

XV -- Expanding International Involvement and Cooperation in the Migration Field: Tackling "Root Causes"

A. General

There is now general recognition of the need to press ahead with efforts to address the "root causes" of mass migration, including asylum claimants, in source countries. Besides Canada, a number of countries, such as Germany, Sweden and Switzerland, have emphasized the point in policy statements, and there have been collective declarations in the same sense.¹ The loosely agreed September 1991 "Strategy Platform" of the Informal Consultations has a useful section on "foreign and development cooperation policy" stressing the relevance of a long list of policy issues including "development cooperation with relevant countries which strengthens their economies, furthers employment, improved standards of living and reinforces human rights", increased trade, stabilisation of world population growth, measures to avert environmental degradation, cooperation with UNHCR, UNRWA and UN development agencies, and improvement of the capability of the multilateral system to deal with the causes and effects of mass displacements.

What is not at all clear to anyone is the "how to". To prepare for early international discussion and possible action, we need to develop as soon as possible a considered Canadian view, drawing extensively on CIDA's development experts as well as CEIC's and EAITC's migration specialists (and probably the academic community), on the extent to which economic development generally, and well-targeted development assistance in particular, can help to reduce migration pressures in individual countries or areas, as well as more broadly. The authoritative July 1990 report of the US Commission for the Study of International Migration and Cooperative Economic Development, entitled Unauthorized Migration: An Economic Development Response, concluded, with particular reference to Latin America, that

"-- although there are other important factors, the search for economic opportunity is the primary motivation for most unauthorized migration to the United States; and
-- while job-creating economic growth is the ultimate solution to reducing these migratory pressures, the economic development process itself tends in the short to medium term to stimulate migration by raising expectations and enhancing people's ability to migrate. Development and the availability of new and better jobs at home, however, is the only way to diminish migratory pressures over time. ...Thus, the development solution to unauthorized migration is measured in decades--even generations. Any serious cooperative effort to reduce migratory pressures at their source must stay the course in the face of short-term contradictory results".