



Migration, Development, and Human Rights: Articulation as a main Pillar for Transforming the Social Reality in Latin America and the Caribbean

The report is prepared as part of ongoing activities for the Migration and Development Civil Society Network (MADE)* Project and **provides a regional outlook on migration issues. The findings are, based on three regional meetings that took place in 2014**, where 253 individuals who advocate for the rights of migrants and their families in 22 countries within the region participated.¹

The document is divided in three sections, each of them with conclusions, challenges, and recommendations:

- a) The regional context, supported on the analysis and revision of specific literature*
- b) Relevant issues put forward during the regional meetings*
- c) Key spaces for advocacy for migrants' rights*

a) The United States still is the main receiving country for migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean; with a significant proportion of them living in irregular conditions. In recent years, there has been a **notable securitization of migration, as well as the militarization of the borders, especially in the countries within North and Central America.** By contrast, the **Southern countries have started to develop a different vision, which includes the redefinition of their concepts of citizenship and border,** based on regional economic integration.

b) The rights of children and women, labor migration and diaspora, labor mobility, regional citizenship, and the regional mechanisms for rights were identified as the most important during the civil society meetings. On this subject, although there is some noticeable progress regarding the protection of the rights of migrants, their families, and their descendants within the countries of the region—particularly at the legislative level—the **vulnerable conditions under which thousands of people migrate along the continent make it indispensable to think of new courses of action, which must entail boosting civil society's regional and global articulation.** For example, when talking about children, the policies seem to be welfare-oriented and fail to provide a genuine comprehensive approach for the protection of children. The same lack of affirmative actions taken by the States can be observed for gender-specific issues. Furthermore, with respect to migration and diaspora for development, there is an absence of mechanisms and public policies incorporating these actors into local and national development strategies for. The majority of the existing policies are based on remittances, without considering that the latter cannot and should not substitute comprehensive development policies.

c) There is a notable consensus driving a common vision towards the governance of migration. This vision encompasses human rights as its cornerstone, while advocating for the free circulation of people and promoting civic participation in the public policy cycle—including transparency and access to information. All these elements are considered necessary for the effective protection of the human rights of migrants, their families and communities.

Key Recommendations

It is important to understand the systemic causes of migration, and to begin structuring comprehensive solutions based on the premise that migration is a human right; and so is the option of not migrating. Therefore, some primary goals are: to foster the reduction of economic, political and social gaps; to improve working and living conditions; and to transform the nature of migration, **so that migrating becomes an option, not a necessity. Additionally, every possible effort must be done to prevent setbacks regarding the exercise of the rights of migrants and their descendants, particularly in the case of the right to identity and nationality—** as is happening today in the Dominican Republic.

¹ The participating organizations work in the following countries: Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela.



In the matter of children, there is an obligation to establish and implement national and regional mechanisms to guarantee their rights, given that certain current policies put them in jeopardy. **The best interests of children should be the cornerstone of migratory actions and policies. At the same time, local and international policies designed to eradicate gender violence should be prioritized and promoted,** including policies that avoid re-victimization, foster family unity, and **provide access to social policies and incorporate women into the dialogues.**

In terms of the links to migrant communities abroad, the recommendations suggest that States should design comprehensive migration and development policies. These policies should include creating programs to encourage local entrepreneurship, reducing the cost of sending remittances back home, and developing programs oriented towards the sustainable productivity of migrants and their families.

With regards to work issues, the implementation of effective regulatory mechanisms for hiring migrants is a priority. This is a critical point because the present ones have not proven effective and allow the possibility of exploitation. **Also, it is necessary to generate and put into action information systems about companies and recruitment agencies that promote migration among countries.**

Furthermore, states must stimulate the social inclusion of migrants, by creating agencies and mechanisms that allow and encourage their access to services, the free exercise of their rights and their social, economic, labor, political, educational, and cultural integration.

Society's participation should be incorporated formally into decision-making arenas. Some of these concern labor migration, migratory regularization, projects for community development, and the definition of the best interests of migrant children, among other subjects. **Such participation should not be limited only to national forums; instead, it should be extended to regional and global forums as well.** In this sense, it is strongly recommended to strengthen the bi-national cross-border dialogues as well as to establish training programs for government officials focused on the protection of the human rights of migrants at the borders.

Lastly, governments are urged to consider within their policies and programs: the integrality of the migratory process; the imperious need of cross-sectorial coordination; and the allocation of budgets towards the free exercise of rights. These policies should take as their foundation the international and regional human rights instruments, such as the United Nations' principles and guidelines concerning migrant rights at the borders, approved by the General Assembly in January 2014, among others.



The Migration and Development Civil Society Network (MADE) Project stems from the collaboration of a series of civil society organizations in the context of the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD). It aims to enhance the capacity of and strengthen already existing networks and organizations, to promote a better articulation, exchange and analysis of proposals; as well as to support future joint advocacy and awareness efforts. MADE is structured around global Working Groups and regional networks that offer mutual support for their endeavors. There are three groups that focus on: the global governance of migration, the role of diaspora for sustainable development, and the rights of migrant workers and the reform of labor recruitment. Alongside these, there are four geographical networks: Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Africa, Asia, and Europe. A Global Coordinating Office in Brussels coordinates their activities. In the LAC region, the International Network on Migration and the Scalabrini International Migration Network, with the assistance of the Scalabrini Foundation, lead the activities in a coordinated and complementary way.



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