



The Limitations and Challenges of the Reception for Immigrants and Refugees in the City of Dourados-MS

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ABSTRACT

This work aims to present the limits and challenges for the reception and integration of immigrants and refugees in the city of Dourados, federative unit of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, in the context of the international migrations in the region. Through document analysis and national and international bibliographic survey, the socioeconomic data of the Municipality and the demands of immigrants in the area are presented, particularly the dynamics of infrastructure and education. It is concluded that the gaps in terms of Portuguese classes, reception infrastructure and bureaucratic procedures for school integration are still very evident challenges in this specific municipality in Brazil.

Keywords: Dourados-MS; Challenges; Immigrants; Refugees; Integration.

INTRODUCTION

The objective of this article is to analyze the network of reception, assistance and search for integration of international immigrants in the city of Dourados, federative unit of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. Through a national and international bibliographic research, and analysis of official documents, the work sought to present the international migratory flow in the region of Dourados; then contextualizing the structure of services to immigrants and refugees, mainly, a database on the presence and participation of young immigrants in the area.

Based on international relations literature and on official reports from the Brazilian government, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the work attempts to demonstrate the limitations and challenges of integration of Haitians and Venezuelans in this city in Brazil. In other words, what are the problems of the city of Dourados to receive immigrants and refugees? The work will develop seeking answers to these questions.

Challenges, dilemmas and limitations that arise when the city of Dourados does not have the structure to receive the entire flow of international immigrants from Haiti or Venezuela, local authorities seem un-

prepared to deal with these situations, schools are not multicultural and most of the locals speak only the native language. This makes it extremely difficult for the displaced people to communicate with the host society.

The local society of the city of Dourados seemed not to be prepared to receive a relatively large flow, particularly of Venezuelans in its space, and the problems of xenophobia, negative propaganda, with the presence of immigrants at the city's traffic lights, seem to highlight the tensions and the estrangement of the locals with the newcomers.

In this work, Venezuelans are classified as refugees as provided for in Brazilian law 9.474/1997 (BRASIL, 1997), provided for in Article 1, reproducing the provisions of the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Declaration. Refugee law is a substitute protection in the sense that it is a response to disfranchisement from the usual benefits of nationality (HATHAWAY, FOSTER, 2014). Just as Haitians are considered immigrants as stated in Law n. 13.445/2017 (BRASIL, 2017) and legislation that regulates it (Migration Law). With regard to the normative treatment given to Haitians, a humanitarian visa was granted, which was the response adopted by the country since 2012 when the Haitian migratory flow became considerable. (GODOY, 2012; SILVA, ASSIS, 2016)

Regarding Venezuelans, it is necessary to say that in addition to the provisions of law 9.474/97 (BRASIL, 1997), the migratory categories available for regularization of Venezuelans began to be presented from 2017 with the Normative Resolution of the National Immigration Council n. 126, in a context in which the new Migration Law was still being discussed. (JAROCHINSKI SILVA, 2018). However, in a discretionary manner and despite these new guidelines, subsequent responses, such as Interministerial Ordinance n. 9 (March 2018) and Interministerial Ordinance n. 19 (March 2021), hover as part of the Brazilian responses little impacted by the new law 13.445/2017 (JAROCHINSKI SILVA, VELASQUEZ, 2021).

Considering that the Brazilian government decided to act more clearly on the country's border with Venezuela from February 2018, with the emergence of Operation Welcome, a coordinated effort for the reception and interiorization of Venezuelan people within Brazilian territory (ACNUR BRASIL, 2022).

The refugee and immigrants are both a product of, and remains closely embedded in, a complex interplay between state prerogatives and human rights, and politics and law. (HANSEN, 2011). It is very important to say that regardless of the normative classification established by the States, the central issue is the development of the protection of the human rights of international immigrants. Checking the approaches and convergences of protection for immigrants and refugees. (ARCE, 2022; CANÇADO TRINDADE, 1997)

THE FLOW OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN THE CITY OF DOURADOS

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First, it is important to know that the city of Dourados is in the countryside of the state of Mato Grosso do Sul (MS), in Brazil's Midwest

region, about 130 km from the dry border with Paraguay and the so called “sister towns” of Ponta Porã (Brazil) and Pedro Juan Caballero (Paraguay), the state is largely constituted within an international border zone. Thus, cross-border issues are a recurring theme in the region’s experience.

As one of the main cities in the state and the largest in the southern region of MS, in terms of infrastructure, population and economy, Dourados settles itself down in a strategic location in the migratory routes that go through the region, covering events related to cross-border citizens, with problems specific to dry border region, but also being the route of international migratory flows that reach the country as a whole, as in the case of Venezuelans and Haitians.

The city has four universities, thus having a large flow of young people, and therefore happens to welcome those ones seeking university education in the region. In the performance of assistance and reception of immigrants, the public universities of the place stand out. However, with serious limitations regarding the physical structure and human resources capacity to offer Portuguese classes to immigrants and refugees (BORGES, JESUS, 2021). Making it difficult to implement an effective refugee protection regime (BETTS, LOESCHER, 2012).

It is also a city with industrial hubs, in which refrigeration industries, play a fundamental role, in relation to the classification of the National Register of Economic Activities (CNAE), the processing industries and agricultural activities, in general, are listed as the main private economic activities of the state (SEMAGRO, 2017). Job opportunities in the industries, commerce and agricultural activities in the region are also a strong appeal for young people looking for a place in the market, although some jobs depend on higher qualifications.

Face to such issues, the legal and international studies of universities always reflected the transnational matters that involved the region, which, consequently, ended up attracting the study of international regimes of protection (KRASNER, 1983). A study that resulted in the technical-scientific partnership between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and university, through the Chair Sergio Vieira de Mello (CSVM), started in 2014 (UNHCR, 2017).

Since then, the project has attracted academics and professors from the Law and International Relations courses, and since 2016, with the creation of the Master’s degree in Borders and Human Rights, it started to count on the participation of Master’s students who worked with the theme. Currently, the Chair is in full expansion, establishing links with the most diverse areas of research and extension, which has enabled the expansion of its political and social range. However, still not enough for the arrival of more than 3 thousand Venezuelans and more than a thousand Haitians. There are few language teachers engaged in helping immigrants, and the physical structure offered for classes is not of great quality (SILVA, 2021).

The policy for granting humanitarian visas since 2012 has intensified the migratory flow of Haitians to Brazil (JESUS, 2020), and Dourados-MS, due to its geographic and socioeconomic structure, has also become a place of interest for immigrants, in special, young immigrants,

looking for job opportunities. Which has led many of them to frustration for not being able to get jobs that pay high prices, given the nature of the work offered in slaughterhouses and charcoal plants. (JESUS, 2020)

This way, several groups of forced immigrants, end up carrying out their migratory flow through their share capital, considering this term as the ability to benefit from networks or other social structures, invoking it to understand the paths and ways of insertion in the country of destination (PEIXOTO, 2017). Looking for migratory ways, leaving their country of origin and entering the host nation, which has already been traveled and explored by their family members, friends and acquaintances, using other compatriots to be received at their destination and understand the means of social integration.

Upon receiving the first flows of immigrants, they began to call other colleagues, friends and family members to go to Dourados and the nearby region, due to job opportunities (JESUS, 2020). It can be said that the region came to be considered a great opportunity for groups through its social capital, a network of connections between the immigrants themselves. The increase in arrivals also resulted in an increase in issues to be resolved, particularly greater social assistance from the City Hall, better structure and more human resources for Portuguese classes (SILVA, PIRES, 2021).

Initiatives to receive and assist immigrants and refugees are still very much located in the university environment and in civil society through churches and religious communities. When some of these immigrants are found on the streets and at traffic lights, it is enough for members of the local society to complain, to show their extreme discontent, which reverberates in the local press.

Still, given the demand, the service structure for this population was being structured, based on scientific and academic research on the subject, creating a welcoming network in university environments, due to the scientific technical partnership developed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Over time, in addition to migrant social network, other means of internalizing immigrants began to bring new migratory flows to the city, as in the case with Operation Welcome, a partnership among the army, the federal government, United Nations agencies (UN) and civil society entities. In a context in which the Americas region hosted more than 5.1 million people displaced across borders (20 % of the global population), with 86% being Venezuelans. Sharp growth in the number of Venezuelans displaced abroad accounted for much of the 11% rise (524.000) across the Americas (UNHCR, 2022). With the job opportunities in a large meat processing company in the city, many Venezuelans left Pacaraima and were sent to the city of Dourados with a guaranteed job. (IOM, 2020a; UNHCR, 2022)

Dourados is estimated to have been the fourth national town to receive more Venezuelan refugees through Operation Welcome, with the arrival of three thousand immigrants through the project. It is estimated that in the operation's internalization program, of the total of Venezuelan immigrants, 36% were men over 18 years old and 285 women over 18 years old, with only 17% of the total traveling alone. (IOM, 2020a).

Thus, even though some flows are organized and well structured, as is the case with groups that have undergone the process of internalizing Operation Welcome, once in the destination city, the effective integration of these individuals requires local support and care. In the case of Dourados, civil society (churches and non-governmental organizations), in conjunction mainly with local universities, has played this role in the immigrants and refugees lives in the region.

Making it clear the limits and challenges of Operation Welcome with regard to the local integration of Venezuelans regarding international cooperation, and the crisis of forced displacement of the people of that country (LOESCHER, 1993). The flow of these people seems to be greater than the city's structure offers, there is a disagreement between federal and local authorities (SILVA, 2021), and the good practices publicized by international and national organizations present clear problems (BETTS, COULLIER, 2017).

In addition to the migration policy, which needs to be in line with the social reality of the country and its different regions, the reaction of the host society will be another variable factor in the integration of migrant workers, which will depend on their own recruitment of mechanisms developed by the employers themselves, who will determine the placement of the migrant in certain segments of work (PEIXOTO, 2017).

It cannot be forgotten that it is in the social field that the legal norms are materialized/become concrete, and although Brazilian law does not allow the repeal of the law due to disuse, it is evident that if the society of destination does not transform the principle of hospitality and integration rules as a social norm, it will be much more difficult to develop protective immigration policies.

In the next topics, we will first discuss how it developed and what is the current status of the immigrants' service structure in the city of Dourados, with special attention to the activities developed by universities in the region. Afterwards, the data on the care of young immigrants will be analyzed, and their leading role in the integration of the groups themselves in the region.

THE SERVICE STRUCTURE

Despite Dourados is in a border region, the city has never counted on a special structure to assist immigrants or cross-border issues, and only with the recent migration flows of Venezuelans and Haitians made these topics come to be addressed in a different way a more strategic way.

In 2014, an agreement was signed with UNHCR for the creation of the Sergio Vieira de Mello's Chair (CSVN), and consolidated in 2015, when university ended up hosting the VI National Seminar of the Sergio Vieira de Mello's Chair, unprecedentedly held in Mato Grosso do Sul (ACNUR, 2015).

During this period, the project gained strength particularly in the area of extension. Firstly, an articulation of partnership and contribution was made with the Extension Project "Facilitation Actions for the Social Insertion of Haitians in Dourados", developed since March 2017

(BORGES, JESUS, 2021). The project held Portuguese classes as a hostess language for Haitians living in the city of Dourados, seeking to provide the language as a means of social, cultural and psychological integration of these individuals to the hostess society. (BORGES, JESUS, 2021)

With the articulation between the CSVM, the number of volunteers available to the Extension Project was expanded, and support was also provided by the Dean of Extension, which started to supply materials such as folders, notebooks, pens, pencils and erasers, in order to facilitate the accomplishment of classes (BANZATTO, NICOLAU, 2018). The studies in geography (JESUS, 2020), collaborating with the project who had carried out a mapping of Haitians in the city and in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, were also used. With such structure and information, it was possible to establish new schedules and places for the classes.

In 2018, the project continued with the offer of classes in three different locations, with flexible hours and adjusted according to the demand of the Haitian population. In 2019, classes were extended to all international immigrants and the participant Jorge Delmar da Rosa da Silva Jr., master's student at the Faculty of Letters, started to develop a calendar with the themes and activities to be addressed in each class, providing the material with the classes ready for the program's volunteer teachers (SILVA, PIRES, 2021). In 2020 the project for Portuguese classes as a hostess language was institutionalized and passed to PROEX, which now offers the course "Portuguese for Foreigners: Reception Module", by the Training Center of the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD). A commendable but extremely timid initiative to teach so many immigrants.

From the connection with the extension project, it approached the work of the sisters who coordinate the *Casa Irmã Dulce* project, a charity house that served as a welcoming place for relatives and sick people from neighboring cities, but that ended up having no use, considering that the City Halls started to provide transport to citizens who went for consultation or medical assistance (SILVA, PIRES, 2021). The residence ended up becoming a place for welcoming immigrants, first being the headquarters of the Portuguese courses, later as a point of care for the demands of this population.

Since the beginning of 2019, volunteers from Law and International Relations courses go to *Casa Irmã Dulce* on Sundays, where they provide legal assistance and receive the demands of the immigrant community, which are guided and brought for discussion by members of the CSVM (SILVA, PIRES, 2021). The main points covered are: legal and psychosocial assistance, renewal of passports (Haitians), diploma validation, domestic violence and human rights violations, vacancies in daycare centers and public schools, among other services. And the trend has been to strengthen the growing partnership between Faculty of Law and *Casa Irmã Dulce* for future assistance to immigrants in these areas.

Also in 2019, with the intense flow of Venezuelans who arrived in Dourados, CSVM became part of Operation Welcome in the region, a cooperation from UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Civil House, Ministry of Citizenship, Defense Ministry. The op-

eration carries out the monitoring and socioeconomic profile of Venezuelan immigrants, among other activities, such as public health campaigns, prevention and combating domestic violence, legal and social advice, and is becoming relevant to the plan of interiorization of Venezuelan immigrants in the region. (SILVA, 2021).

Operation considered one of the best practices carried out by the Brazilian government to receive immigrants, but it presents some problems that become challenges for its implementation. Problems related to the structure to receive immigrants, a lack of cooperation between the different levels of governance in the country and the possibility of the Operation not leaving any legacy for the population of the State of Roraima, as well as for the regions of destination of immigrants (Mato Grosso do Sul). Questions raised by researchers linked to the Sergio Vieira de Mello Chair from different Brazilian universities. (UNHCR, 2019)

For example, the local authorities of Dourados or even the government of Mato Grosso do Sul were unaware that Venezuelans would arrive in the region as a result of Operation Welcome, not being prepared to offer public services (SILVA, 2021). Only the partner, the company Seara Alimentos (JBS), was aware, as it would receive the Venezuelans in their jobs. It should be noted that jobs in slaughterhouses, with bad wages and low added value, to which Venezuelans might not adapt. It is important to note that if a Venezuelan immigrant gives up this process of internalization in Dourados, he is completely free to change cities or return to Venezuela, but he does not receive the logistical and financial assistance of the actors of Operation Welcome. (SILVA, 2021).

Just as the Venezuelans were initially welcomed on an emergency basis in the spaces provided by the Catholic Church, which did not always have the ideal conditions to meet all the needs of the individuals who stayed there temporarily, such as the number of bathrooms and bedrooms (SILVA, 2021).

The participation of the local administration of Dourados in the Operation only took place from the fourth stage of interiorization, from 2019 through the donation of 60 mattresses and visits by the Municipal Secretary of Social Assistance, at the Rural Social Center São Vicente de Paulo, in Indápolis, in March 2019.

Visits in which social workers collected information from 120 Venezuelan immigrants to register them in the Single Registry for Social Programs of the Federal Government, aimed at the low-income population, as well as dissemination of the form of action and location of the so-called Social Assistance Reference Centers, Specialized Social Assistance Centers and Specialized Reference Centers for the homeless (SILVA, 2021).

It should be noted that in 2021 there was an increase of 208 requests compared to the year 2020, when Brazil received 28.899 requests for recognition of refugee status. It is of relevant data for understanding the Brazilian dynamics of refuge in the context of Covid-19 pandemic, as there is no way to dissociate the stability observed between the years of 2020 and 2021 of the scenario of greatest limitations the movement of people and border control, when measures to restrict the entry of immigrants in the country were taken due to the pandemic (BRASIL, 2022).

Another initiative worth mentioning was the State Committee for Refugees, Migrants and Stateless Persons (CERMA/MS), created in September 2016, state meeting to discuss the topic (MS, 2016). The embryo of creation was the contact between the members of the Organizing Committee, still during the 6th Seminar of the National Chair, in 2015. Although the entity continues to operate in a slow and reactive way, lacking long-term planning and governance (BETTS, 2009).

Within Dourados, CSVSM has also been partnering with professionals from other areas, expanding the approach beyond the perspective of Law and International Relations. Since 2019, professors, master's students and academics from other courses, started attending meetings and debating problems and possible solutions in their areas of study and performance (SILVA, PIRES, 2021). One of the projects, which emerged from this interdisciplinary approach, was the monitoring of immigrant children and adolescents/teenagers in the public education network.

University structures, with the support of undergraduate, graduate students, technicians and teachers, have become very important strategically over time, including for UNHCR and other international organizations, given that the town of Dourados ended up being transformed one of the poles of Operation Welcome promoted by the federal government and the consequent flow of Venezuelans towards the city (IOM, 2022).

In addition to these structures, the town also counts on federal government entities, such as the Federal Public Defender's Office (DPU) and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF), free legal assistance and assistance bodies, which defend collective and individual rights (in the case of DPU), and also assist in the care of immigrants. It is important to mention that Dourados is one of the only towns in the countryside of Mato Grosso do Sul to have such structures, which end up meeting the demands of other towns in the region.

In 2020, with the arrival of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, new challenges emerged in the solutions to migration issues, in addition to what the international community predicted (UNHCR, 2020). In the midst of discussions on how to maintain assistance, without exposing volunteers and immigrants themselves to the risk of infection, the care network has found creative ways to continue their work of extension, teaching and research.

Within the scope of teaching and research, several online events have been held by the Chair's participants. In these events, the main topic of discussion has been the difficulties and solutions found for international migration issues in COVID-19 times, both in Mato Grosso do Sul and in the world. In addition to the participation of members of the Chair as listeners in training courses and discussions promoted by other entities. Likewise, the study group continues with its biweekly meetings held remotely.

In Extension programs, despite the risks and impediments caused by the moment, CSVSM continued its service, both in receiving immigrants arriving in Dourados, and in assisting those who are already established in Dourados, which has been carried out on-line, por "whatsapp" application messaging service and by email. (SILVA, PIRES, 2021).

Besides the activities promoted in Dourados, volunteers have also endeavored to publicize solutions and initiatives proposed by other institutions, some for the improvement of volunteers and others for the assistance of immigrants, such as assistance applicatives, classes in Portuguese as a hostess language for remote way, among others.

The world is still experiencing the uncertainties of the pandemic, and Brazil is currently one of the points of concern for the advancement of COVID-19. Many challenges will lie ahead, during and after the period that the pandemic has started. Nevertheless, it is noticeable the initiative and the union of universities in proposing solutions and continuing the extension projects to serve and assist this even more vulnerable population in the current scenario.

DATA ON THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN DOURADOS

The difficulties faced on the way, such as bribes, human trafficking, sexual exploitation of women, documentation fees, tickets, and dubious paths, also cause reactive or involuntary migrations to be as much as selective in the demographic, economic and gender sense, favoring men, young people, with better financial and physical conditions (RICHMOND, 1993), so that, although vulnerable, there are difficulties inherent to the migratory movement that end up making migration more possible to a certain profile of people.

Assistance to incoming immigrants, as a group and as individuals, must take these particularities into account. In this sense, when thinking about service, reception and integration, civil society groups, government and entities must think about strategies according to the characteristics of those immigrants, such as age, gender and nationality.

Dourados experience, especially that experienced by universities, showed that Portuguese courses for immigrants are a gateway to integration (AIZAWA, 2020). Firstly by allowing them to have contact with the language of the host country, secondly, classes are a point of exchange among teachers (volunteers) and students, so that volunteers collect information about the needs of immigrants, and they become aware services that are accessible at university centers and within the government in general. Although there are few teachers and there is a lack of structure to welcome more immigrants. (BORGES, JESUS, 2021).

Within the scope of courses in Portuguese as a hostess language, the project “Portuguese for Foreigners: Welcoming Module” fellow in the course of Portuguese for Foreigners as a Hostess language (PLAc), in the pandemic period is composed of three classes, a total of thirty-four students, the age of those enrolled being between 18 years and 65 years (SILVA, PIRES, 2021).

In this period of online classes, the students enrolled are Haitian, Venezuelan, Bolivian, Colombian nationalities. In the pre-pandemic period, the course had more than five classes among different points of Dourados, with more than 150 students distributed among the classes, students of Haitian, Venezuelan, Bolivian, Colombian, Mexican, Indian, Iraqi, Paraguayan, African. and Peruvian nationalities. (UNHCR, 2017).

During classes, the teaching of the Portuguese language goes beyond, not only being limited to the teaching of grammatical rules, but it is also an approach to the language as a form of reception. In the material, developed by volunteers and focused on specific issues of the region, students have contact with slang, idioms, characteristics of the city, the region and the local culture. Topics such as the division of the city, how to use public transport, food names, landmarks of the city are addressed, among other situations experienced daily by citizens. That is, focused on socio-linguistic aspects, in order to achieve interculturality with immigrants, and they feel closer to local customs. (BORGES, JESUS, 2021)

Therefore, it is important to observe that an intercultural education can be a viable alternative to promote the fight against racist and xenophobic manifestations, since allowing the existence of ethnic manifestations in the school environment reinforces the importance of a society oriented on the premise of global coexistence in which the people learn to live together by accepting and understanding cultural, social, ethnic and gender differences. (CORRÊA, 2022)

The moment of the classes also serves for immigrants to present questions related to their daily lives, such as expressions they heard from colleagues at work and Brazilian friends. Over time, classes became the meeting point of the university itself with the migrant population, who used their time to explain various problems they had as a result of their migratory status (documentation problems, local xenophobia, racism, knowledge of Brazilian legislation). Thus, the need to establish specific assistance for these issues arose.

Legal and assistance services at *Casa Irmã Dulce* started in 2019, being established to take place every Sunday, considering that it would be a time when immigrants would not be working. At first, the service dealt with more documentary and administrative issues, especially the collection of documents for renewing Haitian passports (AIZAWA, 2020). However, as time went by the issues have diversified. Currently, one of the biggest demands is the regularization of school children.

Under the supervision of teachers and project coordinators, assistance is provided by young university students and graduate students, who are available to collect information, documents and send the case so that the necessary measures can be taken. In 2019, 80% of the consultations were provided to Haitian nationals, and in second place, representing 18% of those attended, were Venezuelans. Of the total, 59% were male, 39% female and 2% transgender women. Approximately 31% of the demands were finalized, the rest were still pending documentation by the beneficiaries, or the response of other agencies involved in the assistance. (SILVA, PIRES, 2021)

The majority of those assisted were young, with only 13% being over 41 at the time of service. About 34% were between 19 and 30 years old, and also 34% between 31 and 40 years old. Of the total of assisted, 15% were from 0 to 18 years old. Demonstrating a young migratory profile, in relation to those assisted by the legal services sector of CSVM, therefore prone to insertion in the local labor market (IOM, 2020b). From the presentation of the demands, the volunteers started to categorize the

services, make plans and spreadsheets, in addition to internal booklets, with documentation and information necessary for each type of service. The assistance to immigrants was structured and expanded, according to the needs of those assisted.

Another point that became very important was the personal accompaniment of immigrants to places of care, such as the Federal Police, where the Brazilian migratory police are located (IOM, 2020b). It turns out that linguistic obstacles often prevented immigrants from having access to certain rights, as they were unable to express themselves or understand what the attendants requested, so the help of volunteers has been essential to guarantee certain rights. A factor already pointed out even by other reports or books, only regarding the socio-demographic profile of refugees. (LIMA, 2017)

The presence of young immigrants was essential for the political and social organization of their countrymen in the region, and in 2019 the Association of Haitians was created in Dourados chaired and founded by young Haitians, residents of the city since 2016. Far beyond the earthquake that struck the country in 2010, Haitians blame his departure on the lack of opportunities for growth in his native country (IOM, 2022).

The young Haitians, in addition to creating the Association of Haitians in Dourados, provide initial assistance to immigrants arriving in the city. Due to their proficiency in the Portuguese language and the connection created with the service entities, they are key people in the dialogue between the Haitian community and the local support network (AIZAWA, 2020). In the same way as dialogue with the local authorities in the sense of trying to overcome the social and economic needs.

Along the same lines, the organization created by the Venezuelans, called Dunamis Multicultural (Multicultural Association Dunamis by Dourados and Region) defends the interests and helps the newly arrived Venezuelan immigrants and residents in the region. (SILVA, PIRES, 2021)

At this point, it is worth mentioning that Venezuelans study at universities in Dourados, some having completed higher education or have reached the condition of completing courses and revalidating diplomas, one of the greatest demands of the present Venezuelan community, since many doors are closed to immigrants who do not have their recognized diplomas. One of the most sensitive challenges for Venezuelans and one of the obvious gaps in Brazilian migration policy in the attempt to integrate these people.

Very few Brazilian universities offer the service of exempting the payment of fees for immigrants who try to revalidate their diplomas. One of those that can be mentioned is the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), but it is not the case of the universities located in Dourados. One of the academic limitations of the region. (SILVA, 2021)

Some of the Venezuelans who live in Dourados are authors of books, chronicles and poetry. Such as "Mujer Imigrante" published by Arebol Coletivo. The book written in Spanish talks about the cultural roots of the immigrants present in the city, narrating the long journey from Venezuela to Brazil. (SILVA, PIRES, 2021)

For them, it is a memoir that gives voice to Latin American immigrant, especially regarding the adversities they all go through when

leaving their homeland, rewriting their lives elsewhere, in the role of workers, mothers, and wives. From the Venezuelan point of view, since they left their homeland, they remember the parties and meetings with nostalgia, as they had an intense cultural participation in the country, developing community actions.

The political crisis of Nicolas Maduro's government has deeper roots and has an impact on all sectors, including the cultural one. Venezuelan poets say there is no paper to print books in their homeland, and the internet service doesn't work very well. Governments that don't give importance to cultural diversities don't really think about the country or its people, says the writer.

For the effective integration of young immigrants in the region, two paths have been analyzed in the context of formal education: the recognition of foreign diplomas, which are at high cost, and the access of these young people to quality education for training in Brazil, as well as due monitoring to ensure that they are adapting to formal Brazilian education. (BETTS, LOESCHER, 2012).

While legal assistance has guaranteed children, immigrants or daughters of immigrants, access to free, quality public education, Portuguese classes as a hostess language have sought to guide young people and adults to take tests to access universities technical education.

Even though universities in the Dourados region have not yet developed a system for welcoming these immigrants to the higher education system, either through exemption from fees for the recognition of degrees or the availability of specific places, some ways have been taken with inspiration and example from other universities. (SILVA, 2021)

The availability of places for refugees in some universities in the region is mentioned, through a specific selection process, called External Transfer, Refugees and Diploma Holders, where applications from foreigners holding a refugee, humanitarian or family reunion visa are accepted. In addition to specific resolutions, which grant exemption from fees for the revalidation of diplomas and recognition of foreign undergraduate and graduate courses *strictu sensu* for refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants with a humanitarian reception visa (AIZAWA, 2020). The obvious limitations are that these processes appear only at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), and not at the universities and faculties present in Dourados or other regions of Mato Grosso do Sul.

It is noticed that young immigrants have an active participation in the development of integration projects in the city of Dourados. Empowering young migrants is, therefore, a form of empowerment for the entire community around them. (AIZAWA, 2020) In addition to the assistance provided to their families, both those who stayed in the country of origin and those who accompanied them in the migratory flow, young people also strengthen community ties with other immigrants, providing help on issues they are already aware of.

Whether through study, job opportunities or the recognition of their space in society, young immigrants in Dourados have shown that giving them space is giving space to their entire community. Through associations, idealized and made up of young people, migrant communi-

ties exchange experience, live their culture and form a support network among themselves, it is the strengthening of migrant social capital. Going further, they provide knowledge and opportunities for other migrants to ascend, fighting for causes such as access to education and recognition of foreign degrees.

Due to the pandemic, voluntary efforts remained hindered, but assistance to migratory issues continued to occur even though remotely. There is a lot to be done so that immigrants from the region can be integrated, however, universities have proved to be an excellent point for ideas, debates and assistance to immigrants in Dourados and the region.

At this point, young people also stand out. Despite the pandemic, migratory flows have not ceased to exist, so new strategies need to be thought to accommodate these individuals. The network of connections among immigrants has helped to monitor those who arrive in the city, and the mastery of technologies is essential for the provision of information and referral to medical care, if necessary.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research and extension projects were developed with the theme of immigrants and refugees at the center of the debates and analyzes, particularly after the flow of Venezuelans arriving in Mato Grosso do Sul and municipality of Dourados. On one hand, research aimed at immigrants in all their particularities regarding gender, ethnicity, profiles and motivations has been the object of research both in undergraduate universities in the region and in graduate school. And such initiatives have been transformed into scientific initiation projects, course completion works and master's thesis projects.

On the other hand, the initiatives around the extension have been enabling partnerships and cooperation with entities that work directly with the issue of international migration and refugees in the city, such as Casa *Irmã Dulce*, Operation Welcome, among other religious entities of civil society organized. As a growing trend, these initiatives around partnerships with other university, religious and humanitarian institutions.

Portuguese class projects for young immigrants and partnerships from universities present in Dourados who also study the topic, have been made possible due to the presence of the Sérgio Vieira de Mello's Chair, and the expressive number of students and teachers interested in developing projects of teaching, research and extension in the interdisciplinary area in assisting immigrants, in all its facets. Thus, not only Law and International Relations courses are involved in the Chair's projects, that is, also professionals and students from other areas, such as Geography, Letters and Psychology.

Legal assistance has sought to ensure that immigrant children and young people have access to a free, high-level public education, to Portuguese classes as a hostess language has sought to particularly guide young people to conduct tests for access to local universities, technical education, and a better insertion in the local labor market. The role of immigrants themselves, especially young people, in the political organization for their

demands, has been a major factor for their demands to be considered with the local government, as in the cases of Haitians and Venezuelans.

Anyway, thanks to the efforts and the dissemination of the work of the Catedra in Dourados, more research is being developed on the theme, which enriches and strengthens the discussion of the subject, allowing the analysis of the points still to be improved in the service and integration of the migrant, and in the diagnosis of what can be done or corrected for the creation of more efficient public policies to serve this marginalized population.

The pandemic worsened a situation that was already in a delicate state, demanding even more goodwill from volunteers and employees. The existence of service networks has proved essential to serve this population, particularly young immigrants in Dourados, in this period of uncertainty. Over time, the path taken by these young people, from their original lands to the city of Dourados, in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, needs to be more highlighted and more emphasized, considering the peculiarities brought by their stories and by their exceptional life trajectories.

Despite some of these advances, the limits and challenges for a better reception and integration of immigrants and refugees are located in a better management of the structure of public services and cooperation at the three levels of government spheres in Brazil. Increase in the service offering structure, dissemination of Portuguese classes at a socio-cultural level, combating misinformation and xenophobia on the part of the population of Dourados.

In other terms, regarding the problem of what are the limitations and challenges of the city of Dourados for receiving immigrants and refugees, they are of all kinds. Particularly a small and punctual structure for host Portuguese classes, offer of jobs with low added value and little information from the local population regarding the vulnerability and reality of international immigrants.

An important limitation to be highlighted is the quality of the jobs offered to immigrants and refugees is not the best, which can generate a lot of frustration and disappointment on the part of this community, combined with the fact that the language is difficult and for the revalidation of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees graduation according to Brazilian legislation.

Universities in Dourados have not yet developed a system to welcome international immigrants to higher education, either through the exemption of fees for the recognition of diplomas, or through the recognition of specific vacancies. As in other parts of the country.

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