted to meet this population, especially shared housing and local housing for families. In addition, it is necessary to increase the number of vacancies in existing services.
- Offer references and contact information for public housing/shelters at refugees and immigrants' workplaces.
- Prepare document to be forwarded to the Federal Government on the provision of land for immigrants and refugees' housing (emphasis on the former federal railroad).

## 5. Employment

### Transcript of Participant Inputs

#### Problem

1. Combat slave labour.
2. [...] in a semi-open regime
3. Protocol – validity  
General lack of knowledge about the document
4. Lack of awareness about xenophobia
5. Delay of the Protocol
6. Delay CPS
7. Businesses don't contract
8. Access to education restricted  
Knowledge of Portuguese language
9. Working in the area
10. Lack of knowledge about the job market
11. Qualified in Brazil and does not have access to the market. Protocol is not accepted.
12. Lack of knowledge about refugees' own labour rights and companies take advantage.

#### Solution

1. --
2. How they are stuck in the reception shelter alternatives for work
3. Improve the appearance of the doc, so that all inst. Produce documents with similar appearance  
  
- Information campaigns about the validity and acceptance of its value as rights
4. Sensitisation campaign government and civil society
5. Acceleration of the process
6. Decentralising: it was a victory and now should be implemented; in an electronic manner, many challenges
7. Sensitisation of companies, by the public [...]; credibility
8. Professional orientation
9. Initial opportunities with companies, even if it is not in the exact sector; more of a first step. Action of civil society and government.
10. Public and civil society intercultural lecture.  
  
Seal of diversity add the refugee.
11. Improve the appearance of the protocol.
12. Trainings for refugees and support.  
Information for companies

13. Lack of knowledge information.	13. Importance of voluntary work of the support that exists
14. Include companies in discussions.	14. Invite to fora
15. Communication with companies	15. Dissemination projects and business cases; by UN and government.

## Rapporteur's Summary

Several points were raised. Some of them directly concern the matter. Others are only indirectly related to the issue.

- On general public awareness: promote campaigns in the mainstream media informing the Brazilian population of the refugees' situation, emphasizing their right to work and their relation with the protection of human rights envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, of which Brazil is a signatory. Based on this, xenophobia and prejudices are expected to diminish.
- On awareness and joint management with enterprises: there should be a more direct relationship between the companies that make selection processes and public agencies, since the presence of a public body such as the Municipal Secretary on Development, Labor and Entrepreneurship or the State Department of Employment and Labor Relations generates credibility and gives security for the companies to hire refugees. Thus, it prevents the offering of precarious work spaces, which can often be characteristic of labor analogous to slavery.
- On social responsibility: create a seal to be given to companies that hire refugees or integrate refugees into existing signets such as the Diversity Seal.
- On the relation work-documentation:
  - The precariousness of the protocol as a refugee identification hinders the pursuit of employment (the Protocol is a more pertinent point to the discussion of the Working Group on "documents").
  - On the relation between work and documentation, refugees from certain nationalities face many difficulties to obtain a Work and Social Security Card (CTPS). Due to this fact, many are excluded from the companies' selection processes.
- On the right to work:
  - Find a solution to egress or on detention people since they cannot leave the reception center to work;
  - Promote alternative ways of generating income – such as cooperative models;
  - Provide language classes to ensure communication when searching employment – classes can be free or based on the exchange of language skills between refugees and Brazilians.
- On employment generation and refugees' empowerment: create cultural exchange programs that may generate income for refugees such as language and cultural classes as well as training for works in the refugees' expertise area to take advantage of their technical knowledge and improve their self-esteem.

## 6. Culture

### Transcript of Participant Inputs

- Awareness campaigns
- Forums and events to divulge and debate refugee issues
- Include in school curriculums issues about cultural diversity

### Rapporteur's Summary

The group argued that even in a cosmopolitan city like São Paulo there are still many barriers to cultural coexistence with the refugee population. "Brazilian culture does not know the culture from the outside. A Brazilian friend said that Haiti is in Africa," complained a Congolese refugee during the discussion of the work group on culture. Given this situation, a university professor of international relations stressed that it is urgent to promote a cultural integration between the cultures of refugees and the Brazilian, and vice versa, considering the many dimensions of education, health and identity of this population. "There needs to be an interface with the cultural richness brought by the refugees."

Without access to job vacancies and call for applications for cultural projects funded by the government, many refugees find it difficult to enter in the Brazilian culture. This is the case of a refugee from Cameroon, graduated in Management Science and Economics in his home country, who has been looking for a job for eight months in Brazil.

Prejudice, stereotypes and stigma are barriers that seem unbearable. "Brazilians do not know who is a refugee. They think you are in Brazil just because you wanted to leave your home country," said a refugee from the Ivory Coast.

For a Congolese refugee, "Brazil is a xenophobic and racist country." For this reason, it is necessary to address the issue of cultural diversity of refugees in the school curricula of elementary and secondary education.

To build refugees' skills in the local is essential to further introduce cultural issues in the areas of history and geography. According to ADUS, an NGO that works with refugee integration in São Paulo, there is a high demand for Portuguese language courses. They are currently taught by volunteers. About 750 people were trained in the courses the organization offers between 2012 and 2014, but still there is a pent-up demand with over 5,000 requests.

The promotion of cultural activities can deconstruct prejudices and stigmas about refugees and asylum. "Cultural coexistence of identities is a two-way process. You cannot segregate throughout it," said a professor.

Initiatives such as the so-called "Cultural Hug" (also led by ADUS) help in the dissemination and promotion of the cultures of refugees among Brazilians. "We need to mobilize civil society, health and education professionals, and other stakeholders to assist this population," suggested a doctoral student on the theme "partnerships for refugees."

Despite the obstacles and challenges to cultural integration of refugees, meetings recently organized by this population in São Paulo have contributed to the discussion.

At the round table, it was suggested the creation of a mailing list with contact of refugees and partner organizations to articulate areas where refugees can spread their culture in urban areas. "We need to give more voice to refugees." As an example of a successful international campaign, participants brought up a poster that said: "Einstein is a refugee."



The issue of culture permeates every dimension of life. Therefore, it is important to think about the culture in a multidimensional way, encompassing ethnic and educational dimensions in their historical, linguistic, racial, religious and artistic.

#### Recommendations:

The following recommendations were suggested by the Panel of the Working Group “Integration Challenges” theme of Culture, focused on the dissemination of refugee cultures:

- To promote cultural integration in multidimensional perspective, embracing ethnic, religious and educational dimensions, focusing on sharing of Brazilian cultures and refugees;
- To promote information campaigns refugee respect to awareness, answering the following question: in order to reverse the stereotypes, prejudices and stigmas; "Who is a refugee?"
- Encourage the provision of English language learning courses, incorporating elements of Brazilian culture and cultures of the refugee population;
- Encourage and disseminate forums on social networks;
- Promote initiatives to promote the diverse cultures of origin of refugees, such as artistic performances and spaces for food;
- Include in school curricula the issue of diversity and cultural richness of refugees in Brazil.