

Migration for development

Message by His Eminence Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, President of Caritas Internationalis, on the occasion of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, Stockholm, 13-16 May, 2014

Migration and development are important realities that are interlinked and mutually influence each other.

Development cannot be reduced to economic growth alone, often attained without a thought for the poor and the vulnerable. A better world will come about only if attention is first paid to human dignity; if human promotion is integral, taking account of every dimension of the person, including the spiritual; if no one is neglected, including the poor, the sick, prisoners, the needy and the stranger (cf. *Mt 25:31-46*); if we can prove capable of leaving behind a throwaway culture and embracing one of encounter and acceptance.

On the occasion of the 2014 World day of Migrants and refugees, Pope Francis stressed that migrants and refugees are not pawns on the chessboard of humanity (*Migrant and Refugees: Towards a Better World, 2013*). *“They are children, women and men who leave or who are forced to leave their homes for various reasons, who share a legitimate desire for knowing and having, but above all for being more.”* Today, over 230 million people migrate from one continent to another, or move within their own countries and geographical areas. These numbers represent the largest movement of people in history. As the Church accompanies migrants and refugees on their journey, she seeks to understand the causes of migration, but also works to mitigate its negative effects, and to strengthen its positive influence on the communities of origin, transit and destination.

The reality of migration needs to be approached and managed in a new, equitable and effective manner. More than anything, this calls for international cooperation and a spirit of profound solidarity and compassion – central principles for designing the post-2105 international development agenda. Cooperation at different levels is critical, including the adoption of policies and rules aimed at protecting and promoting the human person.

Pope Benedict XVI sketched the parameters of such policies, stating that they *“should set out from close collaboration between the migrants’ countries of origin and their countries of destination; they should be accompanied by adequate international norms able to coordinate different legislative systems with a view to safeguarding the needs and rights of individual migrants and their families, and at the same time, those of the host countries.”* (*Caritas in Veritate*, #62)

Making migration work for development requires that countries help one another, in a spirit of willingness and trust. Such cooperation begins with the efforts of each country to create better economic and social conditions at home, so that emigration will not be the only option left for those who seek peace, justice, security and full respect of their human dignity. The creation of opportunities for employment in the local economies will also avoid the separation of families and ensure that individuals and groups enjoy conditions of stability and serenity. It also entails that migrants and diasporas are recognized actors of development.

Finally, in considering the situation of migrants and refugees, let us join Pope Francis in his call to eliminate prejudices and presuppositions in the approach to migration. *“A change of attitude towards migrants and refugees is needed on the part of everyone, moving away from attitudes of defensiveness and fear, indifference and marginalization – all typical of a throwaway culture – towards attitudes based on a culture of encounter, the only culture capable of building a better, more just and fraternal world.”* We ourselves need to see, and then enable others to see, that migrants and refugees are not a problem to be solved, but are brothers and sisters with hopes, dreams and aspirations, with skills and talents. They should be welcomed, respected and loved. They are an occasion that providence gives us to help build a more open, just and fraternal world.

Let us believe that we are a human family and each member should have the opportunity to live and to move to another country and being respected.