On policies of hospitality and hostility in Argentina

Irene Duffard Evangelista

Following the Haiti earthquake of 2010 the countries of the Union of South American Nations\(^1\) undertook to receive Haitians in their countries. The motivation to migrate was linked to the hope of improving their lives in a context where all possibilities and opportunities had been destroyed by the earthquake. According to interviewees with Haitians in Buenos Aires: “After the earthquake there was nothing left...”.

For Argentina to make a commitment to receive Haitians for ‘humanitarian reasons’, no specific regulations or clause were needed, as provision was already made for such an eventuality in Migrations Law 25.871 (unlike in other countries such as Brazil or Chile).\(^2\) With the open-ended commitment in law there was no time limit involved, yet from November 2012 Haitians started having difficulties in obtaining this protection status and by 2013 it was almost impossible for them to claim rights under this heading. Similar situations are occurring in Brazil, Chile and Ecuador, which are also tightening their migration policies toward this population.

For this particular population group, it is unlikely that Argentina would have been a destination of migration were it not for the ease of entry and the free access to university study. However, Haitians in Argentina face problems in work, housing, documentation, education, culture and discrimination, despite the law’s commitment to the objective of promoting the insertion and integration into Argentine society of persons admitted as regular migrants\(^3\) and its call on all offices of the state to favour initiatives tending toward the integration of foreigners in their community of residence.

In principle, for both state and society, ‘allowing entry’ to migrants to your country implies taking responsibility for these persons, for their food, housing and psychological wellbeing. The question that then arises is how, having been through traumatic experiences, they can be taken in, included and integrated into the host society with policies of hospitality and not of hostility to ‘the other’.

Irene Duffard Evangelista is Investigator in the Fundación Comisión Católica Argentina de Migraciones. http://migracionesfccam.org.ar/ireneduffard@yahoo.com.ar

1. www.unasursg.org/
2. www.csa-csi.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6933&Itemid=258&lang=es
3. Migrations Law 25.871, Article 3 points e) and h)

Disaster risk reduction and mobility

Patrice Quesada

We are faced with a complex relationship between mobility, risk and disasters. By fleeing, people can save their lives and sometimes some of their assets but they may also expose themselves to new risks, for instance when they end up in overcrowded temporary shelters. At the same time, lacking the capacity to move under extreme circumstances is itself a major cause of vulnerability. It is also apparent that mobility can be used as a preventive strategy; labour migration, for instance, can help diversify a household’s income, thus strengthening resilience in the face of a disaster.

However, little attention has been given so far to the complex role of human mobility in opening up new livelihood opportunities, as well as in driving vulnerability and risk. In this context, how can we make sure that we are not only investing in reactive humanitarian response but also working to decrease and even prevent forced migration through disaster risk reduction measures?

An essential step for advancing risk reduction measures at the local level is to define mobility-based indicators of vulnerability and resilience that can contribute to measuring and reducing human and economic losses resulting from disasters. In the process of identifying risk- and mobility-related indicators a number of issues have emerged that will require special attention from the disaster risk reduction community in the coming decades. These include: