A social perspective of immigration in LA

Marcela Perticara
Research Associate, Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

Conference on irregular migration
Legal and policy perspectives
New York, 21-22 January 2010
Why we care about migration

- The debate about international migration is acquiring a sense or urgency
  - Security concerns, demographics dynamics
- The main view is that governments are loosing 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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Research Associate, Conrad Adenauer Stiftung

THANKS!