

***HUMAN MOBILITY: AN IMPERATIVE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND WELFARE IN
THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION***

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Human mobility –migration- today is not a threat nor is it just an opportunity for development. In the context of globalization, it is an imperative to sustaining development and to obtaining social welfare.

An ILO study makes the point. If current economic, demographic, employment and migration trends in Europe remain as they are today, the standard of living in this region will be 22% lower by 2050. Migration is the one substantial variable in the equation, although not the sole solution.

Human mobility is vital to global welfare. Migrants build the economies of destination countries. Migrants are rightly considered as agents of development who strengthen cooperation between home and host societies. Migrants contribute to development back home through their skills, entrepreneurial activities, investment and remittances. To answer a question raised yesterday, remittances are spent on housing, health, education and nutrition, all of which develop human capital at home.

Migration today is about work, about production of the world's goods and services, and the reproduction of capital. Of the 191 million people living outside their countries of birth or citizenship, ILO estimates show 90 to 95 million of this number are economically active—employed, self-employed or otherwise engaged in remunerative activity. Engaged in the world of work.

Foreign-born workers represent 10% or more of work forces in Western Europe, 15% in North America, and even higher proportions in some countries in Africa and the Middle East.

Today, mobility of workers assures access to labour, distribution of income, and economic productivity worldwide. Over 100 nations today are significant countries of origin or destination of migrant workers, or both.

Jobs in industrialized and in developing countries can no longer be filled by native-born workers. Ageing of native work forces combined with declining populations is only accelerating these dilemmas. And not only in Europe. The work force of Russia will decline by 5 million workers by 2010 compared to 2000. Tunisia reached the fertility rate of zero population growth last year. While today the average social security dependency is 2 retired persons for seven economically active, the ratio will rise to 4 per 7 by 2050. The figures for China are similar.

Groups of countries are realizing that they can only function in the globalized system when they achieve economies of scale and collective political clout obtained by regional economic integration. Just as for the EU, common market spaces of free movement of capital, goods, services and technology cannot function unless there is also labour mobility. So human mobility is high on the agenda in Andean countries, Mercosur, in East Africa Community, in ECOWAS (West Africa), SADC in Southern Africa and now in ASEAN in Asia.

For most migrants, migration is not about choice. It is not to seek greener pastures or a better life or opportunities somewhere else. It is about surviving because there are no pastures at home. As the ILO Director General put it, “*if*

you look at Globalization from the point of view of people's concerns, its single biggest failure is its inability to create jobs where people live."

Migration today is about development in an age of globalized flows of capital, and intensified competition between economic blocks. In globalized competition, migration is key to control and lower labour costs, the only variable when free trade is equalizing costs of material resources, goods and technology.

In today's deregulated environment, migrant labour is an extremely valuable commodity when it comes cheap, docile, flexible, and easily removable when no longer needed. Deport 'em when you're done with them and there's no unemployment, health, welfare or social security costs to pay.

Recognizing rights means raising the costs. Story after story shows that migrants in irregular situations are often tolerated, despite official rhetoric about the need for States to show that they control the borders. Migrants in irregular status are even cheaper. And especially cheaper than those over protected and unionised national workers. Indeed, migrants often cannot unionize to demand fair pay, equal treatment or decent working conditions.

We need the labour power but we don't want to deal with the human beings that bring it. So now we have the new old solution cropping up. Temporary migration. A leading academic line says, look at the statistics: reducing rights of migrants has proven to give them greater access. This has lead to a new concept: temporary –some call it circular-- migration will be a win-win situation because you can trade away so called bundles of rights in exchange for access to labour markets where pay and conditions are better than in home countries.

No wonder a sophisticated construct is built up here in Europe and elsewhere that says we don't need those --how do they put it-- clumsy, intrusive, impractical Conventions on migrants rights forced on us. What we need is a comprehensive, balanced, wholistic, long-term approach to manage migration.

Management? That is the terminology of running a company to obtain results on the bottom line. Not the necessarily the term to describe regulating a natural, social phenomena to assure the human dignity of the people involved.

Yes, we do need a comprehensive, wholistic, long-term --and participatory-- approach to migration of people. But one founded on the human values embodied in international human rights and labour standards. It is only those standards, enacted in law, that provide accountability to the human dignity, development, and social welfare that Caritas is about.