



RESETTLEMENT IN BRAZIL

Requested by the Regional Representation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – UNHCR in Buenos Aires, the Brazilian Government decided to participate in the Resettlement Programme because it understands that resettlement is an important instrument for international protection. Its lasting nature provides refugees who cannot remain in the first country of refuge with a new possibility for protection and integration.

Thus, the Brazilian authorities signed the Resettlement Framework Agreement on Resettlement together with UNHCR in 1999.

However, Resettlement will not substitute for the granting of refugee status for those who individually seek asylum when arriving in Brazil, as long as they fall under eligibility conditions foreseen in Law 9.474 of 22 July 1997 that governs this matter.

In accordance with the Framework Agreement, refugee candidates for resettlement are selected and referred by UNHCR to the National Committee for Refugees – CONARE – which is the interministerial organ within the Ministry of Justice that has the competence to decide on this subject. To guarantee the success of this program, CONARE has technical assistants who then conduct interviews with individual refugees in their countries of asylum and decide whom to accept based on their profiles, expectations, and their reasons for requesting refuge. The technical assistants also orient them on important aspects of life in Brazil.

The participation of a non-governmental organization is extremely necessary for local integration and administration of the funds provided by UNHCR for this program. Professionalization of the third sector is vital for the continuation of the resettlement process, as the State alone is not in a position to conduct the hands-on aspects of resettlement.

Ethnic pluralism in Brazil and cultural wealth, basic principles for Resettlement, will facilitate local integration.

At the opening of the 56th General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 November 2001, the President of Brazil, Mr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, stated: "In spite of all circumstances, Brazil hopes that humanitarian actions toward Afghanistan will not be frustrated. According to our possibilities, we are looking forward to giving shelter to all refugees that are willing to integrate themselves in our country."



Ministério da Justiça
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Thus, honoring this international commitment, procedures have been adopted for the implementation of this pioneer resettlement program which has begun in Porto Alegre, a city which on the initiative of the city council was named "Porto Alegre – City of Refuge."

This fact provided great visibility to the humanitarian character of the project, awakening the local community to the importance of hosting refugees. This process also involved the media, provoking great interest and the publication of articles which have always been favourable.

On 12 April 2002, two Afghan families, coming from Iran, landed in Porto Alegre – RS. On the 26th of the same month, three more Afghan families, who lived in India, arrived, totalling 23 people. Their local integration is under the responsibility of the CENOE – Central de Orientação e Encaminhamento (Centre for Orientation and Guidance), an NGO chosen to partner in this first initiative.

However, it must be emphasized that for the strengthening and evolution of this programme in Brazil, it will be of vital importance for international partnerships to be established, involving countries which have some tradition in resettlement and organs with experience in the areas of consultancy and the implementation of projects. UNHCR regional representation in Buenos Aires is aware of the technical assistance needs of Brazil and has appointed an expert on the subject to assist the Centre for Orientation and Guidance, with the aim of setting guidelines for the first steps towards local integration.

It must be emphasized that an essential measure for the next steps will be support in order to promote the self-sustainability of refugees that in countries such as Brazil can only be solved with programmes that promote autonomy. Investment costs in micro-enterprise projects are low, while insertion in the labour market is not only difficult, but can take a long time due to the language barrier and the lack of professional qualifications of the majority of those persons resettled, as in the case of the Afghans.

In Brazil, the implementation of the resettlement programme is being carried out in a gradual manner, with the acceptance of small groups at a time, since the objective which motivates us is purely humanitarian with absolutely no influence of economic and migratory interests.