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A social perspective of immigration in LA

Marcela Peticara
Research Associate, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

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Why we care about migration

- The debate about international migration is acquiring a sense of urgency
 - Security concerns, demographics dynamics
- The main view is that governments are losing their capacity to keep pace with this fast evolving phenomena
- The question is how we should manage migration
 - In opposition to asking ourselves how we could stop it



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- SOPLA program (Regional Program of Social Policy in Latin America)
 - Is working for improving economic and social conditions in countries of origin
 - We care about the economic and social consequences of immigration in these countries
- We have new issues in the region as some countries absorb intraregional migration (Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica)
 - We need to discuss some issues related to living conditions and rights of migrants in these destination countries
 - Immigration problems are similar to the ones that exist in develop economies



Where we stand

Some facts about immigration in the LA region

- International migration is rapidly increasing
 - 25 million Latin American and Caribbean migrants, 13% of the worldwide total
 - Nearly 4% of its population have emigrated
 - In some Caribbean countries this proportion is as high as 20%
 - The United States is the preferred destination for most emigrants from the region
 - At the same time, the range of destination countries is becoming broader and more diversified
 - Increasing flows of Latin Americans to Europe (especially Spain), Japan and Canada
 - Spain is the second-largest destination for emigrants from LA



Where we stand

Some facts about immigration in the LA region

- Intraregional migration
 - Argentina and Costa Rica are still countries of destination
 - Chile and Brazil are new destination countries (migration from Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay and Argentina)
- Low skilled migrants
 - Exceptions: immigrants from Argentina, Uruguay, Ecuador



Some economic and social effects in home countries

- If the causes of international migration are complex, so too are its effects
- It is difficult to assess whether immigration is solely negative or positive, it might depend on
 - Relative economic/social differences between local and host countries
 - How skilled the immigrants are
 - Potential externalities (positive-negative) that might arise



Some economic and social effects in home countries

- Economic dimension
 - Remittances (Good and Bad)
 - Partnership opportunities (G)
 - Brain loss (B)
- Social/cultural dimension
 - Broken families (B)
 - Migrants can build intercultural bridges (G)



Some issues we need to work on

- **General principle**

- We cannot stop massive immigration unless we work for solving problems in countries of origin: political/economic instability, low wages, bad working conditions
- It is important to build-up institutional frameworks to facilitate business, innovation and entrepreneurship.

- **About remittances**

- They have primarily affected consumption, but we have to find ways of redirecting this remittances to local investment
- Remittances could sustain longer-term growth and development
- We need to work on remittance management (i.e. reduce transfer costs, help households to manage their “new” wealth)



Some issues we need to work on

- **Remittances**
 - Institutional framework to promote investment
 - tax breaks and government matching grants
 - creating political and economic stability and other incentives necessary to stimulate investment in the home economy
- **Partnerships opportunities**
 - (Skilled) Migrants could participate in other forms of investment in the home country, through virtual and actual skills transfers, temporary or permanent return
 - IOM's "Migration for Development in Africa" (MIDA) program
- **Intraregional immigration**
 - Several countries in the region receive intraregional migration (Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica)
 - In this sense these countries face similar challenges as USA or European countries



Some issues we need to work on

- **Intraregional immigration**
 - How to improve immigration policy in these countries
 - How to guarantee immigrant access to social, health and educational services
 - Chile: effects of amnesties / voucher system
 - We also need to work on fighting some myths around immigrants in these countries
 - Stereotypes
 - Discrimination (even from immigration officials)
 - Exploitation
 - Security concerns
 - Media messages



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THANKS!