

Empowering Refugees

Human Rights and Labour Working Group - Global Compact Network Brazil

1. Background

Brazil has an advanced legislation on refugees and their main rights are guaranteed by a national law that goes beyond the rights gained in the international arena. However, refugees face major obstacles to their integration into Brazilian society. The lack of employment, or poor working conditions, the difficulty with the language, the lack of housing in decent conditions and societal discrimination are major obstacles faced by this population. The search for a formal and decent work certainly is among its main challenges. The work is an essential condition for the dignity of these people and to the achievement of economic independence. The local integration of refugees is connected intrinsically to the access to work. Thus, it is essential that the business sector is knowledgeable of the rights of these people and be sensitive to the issue in order not to create barriers to hire them and not to discriminate, thereby ensuring the respect for their human rights. When sensitized to the issue of refuge, companies can still go further, acting as an actor that promotes human rights with a proactive and voluntary posture.

2. Objectives of the Project

The project is an initiative of the Human Rights and Labor Working Group of the Global Compact Network Brazil. The partners of the project have provided opportunities for a group of women, refugees and asylum-seekers from different countries. The main goal was to empower them economically. Also, the project offered guidance to these women in order to prepare them for the labor market and also raise awareness to companies about the employment of refugees. This project relates to the following Sustainable Development Goals: 5, 8 and 16

3. The Partners of the project are:

• Global Compact Network Brazil • United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) • UN Women • Cáritas Arquidiocesana de São Paulo (NGO) • Programa de Apoio para a Recolocação dos Refugiados (PARR – Support Program for the Replacement of Refugees, CSR project of company Emdoc) • Fox Time Human Resources (SME) • Itaipu (company) • Lojas Renner (company) • Whirlpool / Women's Consulate Institute • Sodexo Brazil (company)

4. Activities and Results so far (September 2015 – September 2017)

- **Orientation and Guidance:** 33 female refugees participated in at least 1 of 3 workshops. The workshops provided guidance on the following issues: rights (as refugees, workers and women in Brazil); how to behave in a job interview and how to prepare to the Brazilian job market; tools to improve the learning of the Portuguese language; financial education and women entrepreneurship (how to have their own business and useful resources to promote it).
- **Career Coaching:** 21 received individual career coaching sessions and mentoring;
- **Job opportunities:** The partners of the project facilitated 18 job interviews for this group of women with 11 companies, which resulted in 9 successful hirings (three of them were hired by the partners: Fox Time, Lojas Renner and Sodexo). During this period, 3 refugees were employed without the direct intervention of partners.
- **Support to entrepreneurs:** Some women in the group would like to be entrepreneurs. The partners have made several connections with other actors that are relevant to develop their business (Women Entrepreneurs Network, Women's Consulate Institute, Migraflit and the Government of the State of São Paulo). One of the refugees was granted with a space to host her organization. She has been receiving specific orientation on formalizing her business and support in grants applications. Another Syrian refugee offered her catering services at events

and meetings of partners and participated in a course of women entrepreneurship that was provided by Women's Consulate Institute. In general, women of the project have benefited from professional opportunities and networking, thus increasing their contact networks.

- **Raise awareness:** 200 business representatives participated in 3 raising awareness events about the situation of refugees and their integration in Brazil. Companies were encouraged to employ refugees and cooperate in their integration in the country.
- **Companies Engagement:** Lojas Renner started a program to offer sewing courses to refugees and has been offering job opportunities to refugees; Sodexo announced that it will offer 3 vacancies per month for female refugees. In general, partners have been orientating companies about hiring refugees in Brazil.
- **Raising awareness products:** The project has developed 2 raise awareness videos and a document with frequent asked questions about hiring of refugees in Brazil that is aimed at human resources.
- **Dialogue and Engagement:** a dialogue with NGOs, government and business representatives was promoted in order to find opportunities for the private sector to promote human rights of refugees in Brazil. The dialogue had the participation of 10 refugees of the project.
- **Feedback from participants:** refugees have provided positive feedback that the process has enabled them to get in touch with their own dreams and aspirations. The following points were highlighted:
 - I have learned more about my rights, especially as a woman;
 - I have understood more about how Brazilians see the world and, more importantly, how I can fit in;
 - I have realized that I have a long path to go to achieve my dreams – and I feel more confident and empowered to achieve them;
 - I have expanded my network of contacts and friendships;
 - The educational component and the positive energy of the meetings have help my self-development.

5. Funding

All partners dedicated at least one staff for the partnership. Some activities provided were a result of in-kind contributions (for example, coaching sessions by Fox Time). Meetings were organized with the resources of every partner. Companies funded the expenses of the videos produced (Itaipu, Sodexo, Lojas Renner and Women's Consulate Institute).

6. Lessons Learnt

The partnership has been very successful and Global Compact Network Brazil (GCNB) has been playing a key role in connecting UN agencies and companies. GCNB has been promoting that companies engage in the initiative but not only providing financial resources, but also other resources in order to promote human rights (through core business, CSR programs, and partnerships). The process has been very inclusive, making sure that every partner could contribute to the partnership. About the activities of the project, we have been learning that the project cannot provide every aspect that will contribute to the economic empowerment of the female refugees. Some of them were in depressive situations that we could not address. The ones that were more motivated and were more mental healthy were the ones that benefited the most from the activities. This is a key finding and for the next editions of the project it will be considered.

7. Next Steps

The pilot project ended in June 2016. The partners are now planning the next edition of the project that should include the promotion of corporate volunteering.

8. Further Materials

Pictures of the workshops: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/105321085@N05/>

Videos of the Project (in English):

First workshop: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqnWUyoR_bE

End of the Pilot Project Event: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RMyGtMpbMzc>

Shorter Verison: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QujXTHwmvSA>

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Partners and Refugees – Dialogue Business and Refugees in Brazil (June 2016)



Rights and Career Workshop (November 2015)



Skills Workshop – Companies HR Representatives and Refugees Networking (February, 2016)

