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## Creating Opportunities for Temporary Foreign Workers and their Communities: Innovation in Capacity building and Skills Transfer in Latin America

### \* Pilot Project Proposal \*

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**Summary:** This proposal will help Latin American workers who have participated in a temporary foreign worker program in Canada acquire skills and training in order to reinvest in their home communities, by starting a small business, investing in a social enterprise or applying new skills in local labour markets.

### Context

In 2008, Canadian employers recruited 251,000 foreign workers of different skill levels under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and other temporary work categories to work in Canada. Temporary work opportunities in Canada offer needed income and work experience to Latin American workers and provides their family members with remittances to bolster family income. While the benefits of legal labour programs for migrant-sending countries are well documented, little is being done in Latin America to provide skills upgrading to foreign workers or to facilitate the labour reintegration of migrant workers once they return home. In fact, development programs often overlook the enormous potential for migrant workers –as opposed to remittances– to create and advance positive socioeconomic outcomes in their home countries.

### Project Objectives

The objectives of the project are to contribute to skills upgrading, socio-economic growth and skills transfer in Latin America through educational and capacity building activities for migrant workers. The project also seeks to invest in human capital, to increase transnational connectivity and to increase awareness of the valuable contributions that temporary foreign workers make in Canada.

### The Proposal

The project is based on a participatory, needs-based approach, with marginalized populations and gender featuring as cross-cutting themes. **The project is comprised of four main components:**

**I. Pre-departure orientation workshops** will be designed and implemented for migrant workers in Latin American countries, in collaboration with local non-profit groups. These workshops will inform Latino workers of learning opportunities available to them in Canada as well as upon return to home communities, and will develop an electronic profile highlighting their training plans and objectives during the project.

**II. Educational courses, training or work-related skills upgrading** will be undertaken in Canada by migrant workers. Learning opportunities, such as courses on financial literacy and savings or English as a Second Language, will be facilitated in-person by qualified non-profit partners and teachers or will be available to migrant workers online.

**III. Additional capacity building and skills transfer activities**, such as referral to relevant job opportunities, domestic training programs or access to credit for microcredit/SME initiatives will be facilitated for migrants and their families by local non-profit partners in home communities.

**IV. Short technical visits of Canadian volunteers** will be arranged to the Latin American sending communities, where appropriate and relevant expertise can be shared to help migrant workers launch micro-credit and small business initiatives.

Project results will be monitored and disseminated using innovative media tools and resources, including an **Online E-platform** that can be accessed by migrant workers, stakeholders and the wider public. Workshops for marginalized populations on how to utilize these media tools form an integral part of the project.

### **Anticipated Results**

- Increased skill levels among migrant workers and their family members (sector-specific labour skills and life skills)
- Increase in sustainable development initiatives such as micro-credit enterprises in participating Latin American migrant-sending communities

### **Beneficiaries**

Migrant workers and their families from Latin American countries are the primary beneficiaries. Employers of migrant workers, government agencies and communities of origin and destination will also benefit through better informed and trained workers, better migration planning and enhanced development outcomes in Latin America.

### **Project Partners**

**The Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL)** is an independent, non-partisan think tank dedicated to strengthening Canadian relations with Latin America and the Caribbean through policy dialogue, research and building partnerships. We coordinate and administer diverse projects, including one on labour mobility and development, as well as work in partnership with organizations and government bodies throughout the region.

**World University Service of Canada (WUSC)** is a registered charitable organization in Canada whose mission is to foster human development and global understanding through education and training. WUSC manages volunteer-sending programs and refugee scholarship programs around the world.

**Accion International** is a private, nonprofit organization with the mission of giving people the financial tools they need to work their way out of poverty, including micro loans, business training and other financial services to poor men and women, including migrant groups.

**Connexion Internationale (CI)** is a consulting group that provides innovative solutions, counter-intuitive thinking and groundbreaking solutions services for various sectors of the economy.

A number of additional organizations have expressed interest in the implementation stages of the project once it is underway.

### **Funding**

Project partners are seeking funding sources in order to launch a pilot project.

If you are interested in financing a component of this project or would like to learn more, please write to Barbara MacLaren, Project Manager at FOCAL 613-562-0005 ext. 230 (bmaclaren@focal.ca).