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Buenos Aires, Argentina

a case study from:

Migrant and Refugee Integration in Global Cities
The Role of Cities and Businesses

| Teresa Juzwiak |



The Hague Process
on Refugees and Migration



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Introduction of the Project and How to Read the Report

In collaboration with Maastricht University's Graduate School of Governance, The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration (THP) initiated a research project related to the economic and social integration of migrants and refugees in cities, focusing specifically on efforts undertaken by the private sector and city governments – both separately and in partnership – to provide protections and create greater opportunities in employment markets and communities.

The aim of this project is to ascertain how businesses and governments in eight global cities are contributing towards the integration of migrant and refugee populations, either through specialized outreach programmes, the provision of services or targeted funding of non-governmental organizations, and to what extent these contributions can be deepened or expanded. Perhaps a more important goal is to determine whether and how business and cities are currently working together to create opportunities for migrants and refugees and deepen their integration into society. If collaboration between the private and public sectors does not currently exist, the research identifies barriers and opportunities for potential partnerships.

The project consists of a number of components including a literature review highlighting the importance of urban migration flows, as well as the reality that it is at the local – increasingly city level - whereby migrants interact and experience the process of integration. In this context integration is defined at its most pragmatic, as a process in which migrants are empowered to thrive within the context of their destination – in part - with the help of a number of different local stakeholders. In addition to the literature review, fieldwork in eight countries was carried out to identify relevant stakeholders for qualitative semi-structured interviews. In total 56 interviews were conducted.

The results of the research will be released in a number of different formats. Firstly the main report - 'Migrant and Refugee Integration in Global Cities' presents an overview of the research process and draws together the key findings of the project using data gathered from all cities. It is also intended to be a repository of information for interested parties and thus the good practices and partnerships identified are presented in accordance to the policy dimension to which they are most applicable. For example, if a reader is interested in looking at what stakeholders in other cities are doing to facilitate the cultural integration of migrants, the reader can check this section for clear examples of what is happening in the cities of study.

If the reader requires further information about a good practice or wishes to understand if there are enough similarities between cities to be a viable option to consider for policy transfer, then they can consult the accompanying case study reports. These are intended to act as stand-alone reports for an audience interested in the particular case of a city. For ease of reference, the cities included in the study are: Auckland (New Zealand), Buenos Aires (Argentina), Chicago (United States), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), Lisbon (Portugal), Nairobi (Kenya), Rotterdam (The Netherlands), and São Paulo (Brazil).

Introduction

Buenos Aires is the capital of Argentina, as well as its largest city, with a population of approximately 3.7 million. It is also the city where the majority of the migrant population is concentrated, including immigrants from abroad as well as internal migrants. Buenos Aires has experienced two important migration flows: that originating from Europe beginning in the late 19th century, particularly from Spain and Italy; and more recently, from neighbouring countries (Govea, 2012). In the forty-one years between 1854 and 1895, the total population in Buenos Aires grew from 90,000 to 670,000. Of these, the foreign population represented from 60 to 80 per cent (OAS, 2012). These flows are a result of a combination of the prosperous Argentinean economy, and the conflicts and economic crises in Europe (IOM, 2008; OAS, 2012). Since the 1920s, stricter immigration policies changed the nature of Buenos Aires' migration flows. Eventually, European migration gave way to new waves from neighbouring, and African countries.

Table 1. Key statistics Argentina and Buenos Aires

	Argentina	Buenos Aires
Size (km²)	3,761,274	202
Population (total)	40,117,096	3,718,261
Migrant Population		
Foreign born	1,805,957	381,778
Internal migrants	7,550,828	778,535
Number of refugees	3,488	Majority in Buenos Aires

Source: INDEC Censo Nacional de Población, Hogares y Viviendas 2010¹, EAH 2012², (UNHCR, 2013).

Migration history

Since its independence from the Kingdom of Spain, Argentina has been known as a country open to immigration. Starting in the late 1880s, the government offered subsidized opportunities for migrants arriving mainly from European ports, primarily Spain and Italy (OAS, 2012). Early migrations were deeply responsible for the population growth in Argentina, contributing approximately 4.2 million people between 1881-1914 alone (IOM, 2008). The most prominent groups of migrants were Italians, Spaniards, French and Russians. At that time, settlement occurred both in rural and urban areas, contributing to the development of unexplored territory (IOM, 2008). This trend remained until the mid-

¹ INDEC. (2001). Censo 2001 Datos por Provincia. Retrieved August 15, 2013, from http://www.indec.gov.ar/webcenso/ECMI/index_ecmi.asp

² INDEC. (2012). *Encuesta Anual de Hogares 2012 Ciudad de Buenos Aires: Tabulados Básicos*. Dirección General de Estadística y Censos; Ministerio de Hacienda; Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Retrieved from http://www.estadistica.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/hacienda/sis_estadistico/EAH/cuadros_basicos/2012_tabulados_basicos.pdf

1900s, when Argentina started experiencing a new kind of migration, composed mainly of women from neighbouring countries (Govea, 2012). This new profile also contradicted the traditional migrant profile i.e. until then young men of rural origin. Whereas the earliest migrants would often work in agriculture, the newest groups concentrate their economic activity around construction (for men) and domestic service (for women) (OECD, 2010). Furthermore, Govea (2012) describes the heterogeneity of the migrant population spread throughout the city, which is highly related to the economic opportunities found in each of the neighbourhoods. “Migrants from the region are essentially employed in domestic services, tourism and construction, with the exception of those from Bolivia, who are for the most part employed as agricultural workers for the sugar harvests” (Dumont, Spielvogel, & Widmaier, 2010, pg. 18).

The concentration of immigrants from neighbouring countries has evolved significantly throughout the past decades (Dumont et al., 2010). According to data presented by Govea (2012), in 1970 immigrants from the neighbouring country represented 19 per cent of foreigners in the city. However, by 1991 this share had reached 36 per cent and finally, by 2001, it was close to 46 per cent. Initially, labour migration from bordering countries was characterized by seasonality (IOM, 2008; OAS, 2012). However, this became more permanent with the less restrictive immigration policies and more turbulent situation in other South American countries. According to Dumont et al. (2010), Argentina is the top destination for migrants originating from Latin American countries (OECD, 2010).

Starting in the 1960s and until the early 1980s, Argentina also experienced important outflows of emigrants, looking for better employment and economic opportunities in other Latin American countries, as well as the U.S., Canada, and Europe. This trend continued throughout the 1990s, a period when Argentina suffered from various financial crises and decelerated economic growth (OAS, 2012).

As of 2013, Argentina had 3,488 recognized refugees and 1,921 asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2013).

Currently, as a consequence of the recent European economic crises, there seems to be a renewal of the traditional immigration flows to Argentina, specifically of Spaniards. Olmos Giuspponi (2011) argues that migration to and from Argentina is deeply linked to economic needs and the search for employment. While searching for better conditions, a large proportion of the flow is directed to urban areas, with particular concentration in Buenos Aires (Olmos Giuspponi, 2011).

Policy framework

Despite the early openness to migration, Argentina started closing its borders in the early 1920s, partly due to fear by the governing classes of an immigrant revolt. At the same time, the European scenario showed improvements, which also contributed to lesser flows of immigrants into Argentina (OAS, 2012). Early legislation on immigrant flow was based

on security issues, partly as reflection of the military regime (Olmos Giuspponi, 2011). The General Law of Migration No. 22 439, better known as the “Videla Law”, passed in 1981, was in force for many years, including over twenty years of the newly instituted democratic period. Even though this undermined the human rights embedded in the 1994 Constitution, a new Law was only approved in 2003, after several successive attempts to improve the situation, especially that of irregular migrants. In total, different government administrations approved six amnesties: 1949, 1958, 1984, 1964, 1974, and 1992 – the latter three being specifically for individuals originating from bordering countries (Olmos Giuspponi, 2011). The last regularization programme was conducted between 2007 and 2009, and is widely known as the *Patria Grande* Programme. According to the OAS (2012), close to 10-15 per cent of the total migrant population in Argentina was regularized, with special focus on those from neighbouring countries.

The new Migration Law, drafted in a participatory manner, including organizations from the civil society, and academics, represents an important shift in discourse regarding migration and migrant rights. This shift was towards a human rights based approach. Amongst its novel characteristics is the emphasis on a regional approach to immigration management (Olmos Giuspponi, 2011). In 2006, the Argentinean government promulgated the first law on refugees and asylum seekers; again, following a more human rights based approach contained in the Migration Law.

Tables 2 and 3 summarize the national normative legal framework and the institutional framework for immigration and refuge in Argentina.

Table 2. National normative legal framework

Law	Description
National Argentinean Constitution of 1994	The post-dictatorship Constitution establishes rights and guarantees, aiming at all inhabitants, with no distinction of origin, race, or status. According to this legislation, all citizens are equal before the law, and must therefore have equal access to rights and services.
Migration Act (Law No. 25. 871) of 2003, promulgated in 2004	This new migration law is based on human rights premises and is in accordance with international standards. It recognizes the human right to migrate and the right to family reunification. Moreover, the law guarantees equal access to migrants to basic healthcare and education. It includes specific provisions on the right to residence and work of citizens from other South American countries. This law also refers to the efforts to be made by the state to promote the integration of migrants and facilitate the consultation or participation of these populations in local decision making.

General Act for Refugee Acknowledgment and Protection - <i>Ley de Refugiados</i> – Law num. 26.165 of 2006	Argentina’s first specific law on refuge was approved in 2006. This law abides by the principles of no return, non-discrimination, non-prosecution for illegal entry, family unity and confidentiality. This legislation applies not only to those with granted refugee status, but to claimants of refuge as well.
Law 26.364 on the Prevention and Sanction of Trafficking in Persons and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking of 2008	This piece of legislation aims at implementing measures to prevent and sanction the trafficking of human beings, as well as to assist and protect its victims. It includes dispositions on the rights of the victims; and dispositions on penal and trial procedures applicable.

Source: IOM (2008); OAS (2012); Olmos Giuspponi (2011)

Table 3. Institutional framework at national level

Institution	Department	Attributions
Ministry of Interior	National Bureau of Population	Its goals are to design, develop and evaluate population and migration policies, as well as formulate programmes to implement those. It collaborates with other State entities, as well as NGOs and international organizations. The bureau is also responsible for researching and systematizing information on population; develop legislation; and coordinate with the Federal Population Council.
	National Bureau for Migration	This bureau constitutes a decentralized organism of the Ministry of Interior, which aims at the applying migration policy and legislation. Its main goals are to promote regularization of the migration status of foreigners, as well as to control inflows and outflows of migrants, and the permanence of foreigners in the territory. In order to achieve this, it works together with various police organizations, both national and international.
	National Bureau for Migration – Committee	Created in 1985, this organism is responsible for processing all asylum applications and for

	for the Eligibility for Refugees (CEPARE) ³	granting refugee status. It should also make recommendations on policies to be adopted by the national state.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Worship	Secretariat for Foreign Affairs	This ministry is responsible for extending rights and protection to Argentinean citizens living abroad, as well as elaborate and execute the migration policy internationally, including provisions all concerning nationality. Regarding migration issues, the Secretariat is responsible for protecting Argentineans abroad. It also aims at regularizing migratory status of its citizens, allowing for social and economic integration in the host community.
	Argentinean Fund for Horizontal Cooperation	The Fund was deigned to incentivize knowledge transfer by sending Argentinean experts abroad, and receiving foreign professionals in Argentinean institutions.
	National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI ⁴)	Operative since 1997, the Institute ensures all persons, whose rights are affected by any kind of discrimination, including matters of race and nationality among others. It aims at guaranteeing all rights and equal treatment to these individuals.

Source: IOM (2008)

Regarding the institutional framework, Buenos Aires is a special case. Given the fact that the city is also the capital of Argentina, some of the competencies are not clearly defined between local and national government. Proximity between agencies – both ideological and physical – makes it difficult to distinguish between national government and city, or even state.

Argentina is signatory to most of the international treaties in the matter of human rights, combating trafficking and slavery, and promoting safe migration (IOM, 2008; IOM, 2010). These include treaties and conventions promoted by the UN, the OAS, Mercosul, as well as bilateral agreements signed between Argentina and countries of relevance, especially neighbouring countries (Olmos Giuspponi, 2011). Argentina has signed the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990), but declared that it does not consider itself bound by the provisions of article 92 (1), regarding the arbitration of disagreements between the decisions of countries on a specific matter.

³ In Spanish, *Comité de Elegibilidad para los Refugiados*

⁴ In Spanish, *Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo*

Methodology

The primary source of information for the city of Buenos Aires was the city website, where a word search for terms such as migration, refugees, human rights and inclusion, revealed the relevant local government agencies to be contacted. The city website also revealed information on other organizations that are working in cooperation with the local government in order to facilitate migrant and refugee integration. Snowball sampling was also used in order to identify further stakeholders. One of the businesses identified as promoting integration practices for migrants and refugees, Manpower Argentina, was mentioned by several of the interviewees, and despite numerous attempts, contact was not successful within the proposed timeline.

Stakeholders were contacted initially over the phone in order to establish a more personal contact, something which is much appreciated in Latin American culture, and in order to ensure the correct person would receive the following email with a presentation letter for the project and an invitation to be interviewed. Despite reaching relevant policy makers, the researcher was unable to obtain an interview with the mayor of Buenos Aires.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish and a summary transcription was translated into English.

Table 5: Response rate for Buenos Aires

City	Contacted	Replies	Rejections	Non-replies	Interviewed	Interview response rate
Buenos Aires	16	9	3	7	6	38%

Out of 16 potential respondents contacted, six were interviewed, as shown in the table below, according to the type of stakeholder.

Table 6. Sample size by category in Buenos Aires

Respondent Type	Number of Interviews
Policy Maker/Municipal Administrator	3
Practitioners	0
Businesses	1
Civil Society	2
Total	6

Findings

The charts below depict the systematization of the main results from the policy review and interviews. Table 7 categorizes the programmes and services offered by the interviewed institutions aimed at facilitating the integration of migrants and refugees. The

table follows the policy dimensions determined for this study: social, cultural and religious, legal, political, and economic.

In Buenos Aires, based on the interviews performed, it is possible to observe that all of the organizations offer social programmes for the integration of migrants and refugees. These include health (n=3), education (n=2), awareness campaigns (n=2), as well as workshops and assistance regarding social services available in the city. The cultural dimension of migrant integration policy was also explored by all of the respondents. Only two of them offer language courses, while three provide some sort of training in cultural diversity and integration. Furthermore, two respondents promote cultural activities and one (MyRAR) offers sports activities. Religion was only mentioned by FCCAM, who offers pastoral assistance. Economic issues were also addressed by the majority of respondents in the form of vocational training (n=3) and employment (n=3). Other activities such as microcredit and business start-up assistance, assistance and information on the process of recognition of certification and help with job interviews and CVs were also reported. Regarding the legal dimension, respondents assist migrants and refugees in covering costs relating to legal procedures (n=2), with documentation and legal advice (n=2), and one respondent mentioned assistance in the retrieval of documentation from the country of origin (FCCAM). Finally, in the political dimension, forums for migrant participation are offered by the city government, in liaising with civil society.

Table 8 lists and describes all of the partnerships identified throughout the interviews.

Table 7. Policies, programmes and services provided to facilitate the integration of migrants and refugees according to policy dimensions in Buenos Aires^a

Typology	Stakeholder	Social	Cultural	Legal	Political	Economic	Observations
Policy makers	Sub-secretariat for Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism	Health* Education*	Language courses* Cultural activities Cultural insertion and diversity	Dismissal of costs for legal procedures for vulnerable individuals with no means	Forums for migrant participation*	Vocational training*	
	Directorate General of Coexistence within Diversity	Workshop on access to social services and practicalities Awareness campaigns Work Group on emotional issues	Cultural diversity workshop*	Workshops on legal issues* Documentation		Employment*	The Directorate dedicates itself to forwarding and mediating between migrants and other agencies (public, civil society and businesses); as well as mediation between agencies
	Rental Corp	Housing School (for children)	Cultural training				Custom services
Civil Society	MyRAR – Migrants and Refugees in Argentina Foundation	Sexual and reproductive health Access to	Cultural and sports activities			Financial education Business start-up assistance	

	technology			Microcredit
	Awareness campaigns (in the academic field)			Vocational training and labour insertion*
FCCAM – Argentinean Catholic Commission for Migration	Social assistance	Language courses	Documentation ^b	Employment *
	Home visits	Pastoral work	Legal advice	Training for interviews
			Retrieval of documents in origin country	Help with CV
			Cover small expenses related to legal procedures	Vocational training and labour insertion*
				Assistance and information on the recognition of certifications

^a The interviewee from the Commission was not included in this table since the interview provided different type of information

^b Separation of immigrants and refugees due to different legal questions.

* Occurs in partnership

Table 8. Partnerships for immigrant and refugee integration programmes and/or services in Buenos Aires

Stakeholder	Partner	Typology of partner	Benefit / Service	Description of Partnership	Established
Directorate General of Coexistence within Diversity (Public)	Public Prosecutor	Public	Workshop on legal issues	Prosecutor forward migrants to workshops offered by the Directorate	-
	Manpower	Private	Employment and Cultural diversity workshops	Directorate derives immigrants to vacancies; Manpower hosts cultural diversity workshops offered by the Directorate	For a long time
Sub-secretariat for Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism (Public)	NGOs	Civil society	Forums for migrant dialogue	NGOs participate in the forum to exchange information with the government	Since 2007
	Subsecretaria de Trabajo (Ciudad)	Public	Vocational training		-
	Other municipal agencies	Public			-
	MyRAR and FCCAM	Civil society	Assistance to refugees		-
Rental Corp (Business)	Relocation companies	Private	Relocation services	Rental Corp is hired by relocation companies	-
MyRAR – Migrants and Refugees in Argentina Foundation	UNHCR	Civil society	Training in sexual and reproductive health		-
	National Government	Public	Microcredit	State funds microcredit programme	-
	Municipal government	Public	Cultural activities	Punctual contributions to develop projects	-

	Manpower	Private	Employment	Insertion in legal labour market	Since 2006/2007
	UNHCR	Civil society	Participative diagnosis		In the past
	Galeria Boedo and Mercado Progreso	Private	Commercial opportunity	Offer space for migrant entrepreneurs	-
	<i>Confederación Económica Metropolitana</i> ^a	Private	Commercial opportunity and awareness campaigns	Two-way partnership. The Confederation offers space for migrant entrepreneurs. MyRAR organizes awareness campaigns with members of the Confederation	-
FCCAM – Argentinean Catholic Commission for Migration	Manpower	Private	Employment	FCCAM derives migrants for employment	For 15 year
	Ministry of Labour (National)	Public	Vocational training and insertion	Governmental programme run by the Foundation	Starting in 2013
	UNHCR, National Ministry of Social Development, and INADI ^b	Public and Civil Society	Guarantee rights and basic needs of refugees	Programme funded by UNHCR, the Ministry and INADI, run by the Foundation	2013
	Municipal Government	Public	<i>“Programa Construyendo Nos-Otros”</i> ^c	Programme funded by the Government, run by the Foundation	
	EU	Public	Access to health and education of vulnerable groups	Programme funded by the EU, run by the Foundation	2011

^a Metropolitan Economic Confederation

^b In Spanish, *Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación, Xenofobia y el Racismo* (National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism)

^c “Programme Building Ourselves” [N.A. in Spanish, there is a word play with the term *Nos-Otros*]

Municipality

The City of Buenos Aires is regulated through the Municipal Constitution of 1996⁵ which, among other provisions, mentions in art. 11 that: “all persons have identical dignity and are equal before the law”. Furthermore, the same article recognizes the right to be different, and disallows discrimination in any form, including ethnic or nationality reasons and forbids any circumstance that implies the distinction, exclusion, restriction or prejudice of individuals. The Municipal Constitution does not contain any specific regulations on migration, as this is a matter of national competence. However, these provisions, based on basic principles of human rights, are essential to guide municipal policies on the social inclusion of migrants and refugees.

In 2007, the Work Group in Health and Migration was created under the Directorate for Vocational and Technical Training, with the objective of performing research, training, treatment and diffusion of the issues on migration and health in the city of Buenos Aires⁶. In that same year, Mauricio Macri, the incumbent mayor, at the time of this study, took office. Under his mandate, there was a restructuring of the Sub-secretariat for Human Rights and Cultural Pluralism, which now accounts for three General Directorates relevant for migrants. As explained by respondent from the sub-secretariat in an interview:

- *The General Directorate for the Attention and Assistance of Victims* develops programmes for citizens who suffer violations of human rights; for instance, victims of slave labour, of child labour and of human trafficking.
- *The General Directorate for Coexistence within Diversity* develops programmes for the integration and inclusion of different communities that make up the city of Buenos Aires, based on human rights principles.
- *The General Directorate for Collectivities* aims at coordinating and generating links with the different communities in Buenos Aires, as well as assessing them by way of legal procedures that have to be met by their organizations. In Buenos Aires there are more than 50 colonies of immigrants, which possess their own institutions, social services and educational network. According to the Sub-secretary, it allows for migrant groups that are not yet organized or not recognized as collectivities to have their space, through which they may show their culture to the rest of the community and establish relationships whereby they will gain respect and be included in society.

With regard to migrant and refugee integration, the Directorates for Collectivities and Coexistence within Diversity are the most relevant. Furthermore, it was reported that the sub-secretariat works indirectly with other agencies within the municipalities' institutional framework, in order to guarantee the requirements provided by law on the

⁵ Buenos Aires. (1996). Constitución de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. *Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*. Retrieved August 15, 2013, from http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/com_social/constitucion/completa.php

⁶ Buenos Aires. (2007). Resolución No. 2515 - Grupo de trabajo salud y migraciones. Retrieved August 15, 2013, from <http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/salud/dircap/mat/normativas/reso2515.pdf>

rights of migrants and refugees. For instance, the sub-secretariat cooperates with the Ministry of Social Development (General Directorate for Women) on gender issues; with the Ministry of Economic Development (Sub-secretariat for Labour) on housing issues and with the Ministry of Education on educational issues, including language courses. The sub-secretariat also referred to a Municipal Decree from 2007 that provides for the dismissal of administrative fees for individuals in situations of unsafe housing, allowing them to arrange for all the necessary procedures regarding their access to social services. The objective is to allow them to normalize and develop their lives in accordance with the existing laws.

Furthermore, in 2009 as a result of the new focus on the different communities inhabiting the city, the Programme “*Buenos Aires Celebra*” was initiated to accompany the different communities in their cultural festivities. Within this project, a blog⁷ was developed, where the communities can follow the different events occurring in the city throughout the year. Furthermore, the official calendar of the city includes the celebration of the “Day of Coexistence and Cultural Diversity” (April 19th), “Day for Peru” (July 18th), “Day for Armenia” (October 5th), among others. Several projects have been developed under this programme, including the portrayal of theatrical performances addressing issues of diversity; a photography contest called *Transparencia*, aimed at the portrayal of images that reflect the integration of communities in the city; the publishing of the book “*Mis abuelos también lo cuentan*”⁸ which gathers tales, legends, and songs of the 50 communities inhabiting Buenos Aires; “*Mixturas*”, a project for artistic expression; “*Do Re Mi Ciudad*”, a music festival offering space for communities to share their traditional music. In this context, in 2011, the Observatory for Collectives was created as a result of the extensive work conducted with the communities. Its goal is to reveal the stories and cultural contributions of the different migration trends that characterize the city, and the results can be found on the project’s website⁹.

In 2010, the National Government approved a Decree regulating the Migration Act of 2003. Under this new legislation, municipalities are obliged to create spaces for migrant participation. Therefore, the Law 3.574 of 30 January 2010¹⁰ on Forums for full migrant participation was approved. According to the law, the forums should constitute spaces for participation, consultation, information and counselling for the different communities and, for the authorities, a channel for demands and proposals. These forums take place within the scope of the civil society organizations that work with migrant and refugee populations. Subsequently, these organizations meet in order to share and learn from each other, as well as identify common issues and develop proposals together with the municipality. Demands for access to vocational training and labour inclusion were addressed through these forums. However, not all of the respondents agreed that implementation of these forums is being done in full accordance with the law.

⁷ Buenos Aires celebra. (n.d.). Retrieved June, 2013, from <http://buenosairescelebra.blogspot.com.ar/>

⁸ In English, “My grandparents also tell it”

⁹ Observatorio de Colectividades. (2010). *Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires*. Retrieved June, 2013, from http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/areas/secretaria_gral/colectividades/

¹⁰ Buenos Aires. (2010, September 30). Ley 3574 - Foros para la Integración Plena de los Migrantes. Retrieved August 15, 2013, from <http://www.cedom.gov.ar/es/legislacion/normas/leyes/ley3574.html>

Finally, in 2011 the Municipality approved the Law 4.036 of 24 November on the Integral Protection of Social Rights for citizens of the city of Buenos Aires¹¹. Article 3 of this legislation determines that foreigners must fulfil the requirements established by law in order to access social services in the city; the bill then restricts access to services to those who have lived [legally] in Buenos Aires for less than two years. According to the Director of the Commission on Human Rights, Guarantees, and Anti-discrimination of the Legislature of the city of Buenos Aires, this piece of legislation deprives foreigners of essential rights being, thus, in direct contradiction of the National Constitution, of the Migration Act, and of the Municipal Constitution. However, on this issue, it was reported that the government does not want to engage in the logistics of “victimization” in which migrants and refugees become dependent on government support and, therefore tackles the issue of integration through other proposals. Moreover, other respondents reported that migrants and refugees are able to make use of all social services existing in the city and that the city does not engage in policies of positive discrimination. The policy review also identified the existence of a One-Stop shop developed under the Ministry of Social Development, where migrants should also be capable of obtaining information and guidance about the city’s social services.

In this study a number of specific programmes directed at migrant and refugee integration¹² carried out by the Directorate of Coexistence within Diversity were identified. In a more practical sense, the Directorate has the objective of designing innovative procedures to broadcast information to the public in general, spreading the message of coexistence. These procedures include workshops for the promotion of rights, aimed at recognizing cultural diversity, conflict and coexistence, as well as providing information on services, the city’s legal framework, access to social services, schooling for children, and documentation. In some cases, migrants and refugees under legal probation were sent to these workshops on the orders of the Public Prosecutor. This occurs especially in the case of migrants who are victims of blackmail or extortion; false contracts for housing or arrested for unlicensed selling on the street, as a result of disinformation regarding these issues. The Directorate also organizes awareness campaigns for civil servants, clerks at the One-Stop Shop, doctors and employees in public administrations through which they tackle the existing disinformation among these groups concerned with the status and rights of migrants and refugees. Moreover, the Directorate works as a mediator between organizations, capable of reducing bureaucracy in order to establish programmes for the inclusion of minorities. One of the examples cited was of mediation between an NGO that wished to organize language courses and a public University that was interested in providing the physical space for it. A lack of resources and structure to further develop such activities was identified.

¹¹ Buenos Aires. (2011, November 24). Ley 4036 - Protección Integral de los Derechos Sociales para los Ciudadanos. Retrieved August 15, 2013, from <http://www.cedom.gov.ar/es/legislacion/normas/leyes/ley4036.html>

¹² It is important to note that the Directorate is in charge of policies for inclusion of minorities, including migrants and refugees, as well as sexual diversity and indigenous populations, among others.

In addition to the aforementioned involvement of the city authorities with the integration of migrants and refugees, the respondent from FCCAM indicated that in the past year the Foundation has developed the Programme “*Construyendo Nos-Otros*”, funded by the Municipal Government. This programme is aimed at promoting the participation of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the city’s social-educational-legal-cultural system. Through this programme, guidance activities were organized in order to provide support and counselling on issues such as obtaining equivalence for certificates obtained abroad, as well as access to university and procedures on settling in the city. In 2013 the project was once again presented to the Government, but at the time of concluding this study, approval had still not been granted.

Businesses

In recent years, as a result of the economic recovery, Argentina has been attracting more and more international companies and, consequently, international employees under expatriate schemes. In a review of this issue it was possible to identify three relocation companies providing services in the city. However, it was only possible to interview Rental Corp, a property consulting company that offers custom made services to high level expatriates through hiring companies or relocation companies. Rental Corp specifically focuses on housing needs, acting as an intermediary between the landlord and the tenant. They assist the migrants and their families in finding appropriate housing, in moving, in renegotiating leases and in the return of the property and the recovery of the security deposit. Secondary services include the search for appropriate schooling for the expatriate’s children, and cultural training. Relocation companies offer more extensive packages that include, but are not limited to, documentation and legal advice, spouse support, and language training. Some of the clients listed by such companies include important corporations such as: Shell CAPSA, Novartis Argentina S.A., Daimler Chrysler, Unilever Argentina, UNICEF, and diplomatic institutions.

Third actors

Civil society in Buenos Aires is very active in promoting the integration of migrants and refugees. The Argentinean Catholic Commission for Migration (FCCAM) is a faith based organization with a long tradition in working with migrant and refugee groups in the context of Buenos Aires, and other cities in Argentina. It has been involved in projects commissioned by the Municipal Government, as well as projects funded by international organizations (i.e. the EU) and has close contacts with UNHCR.

The MyRAR – Migrants and Refugees in Argentina – Foundation was founded in 2002 and since then offers a very innovative approach to the integration of migrants and refugees. Through the provision of urban microcredit and financial education, MyRAR assists entrepreneurial migrants in their business start-up. According to one respondent, these services are aimed at migrants and refugees who already have their basic rights

guaranteed, facilitating the full realization of such rights. This programme was initially developed in partnership with the UNHCR, and funded by the Argentinean National Government, which monitors and controls the functioning of the microcredits. Currently, the Foundation is able to provide migrants and refugees with other integration activities, such as cultural festivities and sports.

The only other similar initiative to offer microcredit for migrants discussed within the context of the interviews occurred with Guatemalan refugees who settled in Argentina in 1994/1995. In order to ensure the success of the programme, the microcredit system had to be adapted in order to meet specific characteristics of each migrant group. For instance, the respondent mentioned that Senegalese entrepreneurs have the habit of paying back the credit all at once, at the end of the stipulated time frame. Aiming at avoiding default for this community, the structure of the service had to be adapted. The same applies to the collection of interest, the structure of which had to be adapted as well.

MyRAR has established interesting partnerships with organizations in the private sector, as is the case of the *Galeria Boedo*, the *Mercado del Progreso* and the Metropolitan Economic Confederation, in order to offer commercial opportunities to migrant entrepreneurs to sell and advertise their products. More specifically, the partnership with the Confederation, works as a two-way channel, as MyRAR is called upon to provide businesses members of the Confederation with workshops on the issue of migration, refuge, social economy and CSR.

Partnerships

While this study was able to identify several partnerships occurring between the Municipal Government and civil society, as well as intra-government agencies partnerships, only one public-private partnership was found. A three way partnership was established between Manpower, the UNHCR, and the Directorate General of Coexistence within Diversity. Manpower, an international human resources company, started a programme in partnership with the UNHCR to promote decent employment, vocational training and labour insertion of refugees. Initially, the programme only envisaged employment for refugees, but there were requests to expand the programme to immigrants as well. As a result of this, Manpower cooperated with the Directorate General of Coexistence within Diversity in a two-way exchange. While the Directorate is responsible for providing migrants to Manpower for labour insertion, Manpower hosts the cultural diversity workshops offered by the Directorate. Manpower also engages with FCCAM and MyRAR in providing employment for migrants and refugees. This programme has been on-going for close to 15 years, and has proven to be successful. During the stipulated time frame for data collection, successful contact was not established with Manpower.

Conclusion

Buenos Aires is a big city with many challenges. With regard to the integration of migrants and refugees, some topics of municipal competency were repeated over and over again by interview respondents. Primarily, Buenos Aires has a chronic and historical housing shortage. This problem affects not only foreigners, but also the Argentineans and is reflected in the system of guarantees required from tenants, in order to obtain housing. However, migrants have a harder time overcoming such barriers, which often adds to problems such as lack of proper documentation, language barriers, and discrimination. As a matter of fact, discrimination is another of the great challenges identified throughout the interviews. Analysis of the dialogue indicates various contradictions in the issue of discrimination. Some of the actors strongly emphasize this while others deny that it should even be considered. However, a controversial event in December 2010, when groups of destitute individuals were evicted from the Indo-American Park in Buenos Aires after forceful police action, with the subsequent death of three migrants¹³, led to declarations by the Mayor, Mauricio Macri, stating that the action was racist and xenophobic. This resulted in demands for an apology from the Bolivian and Paraguayan authorities. Furthermore, the respondent from the Directorate indicated that discrimination is culturally embedded in Argentinean dialogue. For instance, it is common to hear immigrants referred to by derogatory names associated with their nationalities.

Another important challenge relates to the unlicensed street traders, which despite being illegal in Buenos Aires, often constitutes the first means of economic integration in the city for migrants, especially those originating from Africa (Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal). Apart from being a path to social marginality, the often brutal way in which the police deal with the issue raises concerns about the protection and guarantee of human rights.

In this context, the microcredit programme, as well as the accompanying financial education and other benefits offered by MyRAR for immigrants wishing to start up their own businesses, constitutes a good practice that is enabling the city to tackle one of its biggest challenges. The city must not, however, ignore the remaining pressing issues and must continue to address them in innovative and efficient ways.

¹³ Desalojan el Parque Indoamericano de Buenos Aires tras un cruento conflicto. (2010, December 15). *Ultimahora.com*. Retrieved June, 2013, from <http://www.ultimahora.com/desalojan-el-parque-indoamericano-buenos-aires-un-cruento-conflicto-n386734.html>

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