



### Labour Migration and Development Special Edition

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#### Special Edition on Labour Migration And Development

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## Foreword: Labour Migration and Development

*Olga Abizaid*

Within the larger discussion on the nexus between migration and development, labour migration provides a good opportunity to illustrate several points. First, the link between technological and economic transformations and the phenomenon of migration—which is at the core of the South-North flows of people. Second, the identification of some of the issues to take into account in the evaluation of the potential impacts of migration on the well-being of both sending and receiving communities. And third, the opportunities to maximize the positive effects of migration.

Indeed, trade liberalization and technological advances have led not only to increased cross-border flows of goods and services and to the establishment of international production chains; they have also spurred international demand for workers—from experts in nanotechnology to agricultural and service workers. Pushed by declining wages and insufficient work opportunities in their home countries— migrant workers are important for both their countries of origin and their host communities. In the latter, migrants contribute to the economy by consuming domestic products, paying taxes, replacing a retiring work force in aging populations and through their payments to the social security system. In the former, either through remittances or through active participation, migrant workers contribute to poverty alleviation, the development of public infrastructure and production ventures. In some cases they have also helped to resolve conflicts in their communities of origin and to provoke social changes.

Migration can also have negative impacts that need to be factored in. For instance, is the loss of people positive or negative for a country's society and economy in light of public investments in education? What impacts does the outflow of people have on key strategic sectors? Do remittances compensate for the loss of these people at the national level? What are the social implications of migration for sending communities? How to reduce the vulnerability of migrant workers? Can migration become a problem of security?

It is widely recognized now that, despite their relevance, the discussion about opportunities for development coming from migration cannot be limited exclusively to remittances. There are other issues that need to be taken into consideration, including an evaluation of the impacts of labour migration for sending countries; the existing facilities to foster the return or circulation of workers (and/or their skills); the rules that enable—or hamper— migrant workers entry into destination countries and their incorporation into the labour market in their field of expertise. Those who return home

from working abroad could also bring back new experiences, values and expectations that could have significant impacts on their communities of origin. Therefore, the discussion on integration of the migrant into the host country, on their rights and more extensively about citizenship rights, needs to be included in the balance as well.

This special edition of *FOCAL POINT* gathers an excellent collection of articles by experts in the field from Latin America and Canada that provide insights about the complex relationship between labour migration and development. In these articles are discussions on many of all the above-mentioned issues; each one posing important questions with policy implications; each one referring to the linkages that migration is creating between sending and receiving countries and the potential for government-to-government cooperation—be it in the context of multilateral organizations or in a bilateral basis. While migration policies are a national prerogative and currently seem to be too concerned about security and the strengthening of border controls, these debates are essential to approach the visions of both sending and receiving countries and could allow for greater coordination between the design of migration and development policies. In the longer-term they could lead to policy coordination among countries.

One cannot forget, however, the main actor in this phenomenon: migrants. The last two pieces of the edition deflect attention from the governments and put the spotlight on migrants and their communities themselves in the discussion on development options. Empowerment of migrant organizations and/or their communities remains essential for a meaningful discussion on development and to achieving sustainable results. ■

### Submission Guidelines for *FOCAL POINT*

Articles should be accessible and of interests to academics, policymakers and students alike.

**Style:** journalistic, analytical. Descriptive articles or summaries are not accepted.

The editorial board will edit the article for format and language and may request changes for clarity and analytical value.

**Length:** 700 – 900 words.

All contributions are on a volunteer basis.

**Please send articles to [clavoie@focal.ca](mailto:clavoie@focal.ca)**

## Latin America and the Caribbean: Skilled Migration, Alternatives, and Old and New Questions

*Jorge Martínez Pizarro and Corina Courtis*

Skilled migration and debates concerning its consequences have been present in Latin America and the Caribbean since at least the 1960s. The main concern has been South-North migration, especially to the United States, and the various losses these flows have generally been assumed to produce. Despite some economic arguments contending that this movement created positive effects for all involved because it entailed the re-allocation of resources, academics, politicians and international organizations interested in social and economic development issues have identified brain drain as a major problem.

What has changed in terms of the debates and concerns since then? The debate has re-emerged—though defined in different terms—following the adjustments imposed by the international economic context and the difficulties experienced by Latin American economies and societies during the 1990s. This is reflected in the idea that skilled labour mobility would not necessarily imply a loss, but rather allow for various options, including the circulation and eventual return of professionals, as well as the connection between the home countries and their scientific diasporas. Although there seems to be evidence supporting these views—which would encourage an optimistic perspective—it is important to bear in mind that we are still far from understanding the complexity of the phenomenon, given the lack of available knowledge about the particularities of the countries in the region. Of increasing relevance is the design of active policies that, based on the premise that it is neither possible nor convenient to eradicate migration in a very asymmetric world, are designed to operate within a framework of clear guidelines for their circulation, linkage and return of migrants, without risking a country's development, and respecting an individual's right to choose where to reside and work.

## Some Considerations on the Concept of Skilled Migration

Despite the popularity of the concept of skilled labour, it is still necessary to discuss its meaning. Is it not true that every worker has the skills to survive in and support prosperity of the country of destination? Who are the most skilled workers in the current age of globalization? Moreover, the so-called non-skilled migrants have themselves begun to contest the category of skilled labour. In some occupations, such as domestic labour—an area where most of the migrant women in the active labour force participate—the concept of being non-skilled clashes with various women's movements seeking state recognition of the abilities required in domestic work and its value as work. With respect to the difficulties in gathering data on international migration, many studies distinguish individuals who are highly schooled or workers holding highly-skilled jobs, but the data in the two categories do not necessarily match due, among other things, to the fact that not all highly-educated individuals obtain jobs in their fields, a phenomenon evident among immigrants from the South. The occupation criterion has been the most widely used among researchers in the region and has allowed for the detection of a variety of professionals and technicians (PT) in migration flows, including scientists and engineers, as well as technicians with different specialties. By examining these data it was possible to determine that the emigration of a few scientists, even on a small scale, could threaten the existence of certain strategic fields, such as in physics and the “hard sciences.” This conclusion has led us to pay closer attention to the quality of human resources.

However, the category of “skilled migrant” need not be restricted to a traditional concept of human capital. There are valid reasons to argue that those who do not fit such criteria are still sufficiently skilled for the reproduction of social relations and, in consequence, their movement is essential to the current globalization process.

### What is the Magnitude of Skilled Migration?

Returning to the traditional view, this is the most common question and one that has relevance in policy-making. Considering Latin American migration within the Americas, data from the Latin American and Caribbean Demographic Center (CELADE) points to a sharp increase in the number of professionals and technicians from a figure of only approximately 300,000 in 1990 to one million people in 2000. The percentage of PT abroad—3% for the whole region—offers a good idea of the quantitative impact of this migration. There are countries whose emigrants in these fields represent between 5 and 10% of the total amount, with the highest percentages being found in the cases of Panama (9.5%), Paraguay (8.8%) and El Salvador (6.1%).



## What are the Consequences of Skilled Migration for Developing Countries?

Based on the concept of a global market of talents or skilled human resources, it has been argued in recent years that one way of dealing with the negative consequences of high skilled emigration is stimulating the return of migrants, especially by establishing links between them and their home countries, supporting the creation of scientific networks associated with the diasporas. These measures seem promising and are increasingly at the centre of the agenda on migration, although discussions remain at an embryonic stage.

It is clear that consensus has not been achieved, given the need to distinguish permanent from transitory migrants, and the difficulty in determining if a migrant's qualifications were acquired in his/her home country or in the country of destination and as a result of his/her own migration project. In regard to the first consideration, available records show that a greater number of people from Latin America and the Caribbean migrate permanently compared to those who do so on a temporary basis (A. Pellegrino. *¿Drenaje o éxodo?: Reflexiones sobre la migración calificada*. Montevideo, Universidad de la República de Uruguay, Documento del Rectorado, 12, 2001). As for the second concern, some researchers emphasize that in the United States almost three quarters of foreign doctoral students remain in the country, a proportion that at the beginning of the 1970s was around half (F. Lema. “Sociedad del conocimiento: ¿desarrollo o dependencia?,” *Raíces, Espacio de Reflexión*, 2001).

It is evident that the rigorous evaluation of the consequences of skilled migration has always been a difficult task, and a source of controversy. Such is the case with attempts to quantify the human capital that is transferred when skilled labour emigrates and to establish a tax system to compensate developing countries as part of an international accounts balance. In this direction, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (Santiago de Chile, 1972) adopted the term “reverse technology transfer.”

The consequences of migration most commonly highlighted are brain drain, an increase in

economic inequality, the erosion of critical knowledge and the potentially regressive effects on income distribution. There is a growing consensus that without initiatives to establish links with emigrants, negative consequences will undeniably persist for the countries of origin, given the growing demand for skilled foreign workers in developed countries, either within the framework provided by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which emphasizes on the temporary movement of skilled people, or through recruitment policies offering favourable labour conditions impossible to match in the countries of the region.

In our view, an analysis of the consequences of skilled migration should not be dissociated from the study of migration in general. It is necessary to re-evaluate the usefulness of the concept as it has been applied so far, and to treat all workers as qualified to compete in a profoundly asymmetrical world. ■

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## Temporary Migration as a Way of Life: Improving Market Access for Developing Country Workers

*Laura Dawson*

The US development thinker David Ellerman has argued that “there is nothing more permanent than temporary migration” (“The Dynamics of Migration of the Highly Skilled: A Survey of the Literature,” in *Diaspora Networks and the International Migration of Skills: How Countries Can Draw on Their Talent Abroad*, edited by Y. Kuznetsov. Washington D.C., World Bank Institute, 2006). Although the legal terms of the work period abroad may be classified as temporary, the developing country worker may find him or herself in cycles of temporary contracts abroad that stretch over decades. If economic migration from developing to developed countries (*a.k.a.* south-north migration) is indeed a fact of life within an increasingly globalized economy, how can it be managed to reduce brain drain and social dislocation in developing countries and perhaps even contribute positively to development?

The term ‘managed’ temporary migration is applied euphemistically to a fragmented collection of policies that tend to be dominated by permanent migration rules and security qualms. At best, they are inefficient at matching labour market supply with demand and, at worst, xenophobic. Compared to the United States, there are not significant levels of temporary migration from Latin America to Canada because of barriers imposed by language and distance (although the rates are proportionately higher for Caribbean emigrants to Canada). Despite the limits of managed migration, Canada does provide some effective models for managing temporary migration which might

serve the United States during what appears to be a nascent period of immigration policy reform.

From the sending country’s perspective the issue of out-migration has evolved over the past half century in three distinct eras. The first perspective was emigration as a temporary safety valve to alleviate temporary economic crises or domestic unemployment. The second characterized emigration of skilled workers as brain drain where wealthy countries systemically culled the best and brightest from the developing world. Today, the discourse surrounding south-north migration ranges from resignation—that a certain amount of emigration is inevitable as long as a wage differential exists—to optimism that emigration can serve as a driver of development through remittance flows and access to diaspora communities that serve as a conduit for external capital, markets, and expertise.

Whether one grudgingly accepts south-north migration or embraces it, the national and international policy frameworks regulating the temporary movement of workers have gaps in important areas. Emigrating workers are looking to host countries for transparent rules for immigration or temporary entry procedures, recognition of training and professional status, and basic protections against exploitation and abuse.

Of the three areas of intervention, regulating access to foreign labour markets should be the most straightforward because the rules are (mostly) made and administered by only one level of government. There are usually two paths for entering a new country—through a permanent migration scheme or a temporary one. Permanent migration to most Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states is difficult and time consuming. Easier access tends to be gained through bilateral guest worker programs which involve some form of limited scope memoranda of understanding between countries and their workers/employers. Most Canadians are familiar with the programs for temporary agricultural workers. Less well known are Canada’s temporary programs for higher-skilled workers in such sectors as information technology, health care and construction, which follow many of the same operating principles established for the agricultural

sector. These bilateral arrangements fall closer to the definition of 'managed' migration than open-ended programs such as the US H1-B visa for highly-skilled temporary workers in which computer programmers from India compete against engineers from South Africa for a limited number of spaces allocated through an annual quota system. What makes Canada's temporary labour programs unique is that they provide employers with a balance of rights and obligations that facilitate easier access to global workers. While the details of these rights and obligations could use improvement at both ends, the idea of admitting high-demand workers as a group rather than on a case-by-case basis is an important innovation in labour market liberalization.

Regional and multilateral trade agreements also offer the possibility of facilitating temporary access to foreign labour markets but the gains from these agreements have not been widely realized. The multilateral General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) allows for the possibility of temporary movement of natural persons through Mode 4 service provision.\* However, there are a number of obstacles preventing the effective use of GATS to regulate economic migration. First, few countries have made commitments in Mode 4 and those that do exist are subject to various types of restrictions that the World Trade Organization (WTO) is slowly trying to reduce. Second, the agreement is constructed to facilitate the movement of intra-company transferees or service providers employed in their own country at jobs which require the delivery of services abroad. Thus, service providers seeking employment abroad are not covered by the GATS as it currently stands. Finally, even if the GATS does open up market access, service providers can still be blocked by national certification and credential recognition barriers in the destination country. This is also the case with temporary movement provisions in regional agreements like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), although these smaller agreements may be accompanied by promises to remove other barriers to market access. However, success should be judged by results not intentions. Since the implementation of the NAFTA, for example, only three professions—architects, accountants and engineers—have concluded national mutual recognition agreements and some of these have not been accepted by sub-national regulatory bodies.

Poorer countries and lower-skilled workers tend to have much lower prospects for participating and benefiting from existing free movement regimes. However, this may be where the WTO can provide leadership to reduce barriers to movement because of its international reach, its negotiating infrastructure, and its stated commitments to development. In order to be effective, however, the organization will have to expand its traditional operating horizons beyond market access to examine issues of equitable treatment for workers in destination countries—what might be considered an extension of the WTO operating principles of transparency and non-discrimination to labour market and immigration regulations. Smaller scale trade agreements in the Americas could also provide a testing ground for new forms of cooperation and commitment—as was the case in the evolution of agreements in investment, dispute resolution and other modes of services trade.

However, the current trade rules on services and on labour are not sufficient for tackling the issue. Without will and action by receiving states, the development of synergies of south-north migration cannot be realized. ■

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\*The General Agreement on Trade in Services is structured according to four modes of services supply. Mode 4 refers to a service provider (natural person) who moves across a border to the territory of the service consumer. Currently, Mode 4 accounts for only about 1% of services trade and this amount is almost entirely derived from highly skilled personnel as intra-company transferees.

## Op-Ed International Migration and Human Development in El Salvador: A Contradictory Relationship

*William Pleitez*

If the concept of human development suggests that a country's primary wealth is in its people, international migration, which deprives a country of its main source of wealth, taking it far away, could be seen as the antithesis to human development or as haemorrhage of human capital. Migration, in fact, is largely the result of insecurity and scarcity of employment and opportunities in the countries of origin, leading a significant part of the economically active population to seek better fortune in wealthier countries. As a result, families become divided and communities disintegrate in order to send their most advantaged members to pursue their fate in an alleged promised land.

In the case of El Salvador, there is evidence that international migration is causing a brain drain large enough to seriously impact the nation's business development and economic growth. A World Bank study examining the implications of

brain drain in labour-exporting countries concluded that in El Salvador 39.5% of people with post-secondary education emigrated (*International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain*, World Bank, 2006).

Is it not perhaps a signal of a failure of human development when young and entrepreneurial people, who should have formed the foundation of the next productive generation, continue to emigrate despite the enormous risks of being subject to theft, assault and even loss of life? And when emigrants are uprooted and forced to pursue unknown destinies in search of work and income, does this not constitute a return to classic economic development, where money is everything and people do not matter? From all this, it could indeed be concluded that migration and human development are conflicting notions.

Nevertheless, migration can also be seen as a resource of the underprivileged, who have decided to run these risks to find a more direct way to achieve their human development. Families and communities that have participated have found opportunities that were lacking in their places of origin. Through hard work and sacrifice many migrants have become sufficiently prosperous and send aid to their families, as well as to others who remain in precarious circumstances, contributing to reduced poverty rates and improved human development indexes.

In this regard, migration has facilitated self-generated solutions to problems of poverty and insufficient human development. Not willing to wait for official programs, migrants have managed to advance their own development and that of their families by investing in social and human capital: their own inventiveness, sacrifice and hard work, with the support of social networks. Their children still residing in El Salvador reach higher educational levels, live in better houses and, if their expectations are not sufficiently met within the country, they can always opt to follow the path taken by their parents. As for those children of migrants born abroad, they tend to be bilingual, better educated and possibly hold dual citizenship. They enjoy better health services, educational opportunities and income than they would have if their parents had not emigrated. Will their family and community not enjoy a noticeably higher level of human development than if the individual had not emigrated? In Salvadorian communities with lower incidence of emigration, poverty tends to be higher.

Why should human development wait for official programs if, on their own initiative, people have made progress in this regard? How can one deny that migration—which provides more opportunities for and a better use of a country's primary resource—also facilitates the human development of those who leave as well as those who remain?

For El Salvador, migration and remittances also constitute the nation's principal means of participating in globalization. Migrants comprise over 20% of the Salvadorian population and send remittances to 24% of households in their country of origin. Remittances are equal to 18% of the gross domestic product (GDP), twice the amount spent on health and education and nearly 7 times the value of direct foreign investment, as well as exceeding the value of

total exports and tax revenue by 40%. To that, one should add that Salvadorian migrants receive revenues over 40% higher than the country's GDP, with a per capita income 6 times greater and already register at a high (0.851) index of human development.

While the Report on Human Development: El Salvador 2005 (IDHES 2005) looks at migration as an opportunity for human development—despite its costs and without paying great heed to the responsibilities that ought to have been assumed by the country and its governments—its purpose is to illustrate the example set by hundreds of thousands of Salvadorian adventurers who have given rise to this transformation from below. Indeed, the images of these courageous men and women underscores the need, as said by the Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, "Father of Migrants," to "defend people's right to emigrate, not their need to do so." ■

William Pleitez is the Coordinator of the Report on Human Development in El Salvador, which may be viewed at: [www.desarrollohumano.org.sv/migraciones](http://www.desarrollohumano.org.sv/migraciones).

## Op-Ed Ecuador-Spain Co- Development: Illusion or Reality?\*

*Richard Salazar*

According to the most conservative figure, there are now approximately 700,000 Ecuadorians in Spain—more than a million, according to other sources—competing with Moroccans to form the largest immigrant community. This group, instead of being a burden on the State, has become a pillar of Spain's progress. Ecuadorian immigrants primarily work in agriculture, domestic service, elderly care, tourism and construction; jobs Spaniards generally do not want for themselves, but which nevertheless are essential.

On the other hand, the Spanish population has been aging in recent decades: most Ecuadorian immigrants are between 20 and 40 years old, with

a higher average number of children than Spaniards. According to some Spanish demographic studies, this phenomenon has produced a balance in the population pyramid. Ecuadorians also contribute extensively to the Spanish social security system: the 331,351 Ecuadorians with regular migratory status contribute over 40 million Euros monthly (almost US\$50 million); and as they constitute a young working population, they do not pose a burden for social security. This also demonstrates that Spanish seniors (16.8% of the population) are receiving their pensions thanks in large part to immigrants' contribution to the economy. The field of eldercare consequently takes on even greater importance, as this is an area in which Ecuadorians have practically specialized.

Furthermore, there are 700,000 people consuming the products of local industry, invigorating Spain's market and economy. It is thus easy to see that if Ecuadorian immigrants left Spain, the economy would be seriously and unavoidably affected. One can then conclude that Ecuador is currently making a huge contribution to Spain's development.

But the economic significance of Ecuadorians in Spain goes both ways. In 2006, 44% of Ecuador's remittances (approximately US\$1.3 billion) came from Spain. This amount represents an enormous contribution to Ecuador's small economy, especially given that remittances constitute the second largest source of revenue after oil exports. Remittances then have also invigorated the Ecuadorian market, increasing the purchasing power of migrants' relatives. Moreover, remittances have strengthened certain sectors that were vulnerable a decade ago, such as the construction industry. In fact, migrants' primary investment in their country is in housing.

All of this demonstrates that migration represents great support and opportunity for both Ecuador and Spain. Therefore, why not explore options for joint development, extending beyond the economy? Opportunities abound to do so, and aside from politics, there is no reason not to take advantage of them. Migration could then stop representing a source of conflict to serve instead as a linkage between countries that are in fact already connected by migration flows.

Spain could not only implement cooperation projects (with a total annual sum of US\$40 million in 2006, a figure that is paradoxically lower than the taxes Ecuadorians pay in Spain in just one month), but also promote entrepreneurial investment in Ecuador, generating employment and possibilities for growth in promising sectors of the economy, such as responsible tourism.

The Ecuadorian government, for its part, could create favourable conditions for those who decide to return to the country, offering them the opportunity to productively invest their savings, with ad hoc financial instruments and the means to repatriate their assets. In this way Ecuadorian migrants could contribute effectively to the economy, generating production and labour, but also contributing new ideas and intercultural experience to their home country, increasing their personal prosperity and promoting changes in terms of citizenship rights. Ecuadorians who live in the countries of the North

experience having these rights for the very first time, bringing about a change in attitude and consequently having a positive impact on the exercise of citizenship and democracy in Ecuador.

In a joint fashion, both countries could increase trade relations by promoting trade agreements, which could serve to reactivate their economies more aggressively, to commercialize in Spain and other interested countries products from development projects implemented in Ecuador, and to sell in Ecuador Spanish products of local interest. Furthermore, financial products could be established between both countries with the participation of the diversity of actors associated with the migration process and remittances, including migrants, their relatives and associations, national and local governments, banks, and businesses, among others. Binational trust companies could be established, offering migrants secure investment of remittances and attractive returns, as well as additional benefits such as loans for productive investments. Profitable transnational financial portfolios could also be established, with diversified risk. In these times of globalization, there must be equal opportunities to improve progress and well-being.

Additionally, better agreements on migration flows are needed, not to promote migration but to provide a realistic and agreed-upon framework, allowing labour (the supply of which far exceeds the demand in Ecuador) to move to where it is needed and valued. Within these migration flows, it is necessary to foster the mobility of entire families and promote family reunification. Reducing the need for migration should be based on aggressive programs of local development, offering opportunities to workers in their own country, thus eliminating the need to choose between corruption and migration as the only options for survival.

All these initiatives would allow as well for a dynamic cultural and scientific exchange. This exchange would create a more human vision of its counterpart in each country as the other's culture, values and knowledge could enrich the own socio-cultural mosaic. Art and research are particularly important in this respect, as they would benefit not only the two countries. Validation of university credentials becomes crucial as it would allow

immigrants to compete in their field, and also offer the receiving country an opportunity to take full advantage of its new citizens' skills.

To support all of these goals the creation of joint social security systems, guaranteeing migrant workers and their families the exercise of their rights in both countries, is critical. There is an old agreement between Ecuador and Spain that has not been implemented. It must be updated, making it possible to recognize the parity of procedures in both countries.

As we can see, there are many possibilities, but there is a need for political will to reformulate development and migration policies, and the relationship between these, as well as cooperation policies, taking into account in this latter area not only the North-South financial flows, but also the South-North cooperation through human flows.

Only then, can we start talking about joint development; a co-development seeking not only the voluntary return of migrants, so they can work on North-driven development agendas or undertake focused projects. The idea of an agreed-upon co-development is not irrational in this era of globalization and would, perhaps, allow for a more equal development for all. ■

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\*\*The concept of co-development used in this article is based on the notion that two or more countries, already entwined by migration flows, can obtain mutual benefits in terms of development. Based on horizontal relations, co-development encompasses the possibility to establish agreements on trade, migration, social security and services. Although the State should be its main actor and promoter, co-development requires a multi-stakeholder approach, including, but not restrained to, the State, civil society, banking system, migrant associations, business people and migrants who could become entrepreneurs.

We use the "World's North" category to refer to the wealthiest countries, and "World's South" for those considered the poorest nations. Although in both North America and Western Europe this category coincides with the northern geographical location on a map, this is not the case in Eastern Europe and much of the Middle East and Asia. As well, Australia would be considered to belong to the North despite its location in the Southern Hemisphere.



## Foreign Workers in Canadian Agriculture: Not an All-Male Cast

*Kerry Preibisch*

The Canadian federal government granted approximately 99,000 work permits to foreign workers in 2005. At least 20,000 of those workers were employed in agriculture. The number of foreign workers is expected to rise considerably under the Stephen Harper government, which has been making it easier for employers to hire workers from abroad.

Some 3% of the foreign workers employed in agriculture are women. This relatively small representation has contributed to women's marginalization in academic research and policy discussions. However, this lack of interest is unwarranted —gender plays a key role in implementing foreign worker programs in high-income countries, as well as in the every day experiences of migrant workers and their families. This article illustrates some of the ways in which gender shapes and organizes temporary migration to Canadian agriculture, including the implications for women migrants participating in a highly masculinized environment.

### Foreign Workers in Canada's Agricultural Sector

Canada has three labour mobility programs that grant temporary visas for employment in agriculture. The longest-standing, best-known programs are the Commonwealth Caribbean Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which began in 1966, and the Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, which began in 1974. Because these two programs are highly similar, I refer to them here as the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). The federal government established a third program in 2003 to move foreign workers into diverse sectors of the economy, including agriculture, referred to here as the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) —also known as the National Occupational Classification C and D Pilot Program or the Low Skill Workers Program.

The SAWP is the principal program moving foreign workers into agriculture. It operates under bilateral administrative agreements between the governments of Canada and labour source countries: Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, members of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States and Mexico. Every year, government representatives of these countries meet with Canadian officials and employers to discuss and negotiate aspects of the program such as wage levels. By contrast, the TFWP does not have the same government involvement and allows employers to hire workers from any country they wish. To date, Canadian growers have hired Guatemalans, Jamaicans, and Thais.

Migrant agricultural workers are issued work permits that are valid only with a single employer. This is one of the principal differences distinguishing them from other workers in the labour market. Although the government refers to the TFWP and SAWP as “labour mobility programs,” it is precisely the lack of labour mobility that puts these workers in a vulnerable position. Unlike other workers, they cannot move to more attractive work sites and leaving their jobs—or being fired—almost always means deportation. As citizens of countries in which poverty and unemployment remain pervasive, most foreign farm workers are careful to protect their migratory livelihoods by acceding to employer demands, even when tired or injured. Scholars have noted that foreign workers are not so much a cheap form of labour as a reliable one, gladly taking up jobs with tasks and hours seen as undesirable to Canadians with other employment options. Although the issues described here are shared by other “low skill” migrant workers, the challenges facing foreign farm workers are potentially greater. In Canada, farm work is considered among the most dangerous occupations in terms of work-related injury yet, paradoxically, in many provinces workers in agriculture do not enjoy the same labour protections as those employed in other sectors (*e.g.* in the province of Ontario, farm workers do not have the right to collectively bargain).

### Gender and Race in Foreign Worker Programs

Employers of foreign workers can choose both the country that will supply them with labour and the gender of their workers. They can also access workers under different programs. For example, strawberry farms in Quebec hire Mexican women under the SAWP and Guatemalan women under the TFWP. These two categories—country of origin and gender—play pivotal roles in implementing foreign worker programs, giving employers additional power over both their workers and the labour-sending countries. The ability to choose the origin country, for example, means that labour-sending countries (and workers themselves) compete for work placements in Canada. Employers play countries against one another in order to achieve the flexibility demanded by a competitive global marketplace. Adding gender to the mix, employers’ ability to choose workers on this basis means they can divide their labour force by hiring, for example, Anglo-Caribbean men and Spanish-speaking women. This strategy of employing men and women who do not share the same language is an attempt to curtail socializing (on and off the job) in order to keep workers focused on productivity. Researchers have also found that women’s scant representation has been used by employers

and/or supervisors to threaten women that they can easily be replaced with men when they question their working or living conditions.

Most migrants come to Canada as part of a strategy to provide for their families, particularly their children. But while the majority of the migrant men are married or in common-law relationships, most women are single household heads (a result of gender norms in the sending countries discouraging married women from migrating independently of their husbands and recruitment policies favouring single mothers). Women’s status as single mothers marks their experiences in a number of ways. For example, they often suffer greater anxiety leaving their children. While men come to Canada knowing their children are being cared for by a parent, women must rely on kin, neighbours, or even older children during their migratory absences. Their stress is compounded by the fact that while migration for men involves fulfilling their primary gender role of breadwinner, for women it means abandoning theirs—motherhood—at least as it has been defined traditionally.

As single mothers, women are often stigmatized as sexually available within the migrant community. Single mothers or not, all migrant women receive inordinate amounts of male attention, including sexual harassment, mainly by male workers but also by supervisors and employers. In 2005 the ratio of women to men in Ontario, the province hiring 80% of foreign agricultural workers, was 1:44. Sexual harassment is not uncommon in the agriculture sector: a 1998 study of Canadian female farm workers in one region of British Columbia found that 37% had experienced sexual assault or violence in the workplace (<http://www.agf.gov.bc.ca/treefrt/newslett/feb00newslet.pdf>).

Migrant agricultural workers, both men and women, face systemic barriers to adequate health care. Although they are entitled to health insurance either through public or private provision (depending on the province and program), they experience significant challenges accessing the health care system. Farm work continues to be among the most dangerous occupations and migrants are particularly vulnerable because they

work longer hours than their Canadian counterparts. They also work when they are sick or injured because they fear reporting their condition might result in losing hours or, worse, their repatriation. Despite migrant workers' increased risks, their access to medical attention is hindered by language barriers, restricted mobility, and limited hours of health care facilities in rural areas. Women are more likely to face restrictions on their mobility such as curfews or prohibitions on leaving the property and/or receiving visitors imposed by employers and/or labour-sending countries seeking to control foreign workers' social activity, including their sexuality. Women's gender-specific health care needs thus often go unaddressed during their migratory periods in Canada.

### Conclusion

Although women account for a fraction of migrant farm workers, gender plays a role in the way foreign worker programs operate and marks the everyday experiences of the migrants coming to Canada each year. The few points addressed here emphasize why gender—and women—must be a part of discussions on foreign worker programs in agriculture despite an almost all-male crew. Further research in this area is clearly warranted, including the supporting roles played by women and others in labour-sending countries, the gender dimensions of the new TFWP, and the role of gender on the “shop-floor.” More importantly, policy discussions on the welfare and rights of migrant workers must consider women's issues, such as their gender-specific health needs and making agricultural workplaces safe for women. ■

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## Op-Ed Beyond Remittances and Migration Reform: The Potential Role of Migrant-Led Organizations in the New Scenarios of Economic Development and Regional Integration in Central America

*Katharine Andrade-Eekhoff*

As world-wide attention is brought upon the contradictory policies concerning international migration, migrant-led organizations are also deeply involved in making their voices heard. One innovative example of this is the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC), a network of approximately 75 community-based organizations led by Latin American and Caribbean immigrants in the United States. NALACC member organizations are working to improve the quality of life in their communities, both in the United States and in countries of origin. They are building the capacity for transnational leadership and increasing immigrant civic participation, so that immigrants can advocate effectively for public policies that address the root causes of migration, as well as addressing the challenges faced by immigrants in the United States. To date, this latter work has focused on efforts to reform US immigration policies to make them more humane and effective. But even the most progressive immigration reform will leave untouched the root causes of much international migration. Key to these underlying issues are the manner in which opportunities are created, or limited, in local economies, and the issues around regional integration and free trade in the Americas.

While many of the Central American migrant-led organizations have vast experience in policy work and lobbying in the US regarding immigration reform, the arena of issues and actors related to free trade, economic integration and local development are relatively less known and understood. Thus, NALACC will be carrying out a series of experiential educational delegations in



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order to identify the issues and actors related to each of those three themes, starting in Central America. The goals of these delegations are two fold. On the one hand, this process seeks to assist its member organizations better understand the new scenarios of the global economy in order to collaborate with Central American organizations in the region in their efforts to promote community development. And on the other, the process will facilitate and promote policy actions that members can undertake to cultivate these community development processes through advocacy initiatives directed towards the governments of Central America, Canada, the United States and the European Union, as well as multilateral agencies.

These delegation will focus on experiences and discussions with organizations that are involved in rebuilding the activities of small farmers and the agrarian sector, small business development in “new” areas of the global economy (tourism and non-traditional agricultural exports, for example), and regional production chains linked to community economic solidarity in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador.\*\*\* Experiences will highlight exemplary roles involving local government, non governmental organizations, and micro-finance institutions as key actors in local development. With the recently signed Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement and the current discussions concerning the European Union-Central American Association Accord, new opportunities as well as challenges face local economies in terms of regional integration, economic development, labour rights and environmental issues. Understanding the issues and actors will be key to forging new alliances with networks in Central America as well as identifying policies around which to engage in campaigns that seek to promote viable livelihood alternatives.

What NALACC is proposing to do moves the migration/development debate to another playing field with different actors. It is far removed from the traditional emphasis on leveraging remittances or working with hometown associations to build infrastructure or sponsor scholarship programs. It means, instead, that visits to the Inter American Development Bank (IADB) by migrant leaders would not be to discuss matching funds programs for productive investment schemes, but rather how the loans and donations made by the IADB impact opportunities for local producers in home countries. It means that their US congressional visits would involve discussions with those committees responsible for the trade and farm bills, and ensuring fair labour conditions in both sending and receiving countries. And it means meeting with Salvadoran, Honduran and Guatemalan Ambassadors regarding the negotiations, reforms and regulations concerning free trade, fair trade and regional integration. NALACC's proposal is a radical shift in viewing the potential of migrant-led organizations. It essentially sees them as key actors not only linked to the debates concerning migration reform and the billions of dollars migrants send home to their families and communities, but rather it proposes to move migrants into fora that underlie the root causes of international labour migration. It is a formidable challenge but one that these groups are taking on head first. ■

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\*\*\* Community economic solidarity seeks to prioritize support and alliances with groups of small producers or business people based on the principles of economic, social and environmental sustainability, ensuring just working conditions and wages, and prioritizing the needs of local populations over international markets.

## Op-Ed The 3x1 Program in Mexico: Achievements and Challenges

*Rodolfo García Zamora*

The 3x1 Program, an initiative using collective remittances to fund infrastructure projects in the hometown communities of Mexican migrants, has been an extraordinary experience of transnational solidarity among Mexican migrant associations and those communities. In addition to other contributions, it has fostered collaboration between the transnational citizenry and the three levels of government in Mexico —federal, state and municipal— to the benefit of the population living in areas with high international emigration rates, while producing a transnational process of social learning that enables advances toward a new type of production community projects based on new public policies to promote local and regional development.

The key to the 3x1 Program has been the emotional bond between migrants and their hometown communities, which has led them to participate in and contribute to the well-being of the local population, and influence new guidelines for social policy at the national level, despite the economic, social and political differences that exist among them. The fact that donations are voluntary and there is no discrimination in the appropriation of community efforts accounts for the sustained growth of the program. Its success, nevertheless, cannot easily be transferred to other areas.

Attempting to expand the 3x1 Program to encourage investments in production, as the Mexican government has sought to do since 2005, entails risks, as profit-making is the attitude that prevails in those projects, radically transforming the rules of the game. In this case, migrant investors (individuals or partnerships) commit their savings to obtain a benefit; they assume the market risks intrinsic to any entrepreneurial investment, constantly supervising the use of their resources and demanding accountability.

Due to the difficult character of the transition from solidarity to production projects, my opinion is that the 3x1 Program would be better utilized only for the social projects for which it was originally created. For production projects at both the national and state level, new specific programs are needed. The basis for programs at the state level could come from evaluating the various experiences obtained over the past eight years in Guanajuato, Jalisco, and Zacatecas. At the national level the basis could be Nacional Financiera's—in association with the Inter-American Development Bank—program "Invest in Mexico."

The 3x1 Program could certainly be improved in terms of its planning, participation, coverage, operation and evaluation processes. The program could even make a dual contribution in its transition to production projects through the strong social capital of transnational migrant associations committed to local development and the implementation of infrastructure projects related to roads, electricity, and so forth. But in the absence of an entrepreneurial culture and with the possibility of disputes arising over investments and their returns, combining the logics of solidarity and productivity could be the downfall of the program.

Now that the United Nations and the World Bank recognize migrants' contribution to both their homeland and countries of destination, and stress their potential to help foster economic development; now that migrants are called "heroes" in Mexico and the Mexican economy largely depends on their resources, it is clearly time that Mexico's various political actors abandoned empty rhetoric and established clear and explicit commitments to produce a profound change in the current structure of the nation-state and of the government. Political actors should recognize the transnational character of the Mexican population and the urgent need to establish a new form of governance, accountable to the citizenry, and design new public policies allowing millions of Mexicans to exercise their right to not emigrate in the future, as there would be adequate employment opportunities and living standards in Mexico.

As Mexican migrants themselves say, they can no longer be treated as if they were ATMs, but neither can they be seen as a marginal aspect of social welfare policies. There is a need for explicit public policies that address the root causes of emigration: backwardness, poverty, marginality and unemployment. This implies reorienting the current economic model towards one that factors in the growth of the internal market, the country's regional development, and attention to migrants and their communities into one central priority, through a comprehensive, coherent, professional and long-term state policy.

By acknowledging the enormous investment potential of a sector of Mexican migrants in the United States and the vast opportunities offered by the Mexican population in that country, the Secretariats of Finance, Economy, Agriculture and Social Development, among other federal departments, should take the opportunity to present a catalogue of programs and investment projects corresponding to the diverse composition of the Mexican migrant community: savers, investors, microentrepreneurs and retirees.

At the state level, Zacatecas, Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, Oaxaca, Estado de México and Puebla have the conditions to design state policies on migration and development that integrate migrant associations and their communities of origin in the planning of the states' policy, and incentive their participation in the design, implementation and evaluation of the different programs. This requires that the various state governments and congresses stop seeing migrant resources sent by migrants merely as a means of supplementing public investment, and that the offices established to help migrants abandon the paternalistic attitude that has guided state offices in charge of liaising with migrants. Instead, these offices need to be the core of a set of public policies designed to promote a new type of regional and local development program centred on the municipalities and an overall public decentralization of technical and financial resources and responsibilities. There are interesting experiences in the municipalities, both positive and negative, of migrant-based production projects, which have not been fully assessed in terms of the lessons they offer for the development of new migrant investment programs at the state level, in coordination with initiatives and programs implemented at the national level.

To a large extent, the possibility of establishing new state policies on migration and development depends on the advancement of democracy and the full exercise of an economic, social and political transnational citizenry. Therefore, the organization and capacity building of hometown communities and hometown associations (HTA) have to be a central priority of both groups, even above of infrastructure projects, which indeed are the responsibility of the State. Instead of investing

more resources in the 3x1 Program, the main priority of the Mexican migrant community should be to increasingly invest in the strengthening of their communities and their capacities. The combination of public and private resources devoted towards this type of strategic investment could become of great relevance in the context of transnational community empowerment. In such context the communities of origin would be able to take control of their projects and their own destinies both in their hometown and in their community of destination, that requires the immediate strategic planning for the integration of second-generation Mexicans born in the United States.

The greatest contribution of migrant associations to their hometown communities is in assisting them to become better organized and more capable to take responsibility for, and be promoters of, their own community development, so that they will not have to depend on the actions, negotiations and donations of HTAs to solve their problems in the future. Consequently, hometown communities would become the basic cell of local and regional development, working in conjunction with the municipalities and state and federal governmental departments. ■

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## Recent Events

### 1st Latin American Migrant Summit Morelia, Michoacan - Mexico May 10th-13th, 2007

Thanks to the generous support of the Walter & Duncan GORDON FOUNDATION, FOCAL has been able to sponsor the participation of representatives from diaspora organizations to participate in the first Latin American Migrant Summit held in Morelia, Mexico.

The following organizations were chosen based on their potential to disseminate and share information and contacts gleaned from the summit:

- Hispanic Development Council, Toronto
- Mexican-Canadian Cultural Association, Ottawa-Gatineau
- Salvadoran Canadian Association, Toronto
- Peruvian-Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Toronto

## Upcoming Publications

### The Impact of Canadian Labour Experience on the Households of Mexicans: A Seminal View on Best Practices

*By Gustavo Verduzco*

This paper looks at the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, underscoring that the success of this program is due to a great degree to the role of the Canadian and Mexican governments to ensure workers' rights.

## Other publications

### A Managed Temporary Movement Program for Nurses from the Caribbean to Canada: The Short (but Interesting) Life of a Policy Advocacy Proposal

*By Laura Ritchie Dawson*

[http://www.focal.ca/pdf/pp\\_laura\\_ritchie\\_dawson.pdf](http://www.focal.ca/pdf/pp_laura_ritchie_dawson.pdf)

### The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program and Mexican Development

*By Leigh Binford*

[http://www.focal.ca/pdf/pp\\_leigh\\_binford.pdf](http://www.focal.ca/pdf/pp_leigh_binford.pdf)

### Survey of Remittance Recipients in Four Parishes in Jamaica: Analysis of Data

*By Carlo Dade*

[http://www.focal.ca/pdf/focal\\_jamaica\\_remittance.pdf](http://www.focal.ca/pdf/focal_jamaica_remittance.pdf)

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