



Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration:

Regional Review in Latin America and the Caribbean

26-28 April 2021

Background Paper

Thematic round table 4: Facilitating regular migration and decent work, and enhancing the positive development effects of human mobility

Objective GCM #5. Enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration

Objective GCM #6. Facilitate fair and ethical recruitment and safeguard conditions that ensure decent work

Objective GCM #18. Invest in skills development and facilitate mutual recognition of skills, qualifications and competences

Objective GCM #19 Create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries

Objective GCM #20. Promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants

Objective GCM #23. Strengthen international cooperation and global partnerships for safe, orderly and regular migration

I. Why does this thematic area matter?

Labour plays an important part in today's migration. Globally, over 65% of international migration is labour migration, and studies show that, when this migration occurs in a safe, regular and orderly manner, it is beneficial not only to migrant workers and their family members, but also to countries of origin and destination. The beneficial impact of migration is maximized when:

- migrant workers can put their skills and abilities to full use, which usually entails the recognition of their skills and qualifications;
- migrant workers have access to decent work opportunities through fair and ethical recruitment, which prevents smuggling, trafficking in persons and forced labour;
- migrants can stay in touch with communities across countries, benefiting from the power of diaspora networks, and can send remittances easily and safely to their families who have stayed behind; and
- migrants are provided with opportunities to access the labor market and be part of labour rights schemes enhancing their contributions to the development of their countries of origin and destination, their families and, of course, themselves.

II. What are key challenges and opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean in regard to the objectives of the round table?

There are several **large flows** that mark the migratory reality of the region, including those of refugees and migrants from Venezuela to the Caribbean, Central America and South America, those from Nicaragua and the countries of Northern Central America towards Mexico and USA, extra-regional flows, as well as internal migration and displacements.

A great deal of this migration occurs in an **irregular and unregulated manner**, and often through unsafe channels, due to a variety of reasons, including the lack of legal pathways for regular migration.



In addition, **recruitment along and across migration corridors is still not fair and ethical**, as many migrant workers are victims of trafficking and / or forced labour, or their basic labour rights (equal treatment, fair wages, paid rest and annual leave, freedom of association, among others) are not respected. While employers, in several areas of the region, struggle to find human talent that meets their requirements in terms of skills, qualification and experience, thousands of migrant workers are underemployed, in what some academics have referred to as ‘brain waste’. In Latin America and the Caribbean it is still common to see migrant workers with higher education qualifications engaging in low-skilled jobs.

The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as natural disasters in the North of Central America and Mexico, have severely affected the region, causing an estimated loss in working hours of the equivalent of 34 million jobs (ILO, 2020) and raising the already high levels of structural informality that characterize regional labour markets. In such a difficult socioeconomic context for the general population, it will be challenging to promote policies for the benefit of migrants, including migrant workers.

In Central America and Mexico and especially the Caribbean, **diasporas** play an important role in the development of their countries of origin, by promoting foreign investment, trade, innovation, access to technology and financial inclusion. Members of diaspora and returning migrants have a wealth of human, social, cultural, and economic capital at their disposal, which they often contribute to their societies of origin in a myriad of ways, including as entrepreneurs and by creating jobs. Unfortunately, aside from remittances there is little data being collected on the broad range of contributions that diasporas make to their countries of origin and destination as most states do not disaggregate data on investment, trade, tourism, and philanthropic transaction by migratory status.

The outbreak of COVID-19 has also raised concerns both regionally and globally regarding the capacities of migrants to send **remittances** to their families in their countries of origin, given the strong socio-economic impacts both in destination markets and in countries of origin and the loss or reduction of employment and income for many migrants. These impacts are particularly worrisome since migrant remittances can constitute a comprehensive insurance mechanism for families in countries of origin, particularly during crises, and in recognition that remittances constituted more than 10 percent and sometimes up to more than 20 percent of GDP in several countries in the region in 2019.

In April 2020, the World Bank projected a large 19.3 percent decrease in **remittance** flows to Latin American and Caribbean countries in 2020. In South America, Bolivia and Peru witnessed falls in remittances of 22%. However, so far, remittances received in other main remittance-receiving countries in the region (where monthly data is available) **have not experienced a drastic decline**. For example, remittances received by Mexico in the first eight months of 2020 registered an increase of 9.64 percent compared to the same period in 2019.

III. **What are key priority issues to be addressed in the region under the overall objective of the round table?**

- Open legal pathways for regular migration, through the design of rights-based labour migration policies, as well as bilateral or multilateral labour migration agreements along key migration corridors in the continent.



- Work with governments, employers, workers' organizations and recruitment agencies to ensure that recruitment, including international recruitment, occurs in a fair and ethical manner, and in full respect of the relevant International Labour Standards, as well as ILO's Principles and Guidelines on Fair Recruitment and the International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) standard.
- Ensure that migrant workers are enabled to send funds, on a voluntary basis, to other countries, in a safe, secure and economic manner, by working with financial institutions and governments on lowering the cost of remittances.
- Empower transnational communities of migrants and diaspora to reach their full potential as agents of sustainable development in their communities of origin and destination.

Guiding questions

- Taking into account the mid-term health and socioeconomic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, what is feasible to achieve in our region, within the next two years, in terms of opening legal pathways for regular migration?
- How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the Global Compact for Migration's implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean?
- What skills sets should be considered for either updating current labour migration mechanisms, or drafting new ones, to supply their labour force to countries such as the USA and Canada?
- How has fair and ethical recruitment been promoted in the region?
- What is the contribution of the diaspora in national development, especially in times of crisis?
- What practical initiatives have been implemented in the region to facilitate money transfers across borders? Any international good practices that we can benefit from?
- How can we improve alliances and coordination between institutions and organizations that work to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration, particularly in relation to facilitating decent work? What other actors should we include?

IV. Additional related resources

iDiaspora platform: www.idiaspora.org

ILO, Information and material on Fair Recruitment (ENG): <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/fair-recruitment/lang-en/index.htm>

ILO, Material e información sobre Contratación Equitativa (ESP): <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/fair-recruitment/lang-es/index.htm>

ILO, Desarrollo e implementación de acuerdos bilaterales de Migración Laboral: <https://www.itcilo.org/resources/desarrollo-e-implementacion-de-acuerdos-bilaterales-sobre-migracion-laboral-en>

ILO, Migración laboral, movilidad en el mundo del trabajo ante la pandemia de la COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe, [Panorama Laboral en tiempos de la COVID-19: Migración laboral, movilidad en el mundo del trabajo ante la pandemia de la COVID-19 en América Latina y el Caribe \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/publications/panorama-laboral-en-tiempos-de-la-covid-19-migracion-laboral-movilidad-en-el-mundo-del-trabajo-ante-la-pandemia-de-la-covid-19-en-america-latina-y-el-caribe)

IOM, Mecanismos sobre migración laboral en Mesoamérica (2021) <https://publications.iom.int/books/mecanismos-sobre-migracion-laboral-en-mesoamerica>



IOM, Ethical Recruitment: <https://iris.iom.int>

OIM, Sistemas De Información sobre Mercados Laborales

https://programamesoamerica.iom.int/sites/default/files/informe_regional_final.pdf

OIM, Contributions and Counting: Guidance on Measuring the Economic Impact of your Diaspora beyond Remittances: <https://publications.iom.int/books/contributions-and-counting-guidance-measuring-economic-impact-your-diaspora-beyond-remittances>

OIM, Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries: <https://publications.iom.int/books/developing-road-map-engaging-diasporas-development-handbook-policymakers-and-practitioners>

OIM, Global Diasporas reacting to the COVID-19 crisis: Best Practices from the Field:

<https://publications.iom.int/books/global-diasporas-reacting-covid-19-crisis-best-practices-field>