

**Caritas Europa
5th Migration Forum
Costa de Caparica/Portugal**

**Concluding Keynote Address
Migration and Development, the Catholic Perspective
September 22, 2007**

**Most Reverend Nicholas DiMarzio, Ph.D., D.D.
Bishop of Brooklyn**

Introduction

It is my pleasure to address you, the Caritas organizations of Europe, on the theme of migration. Your bi-annual forum on migration has become an important focus for your efforts in dealing with the phenomenon of migration, and also with the phenomenon of development. Today, I will do my best to demonstrate how these two important social phenomenons are inter-related. Your organizations many times deal with the issue of migration in your home countries, but you also attempt to foster development activities in the sending countries, many of which are the same that send migrants to your own countries. Some suggestions will be offered at the conclusion of this talk as to how your organizations can assist the natural synergy which exists between migration and development activities.

Migration Phenomenon

At the outset, I must be clear in saying that migration is not some type of sociological phenomenon that does not focus on the human person. It is human beings that migrate. We can at times speak in the abstract; however, this leads us many times to erroneous conclusions. We must put the human face on migration because then we will understand the phenomenon better, and also how the basic human desire for progress and development can be understood as intimately related to the migration phenomenon.

The migration phenomenon is as old as recorded history. From the religious perspective, we can think back to Abraham who was called from the Ur of the Chaldees to leave his familiar surroundings and to inherit a land, and, more importantly, to begin a monotheistic religion which becomes the seabed of the revelation of the future. Migration carries with it many positive elements, while at the same time in itself there are always costs to the benefits of migration which are principally born by the migrants themselves.

Migration and Development

Yet, the connection between migration and development is something that has been understood more correctly and more precisely than just in the last decade. There has always been a commonsense conclusion that migration and development are related because a lack of development is one of the principle causes for migration, which is partly true. The converse popular wisdom, however, is that when development occurs migration is stopped or at least slowed. There too we find ourselves in a predicament because this also is not completely true.

Dr. Hein de Haas of the Radboud University Centre for International Development Issues at Nijmegen, in The Netherlands in one sentence summarizes this relationship, “Hence the relation between migration and development is neither linear nor inversely proportional.”¹ In a paper that he was commissioned to write for the Global Commission on International Migration entitled “International Migration, Remittances and Development: Myths and Fact,” he summarizes the myths regarding migration and development. We must be careful not to jump to conclusions nor use popular wisdom to chart our course. As more research is done on this relationship, we must be ready to change our own policies and practices in light of new scientific revelations. Dr. de Haas goes on to say, “It seems important to stress that this relation is not unidirectional, because a decreasing development level relative to other countries may also transform an immigration country into an emigration country as the case of Argentina recently shown.”² I would add the example of Ireland where a country of emigration has become a country of immigration, because of unprecedented development.

There is an inevitable time lag between the decisions made by individual migrants to migrate and the development of a country. This phenomenon has been described in literature as the “migration hump,” a certain point which is reached when a decision by migrants becomes inevitable when their social and economic condition dictate that it would be better if they move.

Migration and Globalization

In order to put the issue of migration and development into perspective, perhaps we must look at the growing phenomenon of migration as a by product of globalization. Some assert that we live in an age of unprecedented migration. The fact is that migration is at all time highs, however, there have been times in the past two centuries when world migration has been as prominent as it is today. Between 1990 and 2005, the world’s migration stock rose by 36 million from 155 million to 191 million. These figures include refugees. Sixty-one percent of all international migrants live in developed countries. Europe alone had 34 percent and North America had 23 percent according to United Nations statistics. We recognize the phenomenon to be an important element of dealing with our opportunities to influence the social interactions of our respective societies. Perhaps we must directly assess, however, the potential of human mobility to influence the phenomenon of development.

I will take my perspective from the Global Commission on International Migration, on which I served as the Commissioner from the United States of America. The Global Commission on International Migration was formed at the request of the United Nations General Secretary Kofi Annan as a private nation-funded study commission that was charged with bringing back to the United Nations General Secretary a study which formed the basis of a high-level dialogue held at the United Nations in the Fall of 2005. As you may realize, this was

followed by the Global Forum on Migration held in Brussels in July of 2006 and to be followed up by a conference hosted by the Philippines on the same subject.

All three of these forums of discussion on migration and development have come to the same conclusions; however, there is an increasing specificity and complexity to the conclusions regarding this phenomenon. I will begin with the findings of the Global Commission on International Migration. The Commission stated, “The role that migrants play in promoting development and poverty reduction in countries of origin, as well as the contribution they make towards the prosperity of destination countries, should be recognized and reinforced. International migration should become an integral part of national, regional and global strategies for economic growth, in both the developing and development world.”³

As a Commissioner of the Global Commission, after our world-wide consultation it was certainly clear to me after several consultations in the field and the input of academics that this statement is completely true. It is certainly true that migrants make an invaluable contribution to the development of the countries to which they migrate, as well as to the countries that they leave, contrary to some popular understanding that it is a win-lose situation. It is never clear, as in any human phenomenon, what are the cost and benefits of any human action. Certainly, migrants contribute to the developed countries by bringing their labor, talents and skills to further develop a country at a higher level of development than the country which they left. At the same time, that provides a safety valve to the underdeveloped countries and, in the long run, does contribute to the development of the underdeveloped countries in various ways. Unfortunately, the Commission found that migration was generally not considered an integral component of the development agenda in either the developing or developed countries. I believe in our recent past we are looking to see how these two can be linked and can become part of one comprehensive agenda that can benefit for making this important connection.

Costs of Migration

Perhaps it is important again to deal with the human concern over the loss to development countries of valuable migrants. This phenomenon has been described in many ways as “brain drain,” “brain strain,” “brain exchange,” “brain circulation,” and “brain gain.” As I have frequently commented, however, I have never seen a brain that was drained or strained or exchanged or one that moved on its own. Brains are the intelligence of the human person and as human persons they make migration decisions. Brains are not pieces of metal drawn by magnetism as described by push and pull factors. Human beings make rational decisions based on the information available to them. If we forget this perspective, especially as Catholics whose social doctrine is developed by the dignity of the human person, we also will come to erroneous conclusions.

In general terms, we must describe the phenomenon of the loss of human talent from developing countries to their use in developed countries as a by-product of migration. The human desire for a better life, and sometime the forces contributing to the resort of forced migration because of persecution and other difficulties, must be considered separately from the economic benefit or deficit involved. Clearly, there is always a cost and a benefit to migration, not only of skilled migrants, but also those who do not possess higher skills. It seems that the migration phenomenon embraces people with high-skills, lower-skills and no skills. It is the

human person, at whatever the socio- economic level, who desires a better future. This cannot be controlled by certain so-called stay-home programs in developing nations, nor by the exclusion in developed countries of opportunities for migrants especially if they are filling labor market needs. Of course, our migration policies should contain a human aspect whereby those forced to migrate should always find a welcome to developed countries.

Perhaps we must define the impact on developing nations of the loss of skilled migrants. Fortunately, this phenomenon is not universal and restricted to only certain countries in certain sectors of skills. If it were otherwise, the adverse impact would be much more evident. There are, in fact, ways that the adverse impact of the migration of skilled workers can be mitigated. The strategy of training and retraining has been suggested by the Global Commission on International Migration. Such an approach to training and retraining can be an effective factor in maintaining these skilled workers, and also to attract them back to their home countries. There have been calls for direct financial compensation to developing countries by developed countries, especially for those who recruit professionals from developing nations. This is a rather difficult problem since, indeed, we are dealing with individual decisions to migrate. From the human perspective, individuals are free to choose their own destiny. Human beings are not possession of the State, even if they were professionally trained at a cost to the State. On the other hand, migrants have a responsibility to their home countries. Perhaps the solution lies in a contribution by developed nations to the training of professionals in developing countries, especially if they are recruiting those professions.

Some type of co-investment programs in human capital formation and development could also be useful to developing nations. Hopefully, any recruiting that is done by developing nations in developing countries will contain some type of compensation scheme, although not one directly tied to the individual migrant.

I have described one of the costs of international migration that influences development. Some of these costs are exorbitant in certain countries. For example; Jamaica, Granada, Guyana and Haiti lose more than 80 percent of their tertiary educated individuals, especially in the health and education sectors. These figures are the finding of the Pan American Health Organization. Unfortunately, health care workers seem to be most prone to migration, since the compensation they receive in the developing countries is very low compared to what they can receive in developed nations. Since this is a defined sector, any contribution by developed countries to the training of medical personnel can have a positive effect. This is certainly a mechanism for which we should become advocates.

Benefits of Migration

We turn now to the benefits of that international migration has for developing countries. Most agree that the gains from international migration far surpass any losses. In an age of globalization, we see that the liberalization of merchandize trade, in particular for developing countries, has been an over-all benefit, although not to all. International migration seems to have been a positive development for most developing countries; however, mitigating the negative aspects is something for which we must be concerned.

Perhaps the most popular development regarding the relationship between migration and development is the new discovery of the power of remittances. Remittances are those monies that migrants send back to their home countries, mostly to individual family members. Remittances are the most tangible, and perhaps the least controversial link between migration and development. Some were disappointed when this became the focus of the last Forum on International Migration. This is a case, however, of what we call “picking the low hanging fruit.” Ripe for investigation and change, this area has become the focus although it is not the panacea for the development of underdeveloped countries. The fact is that recorded remittances to developing countries have reached 206 billion dollars in 2006, more than double the level of 2001. The estimates by the World Bank, however, put the real remittance level closer to 300 billion dollars since many are transferred outside of the normal systems. Recent studies show that remittances facilitate human capital formation mainly by improving access to education and health. When monies are sent to developing countries, they are used by families to further the education and preserve the health of its family members.

In another area, remittances also lead to the increase of investment in the home countries sometimes to the purchases of small businesses and also to the building and repair of homes, all of which have the multiplying effect to developing countries. In general, remittances lead to the reduction of poverty, particularly within recipient households.

There are those, however, who would argue that these remittances cause a dependency on remittances and do not, in effect, spur any development. One study, using cross-country evidence, showed that the 10 percent increase in per-capita remittances translates into a 3.5 percent decline in the share of the population living in poverty. That is a real tangible impact. It has also been found that remittances are critical sources of foreign exchange for national accounts in developing nations. For some, it is a major percentage of the gross national product. In effect, remittances have been found to promote macro-economic stability, and so it is not only on the individual level that the benefits are derived, but also on the national level.

There are some current myths about remittances that perhaps need to be addressed. Some feel that instead of contributing to development in underdeveloped countries, migration can be a factor that undermines potential for development mainly because remittances are directed to individuals who spend their money on necessary goods or luxury items and sometimes on non-productive investments. Creating a dependency on remittances is not a real problem. Recent research, however, has proven this myth to be of limited importance.

It has also been found that remittances assist families in investing in agricultural and other small businesses which tend to produce a multiplier effect in the undeveloped countries. Again, it is difficult to generalize the positive effect of remittances; however, it is clear that positive aspects certainly outweigh any negative aspects.

Expanded Benefits of Migration and Development

Development and migration must move beyond the discussion of remittances. Migrants should be encouraged to save and invest in their countries of origin through other financial instruments. This might include traditional foreign investment channels whereby countries add to the value of remittances by matching them. We have one example of this in Mexico where the

“three for one program” has helped in rural development. Another discussion that evolved from the Migration Forum in July was the issuance of diaspora bonds whereby receiving countries will issue bonds for use in developing countries to be purchased by migrants and others as direct investments in the developing country. There is one example of this in the United States that I can refer to and that is *Bonds for Israel* which has been a program in effect for many decades. The investment by municipalities, individuals and other investors in these bonds has enabled Israel to make tremendous progress. Rather than becoming a type of foreign aid creating a dependency relationship, the eventual repayment of these bonds creates a stable economy.

Another aspect of expanded benefits from migration is microphilanthropy, either by individuals or by what has been discovered to be called “home town associations” whereby individuals from a particular town band together and assist in capital improvements in various towns, such as the purchase of ambulances. The capital investors invest in various aspects of the town, such as building a school or other public work projects. All of these can be ways that moving beyond remittances can show a tremendous benefit.

Conclusions

So what conclusions can we make regarding the relationship between migration and development? One author has put it this way, “The relationship between migration and development is at once incredibly significant but also marginal in many ways. ... Development is marginal to migration: where we consider all the various aspects of managing migration, the development impacts on countries of origin is rarely going to be as prominent a research or policy issue as issues such as immigrant integration, migrant rights and the economic impacts of immigration. Similarly, migration is marginal to development: of all the factors that shape the development potential of an economy, migration is almost always going to be relatively insignificant.”⁴

Although this view presents one aspect, and despite the difficulties of international migration, it is clearly not a zero-sum game where any migration is a loss to the developing country. Under the right set of policies, international migration could have a very significant positive impact on development.

Many promising policies have been forwarded and some are already in place. For instance, in the inaugural Global Forum on Migration and Development held last July, many states expressed interest in issuing diaspora bonds, as I previously mentioned. Also there was a pledge to securitize remittance flows, by developing automatic clearing house systems to reduce the cost of remittances to the individual migrants. Another pledge has been made to facilitate flows through formal banking channels and to form partnerships with banks in developed and developing countries. Also a pledge to launch partnership projects to address “brain drain” by setting up a training facilities for doctors and nurses in developing countries, or at least contributing to their cost. Another potential enhancement is this area could be measures to improve the financial literacy of the migrants in the host countries and their families back home so that migrants can make informed financial decision regarding the investment of the remittances received. In addition, there seems to be a need to develop systems to provide pre-departure training and information to migrants not only about the benefits, but also the risks associated with migration. This type of migration enhancement program, or at least migration

information programs, would be very useful and can be in place where partnerships between Caritas organizations can take place. It would also be good to offer incorporate migration issues in national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies. This, again, becomes an advocacy issue for NGO's and Caritas organizations of developing nations so that migration will have a more positive effect on the developing nations.

It has been the suggestion by one author that a Migration Development Index, (MDI) be developed. This would mimic the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) successful Human Development Index (HDI). This would, however, be incredibly complex to develop. Thus, there is a need for more concrete economic development and more concrete economic indicators that could influence better policies.

Catholic Perspective

Hopefully, my explanation of the relationship of migration and development has been helpful to you. We must, however, put this in a Catholic perspective since we come here as Caritas organizations. Perhaps we must find the moral justification for our involvement in this area. His Excellency, Celestine Migliore, Apostolic Nuncio and Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, in his intervention at the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations on the 10th Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development, put it well: "An important milestone at ICPD was the link between migration and development that, ever since, has prompted increased sensitivity, research, cooperation and effective policies in this field. Migration is now recognized as a major challenge for all, linked to development and poverty, as well as to financial and health security. In particular, migrants are now seen as proactive agents of development. While appreciating the proper importance of these achievements, States now have to focus much more on creating jobs where people live. Political will and firm determination are needed on the part of Governments and civil society in order to foster a proper cultural, social and juridical environment capable of overcoming the persistent phenomena of discrimination, violence, human trafficking and xenophobia. Migration, now more than ten years ago, has international attention because of demographics in the developed world."⁵

Even more recently, Pope Benedict XVI, in his first Encyclical, *God Is Love*, teaches us a lesson about the globalized world in which we live and the solidarity which is necessary to humanize globalization in our world. The Holy Father states, "In order to define more accurately the relationship between the necessary commitment to justice and the ministry of charity, two fundamental situations need to be considered. First, the just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics. Secondly, love -- caritas -- will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love."⁶

It is clear that our work as the Church must be to globalize solidarity in a globalized world. The thoughts of Pope John Paul II, of happy memory, is clear regarding how solidarity must be globalized as a necessary development in our social relationships in our world today.

Suggestions

On a more practical level, perhaps we can give some suggestions of how the Caritas organizations can assist the enhancement of the relationship between migration and development in its more positive aspects. What can we do? In general, we say the effective and proper implementation of policies that enhance the relationship between the developing and developed nations requires cooperation and partnership in various levels. This is solidarity in action.

Solidarity is both a social principle and a moral virtue. in the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, it is described in this way: “The new relationships of interdependence between individuals and peoples, which are de facto forms of solidarity, have to be transformed into relationships tending towards genuine ethical-social solidarity. This is a moral requirement inherent within all human relationships. Solidarity is seen therefore under two complementary aspects: that of a social principle⁷ and that of a moral virtue”⁸. Solidarity has always been seen as a value and moral virtue that determines the orders of institutions. Solidarity, at the same time, is proactive in developing structures of cooperation that foster interdependence.

Certainly, action at the local level is critically important, as well as the regional level. It is in this locus that migration decisions are made by individuals. Any assistance that we can give to programs, such as those mentioned above, which inform migrants of the consequences that their decision to migrate is important. Assistance to the capacity building of Caritas organizations in developing country for migration programs is truly important and is worthy of funding. Obviously, on the international and multi-lateral levels, interaction among the different stakeholders; namely, the countries of origin and destination, is critically important. The development of the Migration Forum, I believe, is a very positive aspect of this new international dialogue. In effect, the problems of international migration can only be solved by international cooperation. We cannot forget, however, the individual migrants themselves, as they live in the diaspora and can be influenced by your work as Caritas organizations in your own countries supporting them especially in their efforts to develop diaspora associations which will assist their home countries is particularly important. As international development agencies, the enhancement of the ability of migrants to return to their home countries, invest the money they have earned or have their remittances create economic incentives in their home countries is also something that we can address ourselves to as Caritas organizations. Micro-financing schemes are always critically important this way; loans to start businesses or purchase farms, as well as other economic generating projects, are truly worth consideration.

Most of all, however, we must become informed advocates for migrants both in their home countries and in their countries of destination. Knowing the facts and being part of the solutions that might be offered is truly an important aspect of our work. Unfortunately, challenges to cooperation and partnership remain. For instance, in many destination countries their migration policy is formed solely in the interior labor ministries with not even marginal consultation with the development of international cooperation ministries. Here again we can become effective advocates to join in this policy making process, so that migration can truly have effect on development.

Challenges are clearly before us. Hopefully, my comments will help put into perspective what we can do to assist migration so that it becomes a positive element in the development of peoples.

¹ de Haas, Hein, "International Migration, Remittances and Development: Myths and Fact," Global Migration Perspectives No. 30, Global Commission on International Migration, April 2005.

² *Ibid.*

³ Global Commission on International Migration, "Migration In An Interconnected World: New Directions for Action, Report for the Global Commission on International Migration", Chapter Two 'Migration and Development: Realizing the Potential of Human Mobility', October 2005.

⁴ Sriskandarajah, Dhananjayan, "A paper prepared for the Policy Analysis and Research Programme of the Global Commission on International Migration, Global Commission on International Migration, September 2005, P. 28.

⁵ H.E. Msgr. Celestino Migliore, Intervention by the Holy See at the Plenary of the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations on the Tenth Anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (Item 45), October 14, 2004.

⁶ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *God is Love*, Paragraph 28.

⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1939-1941.

⁸ *Ibid*, 1942.