



FOCAL

Canadian Foundation for the Americas

Fondation canadienne pour les Amériques

Fundación Canadiense para las Américas

Fundação Canadense para as Américas

Mapping Migration from the Americas

Summary: This project will create an interactive, web-based mapping tool using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to display migration data in order to better understand the relationship between circular migration and economic development. This will allow stakeholders to better inform their decisions, enhance analysis methods and develop new research projects on circular migration.

The Context

Labour flows from Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to Canada are rising for several reasons, including labour shortages, an aging population and heightened growth in numerous occupational sectors in Canada. In 2008, Canada attracted 193,000 temporary foreign employees—representing a significant increase over the past ten years—in both skilled and lesser skilled occupations. While many of these workers come from traditionally important migrant-sending countries such as Mexico and Jamaica, an increased number of workers are coming from Central America (i.e. El Salvador and Guatemala) and South America (i.e. Colombia). For example, the Embassy of El Salvador in Canada is actively working with Canadian employers to recruit Salvadoreans to work in provinces and sectors facing labour shortages. In 2007, Mexico and Canada demonstrated political interest in expanding circular labour flows between the two countries by creating a Labour Mobility Working Group within the Canada-Mexico Partnership (CMP). This group aims to promote labour mobility between both countries in three sectors: hospitality, construction and financial services.

In this context, there is an urgent need to generate informed research and analysis to better understand the nature and changing patterns of temporary foreign worker migration flows to Canada from the LAC region. Furthermore, there is a lack of sufficient and/or readily available information in Canada about the development impacts of labour migration in sending regions. To address this, policymakers, researchers and advocates would benefit from an interactive, web-based analytical mapping tool with data and information about temporary foreign workers in Canada in order to provide critical information and fresh perspectives to inform and provide options for new policy agendas.

The Proposal

FOCAL proposes to create an interactive, publicly accessible, web-based analytical mapping tool using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. This tool will provide new ways for stakeholders to analyze key social, economic and labour market data on temporary foreign workers to Canada from the LAC region. Ultimately, this will facilitate better understanding and examination of the relationship between circular migration and socio-economic development between Canada and the LAC region. GIS is a Canadian-developed mapping tool that combines the collection, organization, management and analysis of geographic data to allow users to compile and visualize intricate concepts and relationships, as well as to monitor changes over time and identify patterns and trends that are obscure or not captured by written documentation. Using this technology will shed light on large migration data sets previously inaccessible to or little understood by researchers, policy makers, civil society and government officials. Stakeholders will be better able to develop research frameworks to guide the development of new policy-relevant empirical research on the impacts of migration and development in Canada and LAC countries.

It is anticipated that these maps will increase the capacity of researchers in the LAC region and Canada to:

- a) Localize and examine temporary migration flows and trends between the LAC region and Canada;
- b) Identify and increase awareness about new and important issues on LAC and Canadian migration agendas;
- c) Deepen the understanding of circular labour flows from the LAC region to Canada and the associated socioeconomic development impacts; and
- d) Provide information that will assist policy makers to identify alternatives for the design of effective migration policies and programmes in LAC and Canada.

In collaboration with Canadian and regional partners, FOCAL would provide small grants to encourage and facilitate research and dissemination activities by civil society, academics and other stakeholders. Project partners would also conduct education seminars and outreach activities to raise awareness and interest in the utility of the maps.

This project proposal builds on FOCAL's successful completion of an innovative GIS mapping project, *Mapping the Media in the Americas*, that is now having an impact on debates about media and democracy in the Americas. The project created interactive maps of media ownership, electoral and socio-demographic information in 11 countries in LAC and Canada, which increased the transparency of the media's role in democratic processes in these countries. These web-based mapping tools are a unique social science and policy research tool that is now being used by academics, civil society and government institutions to conduct research on this fundamental area of democratic development. We invite you to view the project www.mediamap.info to understand how GIS technology leverages data and provides a fresh perspective for researchers.

Partners

Although partial funding for the project has been secured from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), FOCAL is exploring additional funding opportunities as well as contacting additional partners to implement project activities. FOCAL is working with Canadian government departments such as Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), which collect federal data sets on temporary foreign workers residing in Canada. FOCAL also has an established partnership with the Metropolis Project of CIC and El Centro de Investigaciones Sobre América del Norte (CISAN) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Through embassies in Canada, the governments of Mexico, El Salvador and Jamaica have all expressed interest in establishing a working relationship to assist with this project. The Geography Department at the University of Ottawa in Canada will act as the GIS technical partner.

About FOCAL

During the last decade, FOCAL has developed a strong Labour Mobility and Development programme that concentrates on the analysis of the impact of temporary migration on economic development throughout the LAC region. The programme has produced new research which has influenced the development of policy on worker remittances and highlighted their role in enhancing economic growth. We have also devised policy options and recommendations that situate migration within the development agenda including the importance of links with Diaspora groups from LAC. Past and current FOCAL partners include: the International Organization for Migration (Geneva and LAC regional offices), the Centre for Trade Policy and Law (Carleton University), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, the Instituto de Mexicanos en el Exterior, the Institute for the Study of International Migration (Georgetown University), Ryerson University, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the Vice-Ministerio para los Salvadoreños en el Exterior as well as the Jamaica-Canada Diaspora Foundation.

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