

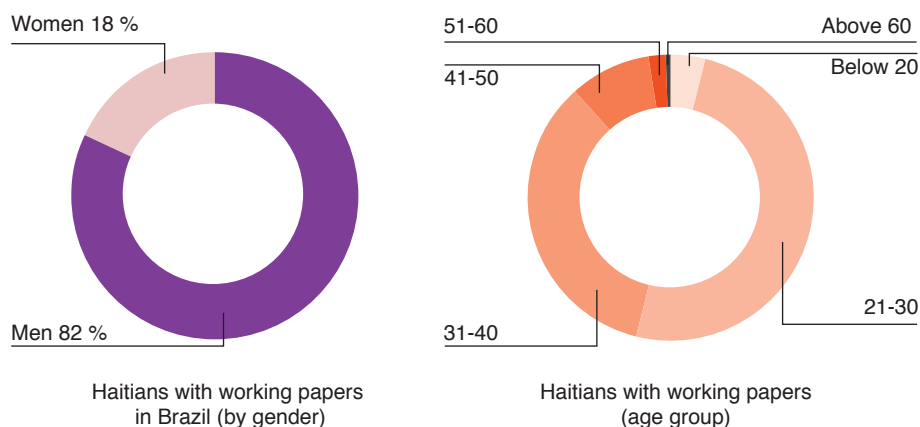
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The Haitian Migration Flow to Brazil: Aftermath of the 2010 Earthquake

Following the Haitian catastrophic earthquake of 12 January 2010, the entire country had to readapt itself to the destructive consequences of such natural disaster. Already plagued by political turmoil, poverty, corruption, the country had to adapt to the consequences of this dramatic earthquake that continue to resonate years after the event. It has been as a matter of fact the main direct and indirect cause for internally displaced people and international migration in the last few years.

The island of Hispaniola, which Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic, holds a delicate geographic position, as it sits on the rim of the Caribbean tectonic plate and has recorded many other ravaging seismic activities throughout history. Earthquakes can be followed by tsunamis, thus aggravating the tragedies associated with this natural disaster. The country also occasionally faces severe hurricanes and disastrous floods caused by torrential rainfalls not to mention man-made soil erosion, deforestation, and droughts, as reveals one of the first study published on this matter (Rodman, 1954)

Haitians have a long history of migration: from labor migrants seeking employment in neighboring countries to middle and upper classes seeking better education in universities in France or the United States, the Diaspora intensified during the 20th century, partly because of the oppressive regime of President François “Papa Doc” Duvalier in the 1960s. The earthquake led to new waves of migration, directed amongst other to Brazil and concerning especially young Haitian men (ranging from 20 to 40 years).



Author: Heloisa Miura, 2014. Source: Repórter Brasil.

In 2013, the number of refugee demands increased in 600% and Haitian migrants tripled (Marcel and Stochero, 2013), challenging the living conditions of Haitians arriving in Brazil, whose government and infrastructure was unprepared for such large migration flows. Throughout 2013 more than 13,000 Haitians obtained a Brazilian permanent resident visa, while a research to be published by PUC Minas University, IOM and the Brazilian National Migration Council estimates approximately 50,000 Haitians living in Brazil until the end of 2014 (Diário do Comércio, 2014).

It is extremely difficult to tell how many people leave a country for good or intending to return; therefore, it is easier to find figures on the receiving end, essentially 'host countries'. However, this only takes into account immigrants in regular situations, holding legal authorizations to stay in the country, thus neglecting the vast territory of clandestine migrants. Today, the Brazilian government estimates that 21,000 Haitians are living legally in Brazil (Fellet, 2014), but many remain undocumented. Furthermore, new comers keep arriving on a daily basis, flying directly to the Southeast region or crossing the border in Northern Brazil to the Acre Department, a region that did not get much media attention until the Haitian's arrival.

Even though the 2010 earthquake left a large number of internally displaced persons in Haiti, this paper will focus on the Haitian migrants who migrated to Brazil, highly covered by the media and thus constituting the center of discussions regarding a change of migration policies and legislation in Brazil. The aim of this paper is to assess the various aspects of Haitian migration to Brazil, such as the challenges they face during the journey and the harsh living conditions endured when they arrive.

1. MIGRATION FACTORS

Haiti has historically been an immigration country due to many "push factors"¹, in particular geopolitical clashes since the nineteenth century (Cruse, 2012: 23). Haitian communities abroad are concentrated in the Dominican Republic, United States, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Canada and the Bahamas. Smaller diasporas are also found in France, Jamaica, the French Antilles, Mexico, Virgin Islands, Brazil, and French Guiana (Cruse, 2012).

1.1. Earthquake

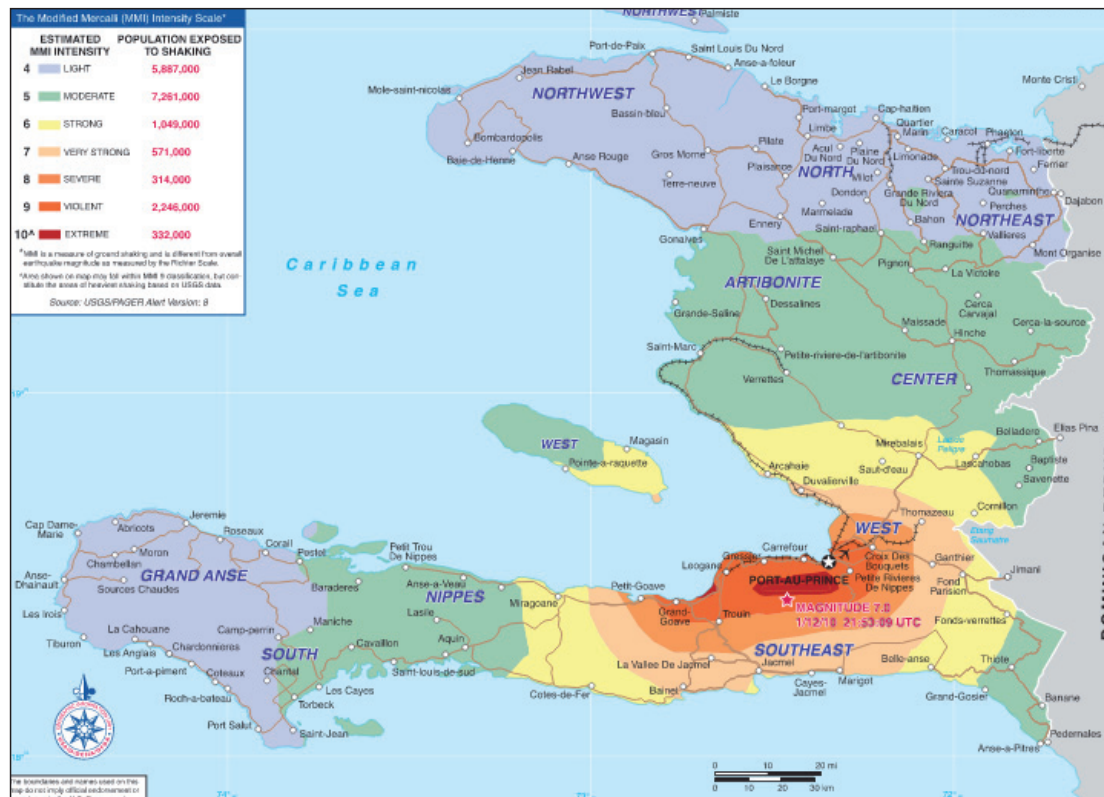
Caused by a rupture on the Enriquillo Fault, the earthquake of 12 January 2010 reached level 7.0 on the Richter scale² and such magnitude can affect areas more than 180 km away from the epicenter of the quake (Cruse, 2012). Its epicenter was near the town of Léogâne, approximately 25 kilometers away from Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, leading to even more devastating effects by reaching such a densely populated area. Many aftershocks continued to affect the country during January 2010, with an official death toll of 230,000 people, half a million injured and more than 1 million homeless out of a population of about 10,400,000 people (Red Cross).³

1. Everett S. Lee's factors that propel migration are divided into two categories: push and pull factors, which respectively reject and attract migrants. More on: A Theory of Migration. 1966. *Demography*. Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 47-57. Available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2060063>

2. Richter Magnitude Scale - «a scale for expressing the magnitude of an earthquake in terms of the logarithm of the amplitude of the ground wave; values range from 0 to over 9». The Free Dictionary. Available at <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/Richter+scale>

3. In total, the Red Cross estimates that 3 million people were affected by the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, including deceased, injured, homeless people and families. Available at <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/haiti-update-140110.htm>

Figure 1. Earthquake intensity in Haiti.



Source: US AID, 2010

The earthquake not only destroyed cities and its buildings, but it also undermined the economic dynamics that existed previously. Unlike other highly destructive disasters as the Fukushima disaster in Japan, the Haitian government was unable to provide means of survival to everyone affected and a lack of absorbing economic capacity in cities that remained unaffected. These cities did not have employment opportunities for the large number of people that left the capital Port-au-Prince (Fagen, 2013). This particular natural disaster consisted of a key push factor, which caused a sharp increase in emigration from Haiti, alongside other natural and historical factors.

1.2. Environmental and Social Factors

The recurrence of environmental disruptions increases risks and vulnerabilities. Indeed, Hurricane Sandy struck southern Haiti in October 2012, leaving a path of devastation including 54 confirmed deaths and causing damage to public infrastructure, houses and crops in Haiti (USAID, 2013) when the country had still not recovered from the 2010 earthquake. Many people were still living in tents or public shelters built by the time the earthquake hit, leaving all room for a new wave of chaos. Disastrous flood followed Hurricane Sandy and are imputable to weak infrastructure to face and mitigate the effects of natural disasters, but also “decades of deforestation for fuel [that] have left few natural barriers to the raging waters” (Ferreira, 2012). Even though preventive evacuation was considered successful, “severe flooding and landslides resulted from the violent winds and heavy rain and caused immediate and significant damage to houses, public infrastructure and crops” (Cody, 2013:32). The

destruction caused by the hurricane worsened the lives of Haitians, with an increase of cholera cases and gross losses in agriculture, providing one more reason to flee the country.

Moreover, Haiti's political history has been affected by several oppressive regimes ruling the country, pushing people to exile. More recently, the United States marine forces occupied Haiti at the beginning of the twentieth century, followed by the arrival of President François Duvalier, known as Papa Doc. His mandate endorsed bloody killings of thousands of political opponents, and such policies were continued by his son, Jean-Claude Duvalier or Baby-Doc, who took over power after his father's death. Such dictatorships created a feeling of fear and hidden anger in the people of Haiti, which helped to discredit the development of this nation and led people to emigrate (Lewis, 2004).

2. WHY BRAZIL?

Haitian migration has traditionally moved towards the North (United States and Canada) and the Dominican Republic. However, a new trend of migration down South (Caribbean and Latin America) gained strength during the last few years, propelled by a series of pull factors in countries like Brazil.

The process of populating Brazil was mainly due to immigration, since the population of native Indians was quickly decimated by the European colonizers. Between the centuries 1500 to 1800, colonization was weak and the Portuguese colonizers and sub-Saharan African slaves were the main groups of habitants. After the end of slavery in Brazil in the year 1888, European immigration increased with the arrival of Italians, Germans and Spaniards. At the beginning of the 1900s, immigration was still in the spotlight with numerous groups of Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish and Italians, who fled poverty and political persecution in their countries to work in plantations or small businesses in Brazil. More recent events led new groups of immigrants to Brazil, like Bolivians or refugee-seeking Colombians, Syrians, and Congolese (UNHCR/Acnur, 2013). After the World Cup in June 2014, hundreds of citizens of Ghana requested refuge to live in Brazil, as tourist visas were guaranteed by FIFA for ticket buyers and taking advantage of this breach (Wilkinson, 2014).

However, the Haitian community in Brazil went absolutely unnoticed until the 2010 earthquake⁴. During the first two years of migration, it was considered just a small wave, but after 2013 this migration flow established as a new pattern in the Latin American region, in a conjunction of pull factors that led to Brazil and is attracting more and more attention by the media and policy makers.

2.1. MINUSTAH and the “fixing” of Haiti

The MINUSTAH⁵ is a United Nations military mission still in operation in Haiti, established by Security Council Resolution No. 1542 on 30 April 2004, due to the instable situation of conflict and political revolt that could threat international security and cause a human rights crisis in Haiti. This mission, composed mostly by Latin American and Asian forces, is led by the Brazilian Army and marks the first strong connection between the two countries, a product of long desired South-South cooperation. However, it is also seen as a symbol of multilateral interests, since Haiti

4 A different and minor flow consisted of young Haitian students who went to Brazil through the aid of scholarships provided by a partnership between the two countries. Télémaque, Jenny. 2012. *Imigração haitiana na mídia brasileira: entre e representações*. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ/ECO, p. 42.

5 Acronym for United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti - in French Mission des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en Haïti.

had no civil war or high crime rates to justify the deployment of UN armed forces, even for preventive reasons. The idea that this patchwork group of soldiers could “fix” the country was at first taken for granted, but it proved to be more difficult than expected after 10 years of international presence in Haiti and not one relevant change provided (Murray, 2014).

Photo 1. MINUSTAH Partners with Haitian Agencies to Combat Cholera.



© Nektarios Markogiannis UN/MINUSTAH, 2014.

Even though participating in MINUSTAH includes high costs for the Brazilian government (Edwards, 2012), it is seen by most political analysts as part of the country's diplomatic agenda of displaying power and sympathy at the international level, as Brazil eagerly desires a permanent seat at the UN Security Council. It also coincides with the country's momentum in the informal hierarchy of international relations and global governance, in what is called *pax brasiliensis*⁶ (Nasser, 2012).

The blue helmets - UN soldiers - have been subject to strong criticism for sexual scandals, unauthorized killings and abuse, among other violations. However, it is said that the Brazilian military presence differs from other military missions in the region, since it is a peaceful presence to help Haiti rebuild itself instead of peacekeeping missions that directly figure it in the field, resulting in the birth of a close relation between Haitian people and Brazilian blue helmets. On the opposite side, many consider it as a game played by President Lula, who utilized this as a political opportunity to elevate Brazil to a more powerful international player (Sanchez, 2011).

2.2. International Agreements and Special Visas

Only a minority left Haiti holding a visa and most of the Haitians only requested it upon arrival in Brazil. As the number of Haitians arriving in Brazil increased every day, it started to draw attention from the media and public authorities. In order to contain the crisis that was beginning in Northern Brazil, the government decided in 2012 by a diplomatic agreement to adopt a limited number of visas issued by the

6 Latin for «Brazilian Peace», implying a period of Brazilian hegemony on international politics.

Brazilian Embassy in Port-au-Prince, with a maximum of 1,200 visas per year (an average of 100 per month); such “humanitarian visas” were valid for 5 years and could be extended once for the same period of time⁷. This was a special and temporary measure only to be applied in the case of Haitian migration deriving as a result of the earthquake aftermath. Other nationalities do not get the same treatment in Brazil that Haitians do. Nationals of countries in conflict, like Syria, have to face all the difficulties of moving to a new country by themselves when they arrive in Brazil, relying only on a small network of support formed by compatriots in the same situation, but with little institutional support or organization by public authorities.

After this measure was adopted, reports of limited success in the Brazilian Embassy started to arise, as they were not issuing the agreed upon average of 100 visas per month. However, the requirements of the visa were not easily fulfilled by Haitians since they did not possess all the documents requested that often took some time to be obtained (Fellet, 2012). Even so, at the end of 2012 the Embassy interrupted the issuing of new visas, as it had already reached the limit of 1,200; showing that this quota was not sufficient to meet the high demands in Haiti.

Therefore, in April 2013, Brazil removed the 1,200 visa quotas and allowed humanitarian visas to be issued by locations outside Haiti (Conectas, 2013), including Brazilian embassies in the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Peru, in a maneuver led by diplomatic and political factors aimed at containing the massive illegal migration industry operating on the borders of Brazil, Peru, Bolivia and Colombia. (Fagen, 2013).

The possibility of obtaining a visa to Brazil or abroad simplifies the bureaucracy of embassies and prevents Haitians from seeking the illegal services of smugglers (coyotes). However, this also poses new problems because, once Brazil issues a resident visa for them, it becomes the responsibility of the Brazilian government to provide minimum survival conditions for Haitians entering the country under its consent.

2.3. Economic visibility

Today Brazil is at a turning point. After decades of brain-drain emigration headed to industrialized and developed countries, the rise of Brazil as an economic force has transformed it into a magnet for migrants seeking jobs. “The rising economic profile of Brazil” is not only attracting the attention of poor countries but also educated professionals from Europe, the United States and Latin America (Romero, 2012).

Brazil has a lot on its plate: two giant sports events, the World Cup in 2014 and the Olympics in 2016, the construction of hydroelectric plants to supply the growing demand for energy and the boom in exports, not to mention the increment in domestic consumption. Low unemployment, shortage of workers and climbing wages also play an important role as pull factors of migration. In the words of a 27 year-old Haitian construction worker: “All I want is work, and Brazil, thank God, has jobs for us” (Romero, 2012).

3. MIGRATION PATHS, ILLEGAL MIGRATION AND COYOTES

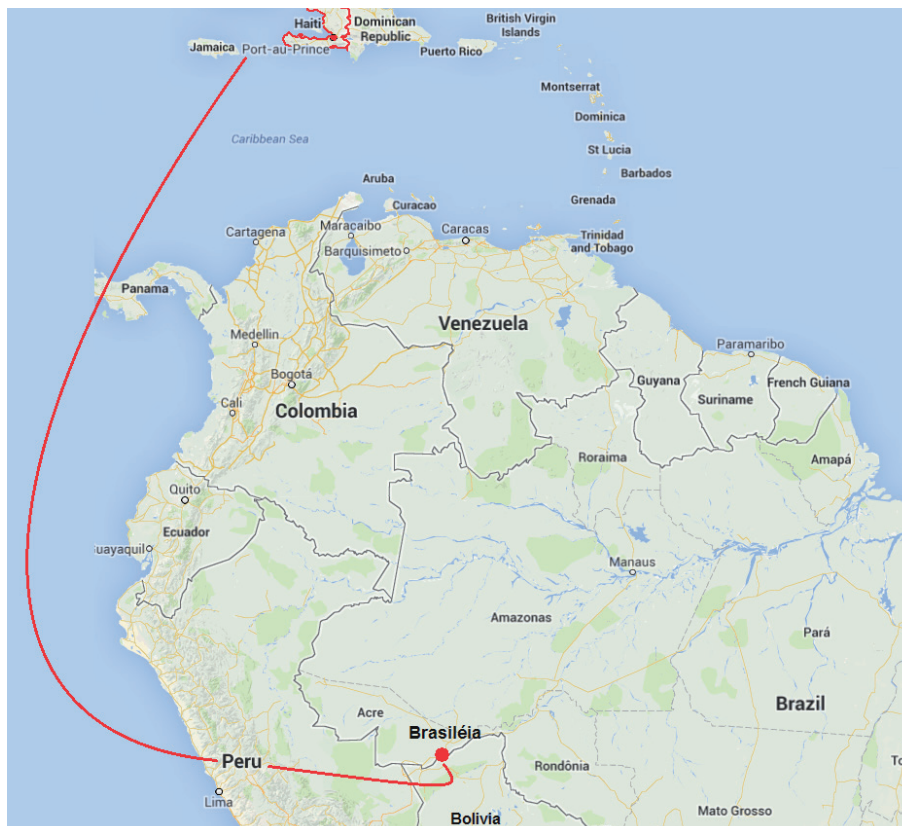
Haitians started to arrive in Brazil in 2010. A few managed to be granted visas in Port-au-Prince, and then leave Haiti by plane directly to Brazil, usually landing in big cities like São Paulo, where job opportunities and welcoming structures for migrants are better. However, the majority of Haitian migrants were guided by smugglers, known

7. CNIG Administrative Resolution No. 97/2012. <http://portal.mte.gov.br/data/files/8A7C816A350AC8820135687F345B412D/RESOLUC%C3%87%C3%830%20NORMATIVA%20N%C2%BA%2097.pdf>

as coyotes, as they did not hold legal visas at the time they left Haiti and were considered illegal migrants.

The path followed by most migrants is usually the same. They leave the capital Port-au-Prince or the Dominican Republic by plane and head to South America, where it is easier to arrive without regular documentation (Peru, Ecuador or Bolivia). The remainder of the trip is made by bus up to the border of Brazil, where they continue on foot or by boat, in case there is a river (since the journey goes through the middle of the Amazon region, there are also rivers and jungle to add more obstacles to it). This route is not spontaneous, it is a route planned and controlled by coyotes.

Figure 2. Migration path to Brazil



Source: Heloisa Miura, 2014.

Haitians and other nationalities arrive at the Brazilian border “exhausted, destitute and often ill” (Fagen, 2013), and still have to face further problems of corruption and overcrowding, putting them on a wait-list to finally cross the border and enter Brazil. These long periods of wait in Peru or Bolivia also prove to be burdensome as there are no amenities to help Haitians. They do not even have access to public hospitals (Ramos, 2014), due to the fact that they had no authorization to be in the country. Even worse than in Brazil, the governments in Peru or Bolivia are not even focused on developing public policies to give the minimum rights the Haitians so much needed.

Expenses from deals with coyotes range from USD2,000 to USD4,500, not to mention the bribes they have to pay to local officials, like policemen who control the

borders, either in Brazil or other countries (Corrêa da Silva, 2014). In order to raise such a high amount of money, Haitians had to sell everything they possessed in Haiti, resort to entire lifetime savings or even to more hurtful or questionable methods. On the other hand, a visa granted by the Brazilian Embassy at Port-au-Prince costs USD200⁸, so even if we consider the air tickets, going to Brazil with regular documents could be cheaper than paying a coyote.

However, the appointments to start the visa proceeding are only scheduled by phone, so even though the government of Brazil made it possible for Haitians to enter the country through legal channels, it is very hard to schedule this appointment, mainly because of the lack of human resources to meet the high demands of requests in Port-au-Prince (Ramos, 2014). Therefore, many Haitians still choose illegal methods, more expensive and dangerous, as their situation in Haiti is unbearable and they are eager to start working and send money to their families. Moreover, some of them are not aware of the news, and therefore think the only way to go to Brazil is through coyotes.

Furthermore, coyotes are part of a high-profitable industry that smuggles thousands of migrants and are hardly affected by official measures, always finding ways to circumvent the law and charge more money. This exposes Haitians and other migrants to frequent robbery and abuse. (Fagen, 2014)

The Haitian Priest Onac Axénat was the first to denounce the trafficking of Haitians to Brazil. The Priest, who has lived since 2010 in Acre, the state that most receives Haitian migrants, stressed that the high number of Haitians can be considered human trafficking and not just a simple migration process (Chagas, 2012).

4. THE SLOW RESPONSE OF THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT

In the last year the number of asylum requests, refugee status and temporary visas from environmental migrants has multiplied and continues to steadily increase. In terms of human resources and infrastructure, Brazil was not ready to receive so many immigrants in the same place (small towns in Acre Department), leading to what was called a “humanitarian crisis” (Pereira, 2014). From a legal perspective, the greatest difficulty was to provide Haitians with proper immigrant status, a basis to guide what type of policies should be applied in their case.

4.1. Conditions upon Arrival

According to Sister Rosita Milesi, Director of the Institute of Migration and Human Rights, when Haitians arrive in Brazil they have already consumed all of the economic reserves they had in hand. After paying for transportation by air and land and bribes to smugglers, they arrive without anything left (Milesi, 2012). This fact, as a result of poor conditions in Haiti, results in a complete state of vulnerability for newcomers.

Upon arrival in Brazilian territory, the migrants are in urgent need for basic things, like shelter, food and documents. In addition to these difficulties, there is also an estrangement with the new culture, communication difficulties and unfamiliarity with the language (only a few people in Brazil speak a second language and they come from the upper social classes, concentrated in big cities, which poses an enormous barrier to most creole-speaking Haitians). As they arrive by crossing the borders of small and provincial towns in the Amazon region, most local people are

⁸ Visa fees informed at the official Brazilian Embassy website. Consulted on 4 May 2014. http://portoprincipe.itamaraty.gov.br/fr/a_propos_des_visas.xml

countryman and even the local government does not have the human and economic resources to deal with migrants, or to even understand their needs.

Photo 2. Haitian provisory camp in Brasília, Acre.



©Luciano Pontes/Agência de Notícias do Acre.

In 2013, in the interim between January and September, more than 6,000 Haitians arrived in Brasília, Acre, and were regularized by the Federal Police Department, the competent national authority in charge of issuing valid visas and papers for foreigners. This number is considered far below the real figures of Haitians entering Brazil and living in camps, which would surpass 10,000 last year (Ramos, 2014). In this sense, there has been a campaign to stop using the term “illegal migrant” and adopt “irregular migrant” instead, as illegal is a highly stigmatizing way of referring to someone, carrying negative connotations (Freeman, 2013), and has already been adopted by the International Organization for Migration lexicon, as well as by activists and NGOs.

According to a Federal Police officer in Acre, there are 50 Haitians arriving in Brazil every day. The problem is that the Federal Police does not possess the adequate capacity to fully provide basic assistance to Haitians. Firstly, because it is an institution which, despite operating at its maximum force, is slowed down by bureaucracy and it takes months to schedule an appointment in order to start a visa proceeding. Secondly, the Federal Police is not trained to apply human rights standards when assisting this specific group; Haitians needed more than just a visa, they needed to be able to report the violations they suffered on their tortuous path to Brazil, as well as the difficulties they were facing, such as the lack of financial means to survive and the need to find work apart from the possible exploitation by dishonest companies.

In Brasília and Epitaciolândia, another border town in Acre, camps have been established to provide shelter for the immigrants that arrived on a daily basis by crossing the border with Peru, amongst them Dominicans, Colombians, Senegalese, but mostly Haitians. They had to wait there until they could regularize their documents and visas to remain in Brazil, and later travel to other cities looking for jobs.

Photo 4. Men fighting for food in Brasília camp.

©: Filipe Araújo/Estadão.

In Acre, food was scarce, people had to sleep on mattresses on the floor and showers were few. The migrants faced situations similar to those they left behind in Haiti, with reported cases of diarrhea in almost 90% of the people living in the shelter (Conectas, 2013). With the capacity to take in only 200 people, more than 1,300 were living at the same time in unhygienic conditions (Pereira, 2013). This emergency situation, in spite of the tragic previous living conditions of Haitians, served to highlight and emphasize the complete lack of efficiency in Brazil to deal with cases such as these. There were not any institutional channels for migrants to seek survival conditions, neither before nor after arrival. The case was referred to the Organization of American States by Conectas Human Rights NGO, bringing this debate to an international level and helping to pressure the Brazilian federal government for a more practical approach (Moraes, 2013).

We must admire the work of religious groups and NGOs that strived to maintain these camps; improving sanitary conditions, providing clothing to Haitians and even helping them to find jobs in other parts of the country. The government did pay for daily meals for the immigrants, but it was simply impossible, in terms of physical capacity, to accommodate everyone. The region they were in was a forgotten land; were it not for the massive presence of Haitians, no one would even talk about this part of Brazil.

As a result of the constant floods of the Madeira River (a tributary of the Amazon river), the city of Brasília and the shelter where many Haitians lived became isolated, roads were blocked and the connection with the rest of the country was only possible via airplane or boats. This made it extremely more difficult to supply the region with food and potable water, intensifying the crisis. Haitians were reliving history, becoming for the second time victims of a natural disaster (Ramos, 2014).

The last days of April 2014 marked a game of improvisation and un-coordination played by the federal government and the state of Acre (Conectas, 2014). Finally

recognizing the operational failure of the shelter in Brasília, the government closed it down and started to transfer the migrants to other cities, including the capital of Acre, the city of Rio Branco. Many were sent to São Paulo, 3,000 km away, where another obstacle emerged, as the municipal government was not aware of the transfer and received many people in need of food and shelter. In São Paulo, Haitians and other migrants were and are still being assisted by the catholic NGO Missão Paz, an intermediary between migrants and authorities, assisting with bureaucratic legal duties, as well as with housing, food, cultural activities and psychological support⁹.

Such disastrous maneuver played by the government only helped to increase the stigmatization towards migrants, as many people do not consider their care as an obligation of the host government to take care for them.



4.2. Gaps in the Legal Framework

By the time they crossed the border and arrived in Brazil, Haitians would ask for refugee status to the Brazilian National Committee on Refugees (CONARE). However, during the analysis of the processes by the Committee, they would determine that refugee status could not be granted to Haitians, since they were not covered by the definition of refugee established in international conventions and national legislation¹⁰; even Haitians themselves would affirm they were fleeing war or political persecution. Thus, their case started to become more complex because an increasing number of Haitians were arriving that the government was unable to handle and most of them were penniless, struggling to find housing and work without legal visas and documentation.

Facing hundreds of analogous cases, CONARE decided to transfer this issue to the Brazilian National Migration Council (CNIG), which determined that permanent resident permits could be granted to Haitians – for the duration of 5 years – due to the humanitarian aspects of their migration, considering the devastating circumstances they left behind in Haiti¹¹.

9. Missão calabrian Nossa Senhora da Paz is a part of a catholic mission pointed as the reference center in São Paulo to assist refugees and migrants; led by Italian priest Paoli Parise and lawyer Eliza Donda, they coordinate the Center for Migratory Studies, and also work to introduce the debate among civil society and public authorities.

10. For historical reasons, refugees are defined as those who are suffering grave humans rights violations, persecutions due to race, religion, nationality and political affiliation and/or life threats in their home country, making it impossible for them to go back. (UN Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951 and Brazilian Law 9474/1997).

11. CNIG Administrative Resolution No. 97/2012. <http://portal.mte.gov.br/data/files/8A7C816A350AC8820135687F345B412D/RESOLUC3%87%C3%83O%20NORMATIVA%20N%C2%BA%2097.pdf>

Haitians continued to enter Brazil through the borders of Amazon, but after the end of the visa quotas in 2012, this migration intensified enormously in 2013 and Brazil again faced the need to provide fast and effective responses to the crisis. However, Brazil's legal framework and public policies towards immigration are very outdated, dating back to the 1980s, unable to adequately deal with the arising challenges. In the special case of environmental migrants, there is not any specific legislation and practices to address the arrival of such number of environmental migrants.

Such legal gaps also cause serious problems concerning the daily lives of immigrants, stranded in limbo. Without official documents, it becomes a staggering task to rent a house, open a bank account and find a formal job. For this reason most of the migrants resort to the informal market, where they can be exposed to labor rights violations, vulnerable to exploitation by their employers. To combat this, the National Ministry of Labor created booklets in Creole to explain the rights of Haitian migrants concerning work as well as providing information regarding basic lessons of Portuguese.

In 2013 and 2014, official task-forces have been deployed to Brasília and other small towns in Acre to issue temporary documents to Haitians, especially working papers. During the first months of this year, 10,000 working papers were to be issued to Haitian migrants only in Acre, as ordered by Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff (Neto, 2014), because many well-intentioned companies were prevented from hiring Haitians due to them not having obtained legal working papers yet. In Brazil it is a crime for the employers to hire a person without working papers. Moreover, for the employees, they can be exposed to serious labor violations if hired by dishonest companies, such as the case of Haitians found in near-slavery conditions in a mining site controlled by the multinational company Anglo American (Wroblewski, 2014). This reflects the lack of public policies for socioeconomic inclusion of migrants; after more than 200 years of the Haitian Revolution that set slaves free, they are still trapped by their past, but this time in Brazil.

4.3. Comigrar 2014

Comigrar stands for the 1st National Conference on Migration and Refuge, a kickoff initiative to discuss at the national level the future of migration in Brazil and most importantly, to discuss adequate legislation and public policies in light of this new trend.

As already mentioned, Brazil will continue to be a receiving center for migrants for years and, if well-equipped, it can avoid a situation of abandonment that Haitians sadly had to experience. From practical issues of providing shelter, to the regulatory framework of visas and formal documents, the surge of Haitian migrants was probably the driving force that boosted discussions within both the government and civil society.

The Conference is held by the Ministry of Justice and took place between May 30 and June 1st 2014 in São Paulo, where many Haitians are arriving to seek employment. As it is the main financial center in Brazil, São Paulo has the infrastructure to support this kind of meeting, attended by various stakeholders interested in discussing the core concepts of migration policy, including politicians, scholars, civil servants and migrants.

The most ambitious aim of the Conference is to elaborate a draft of a new bill concerning migration and refugees in Brazil, aimed at replacing the outdated immigration law, written during the oppressive military regime in Brazil¹². Such a collec-

12. Law No. 6815/1980 concerning the legal status of foreigners in Brazil. http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/l6815.htm

tive process of debating public policies, begun in 2013, is an innovative action taken by the government, which recognized the need for strong participation by civil society. Haitian migrants as well as the NGOs which work closely with migrants and refugees will most certainly have important contributions and provide a reflection on the important lessons of the treatment of newly-arrived migrants.

One of the results of this conference was the recommendations from civil society and academia, which were incorporated by a group of legal experts making a draft for a new migration bill. Hitherto considered a part of national security issues in Brazil, the advent of this bill now brings international migration into the perspective of Human Rights, including and broadening the concepts used in international conventions to stop the stigmatization that hinder the understanding of migration as an important piece of international cooperation (Ministry of Justice, Ordinance 2162/13).

5. NEW CHALLENGES IN A DIFFERENT LAND

Following the first wave of Haitian migrants and after all the difficulties faced, new mechanisms of adaptation should be implemented. Regarding Haitian migrants, each person has a different story to share, and adaptation is a key factor that influences success or failure they have to endeavor in order to overcome the tragedies that affected their country.

5.1. Success Versus Failure

Many Haitian migrants are well-educated, they speak many languages, play musical instruments and know different countries; some are even succeeding in teaching French and English in Brazil. The problem for Haiti lies with the need for qualified workers who can help rebuild the country (Chagas, 2012). Unfortunately without appropriate job opportunities, brain-drain remains a challenge which Haiti is failing to address.

The stories of Haitian migrants are based many times on luck. As the Brazilian government is incapable of providing what they need, many have to find jobs and travel on their own expenses. Often employers would go to Acre and look for workers, provided they held suitable legal documents. However, this led to the objectification of the Haitian workforce, since they were seen as products to be “imported” to other parts of the country and fill the gap of vacancies in low-paying jobs, not certain they would have a permanent work contract. But as opportunity comes and goes fast, the migrants utilized their opportunity to take it.

Current sports events like the World Cup and the Olympics are now at the epicenter of Brazil’s economic buzz (Panja, 2013). However, after the World Cup in June 2014, many immigrants working in civil construction will find less and less opportunities for employment. Even worse, Brazil’s social security is clearly not ready to cover unemployed migrants.

The sympathy of people is not to be disregarded, as many Brazilian companies were willing to hire Haitians, who are considered to be disciplined, intelligent and hard-working. The problem is that not all employers practiced fair recruiting and treatment of employees, generating scandals like the above-mentioned slavery and labor rights violations against Haitians, who oftentimes could not contact the police to report such abuses, as they feared deportation or retaliation for not holding papers, or even for being migrants.

The story is far worse for those who could not find a job and ended up living on the streets, begging for money (Andrade, 2014). As the prospects grow from bad to worse, some people regret the choice of leaving their family and migrating, wishing they could return home. In the words of 30 year-old Vincent: “If my legs could walk 100 days in a row, I would go back to Haiti”(EFE, 2014).

5.2 Remittances and Connections with Haiti

It is estimated that almost one-fifth of the Haitian GDP comes from remittances sent by migrants to their families who stayed in Haiti, totaling more than five times the exports revenue of the country (CIA, 2014). Most of the remittances come from the United States, where the Haitian community is very large. In Brazil, it is hard to measure how much money is being sent to Haiti because it is still a new trend of migration and the numbers of migrants before 2013 are not as significant as today. Furthermore, they still have to face adversities regarding bureaucracy, because if they don't hold regular documents to stay in the country, it is difficult to open a bank account. Therefore, they rely on informal transferring markets, friends and other connections to take the money to Haiti, oftentimes with the intent of paying the travel costs for their families to go to Brazil.

Most of the Haitians who arrived in Brazil during the last year and a half came because they had some sort of connection there: a friend, a brother, someone who told them it was a good option to leave Haiti to look for work in a different country (Fellet, 2014). This may be a sign that, despite the humanitarian crisis Haitians face in Brazil, they still could find what they are looking for, and it is serving the purpose of the sacrifice, that is, making money to support their families back in Haiti (Fellet, 2014). On the other hand, what are the costs for it? Selling everything they own in Haiti to pay bribes to smugglers, suffering from the lack of governmental policies in Brazil and being mistreated by authorities.

Which is why, when trying to contact Haitians in Brazil, it proved to be an extremely difficult task, mainly because they became mistrustful of everyone around them after facing so many violations and obstacles (Donda, 2014); in addition, they didn't want their families in Haiti to be aware of the precarious conditions under which they were living in Brazil, sometimes similar or worse than the ones they left behind.

6. CONCLUSION

Since the boom of the Haitian migration in 2013, the situation of Haitian migrants in Brazil has changed in many perspectives and gathered increased attention from national and international media. Many Haitian migrants are well-educated, while in Brazil this is a privilege of the upper classes. In a way, this lesson may be useful to show that poverty does not necessarily coincide with low levels of education.

Furthermore, refugees and environmental migrants are still unknown to many Brazilians. In fact, conservatives tend to propagate an idea of migrants as criminals or inferior people who arrive to steal jobs and public money in a country where many other Brazilian citizens are too suffering from the lack of assistance by the government. Such prejudice could in part be explained by when immigrants fled to Brazil running away from criminal or political accusations. Even inside Brazil this has happened before when people from the Northeast, struggling with drought and poverty, had to face prejudice after migrating to the South looking for a better life. But this has changed and some Brazilians are still unaware of migration causes and how it is affected by international cooperation, which reflects upon the lack of public debate.

The main point to consider is whether something is being done to effectively remedy the destitution Haitians endure in Haiti and abroad. Migration is a choice out of a no-choice situation and many have claimed that if the scenario was better in their homeland, they would never have left Haiti. Migration, is therefore an adaptation strategy. Improving the situation in Brazil is urgent, but it will not solve the roots of the problem or stop migration. Haiti must face the need of reconstructing both its physical aspects, but most importantly the moral of the Haitian people. ♦

« Combien de temps encore les Haïtiens seront-ils obligés
de quitter notre pays contre leur volonté ?
On se tourne vers la République dominicaine
avec ses camps de coupeurs de canne
et son esclavage à peine masqué ;
vers les États-Unis et leurs camps d'internements
de Krome et de Guantanamo pour nos “boat people”,
on nous renvoie au massacre ;
on se tourne vers les Bahamas et leurs pogroms périodiques ;
vers la Guyane et ses bidonvilles réservés aux “Haïchiens” ;
vers le Canada où le froid gèle les larmes de nos conducteurs de taxis
et où on reproche tous les jours à nos écoliers leur couleur.
Étrangers, vous ne voulez pas de nous dans votre pays ?
Laissez-nous au moins le droit de vivre en paix chez nous.
Laissez nous élire qui nous voulons. »

Paul Anvers, 2000, *Rizières de sang*

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