

Preparing Civilian Experts to work in Vulnerable Places: Unveiling Brazil's Potential

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Publisher: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
Copyright: © Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2016
ISSN: 1894-650X

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IGARAPÉ INSTITUTE
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This report is published by NUPI for the PeaceCap project and Igarapé Institute

The PeaceCap Network is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

¹ The author would like to thank Gustavo de Carvalho (ISS), for his important inputs to this paper, and Susan Hoivik, for her support with the English version.

Contents

Summary	4
1. An emerging civilian capacity in Brazil?.....	5
2. Preparing Brazilian civilians to work in unstable contexts.....	8
3. Challenges and opportunities.....	13
4. Conclusions	16
References	17

Summary

This brief examines Brazil's potential for preparing civilian experts to work in unstable contexts. As yet, Brazil has no mechanisms for identifying, preparing and deploying civilian experts to unstable contexts, whether through multilateral missions or via bilateral channels. It lacks political will, financial support and an appropriate legal framework that can make it possible for Brazilian civil servants to work abroad and regulate their career plans.

The Brazilian federal government has accumulated almost three decades of experience that should be taken into account when organizing the country's civilian capacity. This includes the deploying public servants to vulnerable places through technical, humanitarian or electoral cooperation, mainly through bilateral channels. Exploring this experience gained is relevant for whether and how to organize future capacity to deploy civilian experts to peace operations.

Despite the years of experiences in deploying civilian experts to vulnerable contexts, training initiatives are practically nonexistent. The vast majority of those participating in such missions in unstable contexts have been deployed after *ad hoc* training, or with no preparation at all. That means that Brazilian civilians, acting on behalf of the government, are deployed to vulnerable contexts without the necessary preparation, running the risk of undermining the project/program, or threatening their physical or mental integrity.

Since 2010, the Igarapé Institute has highlighted that these civilians and their experiences in vulnerable contexts are at the core of an embryonic Brazilian civilian capacity. But it was only in late 2015 that the first-ever preparation of civilian experts was conducted, creating an opportunity at the federal government level to establish an institutionalized training course for experts who would be deployed to unstable situations.

This brief first discusses the nascent Brazilian civilian capacity, key aspects and important limitations. Secondly, it presents unpublished information on pre-deployment preparations in Brazil, highlighting initiatives that could be used as a basis for serious debate on training civilian experts. Finally, it discusses the key challenges and main opportunities for training civilian experts in Brazil and in the South American region more generally.

1. An emerging civilian capacity in Brazil?

The Brazilian government has no reliable mechanisms for identifying, preparing and deploying civilian experts to work in unstable contexts. However, for at least three decades, Brazilian civilians have been deployed, on behalf of the government, to missions abroad, also in crisis-affected and conflict contexts. In fact, the first official mission of the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), linked to the Ministry of External Relations (MRE), was in 1987, to Angola, then caught up in a brutal civil war.²

There is no consensus in Brazil on the definition of “civilian experts”. Representatives of federal institutions potentially able to work with civilian capacity are not familiar with “civilian expertise”, “civilian capacity”, and related terms. Interviews in Brasilia showed that the word “civilian” is often used to denote anyone who does not serve the military. By contrast, “civilian capacity” refers solely to those who work on behalf of the government in crisis or post-conflict settings. The only exceptions were found in the MRE and the Ministry of Defense (MoD),³ where government officials were knowledgeable about the term and what it entails. This brief employs the definition of “civilian capacity” adopted by the PeaceCapNetwork, based on the United Nations reports on the matter:

The term “civilian capacity” refers to non-uniformed civilian individuals or groups deployed overseas to crisis or post-conflict settings by (or coordinated through) their respective governments. The term includes personnel deployed through bilateral cooperation programmes as well as those deployed through the United Nations, regional organizations or other intergovernmental organizations. It includes civilian capacity deployed from the public sector or private sectors, including academia and civil society organizations that is in some way “coordinated” under government auspices.⁴ (emphasis added)

The lack of sufficient knowledge on the issue explains why the term is not often used by government officials. Although Brazilian public servants may be unfamiliar with the “civilian capacity” jargon, the federal

² The Angolan civil war lasted from 1975 to 2002.

³ Waisbich (2016).

⁴ Keaton and Wiharta (2013).

government has already accumulated enough experience to institutionalize official preparation for civilian experts who will be working in crisis- and post-conflict contexts. Brazilian experts are deployed especially through bilateral cooperation, through the modalities of technical, humanitarian, and electoral cooperation. However, data on Brazil's bilateral cooperation in unstable contexts are not labeled as "civilian capacity" and are not systematically organized -- whether due to lack of knowledge, or lack of political will. In any case, the question arises: *if* and *how* Brazil should develop its capacity to identify, prepare and deploy civilians to *multilateral* missions (part of the definition of "civilian capacity" above).

Recently, the *if* part of the question has been answered. Statements by Brazilian diplomats in UN fora and elsewhere have made it clear that Brazil is willing to strengthen its capacity to deploy civilian experts to United Nations operations.⁵ The MRE has even provided a list of the type of expertise that the country could explore: "Brazil has sought to broaden the participation of civilian experts in UN missions in areas such as public security, border control, fight against drug trafficking, electoral systems, correctional systems and public administration."⁶

However, this political wish has not been translated into reality. As of late 2015, out of 8,921 experts in all UN field missions, there were only 26 Brazilian civilians (16 DPKO-led peacekeeping missions and 11 DPA-led special political missions)—a mere 0.38% of the total.

These Brazilian civilians entered the UN system through the regular recruitment process where individuals themselves apply for UN positions, not necessarily supported by or representing their governments. To increase these figures, the Brazilian government has recently (albeit warily) begun supporting UN outreach missions to the country, as well as other initiatives that might inspire young Brazilians to join in UN activities. Research also indicates that there are four untapped programs that could prove useful here, partially or totally funded by member states: (a) "Government Provided Personnel (GPP)"; (b) Junior Program Officer/Associate Expert Program; (c) "Special Assistant for the Resident Coordinator"; and (d) "Gratis Personnel"⁷. Although GPP has been lauded as a possible path to increase the number of civilian experts from

⁵ Ministry of External Relations (2016); Waisbich (2016); Figuerôa (2015); Patriota (2012).

⁶ Ministry of External Relations (2016).

⁷ Giannini (2014).

the Global South in UN field missions,⁸ Brazil is not committed, probably due to financial issues, and is still searching for alternatives.⁹

It seems clear that Brazil is interested in increasing the number of nationals who work for the UN system, including in field missions (which always involve unstable contexts). But *how* is it to achieve successful deployment of well-prepared civilian experts? As noted, Brazil already has lengthy experience in deploying civilians to vulnerable places, albeit this practice has not been institutionalized as such. Establishing official pre-deployment preparations would be an important step towards enhancing Brazil's civilian capacity for UN missions.

⁸ See UN Secretary-General Report of civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict (A/67/312-S/2012/645), available at: www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/312.

⁹ Figuerôa (2015).

2. Preparing Brazilian civilians to work in unstable contexts

Since the late 1980s, the Brazilian government has deployed thousands of civilians to missions abroad, including dozens of unstable contexts with difficult living and working conditions. Surprisingly, the vast majority of these civilians were deployed after *ad hoc* training or no preparation whatsoever. This creates unnecessary risks and raises concerns about their physical and mental integrity, as well as about the impact of their work in volatile local societies. Box 1 presents examples of stories from the field.

Since the 1990s, the advantages as well as the limits of pre-deployment preparation have been analyzed and tested by several governments and international organizations engaged in sending civilians to complex situations (usually to peacekeeping or peacebuilding missions, but also to bilateral activities). In Brazil, only a few institutions at the federal level are directly or indirectly involved in preparing or deploying civilians to missions abroad. They include the most important units at the Ministry of External Relations responsible for identifying and deploying civilian experts, as well as other key institutions for Brazilian development cooperation working in unstable contexts, in the areas of rule of law, professional training and electoral cooperation. In all cases, except for one (Federal Police), pre-deployment preparations related to safety and security have not been on the agenda.

Table 1 summarizes the main federal-level initiatives related to generic preparation and/or to deployment of Brazilian civilians to unstable contexts. Taken together, they can indicate the potential for further exploration of training possibilities, as well as providing a basis for future research and analysis into Brazilian civilian capacity.

BOX 1: Stories from the field: Brazilians at risk in unstable contexts

Safety and security have not been a priority in Brazil's cooperation in international development efforts. Initial interviews with Brazilian government representatives who had experience in such contexts yielded accounts of what could have gone wrong in South–South cooperation projects, as well as in the lives of those who worked in countries such as Haiti, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Timor Leste.

One of the top three actors in Brazil's South–South cooperation is Embrapa (the state-owned Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation), which has deployed experts to missions all over the world, including unstable places like Afghanistan, Colombia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Mozambique. In Mali, Embrapa implements the Cotton-4 project, the most important initiative of Brazilian cooperation. When the situation escalated after a *coup* in 2012, Embrapa's resident coordinator left the country. The project was not dismissed but all missions from Brazil had to be suspended. Embrapa maintained regular contact with the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, an entity under the MRE) to check when they could return to Mali. None of this had been planned or foreseen; everything was implemented after *ad hoc* decisions. This crisis had an important impact on ABC: in 2014, "risk management" was included for the first time in the Agency's manual. It also led experts in Embrapa to reflect on risks; some of them were interested in taking a UNDP online course in 2015, but institutional constraints did not allow them to do so. Up until now, there has been no preparation regarding safety and security.

Other accounts told of a Brazilian judge deployed to Timor Leste on a short-duration mission to support the electoral process. She was stabbed several times in her hands and arms. Then there was a small group of Brazilian civilians from ABC who found themselves trapped in the middle of a shooting after the 2015 *coup* in Burkina Faso. And at least three Brazilian diplomats died of tropical diseases after being deployed to official missions in Africa between 2011 and 2014. Such stories are only now emerging, and still need to be organized and analyzed. But they clearly indicate that pre-deployment preparation can be valuable for personnel, and beneficial for the projects.

Table 1: Key initiatives of generic preparation and/or deployment of Brazilian civilians to work abroad

	Institution	Group managed by the institution	Working area when abroad	Professionals receive any preparation?	Preparation for unstable contexts?	Comments
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT / PARTNERS	Rio Branco Institute (Diplomatic Academy/MRE)	Only diplomats	Diplomacy and related themes	Yes	No	The Diplomatic Academy provides a two- year generic course for broad preparation of young diplomats.
	Divisão de Treinamento e Aperfeiçoamento (MRE)	Only diplomats	Diplomacy and related themes	Yes	No	Prior to first mission, diplomats attend a generic pre-deployment course (<i>Curso de Habilitação ao Serviço Exterior</i>). Safety and security issues are not included, regardless of destination.
	ABC - Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (Brazilian Cooperation Agency/MRE)	Public servants and other experts working on behalf of Brazilian foreign policy	Technical cooperation (health, agriculture, education, etc.)	Only some professionals (in partnership with ENAP)	No	ABC oversees the vast majority of missions engaging Brazilian civilians in unstable contexts, on behalf of the federal government. Preparation is voluntary and limited to 30–40 people per year, in partnership with ENAP (see text below).
	CG-Fome (Humanitarian Cooperation and Action against Hunger/MRE)	Public servants and other experts working on behalf of Brazilian foreign policy	Humanitarian cooperation	Yes	Yes, through the UN system	Pre-deployment preparation conducted through UN agencies partnering with Brazil, such as WFP.
	Tribunal Superior Eleitoral (Superior Electoral Tribunal)	Judges and electoral experts (future electoral observers)	Electoral cooperation	No	No	Experts are chosen by the Electoral President (language and skills). Each is responsible for his/her own preparation.
	Federal Police	Federal police officers	Rule of law	Yes	Yes	Office receive training; their main project abroad is for training police in Bissau.
	SENAI (<i>Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Industrial</i>) (public–private cooperation, works in partnership with ABC)	Experts working with vocational training on behalf of Brazilian foreign policy.	Vocational training	Yes	No	Implements activities related to Brazilian technical cooperation

Source: Prepared by the author after Neves (2012), Waisbich (2015) and personal notes.

Apart from the initiatives summarized in Table 1, there are two specific institutions of relevance, both at the federal level: (1) the National School of Public Administration (ENAP – *Escola Nacional de Administração Pública*); and (2) the Brazilian Peace Operations Joint Training Center (CCOPAB – *Centro Conjunto de Operações de Paz do Brasil*).

ENAP, created in 1986, is mandated to develop and deliver courses for federal employees on issues related to public administration. Its first engagement with international cooperation was in 2009, in Mozambique. Lack of preparation resulted in several challenges, including projects that had to be re-vamped and re-created from scratch. As a result, in 2010, ENAP decided to provide better preparation on issues related to international cooperation, by offering a course in partnership with ABC and GIZ (the German Agency for International Cooperation). Target groups include public servants working with bilateral cooperation, as well as international advisors of various ministries and other experts from the federal government. Between 2012 and 2014, the course prepared 150 civilians, through three modules: (a) basic concepts of international cooperation; (b) project management; and (c) interpersonal communication¹⁰. As yet there has been no discussion of safety and security, although some of those attending the course have been sent to work in unstable contexts, such as Haiti, Mali, Burkina Faso or El Salvador. In late 2014, ENAP acknowledged that safety and security are important for specific participants; however, ENAP has no mandate to work on this issue and thus cannot incorporate such a module in the current training arrangement.¹¹

CCOPAB, created in 2005 as a unit of the Brazilian Army, was transformed into a joint center under the MoD in 2010. The Center is mandated to train not only military and police, but also civilians,¹² and since 2008, civilians have been the target group in a few courses, like those focusing on journalists and interpreters¹³. Undergraduate and graduate students may also attend some courses, like those on civilian–military cooperation or protection of civilians. Although these are all civilians in the broad sense, they do not correspond to “civilian experts” as defined by the UN and by the PeaceCapNetwork, and thus do not represent an initiative related to civilian capacity. That being said, this is a potential worth further exploration.

¹⁰ D’Andrea (2012).

¹¹ Brandão (2014).

¹² Ministry of Defense, Portaria 952 (2010) - see http://bdlegis.defesa.gov.br/gerar_html_norma/gerar_html_norma.php?id_norma=1550.

¹³ The first course for civilians at CCOPAB targeted journalists and was organized in March 2008. See www.eb.mil.br/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=8dfdab69-2f70-4ab7-890f-795987ff7108&groupId=16541.

In parallel, the Igarapé Institute has since 2010 been working with civilian capacity. Since 2012 it has advocated the creation of a course for Brazilian civilian experts, and has produced various reports and other studies for CCOPAB and the MRE. Finally, in November 2015, CCOPAB could host the first course in Latin America targeting civilian experts. This was preceded by a workshop in Brasilia 12 months earlier, co-hosted by Igarapé and attended by more than 30 federal public servants and others seeking to identify the profile of Brazilians in the field, as well as the main challenges occurring in unstable contexts¹⁴.

The goals of the 2015 pilot-course were to raise awareness of the importance of pre-deployment preparations and to provide at least minimal information about safety and security in the field. The three-day course was attended by 16 Brazilian professionals from various parts of the country. In the absence of mechanism for identifying and deploying civilians (which would give a pre-selected database of potential participants), professionals were chosen according to which institution they worked for, but also on the basis of their individual experience. Priority was given to those working for institutions with missions and projects in key areas of Brazilian international cooperation. The resultant participants had expertise in areas such as rule of law, agriculture, refugee issues, and intelligence. Professors of international relations were also invited to identify potential areas for academic research and to serve as “multipliers” at their universities.

The course achieved its main goals, to the satisfaction of the key federal institutions involved (CCOPAB and MoD). In consequence, a second course has been planned for December 2016. Participants found the course useful; in fact, completing that course provided new professional opportunities for at least two of them: an international relations expert was authorized to join the disaster roster of ActionAid, and a judge was invited to work in Timor Leste for 12 months. Neither of these persons are federal employees, however. More research is needed to understand the impacts of such a course within the federal government, and to avoid criticisms about federal resources being used to prepare persons are not public servants or who are not going to be deployed.

¹⁴ The Igarapé Institute co-hosted the 2014 workshop with CCOPAB and other partners. Further, it provided political, logistic and conceptual support to the 2015 course, which included preparing the concept note and list of potential participants and giving a lecture on civilian capacity (UN demands, how other countries organize this, what Brazil could do, etc.).

3. Challenges and opportunities

Despite its long experience, Brazil has not been able to institutionalize or coordinate its civilian capacity effectively. Among the initial challenges that remain we may note the lack of political will and financial support, along with an outdated legal framework that obstructs the deployment of Brazilian public servants to missions abroad (in general, not only in unstable contexts). These are natural challenges for any public policy, but they are especially relevant for Brazilian international cooperation.¹⁵

Challenges specifically related to training and preparations include the need to understand (and work with) the current mindset of the Brazilian federal administration. At least two issues require greater attention. First, Brazilian institutions and experts working in unstable contexts have generally adopted a reactive mode and not a proactive mentality. It is vital to conduct strategic and logistical planning before deployment to vulnerable places, under difficult living and working conditions prevail.¹⁶ The CCOPAB course could prove important in providing better preparation to civilian experts. However, logistic issues should be considered: some institutions might not be willing to fly employees to a five-day training course in Rio de Janeiro.

Moreover, there is a strong institutional culture prevailing within the Brazilian federal government that may jeopardize efforts undertaken at the individual level, especially regarding international cooperation. Brazil's cooperation efforts are largely based on projects, missions, and experiences led by *institutions*. This institutional culture is also reflected on the type of data produced and shared by the government in official statements and websites, focused mainly on the number of projects and activities, or the period of Brazilian cooperation involvement with a given country.

More emphasis is needed at the individual level: on the specific skills and competences that certain persons have (or could gain, through training) for better performance in the field. This is of vital importance, since civilian capacity is based on individual abilities and not on institutional experiences. This “pro-institutional” mindset may affect the selection of CCOPAB course participants, since it is a simple matter to recognize the institutions working in Brazilian cooperation, but very hard to identify the individuals who have been involved in these efforts (and

¹⁵ Leite and Hamann (2012).

¹⁶ Waisbich (2016).

might share their experience, as speakers at future courses) or who could be selected for training.

Investing in individuals, however, does not mean ignoring institutions. Rather, a more balanced process should be put in place when it comes to training civilians: individuals should be selected on the basis of their skills and deployment potential, and institutions should be willing to follow up and to ensure that, once in the field, their personnel make effective use of the skills acquired during training.

In the short term, there are at least three opportunities available to Brazil for overcoming some of these challenges. Taken together, or even separately, they could support Brazil's desire to increase its participation in multilateral missions, by using the course at CCOPAB and in future institutions to raise awareness or even to spur a re-organization of its own internal resources in order to be able to work in unstable contexts with fewer unnecessary risks.

First, the future of Haiti deserves serious attention. The UN presence in the country is likely to have a more civilian face in the years to come. In its current format (as a peacekeeping mission), it has generated more dividends to Brazil than any UN mission since the first engagement, in the late 1940s¹⁷. Brazil's main support has involved troops and staff officers, rather than police and other civilian experts, but the next phase will be more concerned with development and less with stability, thus requiring greater participation of civilian experts. Brazil has considerable experience with bilateral projects in Haiti, even before MINUSTAH (2004) or the earthquake (2010), especially in areas like the rule of law, agriculture, health and waste management, to mention a few¹⁸. Brazilian civilian experts to be deployed to these bilateral projects could benefit from attending the course at CCOPAB. Moreover, the Brazilian government itself could analyze and systematize these experiences, to better explore its own presence in a future multilateral effort in Haiti once MINUSTAH has departed.

A second opportunity concerns Colombia, which recently evolved from a protracted conflict to a more stable situation, in a post-conflict process very much open to civilian expertise. Apart from bilateral activities, since 2005 Brazil has also supported regional initiatives related to humanitarian demining in Colombia. In the course of 10 years, Brazil trained and deployed 40 military advisors to the Inter-American Group of the OAS Assistance Mission to the National Demining Plan in Colombia. This may appear to be a low figure, but it corresponds to 85% of all

¹⁷ Hamann (2015).

¹⁸ On bilateral projects coordinated by the Brazilian government, see the ABC website (www.abc.gov.br/projetos/pesquisa).

the staff¹⁹. Today, after the peace process, intense negotiations are underway not only at the regional level, but also in the UN Security Council, which has been planning to authorize a special political mission in Colombia. By their very nature, special political missions require more civilian experts and police, and less or no military. It is important for Brazil to negotiate its participation in this mission not only to strengthen its leadership in South America, but also to improve its internal capacity to identify, prepare and deploy civilian experts to unstable contexts.

Finally, it is worth noting that in early 2014, the Union of South American Nations (*União das Nações Sul-Americanas* – UNASUL) established in Quito the South-American Defense School (*Escola Sul-Americana de Defesa* – ESUDE).²⁰ ESUDE is responsible for engaging civilians and military from the 12 UNASUR member-states in strategic thinking and political action on issues related to regional security and defense.²¹ Its first director is a Brazilian expert with long experience as a high-level official in the executive branch, including in the Ministries of Defense and External Relations, as well as in the Presidency. This could be an opportunity for the Brazilian government to raise awareness of the importance of adequate preparation for work in unstable contexts anywhere in the world. Further details remain to be defined, but it seems that the new School is likely to prepare high-level professionals, much like the Inter-American Defense College (linked to the Organization of the American States and based in Washington, DC) and the Senior Missions Leaders (SML), coordinated by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)²². In this sense, ESUDE's initiatives will probably work on a more political/strategic level, in contrast to the CCOPAB course, which has focused on the operational/tactical level.

These opportunities could enhance Brazil's civilian capacity by focusing on individuals and better preparing those who work for official institutions (Brazilian or South Americans in general), before they are deployed to unstable contexts.

¹⁹ This information was provided by Brazil's Permanent Mission to the Organization of the American States, in a PowerPoint presentation on Humanitarian Demining. The file was shared with the author by email, in November 2015.

²⁰ DefesaNet, "Ministros integrantes da UNASUL aprovam criação de Escola Sul-Americana de Defesa". February 22, 2014. See www.defesanet.com.br/al/noticia/14297/Ministros-integrantes-da-Unasul-aprovam-criacao-da-Escola-Sul-Americana-de-Defesa.

²¹ BBC, "Escola de Defesa da UNASUL começa a funcionar em busca de autonomia". April 17, 2015. See www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/04/150417_escola_defesa_unasul_mc.

²² Brazil has hosted one "Senior Mission Leader" initiative: in October/November 2008, hosted by CCOPAB (at that time, CCOPAB was still under the Army and was called CIOpPaz).

4. Conclusions

The Brazilian government today lacks mechanisms or processes that could facilitate its efforts to identify, prepare, and deploy civilian experts to crisis-affected or conflict-related areas. Evidence shows that the country has in fact deployed thousands of its public servants to unstable contexts, with no adequate preparation on issues of safety and security. Systematizing and analyzing the country's experience in bilateral cooperation in unstable contexts may improve current policies, especially in terms of pre-deployment.

Research has yielded a modest list of federal institutions which could play a key role in preparing Brazilian civilian experts as regards safety and security concerns. They can help to raise awareness on the importance of pre-deployment preparation, which would have positive impacts, in terms of momentum and audiences, on the course offered by CCOPAB. Moreover, in their own processes they can include, as appropriate, reflections, discussions and materials related to safety and security of their employees.

Pre-deployment preparations to missions in unstable contexts are essential, to help to avoid unnecessary risks to individuals and to the fulfillment of projects and activities. But they can also be seen as a means to an end—as a pathway toward greater recognition of the importance of organizing processes or creating mechanisms to improve Brazil's embryonic civilian capacity.

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