

Core values

- Reduce the need for people to leave their homes
- Invest in sustainable development in immigrant-sending countries
- Reshape U.S. trade and foreign policies
- Reshape international financial institutions' policies and practices
- Link policies to address root causes to any immigration reform bill

People of faith have witnessed firsthand the suffering caused by poverty, food insecurity, violent conflict, militarization, political insecurity, persecution, and environmental destruction. Such realities prompt individuals to leave their homes in search of safety and a better life.

Irregular migration is a consequence of multiple factors, including poverty and inequality, lack of opportunity, and hope for a better future, in a context in which there are few options for legal migration. Our faiths compel us to promote conditions in which all people can live in dignity without being compelled to leave their homes. The United States should promote development goals and trade and economic reform policies that protect the poor and support local communities in immigrant-sending countries. Investment in sustainable development provides alternatives to migration for individuals seeking safe and secure futures for their families, and would also reduce the need for costly border enforcement, detention, and deportation systems estimated at almost \$18 billion in 2012.

May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people.

Psalm 72:2-4a

The most effective way to mitigate irregular immigration is by promoting accountable governance and sustainable development in immigrant-sending communities, implementing just foreign and trade policies, and establishing a well-managed migration system capable of providing legal avenues to meet our own labor needs, responding to the aspirations of immigrants, and addressing family visa backlogs. Immigration reform will neither be effective in addressing concerns about irregular migration nor truly comprehensive until the U.S. Congress recognizes and addresses the underlying causes that drive people from their homes.

The face of immigration

Antonio Garcia

Antonio Garcia, 25, returned to Chihuahua, Mexico, after working at a Texas construction site for only four months. Garcia had the foresight to know he wanted to work in the United States temporarily, save money, and return to Mexico to invest in a small business. "I never wanted to work for someone else," Garcia said.

After returning to Chihuahua, Garcia invested his savings in the machinery for a concrete block factory. A local farmers' cooperative helped him acquire tools for the business. "I bought the machinery and, little by little, it started growing," Garcia said. His success has enabled him to hire three laborers to staff his growing business. With a solid source of long-term income, Garcia is an example of a rural Mexican youth who has no need to re-migrate to the United States. "If everything goes well, I don't plan on returning," Garcia says. "Maybe only as a tourist."

With the support of local and international stakeholders, the Mexican countryside has the potential to be fertile ground for productive activities and investment rather than a source of poverty and emigration.

Source: www.bread.org/institute/papers/briefing-paper-11.pdf



“Push” factors

- Just as in biblical times, people leave their homes to avoid violent conflict, natural disasters, and economic distress
- U.S. trade policies such as NAFTA have adversely affected farmers in Mexico



“Pull” factors

- People are drawn to the U.S. for economic opportunity, safety, and to reunite with family members
- By some estimates, 60% of U.S. agricultural workers are undocumented immigrants

How do our faith principles inform our policy recommendations?

In order to truly be effective, **any legislation or administrative policy responding to the effects of migration to the U.S. should also consider and work to address the root causes of migration.** Policies to successfully address root causes should include investment in sustainable development in immigrant-sending countries, a reshaping of U.S. trade and foreign policies, and a restructuring of the policies and practices of international financial institutions.

We support legislative efforts to develop policy recommendations about how the U.S. might help countries to address the economic, trade, social, and security factors driving high rates of irregular migration. These efforts must be different for each country and help to address the unique challenges and opportunities present in each. Potential policies include development assistance, particularly for rural development, youth educational and employment opportunities, and financing opportunities for vulnerable populations. Where violence and militarization are widespread, violence prevention programs designed to increase the safety of all people and increase accountability and transparency and efforts to decrease militarization could also effectively address the root causes of migration.



Gross national income per capita
(US\$, 2013)*

Honduras	\$2,291
Guatemala	\$3,478
Mexico	\$10,307
United States	\$53,042

187 per 100,000

The homicide rate (2013) in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, the country with the highest per-capita murder rate in the world

\$3.5 billion

Annual government subsidies for U.S. corn farmers

25%

Drop in corn prices in 1994, the year in which NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) went into effect

72%

Percentage of corn farmers in Mexico who are small-scale farmers. Many Mexican farmers could not compete with subsidized U.S. corn and left farms to look for jobs in the cities and in the U.S.

* World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2015



Interfaith Immigration Coalition | interfaithimmigration.org | March 2015 | African American Ministers in Action • American Baptist Home Mission Societies of the American Baptist Churches, USA • American Friends Service Committee • American Jewish Committee • Bread for the World • Christian Reformed Church • Church of the Brethren • Church World Service • Columban Center for Advocacy & Outreach • Conference of Major Superiors of Men • Daughters of Charity • Disciples Justice Action Network (Disciples of Christ) • The Episcopal Church • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) • Franciscan Action Network • Friends Committee on National Legislation • Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society • Interfaith Worker Justice • Irish Apostolate USA • Islamic Information Center • Jesuit Refugee Service • Jewish Council for Public Affairs • Leadership Conference of Women Religious • Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service • Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns • Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office • Muslim Public Affairs Council • National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd • National Council of Churches • National Council of Jewish Women • NETWORK, A Catholic Social Justice Lobby • Pax Christi USA • PICO National Network • Presbyterian Church USA, Immigration Issues Offices • Sisters of Mercy of the Americas • Sojourners • 3P Human Security • T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights • Union for Reform Judaism • Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations • United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries • United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society • UNITED SIKHS • U.S. Jesuit Conference • World Relief