

**AN EXPLORATION INTO THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF CIVIL
SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN SHAPING NATIONAL POLICIES THAT
FACILITATE MIGRANT INTEGRATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO**

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ABSTRACT

An Exploration into the Role and Contributions of Civil Society Organizations in Shaping National Policies that Facilitate Migrant Integration in Trinidad and Tobago

Shelly Ann Tirbanie

The 21st century has ushered in unprecedented world events and the Venezuelan crisis has been characterized by socioeconomic adversities, political instability, and the phenomenon of massive, forced displacement. In Trinidad and Tobago, civil society organizations stood as vanguards ready to assist by providing services to an inflow of migrants and acted as liaisons to those they serve in the realm of policymaking. In lieu of the forgoing, however, exists a microcosm of organizations whose contributions were inadequately captured in the scope of policy development for migrant integration, and this provided rationale for the genesis of this study. Through structured open-ended interviews and the use of qualitative analytical software, twelve (12) organizations were assessed on various thematic areas, and the research produced two (2) major outcomes. The preliminary, delved into the sphere of service delivery and it was noted that a minority of establishments offered crucial migrant-related services, in contrast, the second outcome uncovered that most organizations were never a part of policy-making initiatives that would facilitate migrant integration. Resultantly, the outcomes of this study gave emphasis to avenues that can be taken by civil society actors to address various deficiencies in anticipation of an unpredictable regional environment.

Keywords: Civil Society Organizations; Non-Governmental Organizations; Migrant Integration; Policy Development; Capacity Building; Norm Entrepreneurship.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
1. Background and Research Problem.....	1
1.1 Research Questions	1
2. Literature Review	2
2.1 Migratory Trends in Trinidad and Tobago.....	5
3. Theoretical Framework.....	12
4. Methodology	14
4.1 The Research Design.....	14
4.2 Data Collection.....	15
4.3 Demographics	15
4.4 Data Analysis Method.....	16
5. Research Design Measurements	18
6. Findings.....	19
6.1 CSO/NGO Operations.....	19
6.2 Migrant Related Affairs	23
6.3 The CSO/NGO Experience with Stakeholders.....	28
6.4 Policy Formulation.....	31
7. Discussion.....	35
8. Conclusion	41
References.....	42
Appendix A. Master List of Themes	47

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Typology of Civil Society Organizations
Figure 2	Pre and Post Migration Migrant Work
Figure 3	Channel of Information about Health Services
Figure 4	Theme Categories
Figure 5	Services Offered by CSO/NGOs
Figure 6	Initiatives used by CSO/NGOs
Figure 7	Challenges with forming a Migrant Policy
Figure 8	Consultation on Migrant Policy
Figure 9	CSO/NGO Challenges
Figure 10	CSO/NGO Expectations on Policy Development

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Research Design Measurements
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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

Small Island States within the Caribbean have faced a myriad of challenges in the 21st Century, from the heightened vulnerabilities of climate change to the tumultuous pandemic, the anomaly of displacement however has interposed between this dichotomized pair and produced the greatest outflow of refugees the region has ever seen. Ellis (2017, 22) affirms that “the crisis in Venezuela is a problem for the country and the region that neither international law nor multilateral institutions are well equipped to handle”. Nonetheless, despite this circumstance, the state’s hemispheric neighbours have facilitated newly arrivals and countries such as Colombia, Brazil, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago have made several strides to promote different levels of integration (Chaves-Gonzalez and Echeverria-Estrada 2020,2).

The current migratory crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean presents an extraordinary chance for civil society organizations in Trinidad and Tobago to be included in migrant integration and policy development. The problem at hand is this, even though local arms of civil society in Trinidad and Tobago have made considerable strides in providing services especially as it relates to facilitating migrants, some organizations and their contributions have not been adequately recognized and documented within both fields (integration and policy formulation).

As a result of this dilemma, this research paper will address the following:

1.1 Research Questions

Major Research

Question

What is the role of civil society organizations in migrant integration in Trinidad and Tobago?

Minor

- What services do civil society organizations (CSOs) offer to migrants?
- What are some of the challenges and opportunities that exist for civil society as they participate in facilitating integration and policymaking?
- What are the recommendations of civil society organizations (CSOs) on developing policies that facilitate migrant integration?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Civil Society in Migrant Integration and Policy Development

The genesis and renaissance of civil society organizations can be traced to the antiquity of the enlightenment period (DeWiel 1997,3) and when mobilized, civil society can present themselves as a force to be reckoned with as they have the power to influence not only elected officials (Jezard 2018) but the citizenry. Throughout various epochs and seasons they (civil society) have managed pertinent issues that involve disaster and crisis management, protection of human rights, climate change debates and peacebuilding; civil society agents “have also provided much-needed services to individuals, communities and society in general” (Bowen 2013, 84).

At present, there is no specific definition for the term “civil society” whereas, in the context of migration, civil society organizations can mean “a diverse range of non-state actors who may influence formal and informal migration-related rules, practices, and processes, this may include religious or faith-based organizations, trade unions, charities, migrant- run NGO's, women's associations, and advocacy groups” (Banulescu-Bogdan 2011,2). Given this preamble from hereinafter and for this paper, the terms civil society organizations (CSOs), non- governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) would be used interchangeably.

Civil society organizations hold extreme significance in domestic and regional affairs and equivalently a European Economic Social Committee Study Group on Immigration and Integration also emphasized the same sentiments. A report generated by this study group in March 2020 intimates that “Civil society organizations play an important role in migrant and refugee integration; they carry out valuable work assisting or even substituting for government by providing guidance and support for the integration process” (Aasmaa 2020,4). Moreover, findings from this study also suggested that the expertise gained from these practitioners should be used when “designing integration strategies and policies to ensure that they correspond to the actual needs and circumstances, which would optimally benefit migrants” (4). Further recommendations from this report also encouraged member states within the European Union to establish and maintain cooperation between civil society organizations and government bureaucracies to create synergies that would fuse knowledge, practice, and resources available on both ends (Aasmaa 2020,4).

This alliance was further emphasized by Banulescu-Bogdan (2011,1) who states that, “civil society provides a crucial link between governments and the communities they represent- infusing the policy process with grassroots knowledge to which government may not have had access to otherwise and lends legitimacy to their actions”. Following on from this, the typology of civil society organizations that work within the field of migration (see figure 1) further signified that civil society can be deemed as a heterogeneous entity with various functions, goals, resources, and abilities to engage with government at any level.

Along with this typology, Bowen (2013,83) suggests that within the Caribbean context the following types of organizations encompass civil society:

- Non-profit organizations- include educational institutions, faith-based organizations, and trade unions. These are tax-exempted groups and in essence, no owner or trustee can benefit from profit or loss.
- Non-governmental organizations commonly referred to as NGOs- are legitimate organizations that engage in altruistic activities such as advocacy and consist of professional associations that are facilitated without government participation.
- Grassroots or community-based organizations (CBOs) - this includes youth-based clubs and citizen groups that operate at a local community level.

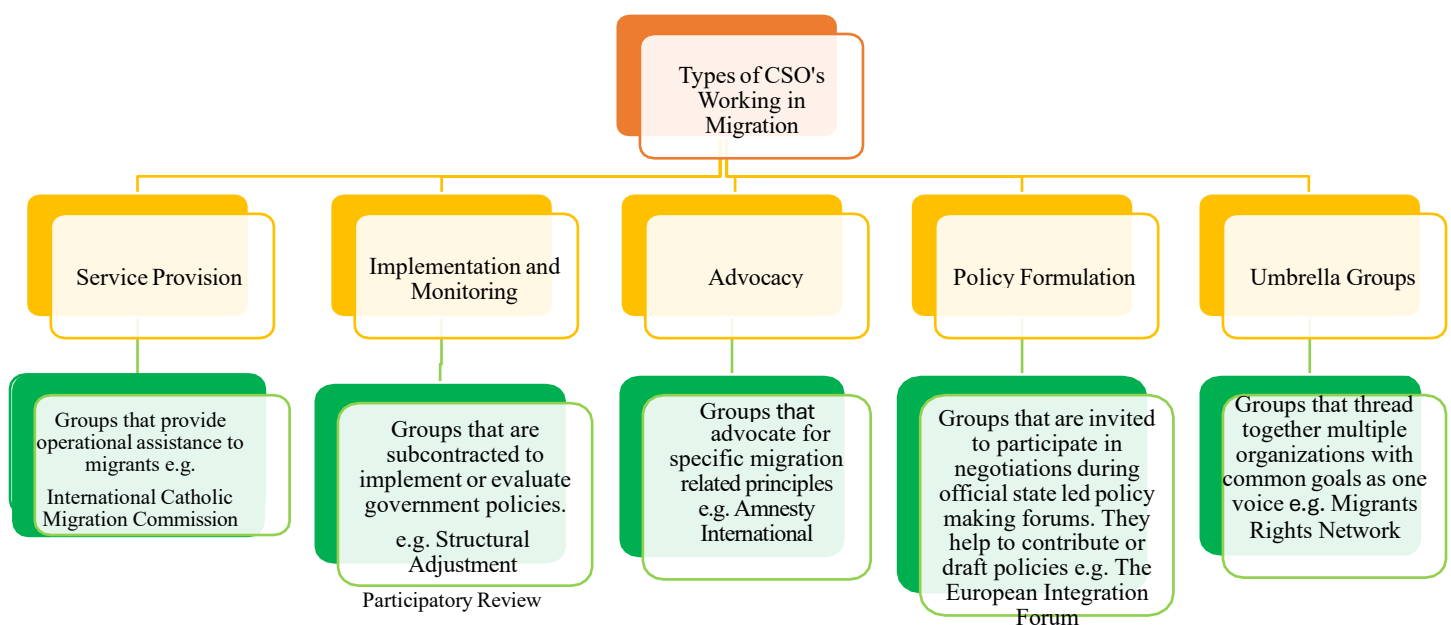


Figure 1: Typology of Civil Society Organizations

Source: Banulescu-Bogdan (2011,4)

Bowen (2013,84) also alludes to the relevance of civil society and its role in policy formulation and implementation within CARICOM particularly in the domain of regional integration. He Bowen (2013,94) states, “an envisioned role for civil society organizations in regional development has implications for public policy; the CSOs’ participation itself has implications for the approach to formulating policy”. In essence, his reflections not only advocate for strategic measures and legislative frameworks that can bolster CSO’s involvement in policy development at a national and regional level, but he also regards this collaboration as a best practice. To the author, consultations in this regard would not be mere opinions but substantial contributions between state and non-state actors in planning and decision-making (Bowen 2013,94-95); this standpoint is also a communal position held by the writer of this paper.

Similarly, the writings of Lewis (1994,125) share parallel connotations, it is proposed that non- governmental organizations should be considered significant in the regional debate of development in the Caribbean. He purports that “crisis provides a unique opportunity for non-governmental organizations to explore and promote alternatives which can transform an economy” (Lewis1994,133). Further to this, community-based and non-governmental organizations have propelled the concept of power into a new dimension as they can collectively respond to and defend the vulnerable in society and can be considered a primary force of social movement and change in the Caribbean. Civil society is therefore a “vehicle through which participation in the development process can be achieved” (Montoute 2010,2). In numerous instances, apart from policy formulation, civil society groups within the Caribbean have proven how beneficial and meaningful their contributions can be. For instance, Montoute (2010,13) highlights their role in conflict resolution; where civil society actors were brought in to resolve a dispute in St. Vincent and the Grenadines after the introduction of the 1998 Gratuity Bill. This was also done in Guyana as conflict arose after their 1997 general elections. Moreover, countries like Jamaica have also included civil society participation in formulating trade policies and dialogue.

The process of involving civil society organizations in migration policy development and overall incorporating them into the political fora may not be smooth sailing, Thouez (2003,9) conveys that, “there are sensitivities and controversies in such a comprehensive field”. Thouez (2003,10) further implies that the topic of migration is sensitive because it highlights not only the North-South divide but also a “widening gap between the haves and have nots” in the global community. This is relative however because in many instances increased poverty has been linked to migration and therefore having conversations on this subject matter can and does have

considerable tension. To abate such friction, civil society organizations and international non-governmental organizations should discuss migration in a meaningful context; one that has its roots in international and humanitarian law.

Another challenge of civil society organizations in the field of policy development is the reality that international migration or the definition thereof has been poorly stated. International migration is not just the mixed flow of migrants but encompasses broad areas which are comprised of inter-linkages. For instance, the concept of international migration has been tied to topics such as globalization, sustainable development, and conflict management; these areas in themselves are either still being debated, not well understood, and may contain issues. It is therefore imperative that civil society organizations not only focus on advocacy work (that is, migrant protection and human rights, which may be fully developed) but also consider the implications these inter-linkages may have on migration policy development to establish concrete areas and formulate agendas (Thouez 2003, 11-12). Further obstacles encountered by civil society organizations is the predicament that consultations may not always materialize into policies and consequently they may face leaders and bureaucrats who may be unwilling to or may not have the time to even engage in dialogue.

2.1 Migratory Trends in Trinidad and Tobago

The phenomenon of migration is not a unique occurrence in the realm of world politics and its scope of influence has become increasingly important to state leaders, citizens, and civil society organizations. Consequently, the time has also reflected that the cosmopolitan state of Trinidad and Tobago has experienced a repository of diverse migrants from countries such as China, the Middle East, Venezuela, and Caribbean territories such as Guyana, Barbados, and Jamaica. It is worth mentioning at this point that at an international level, there is no universally accepted definition for the term ‘migrant’ however, the International Organization for Migration suggest that the term reflects “the common lay understanding of a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons” (Sironi et al. 2019, 55).

Given this context, the twin-island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago has the highest migrant stock in the region and figures from the World Bank estimate that from 2010 to 2015, there has been an increase in the number of migrants from 2.56% to 3.7% respectively (Anatol, Kirton, and Nanani 2013, 10; World Bank Open Data 2023). Migration to Trinidad and Tobago in some regard has been facilitated by conventions such as the CARICOM Free Movement of Skilled Persons Act (1997) which outlines that skilled persons can move and work throughout member states once they have been granted a Certificate of Recognition. In other circumstances

however such as those arising out of the South American region, migration to this twin isle has been largely perpetuated by internal conflict which has led to massive displacement (Anatol, Kirton, and Nanan 2013,11-12).

Considering this evidence above, the case of Venezuelan migration would be used as the catalyst for this research paper. This study aims to pursue the contributions of civil society organizations and examine their role in developing national policies that would inform and influence migrant integration in Trinidad and Tobago. Over the past nine (9) years since the death of the late President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela has been plunged into crisis as the struggle for political power prevails leading to economic and social difficulties. This turmoil has sparked the mass migration of Venezuelans to the regions of Latin America and the Caribbean and is deemed as one of the largest forced displacements in the Western Hemisphere (Ellis 2017,23-24; BBC News 2021). In terms of statistics, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that as of October 2022, there are over seven (7) million Venezuelan migrants and refugees in the world (UNHCR 2022).

Its neighbour Trinidad and Tobago continues to receive an outflow of migrants and in 2019, “the government embarked on a Venezuelan Registration Exercise and this process authorized Venezuelan nationals in irregular circumstances to work for a period of one year” (DTM 2020,1), providing those screening procedures were successful. That said year, over 16,000 Venezuelan nationals were registered and additionally, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) was launched to capture data for monitoring the movement and progress of migrants within Trinidad and Tobago. It should be noted that as of March 2021, approximately over 13,000 Venezuelans have been re-registered and one year later on March 22nd, 2022, it was reported that those who participated in the exercise had been granted an extension on their permits until December 31st, 2022 (Alvarado 2022; Displacement Tracking Matrix 2020; Trinidad Express Newspapers 2022).

After the initial registration process, interviews were conducted, and in 2019, of the 16,523 registered migrants in Trinidad and Tobago, 2,166 were interviewed to determine what were their needs and by extension to ascertain the type of vulnerabilities to which they were exposed. Data collected during this exercise identified key areas of concern: of the 2,166 respondents interviewed, 76% were refugees/ asylum seekers whilst 4% had work and tourist visas. Since migrating, 32% of the respondents were unemployed and those who gained employment explained that their ‘work statuses’ had changed and now most of them had to be employed in other sectors that were different from when they were at home (see figure 2).

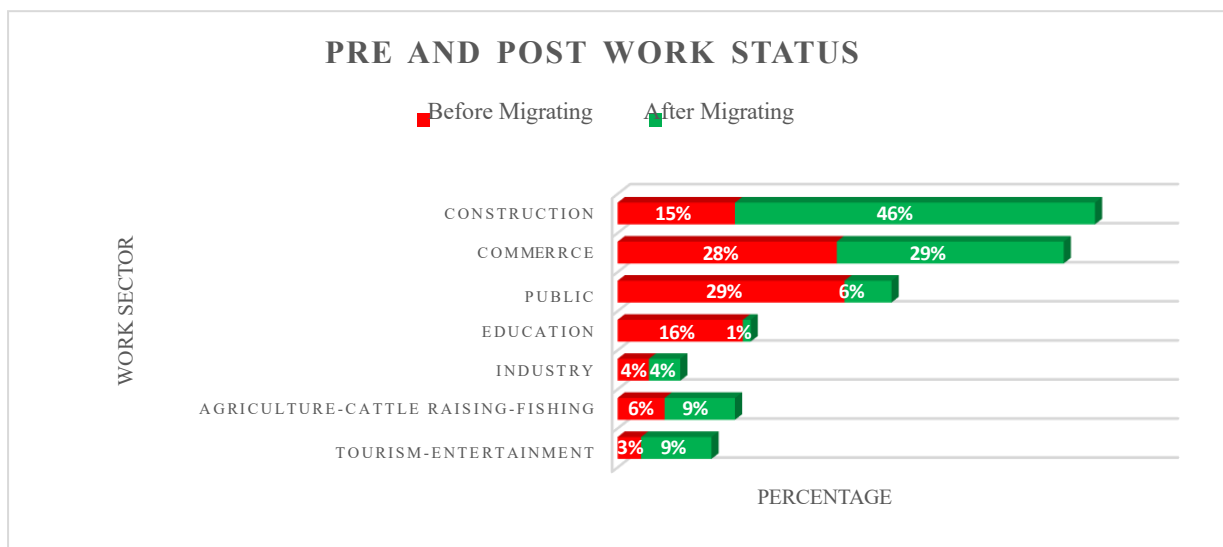


Figure 2: Pre and Post Migration Migrant Work

Source: Trinidad and Tobago-Monitoring Venezuelan Citizens Presence, Round 2 September 2019 | DTM 2020

Originating out of this category, throughout 2019 to 2021, the construction sector was listed as the prime area of employment for most migrants and additional information presented in the Displacement Tracking Matrix suggested that even students who migrated withdrew from their educational pursuits and were absorbed into the labour force. The study also revealed that there are instances where those who were employed had no signed contract, proof of salary deductions for services rendered and, in some instances, persons were either underpaid, received less than minimum wage or were not paid at all. In addition to this data, labour exploitation and workplace intimidation were some of the key issues migrants experienced because of their irregular status and some respondents reflected that they had witnessed physical and sexual violence in the workspace. These factors have been trending over the past two years (Displacement Tracking Matrix 2022).

Similarly, reports from the Migration Policy Institute reflected identical woes as health and health-related services were cited as another major section of concern. Of the 2,166 individuals interviewed within this category, respondents indicated that in some instances, they either did not have access to reproductive and sexual health services, were unsure of where to go for same or believed health insurance was necessary to access health services. Interviewees also indicated that information about where to go to access health services was also limited, as such, alternate options were considered (see figure 3).

The ‘lack of information’ on where and how to access health services was also featured in the 2020 and 2021 Displacement Tracking Matrix and reports displayed that friends, relatives along with the internet and social media were significant sources of guidance to interviewees. In other circumstances, pregnant mothers lamented that they were not accessing prenatal services, and overall, there were instances where migrants would feel a sense of hopelessness and frustration because of their conditions and as such gaining access to mental care services also posed a challenge (Chaves-Gonzalez and Echeverria-Estrada 2020). Concurrently, data from the displacement tracking matrix highlighted that in the department of nutrition and dietetics, 24 % of the interviewees indicated that they did not eat at least three times a day and 77 % of this group did not receive official support (Displacement Tracking Matrix 2019 and 2020).

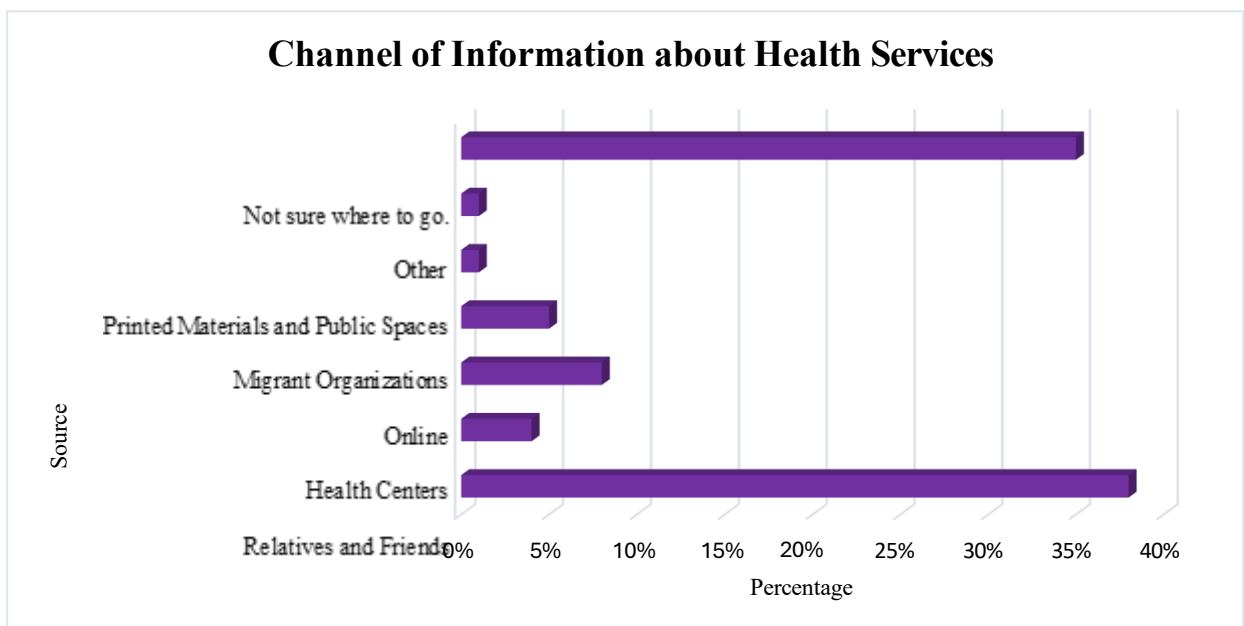


Figure 3: Channel of Information about Health Services

Source: Migration Policy Institute, 2020

In another category, when asked to prioritize their needs, the migrants indicated that income generation and employment were of utmost importance, and this was pertinent because most of them not only had dependents in Trinidad but also had loved ones back at home (in Venezuela), who were waiting on financial and other assistance. Furthermore, they (the interviewees) also had to pay for housing and over fifty percent (50%) of the respondents during this period had to rent houses or apartments and pay for basic utilities during their stay. Subsequently, the Displacement Tracking Matrix for 2020 and 2021 followed a similar trajectory and it was observed that food, medicine and money accounted as major resources being sent back to Venezuela and consequently the rental of accommodations was key to achieve some level of comfort (Displacement Tracking Matrix 2020 and 2021). To support this report by the Displacement Tracking Matrix, the UNHCR also reported in 2022 that multipurpose cash-based incentives were approved for individuals who were facing heightened vulnerabilities, that is, persons who are unable to meet their basic needs and in some instances were either evicted or faced a substantial risk of eviction. (Displacement Tracking Matrix 2020; UNHCR Trinidad and Tobago 2022).

Uncertainty also loomed as over 70% of respondents in the 2019 Displacement Tracking Matrix indicated that they were indecisive about how long they would stay in Trinidad and Tobago and some interviewees even lamented that they would return to Venezuela once conditions there did improve. In an obvious dissimilarity however over the past two (2) years, the Displacement Tracking Matrix for 2020 and 2021 emphasized that there was an increase in the number of families with children entering Trinidad and Tobago, and combined, there are over three thousand children under the age of 18 living with over fifty percent (50%) of the respondents interviewed within the above-mentioned period. In both periods, leading age categories are children ranging between 0-4 and 5-9 years, and there are numerous circumstances where children lacked documentation and have no access to education (Displacement Tracking Matrix 2020 and 2021). Altogether, the aforementioned categories have revealed that the migrant population in Trinidad and Tobago is indeed not only exposed to vulnerabilities but also has a yearning to fulfil their basic needs. The desire for health care, accessing food and finding employment as example, may have been further exacerbated by the Novel Coronavirus particularly with unstable post-pandemic conditions. Ultimately, the perplexities of it all led to over 2000 Venezuelan nationals returning to their homeland in 2021 (UNHCR Trinidad and Tobago 2022).

Migratory flows such as the present experience have highlighted the weaknesses in the existing national policy framework of Trinidad and Tobago and as a matter of urgency; the state implemented “A phased approach towards the Establishment of a National Policy to Address Refugee and Asylum Matters”. The Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago adopted this proposal in 2014 and it outlines the determinants that would be necessary if a policy is to be transformed into law (Grey 2020). It should be noted however that this ‘phased approach’ is just a response to a crisis and not a policy in itself. With this in mind, other instruments such as the Republic’s Constitution, its 1976 Immigration Act and international agreements through which the state has acceded to, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the International Convention on the Rights and Protections of Migrant Workers, all act as a guide to the nation as they treat with those who are undeniably displaced (UNHCR 2016).

In addition to the aforementioned, the government of Trinidad and Tobago also receives assistance and support from civil society actors to protect and solve the quandaries faced by migrants and those that seek international protection. For instance, there are some establishments that have worked with migrants and refugees for a considerable time, offering consultations and services on registration, sexual reproductive health, counselling and psychological support to those who are mentally affected by their journey. This support also extends to those who have become susceptible to sexual assault, discrimination (xenophobia) and sexual labour (UNHCR Trinidad and Tobago 2021).

Other state-stakeholder initiatives include a National Joint Select Committee, which was held at the Fifth Session of the Eleventh Parliament in the year 2020. This committee held an inquiry on the treatment of migrants and focused specifically on the rights to education, employment, and protection from sexual exploitation. Subsequently, a report (National Joint Select Committee 2020) was generated from this inquest and the following were some of the recommendations put forward:

- Extending the work authorization permit that was granted to Venezuelans in 2019 by another year and open registration for those who were unable to do so at the time. This process should also be extended to new arrivals.

- In an effort to build capacity and resources, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed and should comprise of UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, and other government stakeholders. This would facilitate dialogue, research, co-create solutions, and provide technical assistance and expertise which would contribute to the development of political, legal, and social frameworks that would help to manage migration and the protection of refugees and asylum seekers in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Amending current legislative frameworks such as the Immigration Act so that they can be in line with Refugee Conventions
- A waiver of student permits for children of those who need protection (all migrants) would grant them immediate entry into educational institutions.
- Inclusion of these children in the School Nutrition Programme
- Ensure adequate information is taken and managed as it relates to the migrant population.
- Provide avenues for the direct management of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees with the government.
- Implementing additional health facilities for migrants and providing trauma counselling
- Establishing safe reporting protocols which would allow migrants to report cases of sexual exploitation without the fear of retribution and negative consequences from police and investigative authorities.
- A review of labour laws is necessary to protect migrant workers.
- Expedite finalization of the labour migration policy and involve civil society in its review and completion.
- Conduct sensitization campaigns on labour rights, and employer obligations and provide incentives for the private sector engagement with the migrant population.

It is noteworthy to state that the data gathered, and recommendations represented in the narrative presented thus far, originated from a few members within civil society, and though this list is not exhaustive, it highlights the valuable contributions of non-state actors. The magnitude of this influence is crucial in decision-making processes and the building of norms and policies at a national level. In the end, these policies should maximize on the latent opportunities of migrant integration. It is therefore this premise that provides purpose for this study.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To grasp the level of participation of non-state actors in the domain of policymaking, one must take into consideration the process in which public policies are constructed (Spencer 2006,2). Policy formulation involves the vigorous participation of government officials, civil servants, academics, civil society organizations and the voters themselves. With advocacy and interest groups, in particular, they may not be directly involved in political fora, and therefore their goals are achieved through the pursuit of influence within political institutions, and ultimately this features their mandate and the policies for which they support. This process would require capturing the attention of government officials, bureaucrats and the media as well as gaining support from the public (Grant 1995,47). That being said, Spencer (2006,8) claims that there are five categories that determine how NGOs can influence national policymaking:

1. Through exogenous factors, these are elements that put the state under pressure to change policy or limit its capacity to do so, for example, constraints such as international /regional agreements and obligations and drivers such as domestic cultural beliefs, and the overall attitudes of the public, the private sector and service providers can be utilized as a catalyst to propel civil society into the sphere of persuasion.
2. Endogenous factors such as the minister/official's predisposition towards NGOs make them more or less open to external influence. In some instances, NGOs have been a source of parliamentary debate, and this provides the perfect opportunity to broadcast their opinions in a formal setting.
3. The accessibility of official and unofficial channels through which NGOs can communicate with policymakers. These channels include emails, telephone calls and arranging face-to-face meetings. Once contact is made, however, NGOs can exert influence especially if they have identified a policymaker that shares similar sentiments/values, are receptive to their dilemma and recognizes the timing of their needs.
4. Their accessibility to organizations provides indirect channels to policymakers including the media, and other organizations influential with the government. For example, NGOs can use the media as a means of highlighting their plight so that it can reach the senses of officials; once this is achieved their aims can form part of a political agenda.
5. The capacity of NGOs to take advantage of opportunities; involves the degree to which NGOs cooperate in the field of migration, their ability to convince

policymakers that they are a legitimate source of opinion and their level of organizational competence.

The five categories above will be utilized as the theoretical framework for this paper. In essence, this model can provide a valuable guide for the research and its design as it sets a foundation by providing a base for interview questions. Its content can also contribute to addressing the research questions generated for this paper. In addition to this, the categorizations can also illustrate the following for this project: the channels of policymaking in Trinidad and Tobago and the level of influence needed to operate within and impact this domain as a member of civil society. Moreover, within this context, the components charted therein can be used as a gauge to bring to the forefront the internal and external strengths and weaknesses of civil society organizations; especially those establishments that have vital contributions but may have been side-lined by policymakers and officials because they may lack legitimacy in opinion, may not be as influential as those who already exist within the field and may have insufficient resources and years of experience.

Thereafter, the stage of precedence will be set as the level of collaboration and communication that is necessary for policy formulation can be explored, not only between policymakers and civil society members but how they incorporate these concepts amongst themselves. In its entirety, this framework would be best suited for this research paper as it undeniably supports its premise of exploration, and it should bear significance to the case of migration in Trinidad and Tobago as all hands are needed on deck for consultation and consequently policy development in the field of migration.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The thesis began with a pursuit of literature on current migratory trends in Trinidad and Tobago to gain an understanding of the needs and vulnerabilities of its migrant population. The objective of this process was to also assess and obtain information on civil society actors involved in facilitating the inflow of migrants. Furthermore, on evaluating various literary works, it was observed that similar topics involving civil society were undertaken in other regions, for example, a qualitative study to determine the opinions of managers within civil society organizations was conducted in Germany to learn about the experiences of individuals who had immigrated from Turkey (Tekingündüz et al. 2021,417-420). In Switzerland, the practices, vulnerabilities, and resilience of civil society members in the field of migration were measured as they integrated migrants into the Swiss labour market (Fernández Guzmán Grassi and Nicole-Berva 2022,921-923). Hereinafter, at the end of assessing the relevant discourse, ethics approval from the University of the West Indies Campus Research Ethics Committee was pursued and permission was granted to conduct a study amongst CSO/NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago. Consent forms were distributed, signed, and returned prior to interviews which commenced on the 21st of April 2022 to June 2nd, 2022.

4.1 Research Design

Sampling Procedure

The typology of civil society organizations as identified above in Figure 1, by Banulescu-Bogdan (2011) was used by the researcher to categorize potential organizations that function within the field of service provision, advocacy, implementation/monitoring, and policy formulation. Subsequently, a list comprising twenty-three (23) organizations was created based on readings and further inquiry. Purposive sampling was then used to refine this list. According to Johnson and Christensen (2014,364) the purposive method is a type of non-random sample that allows researchers to identify distinctive characteristics within a population and therefore participants would be selected based on the needs of the study. The purposive sampling technique was relevant to this research as it assisted in the development of inclusion and exclusion project criteria. These parameters were used to determine which organizations should or should not be targeted and the conditions are listed below:

- Inclusive Criteria: organizations targeted for this study are civil society agents that provide services to migrants; agents that have the potential to offer services to migrants

and members that have the potential to contribute to policy development within the field of migration.

- Exclusive Criteria: employees within civil society organizations that have limited experience working within the establishment.

In addition to this technique, snowballing methods were incorporated as part of the project's research design. The snowballing procedure was executed at the end of each interview where interviewees were asked to identify other potential organizations that had similar characteristics as outlined within the inclusive criteria. This method was also utilized because attempts to reach some potential organizations were unsuccessful. Conclusively, from engaging in both sampling methods, the sample size for this project was narrowed to twelve (12) organizations.

4.2 Data Collection

A qualitative research design was employed for this project and data collection comprised of standardized open-ended interview sessions with one (1) person from an organization. Standardized open-ended interviews meant that all questions were prepared by the interviewer beforehand and subsequently, were read to all interviewees in the same order as was written. The average time taken to complete an interview was one hour and thirty minutes (1h30mins). All sessions were recorded, and one (1) session was held face-to-face, whilst the majority, eleven (11) sessions were conducted using the Zoom platform. This online medium was suitable because of pandemic restrictions at the time and encouraged an open environment as interviewees were in familiar, convenient settings.

4.3 Demographics

Within the target audience, 41.7% of the interviewees were male, and 58.3 % were females; and of the twelve (12) organizations examined:

- Seven (7) were operating for over fifteen (15) years.
- Two (2) between 7-9 years.
- Three (3) were operating for 1-3 years.

It should also be mentioned that these establishments all have a combination of full-time or part-time employees and in some circumstances, volunteers aided in carrying out day-to-day functions.

4.4 Data Analysis Method

Following data collection from interviews, recorded content was transcribed using two (2) automatic services Microsoft Office 365 (online version) and HappyScribe. The transcriptions were then analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method in qualitative inquiry that goes beyond counting explicit words and phrases. It focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2011). Equivalently, this style of analysis organizes related data sets into themes so that recurrent patterns can be revealed (Sarantakos 2013, 379-380). Thematic analysis was also incorporated into other qualitative studies that examine civil society. For example, a study conducted by Pejovic and Cossarini (2020,1) provides a candid view of how thematic and frame analysis was used to examine the “European Commission’s perception of the role of civil society organizations in the refugee crisis and the rise of right-wing populism”. Within this project, thematic analysis was used as a gauge to map out themes and identify patterns in topics the Commission would have addressed over a five (5) year period. For this research however, this style of analysis was chosen because it presents an avenue for future researchers to review and assess primary data collected by this project. Such a method also creates an audit trail that can assist in further analyses and interpretations that can be retested ensuring reliability. As such, inherently, the themes generated from this research were supported by the literature above and this gave the upcoming findings merit, they are as follows:

- CSO/NGO Operations
- Migrant Related Affairs
- The CSO/NGO Experience
- Policy Formulation.

Subsequent to developing themes, sub-themes were also generated from the raw data, and its determinants were grouped using inductive coding (a ground-up method). Coding is the process of “labelling and organizing qualitative data to identify different themes and the relationships that exist between them” (Medelyan 2021). Johnson and Christensen (2014) also support the above-mentioned definition as they affirm that during a study, coding is a mechanism used by researchers to ‘categorize’ significant sections within transcribed text so that segments can be easily identified. These codes or labels to themes were also helpful in generating new ideas that were crucial for the research paper. Correspondingly, Provalis QDA Miner, a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software, was used for analyzing thematic/inductive style undertaken by the research paper. Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

(CAQDAS), such as Provalis QDA Miner “has distinct advantages over manual approaches by offering quick drag-and-drop coding, retrieval of coded segments, data organization, rapid searches of text, creation of an audit trail, and extensive team facilitation capabilities” (O’Kane et al. 2019,105). Hence, this software was chosen because it can be used for coding, interpreting, retrieving, and analyzing the quantity of data collected from the interviews. Additionally, if needed Provalis QDA Miner can also provide coding and interpretation on images and documents (Abdulkareem et al. 2019,4). Provalis QDA Miner also accepted transcribed data from Microsoft Office 365 (online version) and HappyScribe which was overall beneficial to the researcher. As a result of this feature, a codebook containing all themes and subthemes was generated manually; this was easily stored and accessed without complications. Using QDA Miner also allowed the researcher to assign and re-assign codes, make notes or comments to data sets and facilitated the research by employing techniques such as coding by frequency, coding co-occurrence and coding by variables.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH DESIGN MEASUREMENTS

Finally, after transcribing and categorizing data, the undermentioned indicators were developed as a gauge to determine strong, medium, and weak patterns amongst themes and subthemes. (see table 1):

Table 1: Research Design Measurements

Range	Cases
Strong Theme/Subtheme Patterns Range from (70-100%) of the interviews	Case Representation for strong patterns 9/12 =75 % 10/12 =83.3% 11/12 =92% 12/12 =100%
Medium Theme/Subtheme Patterns Range from (40-69%) of the interviews.	Case Representation for medium patterns 8/12 =67% 7/12=58% 6/12=50% 5/12=42%
Weak Patterns Theme/Subtheme Patterns Range from below 39% of the interviews	Case representation for weak patterns 4/12=33% 3/12=25% 2/12=17% 1/12=8%

Source: Primary Data, 2022

CHAPTER 6 FINDINGS

The outcomes of this study would be categorized into four themed areas:

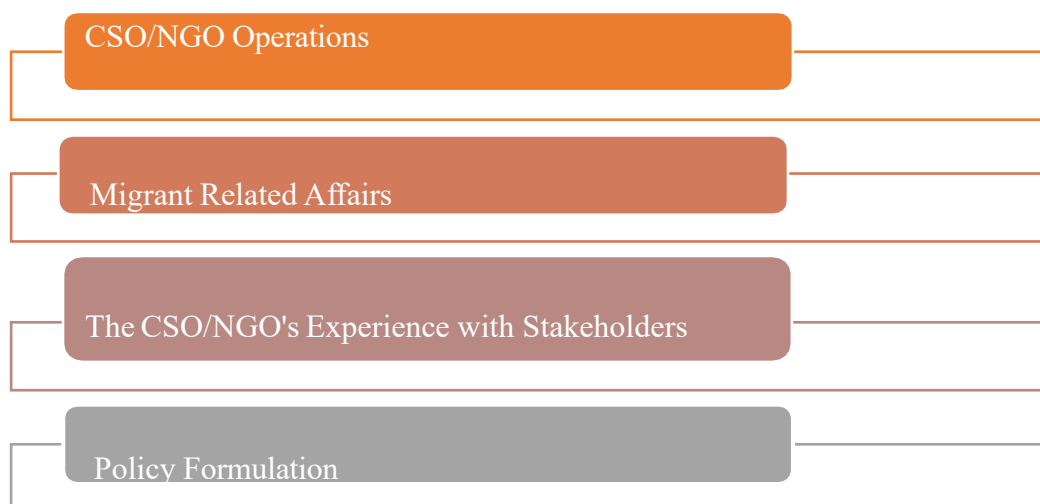


Figure 4: Theme Categories

Source: Primary Data

6.1 CSO/NGO Operations

The CSO/NGO Operation theme evaluates the current capabilities of civil society agents that support the local migrant population, and as such, this segment is concerned with operational logistics and organizational aspirations of the establishments involved in this research. During the interviews, participants identified fourteen (14) different pathways of service delivery used to meet the basic needs of the migrant populace in Trinidad and Tobago. Data collected within this category suggest that providing food support through hampers and supplies, assisting with health care access, counselling/mediation and offering educational facilities were the most dominant services rendered and accounted for over fifty (50%) of the responses (See Figure 5).

Further analysis revealed however that of the twelve (12) organizations interviewed, vital services such as pre-registration/registration, bilingual hotline/call centre support and housing/shelter accommodations were employed by less than three organizations, presenting a weak pattern amongst the data collected. Consequentially, one should bear in mind that these three services are important to migrants because they assist in protection, settling and providing information on how to navigate through a new society. Therefore, in its current state, with less than three organizations participating in this activity, juxtaposed to the previously reported volume of migrants initially registered, that is, over 16,000 and subsequently with over 13,000 re-registered individuals, these results possibly illustrate a gap in service delivery by the

CSO/NGO sector. This gap may be a result of limited integrated involvement amongst CSOs or the lack of internal resources such as funding or staff restraints. Over and above that, it is imperative to express that attention must be given to the following reality: to date, there is an undetermined number of displaced persons still entering and seeking assistance in Trinidad and Tobago and even an uncertain sum of those who depart, as such, increased participation, resource allocation and service provision is required amongst CSO/NGOs in these three areas.

In addition to service delivery, interviewees also identified future potentials to enhance their organizations throughout the sector and highlighted additional avenues that can be explored to facilitate migrant integration. For instance, as a means of expanding services: Interviewee 01 suggested that *“we need to have some sort of orientation for migrants when they come in, educating them about the society”*, this can *“take place in their own language, because of the gaps in their schooling”*. According to Karlsdóttir et al. (2020,7) orientation can *“provide a cool embrace for newcomers”* it can also provide an avenue where new arrivals *“look for information or even receive appropriate information”*. This is an extremely important function as migrants are unfamiliar with society’s operations and cultural associations. An example of this unawareness was highlighted when Interviewee 01 stated that *“they need to understand our currency as well, one of them bought a papaya for \$400TTD because he thought that was the price and didn’t get change. So, the most basic things like how to take a taxi, to go shopping, understanding currency, methods of payment and if you are having issues, where are the places you can go to seek help”*.

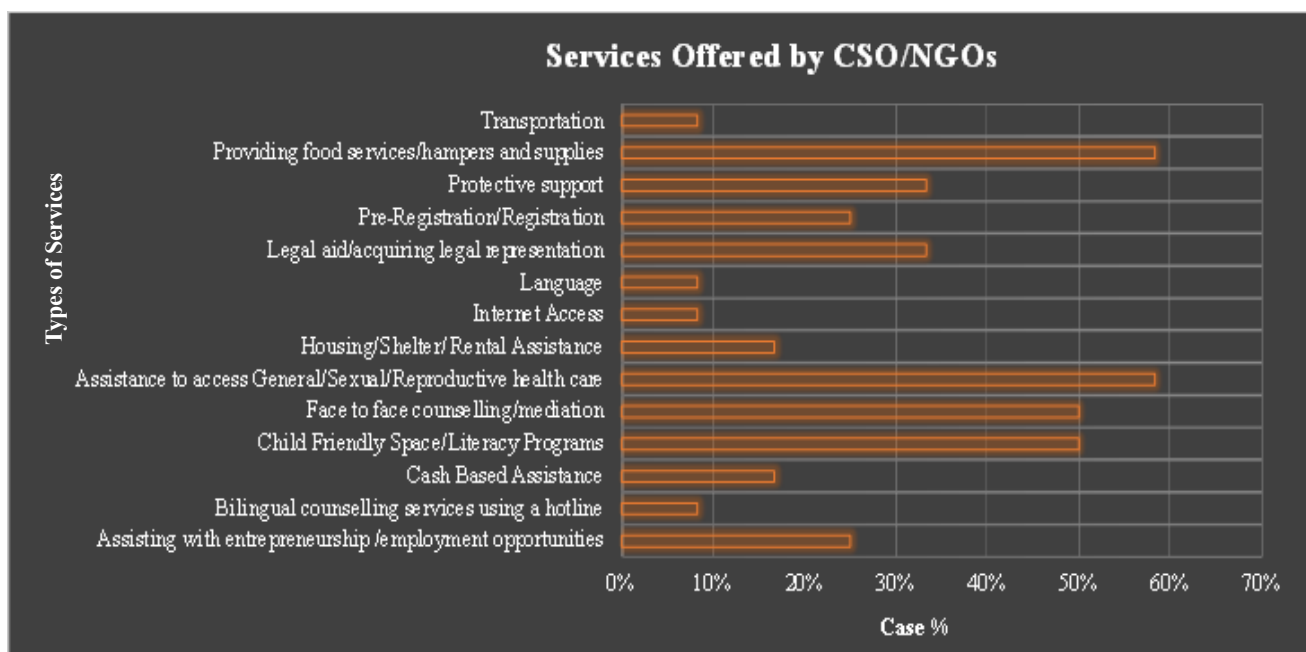


Figure 5: Services Offered by CSO/NGOs

Source: Primary Data

The term ‘everyday integration’ is used by “Norwegian authorities to characterize the social arena of integration that is not necessarily closely linked to a newcomer becoming employed but is more widely associated with becoming functional in navigating the everyday tasks necessary to living in a new society” (Karlsdóttir et al. 2020,10). Taking this concept into consideration, I will now identify other pathways of service expansion participants deemed as important not only to their development but those that would assist new arrivals to steer through our society.

Areas of progression include offering registration services, housing accommodations and contemporary amenities like *‘free internet access’*, this is vital because *“not only would they need it for pre-registration, but they need to reach out to their family and friends back in Venezuela”* (Interviewee 05). Simultaneously, this participant also proposed the implementation of laundry facilities because in certain circumstances *“they will have no electricity, so of course you cannot have a washing machine”*. Other aspirations were identified by Interviewee 04 who specified the need to have additional *“psychosocial support in the field to deal with trauma responses”* and even *“bilingual counsellors to bridge the gap”* (Interviewee 02).

In tandem with service development, long-term initiatives were identified by CSOs as avenues to foster the integration process. An example includes implementing a parallel health care system that incorporates local health services because as it stands the current medicinal climate dictates that *“right now it's very tough for the community. They have access only for the emergency and in some of those hospitals not every emergency is taken”* (Interviewee 12). Such a view was also reinforced by Interviewee 09 *“We do hear stories of some migrants getting treated for primary care. But what about secondary and tertiary care?”*

Considering such circumstances, it is important to note the vitality of this sector and its role in future inclusion, and as such, health related policies should not only consider the core principles of international laws and conventions but also “evidence relating to the behaviour of migrants seeking healthcare, the consequences of poor health literacy, the unawareness of rights, language and cultural barriers” (Legido-Quigley et al. 2019,2). Altogether, as a remedy, Interviewee 01 asserts that, *“we have a lot of expertise here in the medical field from migrants, could we not create a little hospital /clinic area for them to treat their own people and sort of give them the license to practice (...) they said to me look we have these skills right and we can handle our people. We know their culture. You know, and they can do it”*.

Another health-related proposal was withdrawn from Interviewee 07 *“I'm more than interested in perhaps a minor insurance plan, especially health insurance, just so that the medication could be cheaper”*. To explore this idea further, an example will be taken from Thailand where regardless of immigration status, health insurance schemes were utilized as a means of not only providing affordable health care to migrants but as a drive to register those who were undocumented. Thailand's health insurance card scheme for migrants is overseen by its Ministry of Public Health and incorporates low-skilled, non-Thais, who work in formal and informal sectors. It costs approximately \$10 USD and \$42USD per annum for children and adults respectively and includes screening for communicable diseases. To be enrolled in this plan, undocumented migrants were encouraged to register with authorities and subsequently given a permit to work. To date, even though this initiative has had its challenges such as fear of extradition and a reduction of income due to COVID-19, overall, it has led to the registration of almost two (2) million undocumented migrants (Tuangratananon et al. 2020,4-6).

In addition to health accommodations, combined, over 60% of the interviewees cited that education/literacy programs and offering employment support were not only critical zones of expansion but areas of substantial potential for future organizational and national development. Notwithstanding, in a stark contrast, but staying within this theme, respondents specified vital factors that affected their organizational capacity. It should be noted that for definition purposes, organizational capacity within this project refers to the firm's ability to mobilize operations efficiently with or without government intervention (Rosner 2011). In this segment, inadequate funding (91%) and staffing shortage (83%) are major issues affecting institutional capability as some establishments depend heavily on volunteerism. Simultaneously however, and despite their deficiencies at times, local CSOs/NGOs are able to use ingenious ways (See Figure 6) that would enable them to outsource additional *“food and personal care hampers”* (Interviewees 02 and 08), as well as create *“employment opportunities”* (Interviewee 05) for the migrant population. This is done in partnership *“with different businesses in the community where if they need something, they can come to us, and we will supply employment for them. We will refer the migrants.”*

In conjunction with the above initiatives other strategies include events such as *“quarterly jumble sales. Sometimes people bring stuff and clothing, household supplies and so on and we put a little dollar value on each item”* (Interviewee 01). Other establishments *“sell arepas, empanadas and breakfast boxes to create funds”* (Interviewee 12), some create a harmonic

atmosphere through cultural programs “where people from various ethnic backgrounds and populations integrate with one another” (Interviewee 07).

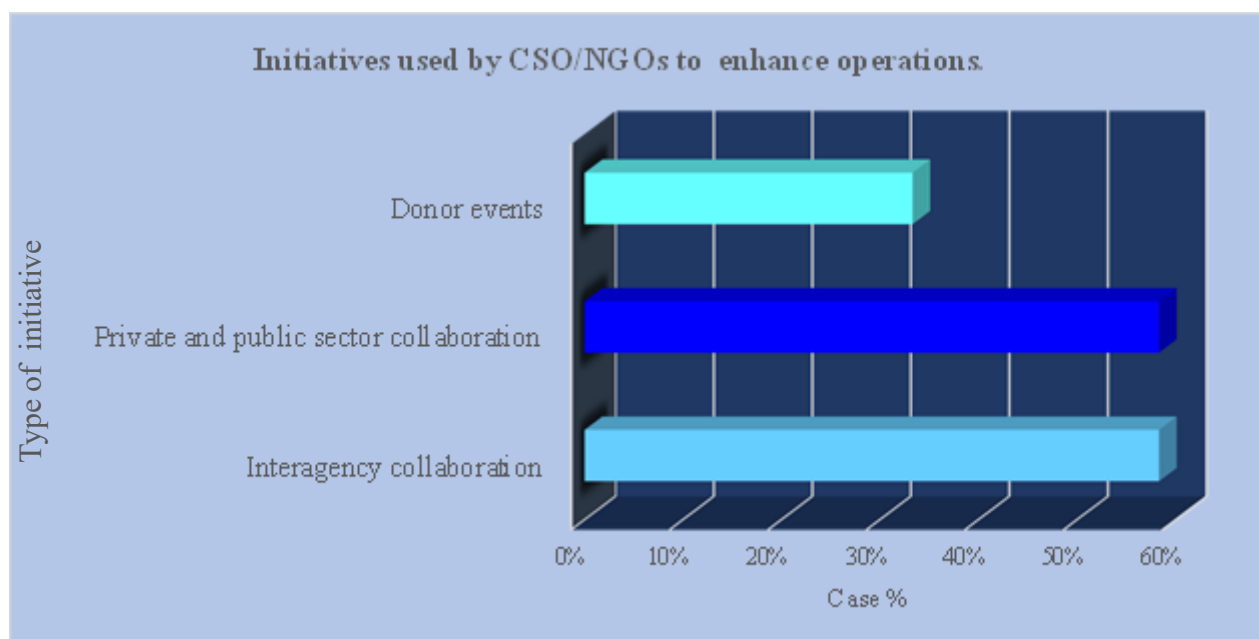


Figure 6: Initiatives used by CSO/NGOs

Source: Primary Data

6.2 Migrant Related Affairs

Over the past 30 years, the world has experienced unprecedented growth in the number of people who have been forcibly displaced (UNHCR Global Trends Report 2021) and though many may face a long, highly priced treacherous journey, the struggle continues upon arrival. Interviewee 09 intimates, “migrants’ issues are the same as our local population they are maybe heightened because again they are marginalized or stigmatized”. Focusing on the issues at hand, of the 12 cases analyzed for this study, more than half of the interviewees revealed the following as predominant challenges within the migrant community: discrimination/denial of services, gender-based intimate partner violence, housing insecurity and sexual harassment/survival sex.

When engaging with local constituents and institutions, there are occasions where migrants face discrimination or are denied access to services, and this occurs “regardless of migratory status” (Interviewee 07). In other circumstances, “with the language barrier, you do not really reach where you want to with a patient, but you try and when you send them to the clinic, they don't have access to the clinic” (Interviewee 12). Discrimination is also encountered when “seeking appropriate legal aid, because so many of them experience the law being applied in

a very arbitrary kind of fashion. I have had to deal with people being deported even though they may have had the government registration card” (Interviewee 01).

In the category of gender-based/intimate partner violence; respondents indicated that there was an increase in the number of cases received and newcomers encountered these incidents with *“locals as well as with people from their own country”* (Interviewees 10 and 11). Interviewee 12 supports the evidence above and claims that there are circumstances where *“we have Trinidadian women abusing Venezuelan men and we have Venezuelan women abusing Venezuelan men”*. In another interview, one organization identified that gender-based violence is not only experienced by the Venezuelan migrant community but those who are *“Jamaican, Asian, and Columbian”* descendants (Interviewee 07). All the same, whilst it was not the aim of this paper to delve into the causes for and risk factors surrounding gender-based violence in within the migrant community, it should be noted that nationally over 6000 reports of domestic violence were captured by authorities indicating an overall increase of this phenomenon in the past two (2) years (Mahase 2022).

Further to this and casting a shadow over the aforementioned elements were circumstances of housing insecurity where *“landlords were taking advantage, taking people hostage, passports hostage, when rent is owed”* (Interviewees 02 and 12). There are also circumstances where the lack of housing leads to migrants *“settling for whatever, wherever they get they can spend the night at the end of the day”* (Interviewee05). The interviewees also revealed that there are incidences where housing insecurity can be linked to the final point of sexual harassment/survival sex and an overall concern of safety. One interview disclosed that *“when rent is owed in order for a debt to be reduced, sexual favours have to be passed. Survival sex is something that we have a lot of migrants engaging in”* (Interviewee 02).

Another organization also linked sexual harassment/survival sex with job exploitation. Interviewee 09 reinforces that *“in the informal industry several businesses thrive, sex work thrives, entertainment, but why? They employ people because they don’t have papers. They are not legitimate, and they are desperate for a job”*. Such victimization was further emphasized as Interviewee 01 expressed that *“there’s a new form of slavery that’s developing and if you’re not on the ground, you will not know”*. Additionally, some respondents also divulged that there are situations where because of migratory status, persons will work long hours, for just under minimum wage and at the end they are not compensated for their labour; these experiences

confirm reports captured by the Displacement Tracking Matrix 2019-21 which was mentioned in the literature review.

Given the multitude of quandaries faced by the migrant community, respondents were probed to give their view on what are some of the challenges with forming a migrant policy in Trinidad and Tobago (See Figure 7). Within this subtheme, the following response featured at the forefront of this section and produced medium patterns amongst the cases, it is the reality that CSO/NGOs operate within the parameters of outdated legislation. Interviewee 02 purports *“Officially, laws have not changed in order to say that Trinidad and Tobago welcome refugees to be regularized”*. This view was also supported by Interviewee 03 who states, *“even though we signed on to the 1975 Convention (...) we don’t have laws here to facilitate migrants and refugees so the challenge will be those laws that’s why the government works through our community groups and NGO’s”*. Altogether, this deficiency and *“lack of legal framework/policy for asylum-seekers/refugees in T&T is a concern”* (Interviewee 06).

The preceding responses produced a second challenge, the lack of political will or a change in mindset was identified by some organizations as an element which stymies progress. Interviewee 04 denotes within the field of migration *“there’s a lot of potential, unrealized potential. I just think it’s lazy politics”*. Another interviewee goes further to claim that *“what actually makes the difference is whether or not the policymakers see something like this in their best interests, whether or not there’s political will”* (Interviewee 10). Conjointly, the lack of political will now connects to the third challenge which is a policy implementation deficit that plagues Trinidad and Tobago. According to Interviewee 04 *“I don’t know what’s the hold-up (...) I mean when you look at a lot of policies developed by international organizations, more than likely you could find somebody from the Caribbean involved in that policy development. We are great policy makers. We create a lot of policies. The execution of the policy is where the issues are”*.

In this regard, past President of the Caribbean Development Bank, Dr William Smith elaborates on the importance of civil society as he addressed a conference on Caribbean Leadership and Transformation Forum. He (Dr Smith) stressed that *“in these turbulent times, the ability to drive through a reform programme necessitates securing buy-in and support from as wide a stakeholder base as possible, including the private sector and civil society”* (CDB 2017). It is in this same manner that Interviewee 08 remarks *“I don’t think that a migrant policy could be developed in isolation (...) I think that there was an economic development board, lets dust off*

those plans, and we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We had a Vision 2020; we had a Vision 2030. This is why I talked about execution. I want you to tell me which one of the items of that plan you are aware of one and two has been implemented?"

To address the last challenge, it is important to reconsider at this juncture the indispensable contributions of Thouez (Page 6) “migration must be discussed in a meaningful context”. This meaningful context is the essence of any migration policy, it is an attitude that emulates a greater appreciation and acknowledgement of human rights. Several organizations identified this facet as a major shortcoming for progressing forward and reflect that *“rights must be the precursor to any sort of legal framework, and if you don't have an understanding that migrants are humans, with rights, I don't think that anything would ever come up the ground”* (Interviewee 01). In addition to this, it is of vital importance for all stakeholders to consider the following, *“What are the legacies that we want to leave, what value we can bring to the migrant workers. These are critical issues, because you must bring a level of value to these people, it is the only way, out of the greatest of respect that human beings are going to respond”* (Interviewee 11).

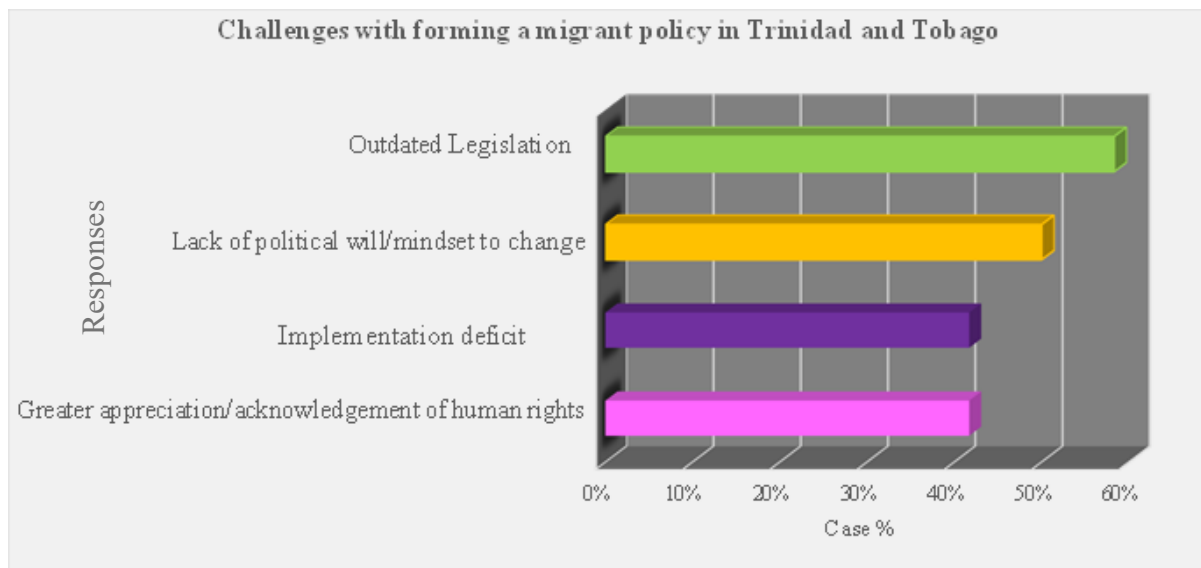


Figure 7: Challenges with Forming a Migrant Policy

Source: Primary Data

The silver lining of this section comes from the numerous recommendations that interviewees brought forward. First and foremost, CSO/NGOs focused on the antique legislative framework that currently exists and expressed that there is a need for reform, this in their view can be achieved if laws and policies are congruent with international standards. Furthermore, some

organizations believe that migrants should be included in the reformation process, as Interviewee 02 affirms, *“I don't think that they're being included really in policy consideration. It has to come as a government-sanctioned policy and the idea would be inclusion for consideration of migrants”*. This point was also reinforced by Interviewee 07 *“There are ways for people to actually gather data and information from us directly and dialogue. Include us in building the narrative that we need, include us in policy making, not only assume what we need or get the data brought to you and just see from your point of view, actually and actively engage us into the policy -making process”*. Constructing such a narrative is critical because *“migration policy should be a living policy. It should be reviewed and if necessary revised as its implementation is constantly evaluated”* (Policy on Migration-IFRC 2009,2). This re-examination of policy should include all stakeholders.

Other contributory propositions stem from ideas that greater dedication is needed from policymakers, this can be facilitated through *“tripartite discussions, meeting both the government, the employer and civil society so we can really deep dive into the issues and come up with something that will mitigate as much as humanly possible, the exploitation of man over market”* (Interviewee 11). Staying on the idea of man over market, one interviewee also suggested that policymakers need to *“look at the agricultural sector in a meaningful way. One of the things that we're looking at is, of course, integrating migrants and refugees into the labour force. We're looking at diversification at an economic level for Trinidad and Tobago and movements towards food security”* (Interviewee 04).

Economic integration however is just one step in the grand scheme of fostering assimilation within the migrant community, other areas of priority should also be given to the education of migrant children: *“It is Dr Eric Williams who also said the future of our lies in the bookbags of our children. While we look at Trinidad and Tobago, these children are now part of our nation and you know, and they're going to be here. You know they've been here from 13-14 years, and they are older now. Are we going to keep waiting for something to happen? these are my concerns”* (Interviewee 04). Bonin (2017,1-2) posits that the education of migrants is a long-term social investment that promotes inclusion, economic development and innovation. Results on this type of investment however is most beneficial to host countries if intervention is done in a timely manner. This can be achieved in two ways; either targeting children that are at kindergarten and elementary school levels or selecting qualified professionals when they arrive, (in Trinidad and Tobago's case for the future, evaluation of qualified professionals can be done at the pre-registration/registration phase).

6.3 The CSO/NGO Experience with Stakeholders

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned section, this project was not only designed to explore the role of civil society organizations in migrant integration but also in the realm of statecraft. As such, given the paper's theoretical framework which reiterates the role of NGOs in policymaking, this section aims at analyzing the experiences of respondents with political institutions.

The first topic within this theme examined if CSO/NGOs were ever consulted by policymakers on a migrant policy. Of the twelve (12) participants interviewed, 58% indicated that they never had an opportunity to meet with and discuss initiatives and strategies with policymakers and 42% denoted that there was some level of interaction on the issue (See Figure 8). Considering this data, the second subject in this theme will delve into the sphere of accessibility.

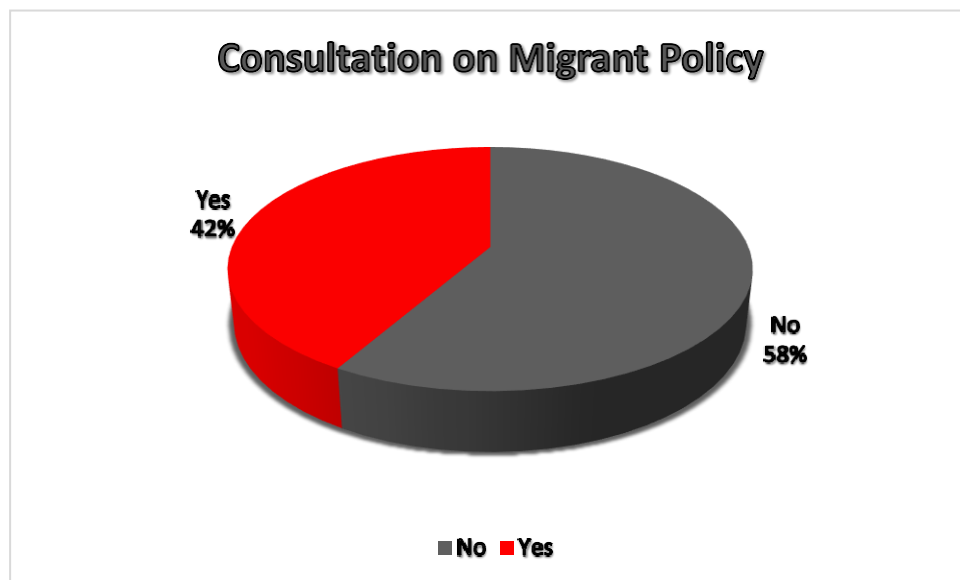


Figure 8: Consultation on Migrant Policy

Source: Primary data

With reference to the accessibility of officials, respondents were asked to describe their last experience when they attempted to or did interact with government officials. Some interviewees specified that communication was 'cordial or professional' and one participant reflected that "*stakeholder meetings, was actually very participatory like even the drafting of our refugee legislation was commendably participatory*" (Interviewee 10) and another remarked that they "*work closely with government at senior, technical and operational levels*

to advance the protection and integration of refugees and asylum-seekers in T&T” (Interviewee 06).

Simultaneously, there are also instances when communication is favourable however persons would have *“attended meetings to talk about migrant policy, but they did not allow us to see the policy (...) we couldn't be part of or see the actual draft”* (Interviewee 09). There are also times when communication *“is not deep”* (Interviewee 12) and one may even say that *“it's always very good because they listen, but I think that they are good listeners”* (Interviewee 04) this though is *“depending only on the tier of government you're officially communicating with, but they too are limited by the system”* (Interviewee 04). In other circumstances, *“the interaction with government officials is almost non-existent”* (Interviewee 11).

The dynamics of the results earlier can illustrate the power of group identity, which according to Grant (1995,15) is a “subjective perception that incorporates shared interests”. The concept of group identity now ushers in the ideas of insider and outsider groups. According to Grant (1995) an insider group is one that is “regarded as legitimate by government and consulted on a regular basis (p15)” whilst an outsider group is either “unable to gain recognition (p15)” or one that simply does not seek a relationship with policymakers. Applying this notion to the results on (Figure 7) it was observed that the organizations that responded ‘Yes’ above, all have substantial years of operations (over 15 years), in the field of migrant advocacy and this presents an avenue for legitimization.

To further support this hypothesis and this disparity, additional review of the data revealed that the organizations that responded ‘No’ (on Figure 7) with the same number of years in operations, even though they offer services to migrants it is not a predominant objective of their establishment, this however does not imply that they are incapable of contributing to policies within the migration field, as they have first-hand, on the ground experiences dealing with vulnerable minorities. In tandem with these observations, what was also discovered is that the other organizations (those with under (9) years of operations), despite having significant encounters and grassroots experiences interacting with the migrant community, these establishments were never consulted by policymakers on migrant integration.

The issue of consultancy now directs the rest of this theme to other challenges incurred by CSO/NGOs. Presenting the first sub-theme with a medium case pattern within this category (See Figure 9), CSO/NGOs acknowledge that within Trinidad and Tobago, at times, there is an unyielding insensitivity amongst nationals towards the migrant community. Interviewee 12

reminiscences *“there is a lack of sensitivity amongst some of the public servants. We have very good relationship with a lot of police officers, with a lot of people from children authority, with those organizations we need to interact with, but sometimes we face actions, we face people who will not be committed to their responsibilities, and they will probably see faces or listen to accents and make any assumptions before they actually can know what needs to be done”*. Another respondent articulates, *“we have been told that the country has so many resources, but our own systems have failed us for so long. The idea of other people accessing minimal resources frightens us and that’s to the point of bigotry”* (Interviewee 02).

Such predicaments were also intimated by Ms. Paula Mae Weekes, former President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago as she delivered her speech at the 44th Conference of the Caribbean, Americas and the Atlantic Region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

“In Trinidad and Tobago although the influx of Venezuelan migrants has seen an outpouring of generosity and kindness on the part of some Trinbagonians it has also opened the window into our parochialism, xenophobia, and racism. Hostile and derogatory comments about migrants are made on social media and talk radio all in the name of patriotism, she told the delegates, adding, it is for our lawmakers, representing the views and interests and aspirations of those on whose behalf they speak to set the tone. Our people will follow where we lead” (McLeod 2019).

Staying on course with the tone of this message Interviewee 05 reflects on this reality *“we need to address the fact that migrants are here (...) but they are here because they need some level of comfort, they need some level of security. And so, we need to also consider these things when policies are being created”*.

To complete this category the second sub-theme that reflected a medium case pattern, CSO/NGOs verbalized that from time to time, their organizations’ views are confined by the objectives of policymakers, *“We have a limited voice”* Interviewee 09 reflects. *“A lot of times it is very superficial or cosmetic where they just want to say, all right, we invited NGOs. They do get information because they do need it but when it comes to actually drafting policy; this is what it's going to be done. Sometimes it does go in the NGO favour, depends on the topic. But a lot of times it's what the government wants to put out there”* (Interviewee 09). The role of democratic life and current status quo within the realm of policy making seems to be restricted by *“the position of power (...) we can share our concerns. We can put forward our*

position. At the end of the day, they are the ones that make decisions, and you can just hope for the best” (Interviewee 10).

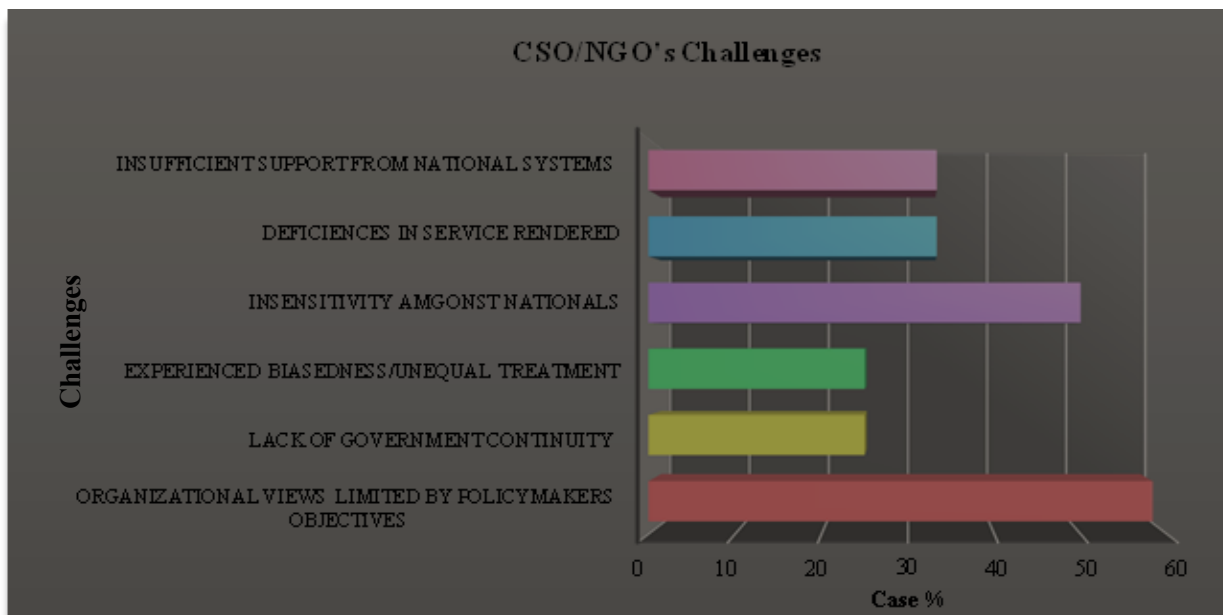


Figure 9: CSO/NGO Challenges

Source: Primary Data

6.4 Policy Formulation

All things considered, this section completes the findings segment of this research paper and the content within would also be an impetus to fuel further discussion. In reference to the above compilations, it is evident that local organizations involved in the field of service provision have had limited exposure to the arena of policy formulation. It is now against this backdrop, that interviewees were given a hypothetical scenario in which they had to outline their expectations if given the opportunity to participate in a policy-making forum on migration (See Figure 10).

Within this scenario, three (3) subthemes presented medium patterns amongst the cases; CSO/NGOs expressed optimism, consistency and improvement of life as factors that should arise out of policy development (See Figure 9). In the first subtheme, 42% of the interviewees indicated that they would be optimistic about policy development, *“I would say I would have very high expectations, considering that I was never a part of anything like that and I will thank them for finally recognizing that this is an issue worthy of national attention”* (Interviewee 01).

Another participant indicated readiness *“to support in any capacity the development of policies, procedures and legislation that contribute to the protection of the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee. These include refugees, returnees, stateless people, the internally displaced and asylum-seekers”* (Interviewee 06).

In the second subtheme, 50% of the participants specified that they would like the process of policy formulation to be homogenous as one interviewee *reflects “what we experience now is just a whole lot of meetings. I'm unsure of the outcome. I think we need to streamline our process for how these things happen (...) one that balances group consultation and preparation work”* (Interviewee 02). With that being said, for homogeneity to be achievable, a critical ingredient must be present, and that is implementation. As Interviewee 04 states, *“I would hate to sit down on a board, a committee, anything like that and then you know we have worked for two years on this massive policy. We did all this research and spent all this time, spend the people money because its taxes that pays for these subcommittees and then for that not to be implemented”*.

In the last subtheme 42% of the respondents identified that through policy formulation, they would like to bear witness to increased safety, protection and an improvement in the quality of life for the migrant population. Interviewee 03 specifies that *“they don't necessarily prioritize the children and housing, we can have additional safe houses and homes for the children, so basically protection around children that will be my focus”*. In another interview one organization gave a holistic viewpoint *“we hope that with such a framework, the situation for asylum-seekers/refugees can improve, for example with access to public services including education, which is not currently available to refugees and migrants, and better access to work, documentation and registration for asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants who were not included in the 2019 Government migrant registration exercise”* (Interviewee 06).

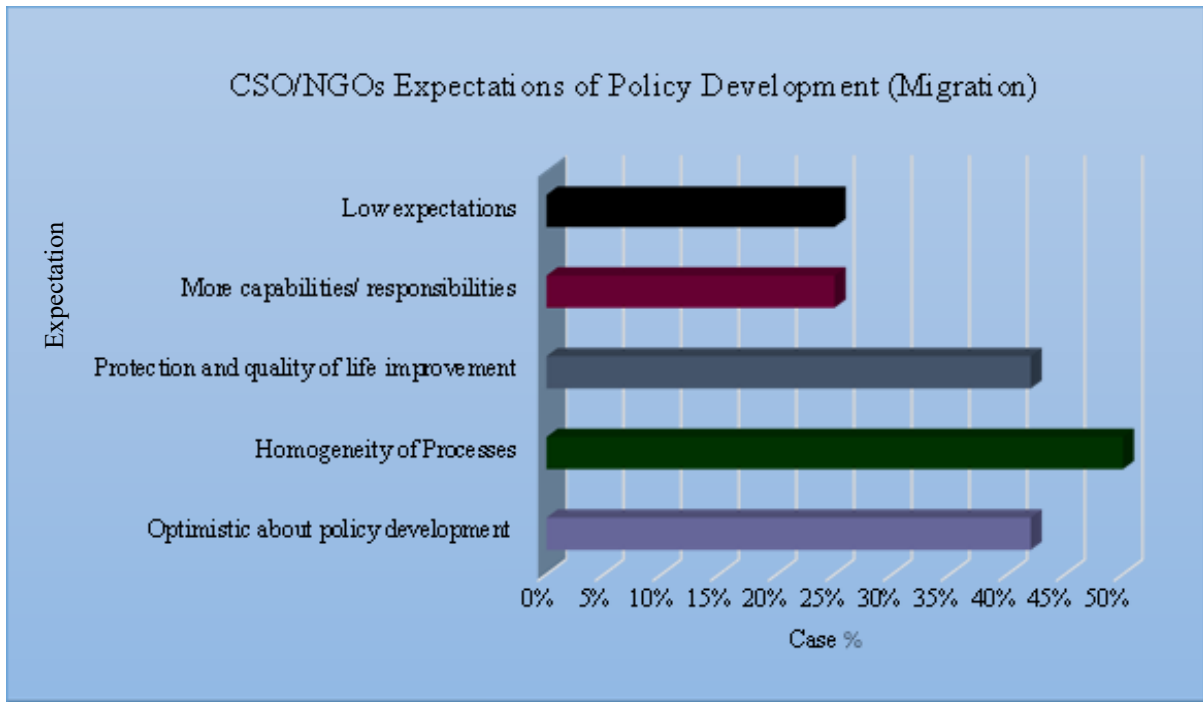


Figure 10: CSO/NGOs Expectations on Policy Development

Source: Primary Data

At the end of the interviews, respondents were asked to think about ways in which they can unite to encourage policymakers to develop and implement a migrant policy. Several organizations verbalized the importance of being harmonious or consistent as Interviewee 05 states *“I think before that, coming together even takes place, we as civil society need to be on the same page or have the same perspective about migrants. We don't all have the same opinion when it comes to migrants. But for those of us who do, I think it's an excellent idea to come together, to stick together, to brainstorm and to come up with ideas that could benefit the migrants”*. For good measure, Interviewee 07 gave a shrewd reality, *“I understand that different civil societies and organizations work in different areas. Some might work directly in education skills, some might work in healthcare (...) others work on legal human rights, if we're actually going to work alongside one another and actually actively work, we set clear objectives and see how we can remind them to actually achieve the very end goal, which is building better policies and policy makers for migrants in general in Trinidad and Tobago”*.

With these statements in mind, it is important to mention that the aptitude of consistency across the CSO/NGO sector is not only crucial because it challenges the current status quo that exists in the local policymaking environment but also because “patterns and issues associated with

migration change over time” (Policy on Migration-IFRC 2009,2). This evolution within the field should ignite an organizations’ willpower to examine themselves “with and for migrants to ensure that their actions remain strong, coherent and mindful of crosscutting issues” (Policy on Migration- IFRC 2009,2)

In a different light however, other organizations remarked that in order to have a united front CSO/NGOs should continue to share information, resources and establish stronger sectoral partnerships. *“From my experience we can collaborate by doing activities and events (...) to showcase what we do”* (Interviewee 03). In addition to coordinated events, one interviewee also recommended that *“we need to strengthen the referral pathways, cause while we have developed relationships with some organizations, places where services can be accessed, all the information is not available to everyone”* (Interviewee 02). In the same breath, an additional but different perspective was also offered by this same interviewee, who reflects that *“maybe we are not reaching out enough because we are so caught up in the service provision and appealing to policymakers takes time. The process of changing policy takes time, and resources. It takes somebody sitting down and looking at a law and making suggestions”*.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

The findings of this research provided a perspicacious view of the realm that CSO/ NGOs are duty-bound to operate within and some themes offered recommendations and ideas for advancement; conjointly, this section of the paper aspires to do the same. Altogether, the interpretations of this piece will reflect on specific outcomes from the findings and contributions will not only be limited to the data collected by the interviews but also by assessing developments within the field of migration.

Outcome 1: The CSO/NGO Operation Theme

To recap, the CSO/NGO Operation theme at its best, gave a comprehensive review of the organizational capabilities of establishments involved in this research and captured ideas for expansion into additional service areas. During analysis, a gap within this theme arose in the category of service provision as the data revealed that less than three (3) organizations offered the vital services of; pre-registration/registration, bilingual hotline/call centre support and housing/shelter accommodations. Despite this predicament, there is a willingness on the part of other CSOs/NGOs to incorporate these services and more into their portfolio even though the constraints of limited resources exist. It is from this perspective that the following avenue can be used as an additive to drive organizational ambitions and also build strong sustainable civil society organizations. This viewpoint was also shared by Interviewee 09 who recognizes that *“we the (CSOs) need funds, but we also need to be sustainable.”*

The term capacity building refers to the process of “developing and strengthening the skills, instincts and processes of an organization” and this is necessary for adaptation, survival, and sustainability (Rosner 2011). Utilizing this explanation domestically, it is recommended that CSO/NGOs should consider capacity building activities as part of their organizational framework, not only to navigate through this current migratory climate but also to prepare themselves for future vulnerabilities such as another wave of massive displacement due to economic, climatic, or political shocks in the region. A CSO/NGOs capacity can be strengthened through its stakeholders; its donors or partners, its clientele (in this case the migrants they serve), staff, governmental agencies and through the strategic direction of the organizations themselves (CANARI 2017,1-8). Upon assessing the organizations that participated in this research, the role of civil society organizations in Trinidad and Tobago has been mainly in the area of service provision

and therefore, the following are some ways that local civil society actors can incorporate capacity building activities:

- Granting migrants, (at least those with the relevant competencies), an opportunity to be a part of not only operational tasks but also decision-making processes. This level of flexibility and adaptation in a firm's organizational structure can also create a pathway for migrants to engage directly in policymaking or with policymakers. Interviewee 07 gives an account of an experience, *"imagine after attending high school in Trinidad and studying abroad with several other entities they will still perceive that you're just a Venezuelan"*. Encouraging increased participation of migrants within organizations allows an establishment to respond to evolving needs of this population proactively and this in turn may strengthen the credibility of CSO/NGOs in the eyes of policymakers.
- Other capacity building tools available to organizations are E-Campus courses offered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This educational platform is free not only to members of civil society but also the wider public and is available in a variety of languages and thematic areas. During the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, the IOM's e-campus courses were completed by over 7000 people in El Salvador and in the Dominican Republic the School of the National Institute for Migration signed a memorandum of understanding for the platform to be used as part of its training curriculum (IOM News 2020).
- Stakeholders can also incorporate mentoring and training as part of its capacity building initiatives. Mentoring in this regard can be a two-fold process; To minimize the gap mentioned above, CSO/NGOs with greater experience in the field should provide the smaller, eager, less experienced organizations with training in the areas specified. This can also be done in other service areas and the process can be facilitated through webinars, online tool kits/courses or face to face sessions. Such knowledge acquisition and transference can lead to the establishment of best practices within the field and sectoral cohesiveness.
- CSO/NGOs can also provide mentoring opportunities to students at a tertiary level, particularly scholars who are interested in the field of migration and its related parts, for example, law, social work, counselling etc. Mentoring opportunities can be tailored to suit the organization's needs, gaps and objectives which ultimately promotes learning opportunities both for the student and the organization. A proposal like this and proper vetting processes can be established through partnerships with academic institutions.

As Interviewee 02 affirms “*we do not have many bilingual counsellors in the country or psychologists so encouraging more students to learn Spanish would be wonderful*”. In this scope, initiatives such as this can possess untapped opportunities for mentoring/training attached as an incentive for students who desire to learn languages. The goal of this proposal should be geared towards addressing the obstacle of staff restraints and gaining feedback that would foster organizational continuity. An illustration of such an initiative was captured by examining the High Atlas Foundation in Morocco.

The High Atlas Foundation is a non- profit organization that establishes partnerships with universities and other stakeholders throughout Morocco to “operate and grow a law clinic and legal aid program which actively engages students in experiential and service learning for the benefit of marginalized communities” (Park 2018). The objective of this program is to expose law students and members of civil society to migrants’ rights and regularization policies. In turn, students will also be given an opportunity to engage with and hold sessions with migrants whose status is irregular and provide guidance and information to them accordingly (Mohamed and Bercegeay 2021).

To solidify the concept of capacity building, this manuscript will traverse to Durban, South Africa to explore the Democracy Development Program, a locally based non-governmental organization and their function as capacity builders. The Democracy Development Program and their intermediary partners provide mentoring opportunities for new and existing civil society actors within the community; part of its objective is geared at developing and training establishments to become a unified voice and improve organizational effectiveness. Projects cover a range of topics that include migration (with a specific focus on tackling xenophobia), policy dialogue, voter education, volunteerism, and community service (Entrepreneur Training Workshop 2022; Democracy Development Program 2023)

Outcome 2: The CSO/NGO Experience with Stakeholders Theme

The final aperture from this project stemmed out of the theme that examined the CSOs experiences with stakeholders and will now be a stimulus for further debate. At the end of analyzing data for this section, the findings revealed that a majority of organizations (58%) involved in this research were never consulted by the government on a migrant policy. Even in situations where dialogue occurred it is alleged that “*we attended meetings to talk about migrant policy, but they did not allow us to see the policy. That is ridiculous. In other words, they wanted to say, yeah, we had the CSO sector attend but yet we couldn't be part of or see*

the actual draft" (Interviewee 09). The absence of consultation transpired regardless of an organizations' years of operations and experience in dealing with migrants and other vulnerable minorities; this occurrence brought to light the ideas of insider and outsider groups and questioned the legitimacy of some civil society organizations in Trinidad and Tobago. Taking this circumstance into consideration, it is only fit that this essay presents the idea of networking to promote norm entrepreneurship to illustrate the importance and impact of not only fostering comradeship amongst various stakeholders but also building synergies that transcend beyond the shores of Trinidad and Tobago.

Prior to discussing networking in norm entrepreneurship, it is vital to mention that there are some pre-existing conditions that are important for CSO/NGOs to be considered a legitimate source of opinion, Spencer (2006,43) posits the following elements:

- Representation: the extent to which the NGO represented either migrants or people whose opinions carry weight.
- Expertise: the extent to which the organization has knowledge of the issues and provides evidence thereof.
- Service provision: its record as a provider of services

As for the above-mentioned elements, one should be cognizant that other factors may be at work in order to establish the legitimacy of a CSO/NGO, for example, the influence of political partisanship (Brechenmacher and Carothers 2018). Resultantly at this juncture, another proposition will be put forward for establishing legitimacy. To grasp the notion of networking in norm entrepreneurship, it is essential to understand the meaning and value of norms. Norms in international relations are universal codes of appropriate behaviour that are set by agents, states, and societal actors (Lindsay 2019,108). These "codes" can be shared beliefs and values, and they provide cues that direct states to what kind of actions and identities are acceptable. Normative guidelines, however, are first fabricated at the national level as they rely on socialization and traditions that are built-in domestic institutions. In this capacity, norm entrepreneurs can therefore be local civil society organizations that create a forum for the adoption or transmission of norms as they have the ability to affect public opinion, influence the various arms of government and contribute to migration governance. Ultimately, norms are then spread beyond their realms of conception (the domestic arena) and enter into regional and international forums through diplomatic relations, negotiations, advocacy, and litigation (Lindsay 2019).

Nah (2016, 2) proposes that civil society organizations can encourage states to adopt new norms towards migrants and refugees and this can occur irrespective of their status (whether they are insider or outsider groups). In this regard, civil society organizations should not be “easily dismissed as ‘outsiders’ who ‘interfere’ in the domestic affairs of a state”. Given this context, the example of the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network would illustrate how a formalized system of civil society agents engages in norm entrepreneurship. The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) was established in 2008 and to date comprises of over 200 local civil society groups based in the Asia Pacific region and more than 100 individuals (which includes academics, legal aid providers, universities, and community-based organizations). The aim of this conglomeration is to promote cooperation and prepare its members to influence the behaviour of states as it pertains to refugee protection (APRRN n.d).

Such goals are achieved through capacity building activities, joint activism, intercommunication, and outreach. This network is unique as its membership excludes governmental and intergovernmental agencies along with state actors; participants come from diverse working groups across various territories and are experienced in a sundry of thematic areas for example, “Legal Aid and Advocacy, Women and Girls at Risk and Immigration Detention” (Nah 2016,10; Taylor 2016,6; APRRN n.d.). The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) fosters norm entrepreneurship by highlighting human rights infringements within the region and emphasizes state practices that undermine refugee protection. APRRN’s beliefs, values or norms are communal, and they collectively call on states to “commit to higher standards of behaviour (...) this is not done in a shaming manner, instead they appeal to states as concerned citizens and residents”, they also promote their norms by seeking to influence regional blocs whose combined behaviour impacts its members. Further to this, what is most interesting about this network is the fact that even though its membership excludes state actors and working groups they are still able to conduct round table discussions with government officials who reside outside of their geographic region, thus reconfiguring power-relations and contributing to projects and policies that involves problem-solving. (Nah 2016).

Since its emergence, Choi (2022, 2527) echoes that Asiatic NGOs have pivoted from “service providers to primary advocates” and their eminence has satiated gaps in refugee protection. It is also noteworthy to state that this network also operates in conditions where some states within the Asia Pacific have not acceded to international conventions relating to refugees and others lack domestic legislative frameworks to facilitate migrant protection and assistance, for instance, within the entire Asia-Pacific region, a handful of states are partied to the 1951

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol; they are, South Korea, Japan, Timor- Leste, Cambodia, China, and the Philippines (Nah 2016,223; Choi 2022,2527).

At present, there are no regional civil society networks in the Caribbean whose sole focus is on mixed migratory flows and refugee protection let alone an association that does not rely on undue state intervention, intergovernmental organizations, and the media. In a comparable fashion, Interviewee 12 identifies with this view *“If we have one opportunity, I would love to have everybody in the same basket and say okay, for all of us, we have to decide. We can meet and discuss things for all of us and make suggestions and so on. One organization, one person and representation for the rest (...) to give different perspectives of that particular group because if we don't unite like that, we're not going to get in any big position”*. The idea of a transnational advocacy network for migration in the Caribbean is definitely an area worth exploration for civil society groups not only in Trinidad and Tobago but also their counterparts in the region. Such an initiative can influence an agents’ perception of migration as well as unify individuals and academics whose interest resides in this domain. Networking in this manner connects civil society organizations that are considered both ‘insider and outsider groups’, thus presenting a legitimate, vigorous force that can compel policy makers to embrace new norms towards migrants and refugees.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

At the end of 2021, the UNHCR reported that over 85 million people have been forcibly displaced and within this aggregate figure, resides a microcosm of Venezuelans who have fled their native land because of political, economic, and social instability (UNHCR Global Trends Report 2021). The ongoing migratory trends in the region has prompted local civil society actors to be involved in assimilation activities to manage the inflow of migrants, and several organizations have made progress in the area of providing services and policy formation, on the other hand, the contributions of others have not been acknowledged in both spheres. It is under this evidence and contemplation that this research paper embarked on assessing the input of civil society.

The paper undertook a qualitative research design and through standardized open-ended questions, interviews were conducted with twelve (12) CSOs/NGOs in Trinidad and Tobago who are involved in the field of migration and policymaking. The findings revealed two major gaps; the first was located in the CSO/NGO Operation theme under the category of service provision where weak patterns were noted in the delivery of three important services: pre-registration/registration, bilingual hotline/call centre support and housing/shelter accommodations. The second gap originated in the third theme which assessed the CSO/NGOs experience with stakeholders and this domain revealed that more than half of the interviewees were never engaged in policy-making initiatives for the migrant community. On account of the forgoing, proposals such as capacity building activities and norm entrepreneurship were introduced to this manuscript as a means of mitigation and advancement so that civil society organizations can be prepared for future volatilities and the dynamism of the global environment.

As the momentum of this paper reduces, thoughts about future avenues of research accelerate as this study provides a platform to now engage with policymakers in a similar structure, gaining insight into their experience with civil society organizations and their involvement in policy making within the field of migration. Gaining an understanding of both ends of this spectrum may help to bridge the gaps identified in this study and provide an opportunity for both actors to move in a direction that would benefit citizens and the nation's vulnerable minority.

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APPENDIX A

MASTER LIST OF THEMES

Research Paper Inclusive Criteria

Civil Society Agents that provide services to migrants

Civil Society Members that have the potential to offer services to migrants

Civil Society Members that have the potential to contribute on policy development

Research Paper Exclusive Criteria

Employees within civil society organization that have limited experience working within the organization.

THEMES

CSO/NGOs OPERATIONS

Description: Evaluates the current capabilities of civil society agents and covers areas that relate to the operational logistics and organizational aspirations of the establishments involved in this research.

Inclusive Criteria: Integration type of services advice or consultations. This domain also examines elements that affect organizational capacity and records ways of improvement.

Exclusive Criteria: Non- integration type of services, advice or consultations such as consular services. This area also omits knowledge management practices. Knowledge management includes identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures.

Subthemes: Services offered by CSOs

Improvement of services rendered

Factors affecting organizational capacity

Initiatives utilized to enhance operations

MIGRANT RELATED AFFAIRS

Description: Provides an overview of the problems migrants encounter and captures aspects of migration policy development.

Inclusive Criteria: Incorporates the problems migrants encounter and also the challenges with forming a migrant policy. This theme also comprises of recommendations put forward by CSO/NGOs on migration policy development.

Exclusive Criteria: Factors out the challenges faced by CSOs when dealing with policy makers.

Subthemes: Challenges migrants encounter

Challenges with forming a migrant policy

Recommendations by CSOs

CSO/NGO'S EXPERIENCE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Description: Investigates the interactions between civil society organizations and their stakeholders.

Inclusive Criteria: Captures the challenges CSOs encounter when dealing with stakeholders.

Exclusive Criteria: Precludes the challenges CSOs face when dealing with other CSOs.

Subthemes: Consultation on policies that facilitate integration CSO

Stakeholder Interaction

CSO/NGO Challenges

POLICY FORMULATION

Description: Examines the expectations of CSO/NGOs and notes opportunities for the unison of organizations and employees to encourage policymaking in migration.

Inclusive Criteria: Includes opportunities and expectations of CSO/NGOs in migration policy development.

Exclusive Criteria: Precludes opportunities and expectations outside the field of migration.

Subthemes: CSO/NGO expectation of policy development

Ways CSO/NGOs can collaborate to encourage policymakers

Source: Primary Data