

INTEGRATION, MIGRATION AND COOPERATION: THE MEXICAN CASE

National Migratory Institute
Ms. Magdalena Carral Cuevas
Commissioner
Mexico

Migration and Integration

In Mexico's national and regional scene, we are starting to acknowledge that migration and integration are inter-active processes, where one of them impulses the development of the other, resulting in a political, cultural and economic inter-influence system detectably in both societies, the receiver and the issuing of migrants.

On the one hand, the permanent flow of Mexican emigrants to the U.S. is a constitutive part of the social integration among the two nations beyond the existing economic agreements between them, so more than 10 millions of Mexican emigrants and about 15 millions of their descendants are currently in the U.S. This population develops a spontaneous integration between the borders and creates a bilateral process that impacts the ordinary life in both countries.

On the other hand, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, U.S. and Mexico, signed in 1994, has promoted a clear process of economic integration, particularly between Mexico and the U.S. The NAFTA has provoked an increased interdependence among the signing economies and the traditional bilateral work-force market.

This proximity has provoked an increasing number of Mexicans migrating to the U.S., due to the communication, transport and money transfers facilities, in spite of strengthened barriers at the borders lines, in order to stop illegal migration.

The incidence of the emigrant's remittances to Mexico

Mexico is ranked the second remittances receiver worldwide, after India, and the first in Latin America and the Caribbean with about 16 millions USD in 2004.

Those remittances have an important impact at national, regional and familiar level:

- At national level, remittances represent more than 2.7% of the GDP. That means that remittances are the country's second source of income from overseas after oil exportations. That is why they function as a counterbalance in the balance of payments, allowing more financial liquidity. Remittances represent the third part of the federal transfers.
- At regional and local level, remittances have a broader impact when they are used as an incentive for developing productive projects or infrastructure like schools, hospitals, and roads, improving therefore the quality of life of the community. Thus, the federal government, in coordination with local municipalities, implemented a program called "three times one". Through this program, the federal government provides proportionally the money sent by the emigrants for local infrastructure development.

- The most significant impact of remittances can be observed at familiar and individual level, allowing people to increase their income, their access to basic services and their quality of life in general. 80% of these resources are used in domestic expenditure, to pay for food, health care and education; 10% is used for housing expenses and finally, 10% in savings or in productive investment.

- Cooperation and co-responsibility towards migration.

Due to the country's condition as point of origin, transit and destination, the Mexican government has been lead to assume international migration as a shared responsibility phenomenon among the States, and different public and private actors, since the current international migration has already reached unprecedented levels and characteristics, demanding also unprecedented responses. That means to transit from unilateral control policies to searching for shared solutions between governments, strengthening cooperation and coordination to improve migration practices and migration policies.

Within this idea of co-responsibility and cooperation between States, emigrants have been beneficiated from bilateral, regional and international actions and agreements in different issues. On this regard, Mexico has agreed upon safe and ordered repatriation mechanisms with neighboring countries in order to contribute to the protection of the emigrant's rights.

In similar manner, Mexico has an assistance program with the International Migration Organization (IMO) for the return of extra-regional emigrants. Also, it has improved the communication between the emigrants detained in Mexico with their consulates overseas, through videoconferences, when their country does not have any diplomatic representation in Mexico.

At the same time, Mexico has promoted internally the protection and orientation of migrants and high-risk groups, through the Beta Groups that have shared their experience among the countries in the region through the Regional Migration Conference (RMC). Mexico has also developed an inter-ministerial program to provide permanent orientation for Mexican emigrants with the support of more than 45 consulates in the U.S. and Canada.