

EXPLORING FRENCH CITIZENSHIP:  
THE ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS)  
IN REFUGEE INTEGRATION

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes three major French NGOs in three distinct migrant-receiving cities in France within the past six to seven years. These organizations have historically welcome immigrant and refugee populations as well as other marginalized groups. First, this research explores the demographics of refugees to understand the manner in which different groups assimilate and how the local community receives them. Secondly, this research targets the most important NGOs services that serve as a foundation for French citizenship which include: cultural activities, housing, French language courses, culture and civil society courses, employment opportunities, and resource support. Lastly, this research serves to gain insight into the influence that NGOs have on public opinion through engaging the local community with refugees, developing projects that spread awareness about refugee and migrant issues, and crafting memorandums and bills regarding refugee and migrant reforms.

In 2014, the largest groups of immigrants in France arrived from North African countries, Morocco, Algeria, Portugal, Italy, and Spain (Dunham: Institut National d'Études Démographiques 2014). Around 100,000 new asylum claims were filed in 2017, proof of the growing influx of immigrants. France has been struggling with its immigration policies for years, a fact that has caused political tensions, particularly in the wake of recent terrorist attacks. This has fueled the former National Front Party,<sup>1</sup> now known as the *Rassemblement national*, with its anti-immigration rhetoric, causing more divisions among French citizens (The Guardian). After World War II, France, as a host country, has carried out an assimilationist approach that forces immigrants to become integrated into society. The nation has relied on nongovernmental organizations that have become necessary for assimilating immigrants because of the policies in place. However, foreign-born immigrants as well as French citizens with immigrant parents, still face an identity crisis due to their different values, cultures, and religions. They have received backlash from a faction of the population in France over the past five years. France practices secularism where mosques are permitted to be built, however, they are not particularly viewed as a sign of integration because France is a country built on Christian ideals. Therefore, integration has been a very ambiguous concept that holds various implications for immigration policies, citizenship, and French nationalist values.

Given these paradoxes, it is important to analyze whether nongovernmental organizations in France and other countries facilitate political engagement for migrants. In light of large influxes of immigration, NGOs have called for adequate and humane integration policies. Nongovernmental organizations serve as vehicles for integrating vulnerable populations into society. Therefore, this study will identify and analyze the various work or actions of

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<sup>1</sup> As of June 2018, Marine Le Pen rebranded the Front National to appeal to more voters

nongovernmental organizations in France that aid immigrants in acquiring their citizenship values and embracing French values and culture.

### **Political Engagement and the Assimilation of Immigrants**

Before doing my own analysis, I am going to look at the existing scholarship on these topics: French citizenship and its significance for immigrants and refugees, the political environment in areas with dense immigrant populations, and the role of NGOs in integrating immigrants and its political implications. Political engagement stems from social capital frameworks that rely on inter-connectivity among groups of citizens. This implies that immigrants and refugees must connect with other citizens around them to stimulate social capital, leading to political influence. Mobilizing people is important in stimulating communication channels between organizations, which then allows for the development of a strong civic community held together by civic norms, political trust, political engagement, and the potential for mobilization (Meindert and Tillie 1999, 2001; Morales & Giugni 2010). NGOs serve as civil society organizations that counterbalance the state, promote good governance, engage citizens with the state, and strengthen civil society (Mohanty 2002; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti 1993).

According to the *Standard Assimilation Model of Ethnic Political Participation* political participation and political acculturation are variables that are dependent on socioeconomic mobility, educational level, and social assimilation (Nelson 1982). Although assimilation involves acquiring the language and culture of a host country, the ethnic background of a citizen does not dissipate completely. French immigrants and refugees may become citizens but they differ from citizens that were born in France. A study that was conducted in New York City uses survey data from a sample of 379 respondents of American black, Cuban, Dominican, Irish,

Jewish, and Puerto Rican backgrounds (Nelson 1982). The researcher explores whether higher levels of socioeconomic mobility, education background, and social assimilation leads to more political acculturation and political assimilation. Political participation is measured as voting in elections, joining community problem-solving organizations, contacting public officials, and attending community protest demonstrations (Nelson 1982). The studies show a substantial relationship between ethnic group membership and political engagement in a city with a dense immigrant population. Therefore, such relationship has an impact on city government.

Other countries in Europe, for example, Denmark has shown the political results of granting citizenship to immigrants. Studies have shown that language proximity and higher educational background enhance chances of participation in elections (Elklit & Togeby 2009). The high participation of ethnic minorities in local elections in Denmark is a sign of successful political engagement of those who were granted citizenship. These studies hold influence for immigrant and refugee populations in France who acquire citizenship and their level of political participation in their communities.

### **French Citizenship and Immigrants**

France has integrated its immigrants and their children-the former through naturalization, the latter through *jus solis* (birthright citizenship)-by facilitating their access to French citizenship but also by conferring symbolic value when they join the French Republic (Fassin & Mazouz 2009). In the case of naturalization, authorities decide what proportion of the immigrant population is to be integrated. A ceremony will take place where prefects (state representatives at the *département*<sup>2</sup> level) give naturalization certificates to approved applicants (Fassin & Mazouz 2009). However, they are still accepted through seeking approval from the French Office for the

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<sup>2</sup> Largest unit of local government

Protection of Refugees and Stateless People (OFPRA). Refugees who receive approval are allowed to bring their spouse and children. They can apply to be naturalized as French citizens, receive subsidiary protection, and are entitled to any local organizations that aid asylum seekers. French asylum rests heavily on European law, notably, the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

It is important to note that French citizens have been given various labels based on their ethnic origins. For example, *Pieds-Noirs* (French citizens living in Algeria who fled to France after Algerian independence) began to be included in the definition of “immigration” by historians in the 21st century (Green 2007). Additionally, *Les Harkis* (Muslim Algerians who served as French auxiliaries in the Algerian War) fought oppressive housing measures and isolation that served to keep colonial practices intact. Therefore, there are great discrepancies between those who emphasize their citizenship and do not want to be categorized as immigrants and others who are in the process of reclaiming the full history of their belonging to France (Green 2007). Citizens who have North African roots face socioeconomic disparities due to their social identity (Duroy 2011). Citizenship holds subjective significance that relates to immigrants’ identity which changes accordingly to their experiences in the host country (Brettell 2006; Frizzo & Mascitelli 2017).

Scholars have examined the influence that immigrant populations hold in voting patterns. Given the rise of the populist right-wing party, formerly known as the Front National, immigrants have received backlash in many forms (Green 2007; Della Posta 2013). A study by Daniel J. Della Posta (2013), compares the proportion of votes towards the party among sampled *communes*<sup>3</sup> to France as a whole in the 2007 presidential election. The study analyzes whether a

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<sup>3</sup> Town, city, or other municipality

higher immigrant population in certain areas leads to more votes for the conservative party of France. The studies find that at the *commune* level, large immigrant populations are associated with less populist right wing voting. However, at the *département* level, large immigrant populations are not associated with lower right-wing votes (Della Posta 2013). This shows that being around immigrant populations can make people more pro-immigrants. Therefore, immigrant populations do hold some influence over civic society and voting.

### **Assimilation in French Civil Society**

Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti (1993) explored the theoretical implications of civic communities and social capital. They explored whether “the success of a democratic government depends on the degree to which its surroundings approximate the ideal of a civic community” (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti 1993). Citizenship entails active participation in public affairs normally, through associations that foster cooperation. Therefore, once immigrants and refugees have received an approval to settle down in France, they must become engaged in the community in order to be fully integrated.

However, refugees are required to assimilate into society to create a model of cultural homogeneity. France requires both refugees and immigrants to sign a *contrat d'accueil et d'intégration*<sup>4</sup> (CAI) (accommodation and integration contract decreed as of July 2016). This requires refugees and immigrants to “commit to respect the fundamental values of the French Republic and to attend a civic training program, and language classes” (OFPRA). Therefore, immigrants and refugees must learn these French values to become a citizen and contribute to French society. As applicants undergo the ‘assimilation interview,’ they are evaluated on their language progression. This evaluates their willingness to learn and assimilate culturally.

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<sup>4</sup> This contract is mandatory for becoming integrated into French society, obtaining permanent residence, and later on, naturalisation.

Secondly, state officials ask applicants if they know their rights and duties in regards to becoming a French citizen. Usually, they do not become immediately involved in politics within their early years of settlement (Bloemraad & Vermeulen 2013). In Europe, children usually have easier access to citizenship than their migrant parents due to familiarity with the country of residence, especially through instruction in local schools and knowledge of the majority language (Bloemraad & Vermeulen 2013).

### **NGOs Influence on Civil Society**

Nongovernmental organizations have been known for facilitating the integration of immigrants into host societies through providing services that allow immigrants and refugees to acquire both, language proficiency, civic learning, and cultural understanding (Zapata-Barrero, Gabrielli, Sanchez-Montijano, & Jaulin 2013). According to Cullen (2009), NGOs can provide a means for governments to counsel migrants and ensure a fit between policies, programs, and migrants' actual needs. In Denmark, the presence of ethnic minority organizations serve as resource centers for immigrants in the following areas: language, education, employment, economy, cultural conservation, social/family, etc. (Lindekilde 2008). Therefore, NGOs may be vehicles for mobilizing immigrants, providing social integration, and stimulating social capital and should be further studied (Putnam 2000; Lindekilde 2009).

Non-profit organizations have only recently blossomed in France, after government decentralization efforts in the 1980s (Archambault, Gariazzo, Anheier, & Salamon 1999). The non-profit sector is comprised mainly of culture and recreation, education and research, health, and social services (Archambault, Gariazzo, Anheier, & Salamon 1999). NGOs such as, *La Cimade*, are vehicles for facilitating immigrant and refugee integration which holds implications for the political environment of France (Monforte 2014). In 2009, 30,000 individuals faced

expulsion. *La Cimade*'s purpose is to "reclaim another political life," one that treats immigrants and refugees with more dignity and echoes the Declaration of Human Rights. Nonetheless, political opportunity can stem from effective immigrant mobilization by NGOs who advocate for immigrant rights (Cullen 2009).

The presence of NGOs can hold political implications for civil societies. A study by Schweizer (2011) analyzes an NGO participation in the United Nations Working Group on Minorities (WGM). The researcher finds that the WGM failed to further develop mechanisms in civil societies for advancing the international minority movement. However, dialogue between NGOs and governments were further stimulated which brought more attention to prevalent minority group issues.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

Current studies show the impact of immigrant communities on voting patterns, relationships between ethnic groups and political engagement, as well as the impact of NGOs on developing pathways for advancing minority rights. However, there is a lack of research on the relationship between NGOs ability to help citizens to feel a sense of belonging within a country once they have used their services and aid. Moreover, there is a lack of information on whether integration services influences public opinion throughout the country. This research will investigate the role of NGOs in influencing public opinion.

The following factors are central in analyzing this relationship: refugee demographics, usage of NGO services, and the effects of NGOs on the political environment. Immigrant demographics are essential in exploring the different groups of people that immigrate to France. Although France aims to create a homogenous culture, ethnicity still influences assimilation. Clearly, we have seen that many individuals continue to practice their culture. Many immigrants

belong to the Islamic culture, and continue to practice their traditions a fact that has been criticized in the French society. For example, after the Paris attacks, there was a growing sense of anti-Islam sentiments in the country. Similarly, in 2016, the government tried to impose a burkini ban as a result of public outcry (Dearden 2016). The most common immigrants come from Morocco, Algeria, Italy, Spain, and many West African countries. Therefore, I will focus on the top regional groups: the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe. Demographics are useful in exploring the manner in which different groups assimilate, if they decide to become French citizens, and how the community receives them.

This leads us to the second factor, usage of NGO services. Analyzing this factor is crucial in determining how immigrants have assimilated into society and whether or not they have become integrated into the society's culture. The most important NGOs services that serve as a foundation for French citizenship include: cultural activities, housing, French language courses, culture and civil society courses, employment opportunities, and resource support. Housing, resource support, and employment are necessary in becoming established in France. However, the French language and culture and civil society courses serve as a way for France to preserve its homogenous culture. Additionally, cultural activities, such as museum visits, landmark tours, and holding festivals are important in observing civil society changes. Cultural activities are usually used as a method to foster sensibility in communities that host many immigrants. This helps them feel a sense of belonging in their community through interacting with other citizens and sharing their experiences and culture. These are key factors in determining their future political implications, such as, public opinion which influences elections.

Therefore, it is important to observe how NGOs have attempted to influence the political environment in which immigrants live. NGOs can influence public opinion through engaging the

local community with refugees to foster awareness and sensibility towards their issues and treatment in their new communities. Additionally, NGOs may develop projects that spread awareness about refugee and migrant issues, such as, festivals, discussions, and artistic performances. In sharp contrast to this type of local influence, other NGOs may craft memorandums and bills regarding refugee and migrant reforms as well as refugee issues that have arisen in France. This approach is a more direct way of influencing policy since these documents are directed at policy members and other politicians.

### **Research Design**

This study will analyze three case studies of major refugee NGOs in France that have provided services to immigrant-refugee populations in the past six to seven years. These organizations welcome immigrant and refugee populations as well as other marginalized groups. They are located throughout the country and hold international ties with other organizations who collaborate to implement projects across the globe. Their goals include inclusivity and sensibility towards these groups and they each provide different services that aid refugee and immigrant populations integrate into society notably, through housing, advocacy, and cultural awareness. Moreover, they influence civil society through outreach programs where French citizens work personally with refugees and immigrants, thus fostering social capital and creating a sense of *fraternité*.

I will focus on key cities that historically welcomed immigrant populations, including Paris, Angers, and Lyon. Paris is located in north-central France, Angers is a smaller, western city southwest of Paris, and Lyon is located in the south-central region. Paris and Lyon were identified in a survey conducted by the *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (INSEE) as the top cities with dense immigrant populations in 2012. Angers is a

smaller city with a smaller population of immigrants and refugees, however, this allows us to analyze NGO refugee integration and implications for smaller cities. The study will explore *La Cimade* in Lyon,<sup>5</sup> *France Terre d'Asile* in Angers,<sup>6</sup> and *Singa*'s work in Paris.<sup>7</sup> I have selected the following NGOs because they offer different cases with similar objectives.

*La Cimade* is a nongovernmental organization that was created after World War II. Its main objective is to advise migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and foreigners who seek assistance upon their arrival to France. *La Cimade* provides legal support in defending human rights and providing social services, such as housing. This NGO is present in eight regions in France, has 98 reception centers, and 88 local groups. Moreover, *La Cimade* has influenced public opinion through informing and raising awareness about immigrant populations on social media platforms, press releases, and migrant festivals. This prominent NGO has made several bills regarding changes in migratory policies. In 2017, 100,000 individuals received some type of assistance at *La Cimade*. I will be focusing on immigrants who seek housing, take language courses, and participate in festivals to be engaged with the community, which renders sensibility towards these groups.

*France Terre d'Asile* is an association established in 1971 aimed at maintaining the right to asylum in France under the law of 1901. Its mission addresses all types of legal migrations and caters to refugees, stateless people, asylum seekers, and unaccompanied foreign minors. *France Terre d'Asile* holds many international ties with organizations, including, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, the European Council for Refugees and Exiles, and the United Nations Social and Economic Council. This association helps individuals receive protection and

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<sup>5</sup> Population size for Lyon: 472,317; Immigrant population: 66, 498 (13% of local population) (Linternaute)

<sup>6</sup> Population size for Angers: 168,279; Immigrant population: 14, 308 (9.4% of the local population) (Linternaute)

<sup>7</sup> Population size for Paris: 2,138,551; Immigrant population: 450, 111 (20.4% of local population) (Linternaute)

subsidiary support, and facilitates the integration into French society through the following services. In this study, I will be focusing on accessibility to employment, language training, healthcare, and housing. *France Terre d'Asile* manages various accommodation centers for asylum seekers, refugees, and other migrants available at 37 locations in 10 regions. In addition to providing services, *France Terre d'Asile* also has a public presence among media sources to promote solidarity and understanding about the differences between refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people, etc.

*Singa* stemmed from a citizenship movement with the aim of creating opportunities for engaging refugees with their host community. Their goal is to create a fraternal community through cultural awareness, employment opportunities, and dismantling refugee asylum prejudices. *Singa* is located in four French regions and six countries. It is composed of over 20,000 members of various professions who promote the three objectives of informing civil society, interacting with a common foundation of civil competences, and using innovation methodologies for social inclusion. *Singa* has partnered with the *Comme à la maison* (CALM) platform to help refugees seek temporary shelter. Additionally, *Singa* explores the economic impact of refugees and organizes cultural activities in communities. I will be focusing on language and civil courses, employment, and cultural activities regarding immigrant integration.

## **Sources**

The cases will differ in regards to location in addition to the type of services they provide. First, I will investigate at the NGOs' websites which will serve as sources of evidence to investigate forms of integration services including articles, press releases, interviews, cultural activities, and the usage of social services within the past few years. I will pay particular attention to services in their annual reports that I mentioned in my framework: housing, French

language courses, culture and civil society courses, employment opportunities, and resource support. This will help me gauge how well immigrants have integrated into society. The annual reports of each NGO in their given city will be also be used to decipher the breakdown of the demographics of their clients and the services they used. These factors all contribute to immigrant and refugee integration efforts into civil society.

I will use the following reports from *Singa*: the objectives and activity reports for February 2012-2013, February 2014-2014, February 2014-February 2015, the annual activity reports from 2015, 2016, 2017 and the evaluation report of 2017, These reports summarized *Singa*'s objectives, activities, evaluations, progress, demographics, services, and impact from its creation to the present. The evaluation report of 2017 includes polls, interviews, and surveys that demonstrate how public opinion of local citizens has changed through their interaction with refugees in activities related to their integration.

In my second case study, I will use the following reports from *France Terre d'Asile*: Activity Report 2011, Activity Report 2012, Activity Report 2013, General Activity Report 2014, Institutional Report 2014, General Activity Report 2015, Institutional Report 2015, General Activity Report 2016, and the Institutional Report 2016. In addition to these sources, I will use the following sources to assess their influence on public opinion regarding refugees and migrants: Bills for Asylum Reform (2013), Plead with 12 Bills Regarding Immigration (2015), and Memorandum Addressed to the 2017 Presidential Candidates Regarding Asylum and Immigration (2017).

My third case study for *La Cimade* will use the following reports: *La Cimade à Lyon*: Local Activity Report 2015, Local Activity Report 2016, and Local Activity Report 2017. In addition to these reports, I will use an article called, “*#QuandEllesNeTuentPas*,” a campaign

project *La Cimade* conducted two months before the presidential elections of 2017 to inform citizens about refugee issues so they can consider them when they vote in the elections.

### **Expected Results**

Given the selected case studies are located in two densely migrant populated cities and one city that is not as dense, I expect to see a high usage of NGO services in all areas with perhaps fewer clients in Angers. With this in mind, I think refugees will be well integrated into society given that the NGOs have a wide variety of services that cater to the overall needs of refugees for them to be mobilized in civil society. Additionally, each NGO influences public opinion in different manners. This is essential in exploring what political implications this may have for both the local community and the overall national political environment of the country. If NGOs foster positive public opinion, this may sway citizens to vote in favor of more favorable refugee integration policies or candidates that are open to welcoming refugees.

The findings of this study will serve as a basis for further research on exploring cultural identity and political implication through the usage of NGO services. This study will show implications for immigrant-receiving countries, such as, the United States and the member states of the European Union. Citizenship will also become a more defined concept for immigrants who arrive and become integrated into society. Finally, the study will show whether immigrant-receiving countries should incorporate more NGOs into civil society to integrate more immigrants and perhaps have stronger communities that promote a national identity or foster positive public opinion of refugees.

### **Case Studies**

#### **Singa**

*Singa* caters to refugees from all over the world but receives most of its refugees from the Middle East and North Africa regions. This case study examines factors such as employment, housing, language and education, as well as daily activities. The first three factors help refugees become financially independent, obtain a residence and network, and become culturally and educationally knowledgeable about French culture and society. In addition to becoming integrated, refugees connect with local residents through every aspect of the process and more specifically, through daily activities. These interactions are vital in analyzing the public opinion of local citizens after their participation.

Since its establishment in 2012, *Singa* has received an increasing number of refugees and has partnered with the two other NGOs in my study, *France Terre d'Asile* and *La Cimade*. In 2012-2013, *Singa* served its first 39 refugees, in 2013-2014, it served 50 refugees, and from 2014-2015, it served 76 refugees. In 2015 *Singa* served 714 refugees with the top nationalities being 31.9% from Syria, 13.8% from Sudan, 13.6% from Afghanistan, and 5.6% from Iran. In 2016, *Singa* served 1,500 refugees. As of 2017, 44.3% of *Singa*'s 1,500 refugees were between 25-34 years of age, 63% of the newly arrived participants had a French level of B1-B2<sup>8</sup>, and its top nationalities continued to be Sudan (26%), Syria (20%), and Afghanistan (10%). These statistics demonstrate that many refugees come from the Middle East and North Africa, as well as war torn nations. Many refugees are young adults and appear to have some French language knowledge, which may facilitate their integration into French society.

## **Employment**

*Singa* offers many professional workshops for refugees who seek employment opportunities. This unique program aids refugees in honing their skill sets, finding a source of

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<sup>8</sup> The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) has six levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, and C2

income, becoming independent, and connecting to French society. *Singa* helps refugees start up projects through researching employment opportunities, offering language courses, coaching, workshops by sector, and networking with professionals.

*Finkela* is a program that promotes entrepreneurship as a form of emancipation for people who qualify for the benefits. *Singa*'s reports mention how this program helps foreigners create an activity related to their competencies, helps increase their revenues, helps them share their culture with their community, and promotes business opportunities between their home and host countries. Additionally, *Finkela* provides professional mentors, entrepreneur development, and events to promote their projects. 20 refugees pursued the incubation process of 6 months, 17 of these 20 projects (85%) created a legal structure, 11 generated revenues from their incubation, 8 are independently financed or are on the way to becoming independently financed, and 7 can take on salary collaborators or interns.

Furthermore, *Singa* proposes other resources for entrepreneur refugees such as the Human Safety Net, a program for refugee entrepreneurs that provides labs for reuniting entrepreneurs, networking, think tanks, and 3 week workshops for learning entrepreneurship. MAD (Make a Difference Day) is a day dedicated to team-building for innovation among entrepreneurs and collaboration on their projects. During this day, *Singa* invites local communities to engage with refugees and learn about their ongoing projects that render social connections among participants.

Refugees have initiated a myriad of business projects that help preserve their culture, spread awareness to their local community, and render economic benefits. In 2013-2014, a Kurdish refugee journalist launched a Kurdish Cultural Center in Paris using dance and cuisine as mediums to bring Kurdish culture to France. In 2015, Yaser and Mohammad, two Syrian

refugee rappers, of Palestinian origin, created the group, ‘*Refugees of Rap.*’ *Singa* helped them continue their musical career through organizing conferences at universities and other schools to present their projects, putting on concerts in Paris, using ‘*Buddies*’ to translate their lyrics, and connecting the rappers with professional French rappers. In 2017, two women, Ange and Fanny, launched a clothes line that uses African patterns and Western cuts. Their objective is to use their creations to tell stories regarding identity, equality, and inclusion. Through these creative projects, the French community becomes cognizant of the various backgrounds of refugees.

## **Housing**

*Comme à la maison* (CALM) was initiated in 2015 to allow refugees to spend 3 to 12 months with French citizens in their homes to foster cultural immersion and allow refugees to form connections with their French communities. In 2016, *Singa* reported that 44.2% of the refugees who participated in a homestay, found employment through their host family, 27% continued their education and professional development, 3.6% developed an entrepreneurial activity, and 61.5% found housing. A breakdown of host family locations in 2015 varied: 3% in Lyon, 85% in IDF, and 12% in other French cities. The top host family participant nationalities are as follow: 28% Sudan, 18% Afghanistan, 12% Syria, 9% Tibet, and 7% Eritrea. The duration of their homestays were as follow: 39% 1-3 months, 27% 4-6 months, 1% less than 1 year, and 26% were undetermined. Participants in the homestays included: 80% men, 2% women with a child, 4% family with a child, 8% women, 2% family with 3 children, 2% couple.

In 2017, *Singa* documented the impact of CALM. 27.3% people found employment through their host family, 24.2% people attended French courses, and 31% people found an internship, a profession, or continued their studies. Vacation with host families also showed a significant impact on its participants in 2017: 32 people opened their homes, 20 people were

hosted, 30% of relationships were strengthened, families (host and refugee) decided to see each other regularly after the first encounter, families opened their doors for Christmas, 4 people found a profession thanks to their host family (professions included: 1 contracted in carpentry, 1 contract with a market gardener, and 2 mechanic internships.)

*Singa's* [2017 Evaluation](#) found that two-thirds of its participants had an intermediate level of French. However, it was noted that the CALM participants acquired a higher level of French in comparison to non-participants. CALM participants reached higher French proficiency levels up to C3<sup>9</sup>. This demonstrates the effectiveness of homestays with locals including the willingness of refugees to participate and integrate into society.

### **Education + Language and Culture**

*Les Buddies Program* is a social program that connects French citizens with refugees who share similar interests. *Singa* requires participants to meet for at least two hours per week for at least two months. The two participants must define their list of activities which can include, language learning, visits, cultural activities, etc. Refugees learn about their local city while improving their French proficiency and gaining friendships.

According to *Singa's* evaluative report of 2017, *Les Buddies Program* is one of the top programs in which refugees participate. *Singa* took a poll of the activities its refugees participated in to understand which activities tend to be the most favorable among refugees. This demonstrates how willing and open refugees are to connecting with the local community through cultural exchanges that are geared towards their integration into French society. There was also a positive correlation between the knowledge acquired by local citizens and the number of

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<sup>9</sup> See Footnote 8

refugees they interacted with—a sign that *Singa*'s activities have influenced public opinion of refugees.

### **Daily Activities**

*Singa* achieves its objective of promoting sensibility towards vulnerable populations through a myriad of sports and physical activities throughout its locations in France. The activities include fitness sessions, half marathons, and soccer cup tournaments composed of a diverse group of refugees. *Singa* hopes to create an environment where everyone can thrive and participate in dialogues that dismantle notions of prejudice.

Additionally, *Singa* has organized several picnics, film nights, and artistic nights. In Paris, *Singa* has put on fashion shows (*Le Singa Fashion Show*) with 250 participants, week-long activities that occur annually around the World Refugee Day which consists of activities, music, street art, and an evening at the Hotel de Ville in Paris. *Singa*'s biggest event in 2016, *La Singa Night #5*, consisted of bringing 15 artists to Paris which attracted an audience of 650 people.

### **Impact on Public Opinion**

There were various positive findings in the [2017 Evaluation Report](#) regarding social relationships between refugees and locals. For one, *Singa* appeared to have a positive role in facilitating relationships through its various activities. *Singa* also found a positive outcome from those who participated in more activities: as they participated in more activities, their social circle increased and they became more active participants in other activities. Increasing social circles for refugees holds many benefits, such as, dismantling cultural stereotypes of refugees, understanding France's humanitarian role, understanding what it means to be a refugee, and having a humanitarian perspective.

### **France Terre d'Asile**

*France Terre d'Asile* receives asylum seekers and refugees. In 2011, *France Terre d'Asile*'s local center in Angers counted 219 participants, mainly from Russia, Armenia, Sudan, Chad, and Kosovo. In 2012, the center counted 224 participants from Russia, Albania, Sudan, Georgia, and Kosovo. In 2013, 191 participants came from Russia, Angola, Sudan, the Congo, Algeria, China, and Albania. In 2014, there were 179 participants with the top nationalities being from Sudan, Chad, Russia, Kosovo, and Albania. In 2015, 100 participants came from Russia, Libya, Sudan, Chad, DRC Congo, and other. In 2016, 188 participants came from Russia, Sudan, Eritrea, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Chad, and other. In 2017, *Singa* counted 164 participants from Russia, Sudan, Georgia, Guinea, Afghanistan, and other. Therefore, their main refugees come from Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

### **Integration**

In 2011, 10 individuals enrolled in FLE (French as a foreign language) courses. The *P<sup>10</sup>* family of Eritrean origin arrived in France in July 2009. The couple used the center and managed to obtain a statute in December 2010. They signed a CAI and signed up for French courses. They each completed 250 hours of French and afterwards became integrated into society professionally. The husband obtained an interim 2 year contract of insertion as a tri agent. His wife dedicated herself to educating their child born in 2011. When the permit ended, the family obtained housing in a *bailleur social du département*.<sup>11</sup> In 2013, 24 French courses were administered through the support of 40 volunteers. The courses covered various themes and included cultural outings. In 2014, two people enrolled in a French course. This demonstrates the effectiveness of using the organization to become integrated in addition to finding stability and independence after using their services.

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<sup>10</sup> *France Terre d'Asile* does not reveal the full names of their clients

<sup>11</sup> Landlord who owns an apartment building for low-income families

## **Employment**

In 2011, one person received employment as an interim worker in the environment sector with a 2 year contract. In 2012, 3 people obtained access to a job. In 2013, no one secured a job. In 2014, one person found employment in the construction sector with a temporary work contract. Mr. L. is from central Africa. He is 43 years old and obtained subsidiary protection in 2014. He was able to pursue a qualifying training as a professional security agent at *Nantes*. He obtained the certification in October 2014. He has worked as an interim in the food industry in Châteaubriant since December 2014. In 2015, one person obtained employment in the horticulture sector with a temporary work permit. One person obtained employment with a permanent work contract within the building painting sector in 2016 and another person signed temporary work contract to work in a seasonal job. Although it is difficult to find jobs for most refugees, these success stories demonstrate refugees' ability to integrate in various sectors of society professionally. They become economically independent and input their productivity into the French economy.

## **Housing**

In 2011, 28 refugees obtained housing. 27 people obtained housing in 2012 including shared apartments and temporary housing. In 2013, 13 people obtained housing. In 2015, 41 people obtained housing in the public area and 3 people in the private area. In 2016, 31 people obtained housing in the public area, 1 in a home with a family, 2 in centers for housing and social reinsertion, and 15 in transitional housing in Direl. Although there is a distinct variety in housing situations for refugees, the center's ability to find housing for refugees enables them to become stable in France.

## **Promoting Solidarity**

The center participated in an event called “*Mix cité*”<sup>12</sup> in 2012 for the first time since its creation. This event showcased the city’s intercultural richness and during Christmas, the center presented itself and spread awareness to its citizens.

In 2015, many residents participated in a workshop organized in conjunction with a school where individuals shared their experiences as refugees and asylum seekers. Additionally, the organization created a postcard project called Noel Solidarity during Christmas season to spread awareness about the lives of refugees and asylum seekers.

These activities are essential for instilling awareness in the communities where refugees will reside and gradually convert into their new homes. Solidarity is an important factor for upholding and bridging the sense of *fraternité* between newcomers and local citizens.

### **Influencing the Political Environment**

*France Terre d’Asile* created a bill in 2013 for asylum reform; it was sent to the French government. First, the organization stated that it is essential for the state and local actors to collaborate in a qualitative and quantitative evaluation that addresses public politics. An extensive diagnosis of the refugee situation is needed to make adequate decisions and a budget. Secondly, the organization proposed to make the asylum process easy, fast, and more accessible, rendering justice and equity. The following were suggestions for this goal: making documents accessible online and in many languages, offering addresses regarding legal information and procedures and in various languages, giving asylum seekers an attestation<sup>13</sup> of their statute within three days after submission, creating platforms for multi-services, gathering evaluations regarding housing situations and needs of asylum seekers, placing more attention on the process for isolated minors who are asylum seekers, publishing and assuring uniform respect throughout

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<sup>12</sup> Multi-ethnic area

<sup>13</sup> affidavit

the territory with clear and precise directives, and organizing consultation reunions. Thirdly, the organization proposes adopting a high quality asylum process through collaboration with civil society actors, adopting guidelines for the exam that needs to be taken, extending the *OFPPRA* to judicial councils and associations, and speed up the process to a one year waiting limit. Lastly, *France Terre d'Asile* made a recommendation to provide high quality housing and accompaniment through opening centers across the country. These bills were made out to the French government to uphold humanitarian standards as refugees feel to France.

In 2015, *France Terre d'Asile* made twelve propositions regarding the law for migration rights. Its main objective, highlighted in the document, is to create a sensible political environment for migrants. First, the organization recommended providing residence permits that last for four years as individuals wait to receive their residence cards. Then, the organization recommends that better forms of integration, such as, making French courses more accessible and promote civics courses across organizations to diffuse the values of the French Republic. However, the organization recognizes the need to regulate immigration influxes and recommends that regulation can proceed as long as it is with respect to the fundamental human rights of individuals. Therefore, the organization makes the recommendation to allow access to health services for those individuals who are ill or need to monitor their health which includes both physical and mental health. In addition, the organization recommends the state to seek alternatives to retention that may impede individuals from improving their living conditions. On the other hand, the organization also recognizes the need to respect the rights of all European Union citizens who travel to France freely unless they become a threat to the overall public wellbeing. In regards to the overall wellbeing of migrants, the organization recommends guaranteeing access to resources that can facilitate their stay and any legal issues they may have.

Furthermore, *France Terre d'Asile* recommends that interdictions to return to French territory be highly reconsidered because these interdictions have negative consequences that affect individuals' access to the Schengen area and any family ties in other countries. Lastly, the organization presented several recommendations regarding retentions that include imposing the intervention of a judge early on in the retention, reducing the time of the retention, banning the retention of children, and reducing the number of retention sites throughout the country.

In 2017, *France Terre d'Asile* wrote a presidential memorandum that addressed the recent concerns regarding large influxes of refugees and to continue upholding their humane treatments in various sites. In regards to access to the right to asylum, the organization states that the timeframe for applications being processed for asylum should remain at three years.

Additionally, *France Terre d'Asile* recommends that there should be an improved geographic redistribution of asylum seekers in centers across the country. Furthermore, refugees should have accessible housing. The organization proposed proper integration of refugees into civil society through the creation of a state administration dedicated to the protection and political integration of refugees. In addition to this protection, recommendations have been made for social inclusion and access to jobs. On the other hand, *France Terre d'Asile* also recommends that the following steps be taken to protect minors: a mechanism for identifying minors, aid in a speedy family unification, and renegotiation of the Touquet Accords (signed 2003 and renegotiated in 2017) in regards to the French territory and migration. Overall protection for refugees needs to be met through efficient coordination between regional and national entities in addition to allocating funds towards meeting the needs of refugees. Furthermore, *France Terre d'Asile* makes recommendations for France to become a model for other countries to follow regarding protecting the rights of refugees such as the right to live together as a family which constitutes a

legitimate and stable means of migration. Judicial assistance should be used after individuals are assigned a place to live to allow them to access recourse. Lastly, child detainment is strictly forbidden and should never be implemented as a policy because it has no benefits for the state or the child.

### **La Cimade**

In 2015, the top nationalities served included 31% Algerians, 43% North Africans, and 27% Sub Saharan Africans. 30-50 people arrived at the Lyon center every Wednesday, close to 1300 people in 2015. This is a 58% increase from 2014 and a 48% increase in the overall Lyon region. The top services in demand included seeking information, health, asylum assistance, and family regroupment. Overall, this NGO caters to Africans.

In 2016, *La Cimade*'s most prevalent demands included providing information, health, family regroupment, expulsion measures, and asylum. Most of the service seekers resided in France for less than five years and the majority are between the ages of 26-40.

### **Resources**

*La Cimade* in Lyon provides legal support, information, and answers phone calls. There are three legal experts that reside in this center. They guide individuals who seek aid and answer any questions they may have regarding housing or other matters. Additionally, they connect individuals with lawyers who can help them with their legal situations. In 2015, there was a small decrease in the number of people received, however, there was an increase in number of cases opened. Volunteers helped individuals that met the following criteria: people under the obligation to leave the French territory (OQTF)<sup>14</sup>, non francophone people, sick individuals that have lived in France for less than a year, and parents with a French child from Sub Saharan

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<sup>14</sup> Obligation to leave the French territory within 30 days if one illegally entered the territory

Africa. During 2017, 1173 individuals sought resources. This focuses on providing mostly resource and legal support to vulnerable populations.

### **Women Refugees Program**

A social gathering for migrant women was formed to unite women to address their social situations in regards to their meetings with legal experts. Participation is fully voluntary and help women understand their rights in relation to their legal status in the country. The objective is to provide a space to inform and guide women in their social, medical, and educational advances. This setting facilitates information exchange, addresses concerning questions, and guides women to settle in.

The majority of the women who participated are in precarious situations and have faced many difficult and violent experiences after their arrival in France. The women for the most part are Algerians, Moroccans, Congolese, Nigerians, Cameroonians, and Albanians. One-third of the women who participated did not have housing or lived in precarious situations with members of their family or their community members. Five women experienced sexual violence or sexual assault. One-fourth of the women spoke little French and more than half of them are pregnant, have children, or do not have support from their children's father. 8-10 women participated each Wednesday throughout the year with a total of +/- 300 women per year.

In 2016, 380 women participated and 153 of them had children. They were primarily Algerian, Congolese, Cameroonian, Albanian, and Moroccan. These women sought housing, social and medical aid, access to associations that helped women who have experienced violence and prostitution, primary needs (food, clothing, etc.), and French language courses along with schooling for their children.

During 2016, *La Cimade* partnered with associations to accommodate these women and provide support. *Le Point Accueil*, for example, takes in women and children in the afternoons and guide them to find housing while learning about their rights. Another association, *L'ouvre port*, provides temporary housing. Additionally, *La Cimade* put on a social innovation exposition that allowed women to meet with local citizens to learn about the experiences of homeless women.

The number of participants increased in 2017 to 450 women; 224 had children and 40 were pregnant. The top nationalities were similar to 2016: Algerians (118), Cameroonians (40), Congolese (37), Albanians (32), and Tunisians (26). *La Cimade* continued offering the same support in addition to connecting women with *l'amicable du Nid*, which helps women who practice prostitution, and *VIFILL*, which hosts and accompanies victims of violence.

### **French Language Acquisition**

In 2015, French language acquisition activities occurred in various, creative forms. First, tests were given out to evaluate levels of French proficiency among participants. Some individuals chose to participate in writing workshops with students from Lyon 2 University. The workshops are a project called, “*Ordinary Odyssey*,” which consists of writing stories inspired by migratory experiences. The two remaining components of the project included round table discussions and creating a book of the stories.

In 2016, 79 participants signed up for French courses. The French proficiency levels ranged from A0-B1<sup>15</sup>. Volunteers coordinated activities, such as, having lunch in a restaurant, museum visits, theatrical plays, and collaborating with a solidarity event presented by the council for children. The courses offered were two hours per week and involved roughly thirty

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<sup>15</sup> See footnote 8

participants each week. Future plans for 2017 included collaborating with a technical arts and theatre school as well as municipal libraries for French language acquisition.

*La Cimade* saw a sharp increase in registered participants in 2017-150 in the first six months and 187 in the second six months. Within these two periods, modules were created to enhance the structure of French courses. The new activities for the year included participating in the Migrant Scene Festival, Christmas lunch, and participating in the Cinema Festival at *l'Institut Lumière* (a French organization dedicated to promoting and preserving French film making).

### **Cultural Awareness and Solidarity**

*La Cimade* held its fifth annual Migrant Scene Festival comprised of 13 cultural and artistic demonstrations in 11 different sites throughout the Lyon region with the help of various partner associations. There were 1350 participants. The festival's objective is to promote understanding and solidarity with the refugees living in France. The events included theatrical plays, comic shows, film showings, debates, singing, photographic expositions.

The 2016 Migrant Scene Festival included 8 events, 1250 participants, 11 associations, and 7 artists. *La Cimade* received a large media presence among the following sources: *Patastras Mag'*, *Rue89Lyon*, and *Le Progrès*. *Radio Salam* and *TV des 2 rives* broadcasted publicity about the festival including specific events.

*La Cimade* became involved in promoting awareness using public schools, specifically, one elementary and four high schools, as platforms. History, geography, and philosophy teachers ask their students questions about refugees and their thoughts on them. The teachers use keywords in their discussions, such as, "border security/insecurity," "Islam," "identity," etc. Their students have 5-10 minutes to react to these words and the teacher asks them where their reactions and thoughts originated from. The objective is for the teachers to dismantle prejudice

against refugees and asylum seekers and for their students to understand all types of migrants, international migrations, and the Mediterranean sea-a border that migrants usually come across in their journey.

*La Cimade's* annual festival in 2017 had more variety in cultural presentations from different groups with special discussions regarding the media and politics. *La Cimade* also included an debate about the Algerian community, French citizenship, and integration into society.

Furthermore, in 2017, the organization extended its objective to increase awareness across public schools in the Lyon region-five high schools and two elementary schools. The lessons were conducted in literature, technology, and health and social classes ranging from 10-32 students in each classroom.

### **Influence on 2017 Elections**

Three weeks before the French presidential elections, *La Cimade* used the media to influence public opinion. They launched a campaign called *#QuandEllesNeTuentPas* to spread awareness about migratory issues that individuals face at the French border, especially, those who lose their lives upon attempting to enter France. Visuals were created such as posters, photographs, and collage videos and used in fifty cities in France. Additionally, 6,300 flyers were distributed to deputies, senators, elected europeans, mayors, prefects, ministers, departmental and general consuls, *commune communautés*<sup>16</sup>, institutions, associations, and journalists (La Cimade 2016).

The flyers included a large bold word written across the page diagonally that describes migration issues. Examples of words used include: excluded, reprimanded, and humiliated.

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<sup>16</sup> See footnote 3

These posters were placed besides other posters that displayed the french motto or they covered up posters of the presidential candidates. These posters were placed strategically to sway public opinion before the presidential elections. It was a way to promote the values and human rights of refugees and the French motto simultaneously. In other words, *La Cimade* was communicating to French citizens that refugees should be treated humanely and deserve to have a place in French society.

### **Conclusion**

France has had large influxes of immigrants and refugees in the past 15 years. Although the political environment has grown tense due to these concerns, nongovernmental organizations have taken up the role of integrating refugees effectively through the following: employment, housing, education and culture, and addressing other resource needs. In addition to integrating refugees, *Singa*, *France Terre d'Asile*, and *La Cimade* have promoted cultural sensibility and engaged in political discourse in the following cities: Paris, Lyon, and Angers.

Demographics tend to be similar across the organizations. *Singa's* refugees are largely from the Middle East and Africa. *France Terre d'Asile* and *La Cimade* cater to a larger range of refugees from the Middle East, Africa, as well as some Eastern European refugees. These demographics highlight the main profiles of refugees coming into France, often fleeing political tensions, war, poverty, and economic instability.

Employment opportunities differed for different organizations. *Singa* achieved this goal through successfully equipping refugees with knowledge and tools to start up their own businesses where they can incorporate their own culture and skills while networking with the local citizens in the area. *France Terre d'Asile* did not facilitate employment searches as well because only a few people each year found employment. They did not specify exactly how these

individuals found employment but there were very few who were successful in doing so. Nonetheless, the individuals who did find jobs were success stories because they eventually became professionally integrated in addition to their mastery of the French language and thus, became a part of French society. *La Cimade* did not discuss employment opportunities at the local level.

Housing was achieved through various measures. *Singa*'s program allowed refugees to pair up with host families and live with them. This generated positive feedback because refugees learned more about French culture, improved their French proficiency, and local citizens became sensitive towards their issues. *France Terre d'Asile* helped refugees attain more permanent and independent housing. *La Cimade* simply provided resources for refugees to find housing.

The three NGOs largely focused on education and language acquisition using similar methods. *Singa*'s program is run by volunteers who tutor refugees in addition to participating in daily activities in civil society to promote both French language and culture acquisition. *France Terre d'Asile* allowed individuals to sign up for French courses that were administered by volunteers. *La Cimade*, on the other hand, also offered French courses offered by volunteers and collaborated with a university and schools to engage refugees in projects that both, advanced their French proficiency and promoted cultural sensibility.

Solidarity and cultural awareness were all objectives of these organizations. *Singa* wove this objective into its activities. *France Terre d'Asile* held demonstrations and projects where refugees could showcase their identities. *La Cimade*'s famous Migrant Scene Festival engages the community with refugees to answer questions, dismantle stereotypes, and promote solidarity. Additionally, *La Cimade* engages with schools to incorporate migration issues in the curriculum.

Overall, these organizations attempt to influence communities to create welcoming communities and a sense of *fraternité*.

The organizations attempt to influence public opinion and politics in different ways. *Singa*'s questionnaires analyzed how local citizens have changed their perceptions of refugees through participating in activities with them, living, and interacting with refugees. The overall results demonstrate that individuals became more sensitive towards refugees and understood their situations. *France Terre d'Asile* has made bills and a presidential memorandum to address migrant reform, refugee integration issues, and calls upon presidential candidates to consider refugee issues. *La Cimade*'s project, *#QuandEllesNeTuentPas*, to influence the presidential elections in making individuals cognizant of the issues refugees currently face.

Overall, the organizations cater to similar demographics and integrate refugees and other migrants in similar but different methods. *Singa* appears to be very effective due to its success in rendering positive feedback from the local community, engaging refugees with the community in a myriad of activities, and helping refugees find homes and start up their own businesses, making them independent. In order to measure the effectiveness of the other two organizations, it is necessary to do further research through questionnaires or surveys which aid individuals in determining how much positive feedback and effective their methods are in swaying public opinion and politics. Influencing public opinion can be examined through learning about individual feelings and opinions towards migrants as well as analyzing NGOs attempts to sway politics in the form of bills and projects during elections. Additionally, further research can examine whether individuals pursue citizenship and residence after being integrated in the following areas that were addressed in this research and whether or not they become involved in the political life after they have been successfully integrated.

NGOs are essential because, without them, refugees and migrants would be homeless and would eventually be expelled from French territory. These individuals experience harsh conditions living on the streets that lack sanitation and become susceptible to diseases and infections. Migrants are sometimes taken to camps or temporary shelters in school gymnasiums when NGOs become full (Chrisafis). Therefore, NGOs are essential in facilitating access to bare necessities upon arriving to a host country. Furthermore, NGOs speed up the asylum seeking process that includes filling out the CAI and becoming integrated through language and civics courses. Migrants have also been known expelled from French territory by the police as referenced earlier by the OQTF. NGOs are excellent resources to help migrant avoid these undesirable outcomes.

Given the success of these French NGOs, it is important for local and federal governments in other large-immigrant receiving countries to continue supporting or creating NGOs. First, funds should be allocated towards these organizations and management support should be increased. Taxation policies can be revised for possible exemptions, providing incentives for NGOs to generate income and/or to receive funds and aid. Secondly, government officials should open up platforms or committees for NGO staff to communicate their ideas and be considered in the making of government policies that impact refugees and local citizens. NGOs can serve as consultation agencies for the education, housing, and labor sectors and provide significant assessments of communities and the effectiveness of NGO activities. This collaboration can be beneficial in acquiring official support for trainings, funds, and technology equipment as well as finding solutions for pertinent issues, such as, refugee integration and socioeconomic inequalities.

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