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Remittances, Global Integration, and Immigrant Communities

By Oscar Chacón

As is well known, hard-working immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean in the U.S. have become an indispensable source of economic support for their countries of origin. According to studies commissioned by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), nationals from Latin America and the Caribbean residing abroad, mostly in the U.S., sent approximately \$23 billion to their respective countries last year alone. This amount represents much more foreign aid than what it is provided to Latin America by the wealthiest nations on the planet combined. In the year 2000, the World Bank estimated that annual remittances to the region totaled approximately \$15 billion, compared to about \$3 billion in aid (grants, as opposed to loans) for that year.

International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IADB have become increasingly interested in how to raise levels of remittance flows to developing countries in the Western Hemisphere. They have focused particularly on how to make remittance-sending mechanisms more efficient; that is to say, how to send money fast and at the lowest possible cost. However, the notion that remittances alone will be able to lift people in the region out of poverty, without fundamental reforms to current local and macro economic policies, is nothing but wishful thinking. There is no question that an infusion of capital in the magnitude of current remittance flows to the region does go a long way in alleviating the conditions of misery in which tens of millions of people in Latin America continue to live today. Since not all remittances go to the poorest of the poor, they also contribute to the appearance of an emergent middle class in the region whose growth is not exclusively the result of well-paid and broadly available employment. *(cont. on p.2)*

Mexican and Central American Immigrant Community Leaders Gathering

On October 6, 2002, Enlaces América convened a small group of leaders of Mexican and Central American immigrant communities in order to initiate an ongoing dialogue about how to strengthen the role those communities play in the formulation of domestic and international policies that impact them. The day-long conversation amongst these leaders covered an array of topics, including how the strong transnational connections of Mexican and Central American communities are expressed in the work of the meeting participants; how to define a political vision and agenda for Latino immigrant communities that reflects their increasing demographic and economic importance to the U.S.; and how to strengthen immigrant organizations themselves in order to advance that agenda. *(cont. on p.3)*

In This Edition:

This third edition of Enlaces News presents integrated perspectives and analyses on a number of trade, development, and migration-related issues in Central and North America. We report on Enlaces' immigrant community leadership development work, and on recent civil society meetings regarding migrants rights in the region.

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(cont. from p.1) In the past year alone there have been several key developments that seriously call into question the viability of economic policy models rigidly advocated by international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Other institutions such as the WB and IADB define their interventions in developing countries around these models. In recent months a number of prominent scholars and policymakers have publicly proclaimed that major reforms to dominant models of trade and development policies are urgently needed. Joseph Stiglitz, a former President of the World Bank, who is also a Nobel prize winner; Tina Rosenberg, an editorial writer for the New York Times and author of several books on Latin America, and Dani Rodrick, an author and economist at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, have all concluded after careful research that there is a pressing need to revamp the global economic policy framework which so far has failed to produce beneficial results for the great majority of people around the world. These scholars have noted that China and India, two countries that have made noteworthy progress in lifting people out of poverty in recent years, have done so not by following the standard IMF recipe, but by designing and implementing their own development policies.

The current dominant international economic policies are clearly not working well for everyone, and blindly continuing to implement them will simply deepen the pain of those who have only suffered during the years of faithful implementation of free-market prescriptions for development. This is especially true in the cases of social sectors historically excluded from economic opportunities that could effectively allow them to overcome poverty and misery. It is imperative that civil society and policymakers work together to develop serious economic policy alternatives that will truly address poverty and inequity in the region.

Remittances cannot become powerful levers toward dignified, fair and sustainable development within the present international economic policy framework. Even if family remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean were to double or triple over the next ten years, they would not reach their full potential unless a different policy framework were to be put into place.

Both Dani Rodrick and Tina Rosenberg have emphasized the need to think of globalization in a more comprehensive manner, as a far more complex and profound process than simple investment and trade relationships. Both agree that the migration phenomenon is a natural and predictable element of regional and global integration processes – and that it is one that could be of great benefit to both sending and receiving countries if it were managed intelligently. By accepting and wisely regulating migration, the circularity of migrant populations would be greatly enhanced and with it, the gates for greater sharing of knowledge and experience between peoples and countries would be opened. Migration should be dealt with not as a “problem” to be solved, but as a creative and enriching process. Beyond being simple vehicles for capital transfer between the industrialized and developing world, migrants have tremendous potential as protagonists in the definition of better, more productive ways of using both remittances and funds for local development projects in general.

While most public discussions to date of the role of immigrants in relationship to economic development in their countries of origin have focused on technical improvements to make remittances faster and more affordable, immigrant communities should also be engaged in the more substantive, creative process of developing new policies that effectively reduce poverty in their home communities. Immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean residing in the U.S are already making a very generous contribution to the well-being of their families via the remittances they send. For them, advocating effective international economic policies that guarantee better access to education, health care, housing and well-paying jobs in their countries of origin is a matter of self interest. This new emphasis on the articulation of a policy advocacy strategy for immigrant communities in relationship to their countries of origin does not negate the importance of making the sending of remittances faster and more affordable. If anything, it is a necessary complement to the more technical approach that, in the long run, will vastly increase the potential for remittances to become a more efficient factor in fostering sustainable productive outcomes.

At Enlaces América, we are committed to working with Latino immigrants in the U.S. to support them in developing the knowledge and capacity required to be effective advocates in shaping the multiple public policy decisions that impact their communities’ lives here and in countries of origin. The realities of communities in sending countries and communities in the U.S. are increasingly intertwined, as the transnational identities and practices of immigrants here deepen every day. *Oscar Chacón is the Director of Enlaces América.*

(cont. from p.1) Mexican hometown associations or clubs, which exist as a means for immigrant communities in the US to better the conditions in their communities, states, or countries of origin, represent a concrete and direct expression of transnational connections. These organizations typically provide financial support for local development activities or projects in their places of origin. Some of them have become involved in political advocacy efforts aimed at shaping policies impacting their communities at home. The ability for migrants to vote from abroad in elections in their countries of origin is a major issue of concrete interest to many of these hometown associations and clubs.

In the case of Central American immigrant communities, where the existence of hometown associations is a relatively new phenomenon (compared to the Mexican organizations, some of which have been around for more than 40 years), transnational linkages are often expressed by community leaders who were active in efforts during the 1980s to monitor human rights issues in their countries of origin and to advocate on behalf of refugees escaping the armed conflicts in those countries. Today, many of those leaders who were involved in solidarity efforts in the 1980s are leaders of immigrant community base organizations (CBOs). Over the past decade, some of these community-based organizations have come together to form national entities like the Salvadoran American National Network (SANN), which aim to impact the political processes that affect their countries of origin. Additionally, many Central American immigrant CBOs have played a leadership role in the collection and delivery of humanitarian aid to victims of recent natural disasters in the region. Finally, a number of Central American and Mexican organizations express their transnational relationships by working to strengthen the cultural and social identities of immigrant communities in the US through community festivals, holiday events, etc.

The Latino immigrant population is growing rapidly in the U.S., but Latino communities have not been able to develop the political vision and tools to exercise the power that should correspond with that demographic growth. Meeting participants identified the following as some of the major challenges to the articulation of a Latino immigrant political agenda:

- The complex and layered identities of Mexican and Central American immigrants. As one participant put it, “First, I am a Michoacano [from the state of Michoacán], then I am a Mexican, and then, maybe a Latino.” As immigrants become more integrated in their adopted countries, they add even more layers, becoming “Chicagoans” or “Mexican-Americans” for example.
- The “myth of the return”: the tendency among many Mexican and Central American immigrants to view social and political participation in places of current residence as unnecessary, because they expect to return to their homes sometime soon.
- The fact that many Mexican and Central American immigrants arrive in the US having experienced very corrupt political systems in their countries of origin that didn’t respond to the needs of the population; these experiences often lead people to believe that everything that has to do with politics is corrupt or undesirable.
- The lack of resources for many grassroots immigrant community organizations and Hometown Federations, and the need to find a balance between the “professionalization” of these organizations and bureaucratization that would render them unresponsive and unaccountable to their constituencies.

Meeting participants agreed that it was crucial for Central American and Mexican immigrant community leaders to continue dialogues like the one initiated at this meeting. Participants also agreed that these same conversations need to take place at the local level with immigrant communities themselves, in order to begin to define principles of unity between Central American and Mexican communities.

Even as they acknowledged the challenges for working together, most of the participants at the meeting argued for deepening dialogue and understanding amongst exploding Mexican and Central American immigrant communities. Key regional policy decisions are likely to be taken in the region over the next several years and immigrants have yet to make their voices heard on most of them. Legalization topped the list of concerns for most participants, but they also signalled the importance of the pending regional economic negotiations – initiatives like the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the proposed Central America – U.S. Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), and Plan Puebla Panama. Participants also pointed to the increased marginalization of immigrant communities after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the militarization of Latin America as urgent issues of mutual concern.

A BINATIONAL PROPOSAL FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ZACATECAS, MEXICO

By Rodolfo Garica Zamora

People have been migrating from Zacatecas to the U.S. for more than a hundred years because of the structural limitations of the state's economy, particularly in its agricultural sector, and because of the emergence of social networks that link communities of origin in Zacatecas with destination communities in the U.S. Currently, there are 3.5 million people living in Zacatecas, whereas 900,000 Zacatecos live in the U.S. – 800,000 permanently and 100,000 as seasonal workers. Additionally, 1.5 million U.S. residents are of Zacatecan origin.

This large and growing international migration has resulted in a flow of family remittances to Zacatecas that reached more than 500 million dollars in the last three years. It has also resulted in the development of more than 250 Zacatecanos Clubs - groups of migrants in the U.S. Zacatecas who organize fund local development projects origin. In areas of heavy from Zacatecas, these clubs come of Zacatecanos. There are fifteen Federations in different regions of

International migration to the U.S. from Zacatecas has resulted in a family remittance flow of more than \$500 million in the last three years., and in the development of more than 250 Zacatecanos Clubs in the U.S.

from the same towns in themselves to collectively in those communities of concentration of immigrants together to form Federations of these Zacatecanos the U.S.

The Zacatecas state government the collective remittance flows federations. In 1993, it first program based on collective government matched every dollar Federations with two state dollars projects. In 2001, the federal contributing to the project as well, and the combined public funds for every dollar sent in collective remittances was raised to three dollars. About 7 million dollars was invested in 113 community projects through this "Three for One" program in Zacatecas last year. This program has had a tremendous impact on the state level, and has been transformed into a national program this year. However, international emigration to the U.S. continues to grow and intensify.

has worked to capitalize on from these clubs and implemented a "Two for One" remittances in which the sent by Zacatecanos Clubs or in funding for development government began

Given the growing importance of remittance flows and the "Three for One" program, it is essential that communities of origin in Zacatecas and local development groups coordinate more closely with Zacatecan communities in the U.S., particularly with immigrant community organizations like the Zacatecanos Federations. The Foundation for the Comprehensive Development of Southern Zacatecas, formed by agricultural producers, ex-migrants, and people with family members in the U.S., works to promote productive projects that strengthen local and regional development in southern Zacatecas. The Federations of Zacatecanos in southern California have proposed to go beyond community social projects and to begin supporting productive projects with the savings and investments of migrants coordinated with the Foundation for the Comprehensive Development of Southern Zacatecas.

The Foundation for the Comprehensive Development of Southern Zacatecas is promoting a number of productive initiatives, including the formation of the Associations of Producers of Agave, Mezcal, Oregano, and Cattle. The principal towns that are involved in these efforts are Nochistlan, Juchipilia, Apozol, Tabasco, and Apulco. All these projects stress a comprehensive vision of development. These initiatives are for the most part autonomous; the majority have been created without governmental support, usually with financing from their families.

The Southern California Federation of Zacatecanos Clubs and the Foundation for the Comprehensive Development of Southern Zacatecas are working together to identify infrastructure projects for the "Three for One" program that can support the above-mentioned productive initiatives. The Southern California Zacatecas Federation has in the last three years been emphasizing the need for new kinds of state policies that support productive initiatives with programs designed by migrants themselves.

The Southern California Federation of Zacatecanos Clubs and the Foundation for the Comprehensive Development of Southern Zacatecas share a common commitment to advancing productive projects with the greatest local and regional impact

on the employment and well-being of people in this region of Zacatecas. In order for this binational development effort to be successful, the institutions involved in Mexico (the Foundation for the Development of Southern Zacatecas) and in the U.S. (the Federations of Zacatecos in Southern California) must undergo a process of institutional strengthening. In order to promote this institutional strengthening, the Foundation hosted two workshops which led to an analysis of the region's needs and proposals for development, in which the following ideas were developed:

1. Promote training programs on administration and municipal economic development;
2. Strengthen comprehensive regional economic development with training for producer organizations, which will allow them to plan their activities and make better use of their productive capabilities;
3. Increase production, marketing, and financing capacity through integrated and associated businesses, taking advantage of the programs and economic resources of the three levels of government – local, state, and national;
4. Propose financing schemes that allow access to national credit markets and to international organizations like the Inter-American Development Foundation, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank;
5. Promote a new culture of responsible use of water and other resources in the entire Zacatecas population;
6. Design permanent business training programs for different producer organizations in the region, drawing on the support of national and US universities, various governmental agencies, NGOs, and different international foundations;
7. Develop family agricultural businesses, taking advantage of the productive vocations of different towns, with a focus on productive systems that allow for the strengthening of local development by integrating different activities, and
8. Promote the strengthening and development of the Zacatecos Clubs in the US to increase their economic, political, and social advocacy capacity, so that they can become a central source of support for regional development in Southern Zacatecas.

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Global Coffee Crisis Continues to Devastate Rural Communities Throughout the World

Though it still has not seeped into the consciousness of the general public in major coffee-consuming countries, the global crisis in coffee prices is beginning to attract attention from policymakers, advocates, and the media across the world. The real prices paid to coffee farmers per pound of coffee, which began to decline sharply in 1997, are as low now as they have been in 100 years.¹ Because many rural communities and entire national economies in the developing world depend on coffee production as a central means of sustenance, repercussions of the current crisis are felt across a wide array of sectors. People working on issues of rural development, food security, migration, the environment, education, and health care are being forced to examine the coffee crisis and consider its implications for the issues and/or regions they are concerned with.

The crisis has directly impacted an estimated 25 million coffee producers, many of whom cannot sell their coffee

beans at the cost of production. Beyond those farmers, however, are an estimated 100 million more family members and seasonal laborers who also depend on coffee farming for their livelihood.² Entire national economies – particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central America – depend on foreign currency from coffee exports to pay back enormous national debts.

Origins of the Crisis: Overproduction and Deregulation

Throughout the Cold War, the global coffee market was regulated by the International Coffee Agreement, an accord reached by 66 exporting and importing countries that established a floor and ceiling for coffee prices and which also set limits on the amount of coffee each exporting country could sell on the global market. In 1989, the U.S. and several other coffee-importing countries withdrew from the Agreement, rendering it unenforceable. Member

¹ “Mugged: Poverty in Your Coffee Cup,” a report by Oxfam International, September 2002.

² International Coffee Organization

countries of the inter-governmental International Coffee Organization (ICO) agreed on a new International Coffee Agreement in 2001, but without the participation of the U.S. and other major importing countries, the ICO is limited in its ability to enforce price floors or export quotas.

The decade of the 1990s saw tremendous changes in the global coffee trading system. As many coffee-producing nations – often under pressure from lending countries and multilateral lending institutions – abandoned efforts to limit their export levels and to act as intermediaries between coffee producers and foreign purchasers, the world's largest coffee roasting companies took advantage of ever-increasing supply to purchase cheaper and cheaper coffee beans.

Changes in coffee production in Brazil and Vietnam transformed the international market as well. Vietnam was a minor coffee exporter until the earlier 1990s, when, with support from international donors, the Vietnamese government began to subsidize export-oriented coffee production. Vietnam's coffee exports rose by 400% during the 1990s; it is now the world's second-largest coffee exporting nation. Brazil has long been a major coffee exporter, but throughout the 1990s it implemented new high-yield technologies that have dramatically increased its production levels.

Unfortunately, the rising levels of coffee exports throughout the 1990s coincided with a steady decrease in coffee consumption throughout the world. The increasing supply and decreasing demand have, unsurprisingly, led to a downward spiral in international coffee prices. Aside from a spike in prices in the mid-1990s due to a massive frost which destroyed much of Brazil's coffee crop, the prices farmers receive per pound of coffee have declined steadily since the disintegration of the ICA as a market control mechanism in 1989. In 1997, prices took a dramatic downward turn, bottoming out at about \$.50 per pound in the summer of 2001, which is approximately where they remain today. Harvesting and production costs outstrip the price many farmers can receive for their beans - coffee production costs

in southern Mexico and Central America, for example, are estimated at around \$.80 per pound.³

Social, Economic, and Environmental Repercussions

The decline in prices to coffee farmers has tremendous implications for families, communities, and entire countries throughout the developing world. Coffee is one of the few commodities which is still most frequently produced by small farmers on plots of 10 hectares or less.⁴ Larger farms and plantations also provide a key source of income for millions of rural residents in the developing world. The current crisis has stripped families and entire communities of what was once a relatively secure means of sustenance. International agencies have documented food insecurity in coffee-producing regions throughout the world. In Central America, where a persistent drought undermines the ability of subsistence farmers to feed themselves and their families, the situation is worsening: international relief agencies estimate that more than 1.5 million people face starvation.⁵ The World Food Program reported in March 2002 that 30,000 Hondurans were suffering from hunger.

Though concrete numbers are hard to come by, it is clear that many of the 125 million people impacted by the global coffee crisis are exercising the only option they have : leaving their land for urban areas or other countries.

Though concrete numbers are hard to come by, it is clear that many of the 125 million people impacted by the coffee crisis are exercising their only option: leaving their land in search of work in urban areas or other countries. This is certainly true in Mexico and in Central America, where historical patterns of international migration have created strong cross-border social networks that facilitate the movement of displaced people across national boundaries. In May 2001, the brutal deaths of a group of twelve migrants from the state of Veracruz who were attempting to reach the U.S. by crossing the Arizona desert drew national attention. At least six people in that group were coffee farmers who left their land to find work in the U.S.

(cont. on p.7)

³ Fritsch, Peter, "Coffee-bean Oversupply Deepens Latin America's Woes," in the *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2002.

⁴ "Mugged: Poverty in Your Coffee Cup," a report by Oxfam International, September 2002.

⁵ Fritsch, Peter, "Coffee-bean Oversupply Deepens Latin America's Woes," in the *Wall Street Journal*, July 8, 2002.

International Response

As the crisis deepens, international agencies, governments, and civil society groups are beginning to explore steps they can take in response. One hopeful element of the generally disastrous story of the global coffee trade in recent years has been the growth in the Fair Trade coffee market. Fair Trade coffee is currently the fastest-growing segment of specialty markets; it now accounts for about 2% of the total global coffee market.⁶ Fair Trade offers a “floor price” to producers (currently set at about \$1.20/lb) and fair trade marketing can be an important as a tool for educating the public in coffee-consuming nations and for generating pressure on major roasting companies. However, advocacy groups such as Oxfam note that development of the Fair Trade “niche” alone is not a long-term solution to the problem – comprehensive approaches that address the structural imbalances in the global coffee market are much needed.

Oxfam is calling on the major coffee roasting companies to finance a mass destruction program of 5 million bags of the world’s lowest-quality coffee beans as an immediate step to address the current massive oversupply of coffee. It is also calling on those companies to “commit to paying prices that provide farmers with a decent income, and manage their supply chains so as to ensure that farmers capture more benefits of the market...” As a long-term solution, Oxfam and other international development agencies insist on the need for some form of international market management to ensure stability and that the current imbalance between supply and demand does not emerge again.

One such step towards regulating the international coffee market is the Quality Improvement program recently implemented by the ICO. The initiative, which has been embraced by most coffee-exporting countries, establishes quality standards for coffee exports in hopes of reducing the flood of cheap, low-grade coffee beans on the global market. In order to represent a meaningful step towards dealing with the current crisis, however, major roasting companies and the governments of coffee-consuming nations must support the initiative and reject imports that do not meet the quality standards.

Because the crisis is now threatening major U.S. interests in the Western Hemisphere – namely, curbing undocumented northward migration flows, ensuring political stability, and stemming the production of illicit drugs – the government has begun to take some action. In the spring of 2002 the US Agency for International Development (USAID) announced the Opportunity Alliance, an initiative aimed at “promoting rural prosperity and competitiveness” in Central America. The initiative will include a specialty coffee program to provide technical assistance in export marketing and certification to coffee farmers. However, the coffee crisis reveals the stark human and environmental consequences of hitching rural development worldwide to global commodity markets as they currently function. This crisis illuminates the pressing need for innovative, comprehensive, and sustainable approaches to local development across the world.

MIGRATION AND CORPORATE CONTROL OF AGRICULTURE

As control over world agricultural production becomes increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations, many people have raised concerns about the implications for consumers and for small and family farmers. These concerns have centered on the little-known potential impacts of genetically modified foods, the potential environmental impacts of large-scale intensive agriculture, and the inability of small farmers to compete on world markets. Less attention has focused on the connection to migration, but it is a direct and dramatic one. As transnational agro food corporations take advantage of large US subsidies and market access to dump their excess products on Mexican and Central American markets, they are able to further increase their profits by hiring as cheap migrant labor the very rural people from those countries who have been forced off their land by floods of subsidized agricultural imports.

On October 17-19, 2002, a group of nearly seventy activists, academics, and policy advocates concerned with the growing political influence of large agribusiness corporations convened outside Chicago to explore means of collectively challenging corporate control of global agriculture. Participants represented a wide array of constituencies affected by the overwhelming market power and political influence of large transnational agro food corporations, including consumers, small farmers, environmentalists, and agriculture and food processing labor unions. The gathering marked the launching of the Agribusiness Accountability Initiative, a newly-created and forum sponsored by the Center of Concern and the National Catholic Rural Life Committee. (cont. on p.8)

⁶ “Mugged: Poverty in Your Coffee Cup,” a report by Oxfam International, September 2002.

The meeting began with an analysis of the current state of global agribusiness market and political control, as well as activist attempts to challenge it. Participants identified two fundamental and inter-related areas of shared concern: 1. the oligopolistic control of global agricultural markets exerted by a small number of transnational corporations, and 2. the tremendous influence these corporations wield in the formulation of national and international agriculture and trade policies.

Corporate agribusiness's political and economic power is visible in a number of current trends in global agriculture, including: the worldwide drive towards export-oriented agriculture; subsidy regimes in rich countries (especially the U.S. and the European Union) which favor export-oriented corporate agriculture, and increased privatization of "points of control" in the food production process, notably land, water, and genetic resources.

The increasing control of a few agribusiness corporations has drastic implications for small producers throughout the world, for all food consumers, and for the environment. Although large agricultural corporations claim that they are bringing the benefits of "cheap food" to consumers, participants in this AAI Forum noted that these corporations are essentially externalizing the costs of production, by exposing the public to the environmental, health, and economic costs of the transition from local production networks to corporate, vertically integrated food production.

The Enlaces América project came to be concerned with agricultural policies and international agricultural markets because current trade and economic development policies in North and Central America, which favor export-oriented agriculture, are devastating agricultural sectors throughout the region, displacing millions of small farmer, and forcing rural residents to migrate to urban areas or the U.S. Small farmers in the U.S. and the European Union are also marginalized and forced off their land as they lose the ability to compete in global markets. Other sectors of society – including consumers who want access to healthy, reliable

food; laborers in agricultural production and meat processing; and people concerned with the environmental damage caused by industrial agricultural production – are also adversely impacted by agribusiness consolidation of market and political power.

In order to do move forward on these issues, activists and advocates must educate and organize a broader array of impacted sectors about the nature and repercussions of corporate control of agriculture. Participants also agreed that

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their alliance-building efforts must be truly international, since corporate agribusiness market and political activities are global in their impact and reach. They observed that there are a number of opportunities for forging international alliances of small farmers, including ones that span North/South boundaries. The real issue at play is how much power producers have when they come into contact with the marketplace – and the answer is "very little" for small farmers in the U.S. and the European

Union, as well as those in the developing world. Participants also suggested that the issue of accountability for transnational agribusiness activities offers significant possibilities for cross-border organizing.

Other key constituencies who will need to be brought into a global movement against corporate control of agriculture include consumers and agribusiness labor. As participants considered how to effectively develop global consumer-farmer-labor networks, they emphasized the need to move beyond the notion of "fair trade," which for many people implies networks between consumers in the "north" and producers in the "south", and towards the notion of "fair food", which is more encompassing. Rural communities throughout the world are currently suffering the brunt of corporate agribusiness' deepening market consolidation and political influence, but ultimately everyone who eats is part of and affected by global processes of agricultural production and trade.

For more information about the Agribusiness Accountability Initiative, please contact Peter O'Driscoll at the Center of Concern at podriscoll@coc.org, or visit the AAI website at <http://www.coc.org/focus/private/aai.html>.

Leaders of Mexican Hometown Associations COMPLETE Pilot Training Course

On September 7, participants in the Mexican Hometown Federation Leadership Training Initiative celebrated their graduation from the eight-month training program at a closing ceremony in Chicago. Graduates of the training program included leaders and representatives of Asociación de Clubes y Organizaciones Potosinas de Illinois, Durango Unido en Chicago, Federación de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois, Federación de Oaxaqueños del Medio Oeste, and the Federación de Clubes Unidos Zacatecanos en Illinois.

From January through June 2002, participants met in biweekly workshops organized by Enlaces América staff, to explore issues of organizational development, financial management, and strategic planning. These workshops served to nurture a spirit of collaboration amongst training participants, and throughout the summer of 2002, they continued to meet on a monthly basis to share and reflect on personal and organizational challenges they face in carrying out Hometown Federation work. The close of the training program in September marked the end of the pilot project phase of the Leadership Training Initiative. The five participating Chicago-area Federations, with support from Enlaces América, are currently seeking funds to continue with the initiative.

Federation members and Enlaces América staff see the training program as a means of developing the enormous potential Hometown Federations have to better their communities in the U.S. and in Mexico. In conversations with Enlaces América staff, representatives of various Federations reflected upon their experiences with the training program and how it served to strengthen their work with their hometown federation.

First, these training program participants were asked to describe the mission of their Federation. All the answers reflected a degree of binational civic engagement and citizen organizing around a very strong sense of regional identity. The answers included “address the social and economic needs of our state [in Mexico] by supporting the construction of roads, hospitals, schools, etc.,” “organize our communities to better our lives and participate in civic life here and there,” and “help our communities of origin and get to know one another here.”

Examples of the activities Federations carry out in order to advance this mission include: sponsoring exchange programs between students in Chicago and students in states of origin; meeting with Mexican state government officials to try to influence state policy and budget decisions and development plans; organizing events in the Chicago area to highlight the culture of various regions of Mexico; and holding fundraisers to help community members who encounter medical or other problems.

Participants identified a number of challenges that Federations face carrying out their work in the U.S. and in Mexico. Several of them spoke of their concern about young people in the U.S. losing their culture and identity as Mexicans and as Michoacanos, Zacatecanos, etc. They also spoke of the challenges of working with state governments in Mexico, who are only just beginning to recognize communities in the U.S. as the force that they are, and who are only starting to deal with them with the respect and seriousness they deserve. On an internal level, Federation members pointed to difficulties of working with few resources and no paid staff. All the work done by Federations is done by people with multiple additional commitments to work, family, etc; it is hard sometimes to find time for Federation members to gather together to meet. A related challenge is that it is hard to make the Mexican community itself aware that the Federations exist.

In reflecting on what the training program had meant for them, participants were nearly unanimous in citing the connections they developed with each other as being the most important aspect of the program for them. One person said “We learned that each state and federation are different in geography and name, but we have a lot in common. We have the same needs, and we can support each other in the future.” Another said, “Sharing experiences amongst ourselves was extremely valuable for me. I learned from the ways in which other people do things.” Another emphasized the emotional value of the program: “Being able to share ideas and support, it gave me strength to keep going.”

Participants also appreciated meeting other Chicago immigrant community leaders in the context of the program, and noted that they had learned from the trainings the importance of network and coalition-building. (*cont. on p.10*)

In addition to serving as a space for relationship-building and exchange amongst Federation leaders, the training programs also helped participants develop important individual and organizational leadership skills which help them advance their Federation's work. Participants cited techniques for conducting outreach to community members and the press, as well as ways to organize effective meetings, as important skills they put to use immediately in their work with the Federations. They also said they learned how already-established organizations function, and how local, state, and federal politics function in this country.

When asked for specific examples of how they had put to use the skills they developed in the training program, participants again emphasized the importance of the friendships and connections nurtured over the eight-month training. One participant said "I have become a leader by knowing more people, having more contacts. I met a sick person from Chihuahua, and I knew the name of someone from the Chihuahuans Federation that could help him. Somebody from the Michoacanos Federation was looking for an event room, and they called me because they know I have access to one." Another participant commented: "Our meetings have been much better organized since the program. We have learned how to be organized, be realistic, how to make an agenda and carry it through." Finally, one participant summed up the experience by saying: "We have learned how to convert dreams into plans."

U.S. Meeting on Regional, Hemispheric Migration Policy Forums

On October 7, representatives of U.S.-based organizations interested in regional and hemispheric processes related to migration policy met in Washington, DC to learn about the status of the inter-governmental Regional Conference on Migration (RCM), the parallel civil society network Regional Network of Civil Organizations on Migration (RNCOM), and plans for a November 2002 Hemispheric Summit on the Human Rights of Migrants and Human Trafficking to be held in Santiago Chile.

The RCM inter-governmental forum was established in 1996 at a gathering in Puebla, Mexico of foreign policy and migration officials from all Central and North American countries, as well as the Dominican Republic. Civil society representatives from the U.S. and Mexico met the governmental officials there, and have worked to promote the human rights of migrants in the context of the RCM forum ever since. Since 1996, the RNCOM has become a proactive coalition with an agenda of its own. After a long process of consultation, the RNCOM developed a set of Regional Guidelines for the Treatment of Migrants in Situations of Arrest, Detention, Deportation, and Reception. These Guidelines are a non-binding document based on international and regional human rights law intended to establish minimum standards for the treatment of migrants in the region. In 2001, there was great hope that the governments of the region might adopt this document.

However, Department of State and INS representatives have affirmed that the U.S. government has no interest in committing itself to regional standards of human rights protection for migrants, not even ones that would only include rights specifically afforded by the U.S.

Constitution. The U.S.' blanket rejection of the Human Rights Guidelines has effectively ended plans for the RNCOM human rights campaign as originally conceived, with the goal of Guidelines adoption by all RCM member governments.

There are several options now for moving forward with the Guidelines document:

1. Implement a process of adoption amongst civil society organizations in the region; NGOs themselves can decide to adopt them and use them in advocacy, lobbying, and monitoring efforts.
2. Move the process to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and press for adoption there.

Hemispheric Summit on the Human Rights of Migrants

Oscar Chacón gave an overview of what is known about plans for the Hemispheric Summit on Human Rights of Migrants and Human Trafficking in the Americas. This conference, which will take place November 20-22, 2002 in Santiago, Chile, is being organized by the International Organization on Migration (IOM) and by the United Nations Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). It is sponsored by the governments of the hemisphere as well as the Inter-American Development Bank, UNICEF, UNHCHR, the UN Population Fund and the International Labor Organization. *(cont. on p.11)*

The conference's objectives include:

- Advancing the understanding of the multiple causes and consequences of international migration;
- Helping to bring together the multiple sub-regional processes currently underway with regard to migration, as well as the various international organizations addressing the issue;
- Identifying possible initiatives regarding international migration, with an eye towards bringing them to the next Summit of the Americas;
- Sharing information regarding a proposed OAS office on the rights of migrants and their families, and
- Deliberating on a possible workplan to combat the trafficking of migrants in the Americas.

The RNCOM is organizing a parallel hemispheric civil society meeting to the inter-governmental gathering. Groups at the meeting were encouraged to consider participating in the Hemispheric Summit.

Next Steps

Participants in the meeting were in general agreement that they would like to be kept abreast of the progress of civil society and inter-governmental discussions regarding migration policy, and most stated that they would be interested in being involved in these processes – via participation in Chile, or by promoting the Human Rights Guidelines at community or legislative forums. Because a wide variety of organizations – including immigrant advocacy, immigrant-led, and international development

groups - were represented at the gathering, there were a number of different perspectives on what form future U.S. participation in the regional network might take. Listed below are some of the issues highlighted in the conversation of next steps:

- Acknowledgement of tensions between grassroots organizing and policy advocacy, but strong sense is that grassroots political pressure will be critical at this stage;
- Emphasis on need to incorporate more perspectives of migrant organizations in the U.S. in this process. Discussion of how regional migration should be presented to make it relevant to migrant-led organizations;
- Debate on the merits of “parallel” processes versus direct pressure on governments. Need for civil society groups to be careful in how they play the role of “interlocutor”;
- Debate about the importance of situating the regional migration guidelines in the broader context of regional integration, trade agreements, and other regional political debates;
- Need for advocates to monitor bilateral agreements that U.S. government is pursuing with other countries in region – ie, MOU with Canada.

For more information on the work of the RNCOM or other regional or hemispheric migration forums, please contact us at info@enlacesamerica.org.

Formation of South American Migration Forum

By Marcela Ibarra Mateos

Although some sociologists, political scientists, economists, and anthropologists speak of the nation-state as a concept that has been diluted by processes of globalization and rendered obsolete by transnational processes, national borders are still very real for many of the world's 175 million international migrants. The xenophobic conditions faced by millions of migrants, refugees, and other displaced people, particularly those who are undocumented, make these populations vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

In light of this situation, the work of migrant organizations and of civil society organizations who work with migrants and their families is not just necessary but urgent. In order to be able to effectively advance the rights of migrants, it is essential for civil society organizations to create networks that allow for coordinated, systematized work.

The effort to create a space for dialogue and discussion about this issue in South America was initiated recently

with a meeting in Quito, Ecuador that took place in late August. Behind the initiation of this process there were many years of work carried out by organizations represented at the meeting.

The meeting in Quito made participants rethink the complexity of the migration phenomenon in each region and in each country of Latin America. The context of South America is very similar to that of North America, Central America, and the Caribbean. Therefore, we should work together as one region, addressing the particularities of each country, but with one common objective: protecting the human rights of migrants.

From all the information presented and from the Political Declaration turned over to the South American governments, we can point to the fundamental factor in migratory flows as being the capitalist model which has destroyed economic systems of those countries located in less developed regions of the world, and that has led to financial crises, falling commodity prices, unemployment, loss of buying power, provoking the abandonment of these countries.

In spite of the fact that each country has different political and economic conditions, the situations of refugee, migrant, and displaced populations in nations throughout all of Latin America have a number of characteristics in common. South American migration is particularly tied to the European continent. In spite of the high cost of traveling to Europe, many Argentines, Ecuadorians, Brazilians, and Peruvians move to Spain and Italy.

However, not all migration flows from this region are directed towards Europe and the U.S. The nations of the regions themselves permanently receive populations from their neighbor countries. There are strong migratory flows of Bolivians, Paraguayans, and Brazilians to Argentina, of Peruvians to Chile, etc. Human mobility is a daily reality in the region.

A shared reality within Central and North America and the Caribbean is the militarization of national borders, a situation that has intensified since September 11. In spite

of the fact that many Latin American countries have legal instruments specifically delineating the rights of migrants, most of these countries do not have formal, explicit, comprehensive migration policies. In some cases governments rely on laws or programs that were developed over 20 years ago.

The Political Declaration of the Organizations of the South, which was developed by participants in the civil society Quito Summit, is very clear and emphasizes the group's concern about the growing militarization of borders in Latin America. The Declaration demands the immediate effective application of relevant International Treaties and Conventions signed by Latin American countries regarding migrants and refugees, especially the Declaration of Cartagena of 1984.

The Declaration insists upon the need for governments to address migration in their regional and subregional integration agreements. It also

affirms the need for governments in the hemisphere to develop economic policies that are respectful of human rights.

Additionally, the Declaration places special emphasis on the issue of family unity. It urges the introduction of national-level laws that allow for immediate family reunification of immigrants, and calls for the addition of gender violence as a category of persecution to international frameworks regarding refugees.

The Declaration concludes by saying: "Because we are part of one humanity and we see ourselves in all those who suffer, wherever the suffering may occur, we reaffirm with one voice our commitment to act together to transform the current international migration order that impinges upon human dignity into a new one that is more just and that allows for our full realization as human beings."

Marcela Ibarra Matos is the Coordinator of the Ibero-American University's Migration Project.

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CLINIC Hosts Conference on U.S. Immigration Governmental Policies and Practices since 9/11

On October 21st, the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC) hosted a day-long conference on U.S. governmental policies and practices relating to immigrants since September 11, 2001. The conference brought together leading U.S. advocates and governmental officials to explore the implications of legislative changes, anti-terrorism initiatives and new enforcement efforts for immigrant communities and the nation as a whole.

Some of the major issues of concern regarding post 9/11 policies and practices highlighted by conference panelists included:

- **Massive post 9/11 detention of Arab and Muslim men**
- **Dramatic reduction in refugee admissions**
- **State-level policy changes making it more difficult for immigrants to obtain licenses**
- **Increase in numbers of Social Security “no-match” letters**
- **Department of Justice proposal shift to encourage cooperation between local police, INS**
- **Heightened immigration law enforcement activities on Mexico-U.S. border**

Taken together, these federal, state, and local initiatives have contributed to a feeling of siege in immigrant communities across the country. Immigrants feel under attack in a way they haven't since a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment gripped the U.S. in the mid-1990s and culminated in the passage of the harsh Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996.

In a concluding discussion panelists explored how immigrants' advocates could effectively advance policies that respect migrants rights and respond to national and global economic realities in the current political climate. They spoke of the need to highlight the important national values – the U.S.'s tradition as a “nation of immigrants,” basic constitutional principles like the right to due process, and the notion of rewarding hard work – which are at play in debates about how to deal with migrants and migration. They also pointed to the national economic and demographic realities that policy-makers and ultimately our society must confront, particularly the U.S. economy's structural need for immigrant labor.

Several panelists went even further to point to the global social and economic forces that generate international migration flows. Frank Sharry of the National Immigration Forum spoke of the need for “intelligent regulation” of migration flows in North and Central America within the framework of a migration accord that reflects the deepening economic integration in the region. He pointed out that during the second half of the 1990s, which saw one of the largest buildups of undocumented immigrants in the history of the U.S., the federal government enacted the most ambitious and expensive border and interior immigration law enforcement effort in our nation's history. The real problem is the fundamental disconnect between the “rigid and contradictory patchwork of U.S. immigration laws” and global and national economic realities. As the international coffee crisis deepens, rural economies in Central America and Mexico continue to disintegrate, and the U.S. pursues a NAFTA-style free trade agreement with five countries of Central America, the need for a new policy framework to regulate the movement of people in the region is as pressing as ever. The existing disconnect between our immigration policies and practices and the forces that drive people north in search of a better life will continue go unaddressed at great cost to our nation, our neighbors, and millions of human beings throughout the region.

Mass Popular Strikes in El Salvador Prompted by Attempts to Privatize Health Care

In response to an attempt by President Flores to push through legislation that would lay the groundwork for the privatization of El Salvador's public health care system, doctors and health workers at major public hospitals have organized a massive strike that has gripped the country for over a month. They have vowed to continue the strike, which has been accompanied by street protests and which is generating support from a broad array of civil society groups, until President Flores signs a decree passed by the Salvadoran legislature on October 17 which would prohibit any form of health care privatization and which affirms the state responsibility to preserve the health care of its citizens as a public good. On October 23, more than 100,000 people marched in San Salvador to pressure President Flores to sign the decree. This mass social mobilization is the largest in the country since the peace accords were signed in 1992. President Flores and his ARENA party's efforts to privatize the nation's health care system can best be understood in the context of the government's preparations for upcoming negotiations of a free trade agreement with the U.S. (Central American Free Trade Agreement - CAFTA) and the President's desire to make the country more attractive to foreign investors.

The health care strike is viewed by a number of Salvadorans, and others throughout Central America, as a crucial test of the capacity of citizen movements to challenge the imposition of economic policies which prioritize the interests of foreign investors over national governments' obligations to protect the well-being of their citizens. A broad-based civil society coalition in El Salvador is calling on organizations abroad to demonstrate their solidarity with the striking workers.

On October 31, President Flores made a surprise announcement that he would appoint Hector Silva, the current mayor of San Salvador and long-time FMLN politician, as the coordinator of a commission which would work to mediate between the administration and striking medical workers in order to bring the strike to an end. While Flores' move could represent an indication that the striking workers have succeeded in pressuring him to concede on this issue, the coordinators of the mobilization are not celebrating yet. Flores has yet to name other members of the commission or explain precisely what its role would be in relationship to striking workers. The medical workers union and civil society organizations supporting them have stated they will reject the Mayor's mediation until the President signs the Decree and withdraws his current legislative proposals regarding health care reform.

About Us

The Heartland Alliance is an anti-poverty, human rights organization that provides housing, health care and human services to improve the lives of impoverished Chicagoans. Once known as Travelers & Immigrants Aid, Heartland has been helping the most marginalized men, women and children through services and advocacy since 1888.

With support from the Ford Foundation, the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Rockefeller Foundation, Enlaces America facilitates the empowerment of transnational communities in their commitment to building an equitable, sustainable, and dignified way of life for peoples in the Americas.

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