Migration and Human Rights in the Age of Globalization:
The Case of the North American Corridor
The University of Chicago
October 12-13, 2007

Migration in Post Conflict Societies: The Central American Case
By Katharine Andrade-Eekhoff,
Universidad de Centroamérica ‘José Simeón Cañas’ (UCA) in El Salvador
and the Red Internacional de Migración y Desarrollo (RIMD)

Abstract
Twenty years ago, migration from Central America was clearly seen as a result of the raging civil conflicts of the region and gross human rights violations taking place. A cold war perspective on these conflicts dominated U.S. policy in the region as well as impacting migration and asylum protocols. Good guys and bad guys; friends and foes; government forces versus insurgents. That situation, thankfully, has changed dramatically. In deed, Central America is seen as a global success story when it comes to formal peace accords and democratization processes and is no longer part of the daily headlines in international news in the north. Yet describing Central America as “post conflict” hardly seems appropriate when looking at the levels of violence and persisting human rights problems, with some familiar but mostly new facets. These conflicts continue to fuel international migration. But added to the mix of violence and human rights abuses are also issues related to regional integration and free trade as well as the impacts of global warming and natural resource depletion. This mix of violence, and economic and environmental factors have a dialectic and often times contradictory relationship with human mobility within the North American corridor. This paper will explore these issues based on a unique experience shared with Honduran, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Mexican migrant leaders from the United States in two tours in the Central American region that took place in June and August of 2007. The delegations served as preparatory analysis in order to prepare transnational advocacy agenda for NALACC. My final thoughts in this paper seek to link my analysis of the issues with the challenges involved in developing this sort of agenda.

As I sit to write this paper, Hurricane Felix dissipated and is now a tropical depression, raining down on Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. The general nervousness that now proceeds hurricane season in the region was put into full throttle yesterday when airports were closed, beach resorts evacuated and schools shut down for the day. The category five hurricane melted into the promise of saturating rainfall with probable flooding and mud slides, but nothing like what I and thousands of other Central American families braced ourselves for. And I know that in Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Washington D.C., Atlanta, Boston and hundreds of other cities in the U.S., Central American relatives have also been on pins and needles, waiting for the storm to hit and praying for the safety of loved ones. My Salvadoran mother-in-law who lives in Los Angeles, called us three times in the last few days. After all, we are watching the same news on CNN or Univisión, and she gets very worried when the weather reports repeatedly mention Red Alerts in our neck of the forest. But you must be asking, what does another rain storm in
tropical Central America have to do with migration in “post conflict” Central America? The short answer has to do with the more intimate link that has developed over the last two decades between global warming, natural resources, development and migration.

During the 1980s, migration from Central America was clearly seen as a result of the raging civil conflicts of the region and gross human rights violations taking place. A cold war perspective on these conflicts dominated U.S. policy in the region as well as impacting migration and asylum protocols. Good guys and bad guys; friends and foes; government forces versus insurgents. That situation, thankfully, has changed dramatically. In deed, Central America is seen as a global success story when it comes to formal peace accords and democratization processes and is no longer part of the daily headlines in international news in the north. Yet describing Central America as “post conflict” hardly seems appropriate when looking at the levels of violence and persisting human rights problems, with some familiar but mostly new facets. These conflicts continue to fuel international migration. But added to the mix of violence and human rights abuses are also issues related to regional integration and free trade as well as the impacts of global warming and natural resource depletion. This mix of violence, economic and environmental factors have a dialectic and often times contradictory relationship with human mobility within the North American corridor. This paper will explore these issues based on field work carried out over the last twenty years in the U.S. and Central America, as well as a unique experience shared with Honduran, Salvadoran, Guatemalan, and Mexican migrant leaders from the United States in two tours in the region that took place in June and August of 2007 to look into the underlying causes of international migration to the U.S. and the implications for their advocacy work in the north. The experiences highlight how the root causes of migration have persisted and evolved over the last thirty years. I will first look at those issues that persist as they relate to violence and human rights abuses, followed by those topics linked more to economic (dis)integration in the region, and thirdly incorporate global warming and natural resource depletion/preservation. My concluding remarks will attempt to put the issues, actors and potential agenda for transnational advocacy and research together that can simultaneously serve as a policy platform.

1 The tours are part of work that the National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities (NALACC) (www.nalacc.org) organized to develop a transnational agenda of advocacy and action for the 80 some odd member organizations. The first tour covered Honduras and El Salvador over a 7 day period and focused on free trade issues, regional integration policy, small producers and environmental issues. The second tour, of 10 days, focused on issues related to indigenous and afrolatino communities in Honduras and Guatemala, incorporating an understanding of the roll of microfinance as well as a more current understanding of the human rights issues facing new migrants from the region. Migrant leaders that participated included a mix of men and women leaders living in Los Angeles, Washington DC, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Boston, Cincinnati, Miami and Milwaukee. Participants were born in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Puerto Rico and included first generation as well as 1.5 generation migrant leaders. The tour included visits to government officials, particularly with Foreign Affairs, as well as well European Union and IADB functionaries. Meetings were held with the respective members of the Salvadoran, Honduran and Guatemalan civil society forums on migration. But more uniquely, these leaders also touched based with groups of small farmers, indigenous and Garifuna community leaders, microfinance institutions, community development organizations and local mayors and city councils, as well as academics and church leaders.
Violence and human rights violations:
While Central American countries have improved their human rights records greatly after the regional processes of Peace Accords and cessation of politically motivated armed conflict, violence continues to mark the region. Politically motivated human rights abuses persist. Over 50 political candidates were murdered in the campaign period leading to the September 9th, 2007 elections for President, Vice President, legislative assembly and city councils in Guatemala (La Prensa Grafica, 1 sept. 2007). Family members of candidates have also been direct victims of violence, where at least three children of political party candidates or activists were murdered in the months prior to the elections (Siglo XXI, 5 sept. 2007). Political tensions always increase before elections in each of the countries of the region, but generalized level of intolerance persists among diverse political perspectives and ideologies in the region regardless of the electoral ebb and flow. Guatemala perhaps represents the extreme in this situation where political adversaries or their family members are eliminated. But threats, kidnappings, and attempts on the lives of those who stand up to injustice or seek to promote the human rights of others in the region persists in Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua as well. While the number of cases of politically motivated violence and human rights abuses is certainly much less than during the dark days of the 1980s, the human rights ombudsmen and non-governmental human rights organizations as well as new organizational expressions for human rights (i.e. Youth and gang members, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered, (GLBT) communities) continue to document and denounce violations while working for awareness and spaces for respect and tolerance.

But the politically motivated forms of violence or human rights abuses are not what really concern the everyday lives of the general population. El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala claim the notorious first place in Latin America in homicide rates (see Table 1). Debates rage about whether or not things are improving, the ineffective justice systems and who is to blame for little improvement (the police, the judges, the prosecutors). But the fact of the matter is that this form of violence is much more present in the public psyche than any other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Murders in 2005</th>
<th>X 100,000 people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>3,761</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>2,836</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente (Enfoques, La Prensa Grafica, and Ribando, 2007)

Three main causes are seen as the root of the problem: narco-trafficking, youth gangs and deportees. The drug trade weighs heavily in certain territories of the region exacting a high toll in human terms as well as to the institutions set up to preserve and protect the public (i.e. civilian police forces). Probably the most visible and polemic of these cases was the murder in Guatemala of three Salvadoran members of the Central American parliament in March of 2007. The quick arrest of several members of the National Civilian Police force in Guatemala, subsequently murdered within 24 hours while in police custody, essentially closed the book on the investigation. But the case revealed to all the manner in which organized crime operates on a
regional level and has penetrated public institutions that were supposedly cleansed following the peace accords. Similar concerns of intertwining of police and organized crime structures exist in El Salvador, especially related to the extortions faced by businessmen—particularly targeting bus owners and their employees. In 2003, the National Civil Police of El Salvador reported 289 cases of extortion, 314 in 2004 and 493 in 2005. 2006 broke all records with over 2,145 cases representing an increase of 335% (El Faro, 1 January 2007). Because of these problems of violence, some seek safer options outside of the country. But even then, anecdotal evidence points to migrants and their families as targeting victims of violence. Field researchers with the Salvadoran Foundation for Development, FUSADES, while carrying out a 2007 study on new financial products and remittances for the Banco Agricola and the Interamerican Development Bank (IADB) in the eastern region of El Salvador and the greater Washington D.C. area, reported that migrants would not even answer phone calls from El Salvador on their cell phone if they did not recognize the number, fearing extortions.

And youth gangs are also part of the new scenarios of violence. Twenty years ago, many of the asylum cases I prepared were for young poor men fearing forced recruitment of the army or guerilla. Today, young poor men (especially urban) continue to leave because of forced recruitment fears, but due to gang activity in their communities. Ironically, these young men (and women as well) fleeing gang recruitment in Central America, may end up in neighborhoods most impacted by youth gangs in Los Angeles, Washington DC, Boston and other urban centers where graffitied walls mark the territories of the Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street gangs. In Central America, MS and 18th Street gangs (as well as others) can be found in San Salvador, Chalchuapa, San Miguel, Usulutan, San Pedro Sula, Tegucigalpa, Guatemala City, Tecún Uman and even parts of Mexico. The prisons in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador are segregated based on gang affiliation in an effort to control violence within the prison. Estimates on the number of young people in gangs in Central America vary from between 70,000 to 100,000 to upwards of 300,000 (Ribando, 2006 cited in WOLA, 2006). The FBI estimates that approximately 38,000 individuals are members of the MS and 18th Street gangs in the U.S. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2004, cited in WOLA, 2006).

Many link the youth gang problem directly to immigration. Central American policy makers blame gang problems in the region on deportees from the United States, while the U.S. tends to blame migrants for gang related problems in the streets of major urban areas. The last several years have seen a dramatic increase in deportations to the region² (see table 2). This has lead to a criminalization in both the United States and Central America of migrants and young men, and feeds into the policy directives that see migrants and migration as a security problem. For example, the General Directorate of Migration in El Salvador is now a dependency of the Ministry of Security and Justice, rather than the Ministry of the Interior/Governance, as has been the tradition. Security policy (and within that migration policy particularly related to deportees and youth gangs) are one of the key areas in which the governments of Central America and the

²Deportations from the U.S. to Central America started increasing in 1999. In El Salvador deportations from the U.S. slowly rose from about 2,600 in 1999 to over 7,000 in 2004. But in 2002, deportation increased dramatically as Mexico took on a more prominent roll in interdiction and arrests. In that year, 16,828 Salvadorans were deported from Mexico. In 2005, some 35,900 Salvadorans were deported via land; and almost 26,000 in 2006. However, after the failed attempt at immigration reform in the U.S., Mexico has rolled back its interdiction policy and only 8,821 Salvadorans were deported by land in the first six months of 2007 (Based on data from the Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería del Ministerio de Gobernación, Gobierno de El Salvador).
United States are more closely collaborating and developing truly transnational policy initiatives (zero tolerance policies in the U.S.; “Mano Dura” implemented in El Salvador and Honduras and promised as part of government policy in the Guatemalan Presidential elections of 2007.) (Zilberg, forthcoming). At the same time, community organizations working with youth at risk or gang members, point to rampant levels of violence targeting young poor urban men and “social cleansing” taking place in the region, reminiscent of death squad type activity from the 1980s. In 1994, a Salvadoran death squad called “Black Shadow” (Sombra Negra) carried out social cleansing of young men link to gang activities. On August 14, 2007, flyers threatening social cleansing of “vagos”, “maleantes” and “vichos vagos de las escuelas y colegios”\(^3\) began to circulate in Chalchuapa, in western El Salvador where 10 murders took place in July and 15 more in August, more than half of those committed during all of 2006 (El Faro, 17 sept. 2007). Advocates working with at risk young people in Guatemala City also mentioned the practice, and similar situations are documented in Honduras (Moreno, 2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Costa Rica</th>
<th>El Salvador</th>
<th>Guatemala</th>
<th>Honduras</th>
<th>Nicaragua</th>
<th>Panamá</th>
<th>Total Central America</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY 2005</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>7,235</td>
<td>12,539</td>
<td>14,556</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>38,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2,665</td>
<td>1,840</td>
<td>2,467</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>7,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Criminal</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>4,570</td>
<td>10,689</td>
<td>12,089</td>
<td>677</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28,333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY 2006</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>563</td>
<td>10,312</td>
<td>18,386</td>
<td>26,526</td>
<td>2,241</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>58,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>3,679</td>
<td>3,589</td>
<td>5,559</td>
<td>585</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>13,621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Criminal</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>6,633</td>
<td>14,797</td>
<td>20,967</td>
<td>1,656</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FY 2007 (through June 18, 2007)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>12,499</td>
<td>14,234</td>
<td>18,419</td>
<td>1,457</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>49,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3,138</td>
<td>2,238</td>
<td>3,560</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>9,402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Criminal</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>9,361</td>
<td>11,996</td>
<td>14,859</td>
<td>1,112</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37,590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ribando, 2007, Table 1, based on data from Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Detention and Removal.

The multiple factors linking violence and migration point to a downward spiral of causation between violence and migration. From Central America, there appears to be no end in site, especially if policy makers continue to push forward the ineffectual but highly popular initiatives like “Mano Dura”.

At the same time, the migration process in and of itself, has created a whole new class of human rights victims. Those individuals with few economic and social resources are the main victims as they take the least “expensive” but most dangerous routes north. These are the men and women who head north without the “services” of a coyote- or who hire the services of these guides at particular points along the journey but make their way north clinging to the rungs of the freight trains in Mexico. The Central American victims of assault, robbery and rape number in the thousands; the assailants face total impunity. Because of deaths and disappearances, a new form of families of the disappeared has emerged in Central America. In Honduras, a network of committees of family members of migrants has been organized (COFRAMIPRO, Committee of Family Members of Migrants of Progreso), especially among those family members where the

\(^3\) Roughly translated these terms mean vagabonds, bad people and lazy school kids.
A migrant died in route or has gone missing. In 2006, a similar organization was formed in El Salvador, COFAMIDE (Committee of Family Members of the Disappeared of El Salvador). Reminiscent of the committees of mothers of the disappeared during the 1980s, these parents seek information about their children who left in search of more and better opportunities, and “disappeared” en route.

**Economic policy, integration, remittances and sustainable livelihoods:**

In December, 2005, Toño decided that he was tired of his $150 a month security guard job that offered no benefits and extremely few possibilities for moving up the ladder, not to mention the very real risk of being shot. It had long been clear to him that his high school diploma was not going to get him very far either in San Salvador or in his home canton in San Esteban Catarina, San Vicente- despite being the first in his family to graduate with such a high level of education. His father only planted enough corn and beans for the family’s consumption since the market for these products means selling them at a loss- so traditional agricultural options are a dead end. The better paying jobs in San Salvador require at least “80%” English or at the very least, computer skills, neither of which were skills that Toño had any real prospect of mastering in the coming years. So, he opted for seeking out more and better options in Los Angeles. The trip was cruel but he made it and within two months had paid off his debts- about $1,500 (Toño got off “cheap” as many migrants who hire coyote services pay $7,000 to 9,000 these days). And ironically, he found employment working in construction in L.A., where neither computer skills nor even a minimal working knowledge of English were required.

The 2005 Human Development Report for El Salvador (PNUD, 2005) prepared by the UNDP pointed to the contradictory nature of the economy in the country- evidence of which can be seen throughout the region, and is clearly depicted in Toño’s story. How can it be explained that public opinion surveys continually reflect that the main problems of the country relate to the lack of employment opportunities, especially among youth, while a temporary worker program with Honduras and Nicaragua has been established to fill jobs in sugar cane and coffee harvests; or call centers have gone to recruiting Salvadorans abroad to return and work in El Salvador because they can not fill the openings in the country? At the same time, El Salvador has had over ten years of lack luster economic growth, but shopping malls continue to be erected and are bursting at the seams with shoppers. Agricultural land prices have skyrocketed but corn and bean farmers sell their crops at a loss. Locally, just over half the population of rural Anamoros in La Union falls below the poverty line, yet the local high school lunch crowd provides a thriving business for “Three Flags Pizza” (complete with menu in English and Spanish; the flags are Salvadoran, U.S. and Colombian- the owner, Salvadoran, and his wife, Colombian, live in Houston, thus explaining the “three flags”) housed next door to the school in a five story building. And the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP) in El Salvador recently criticized the Salvadoran government’s analysis that the country was producing more college graduates. ANEP argues that the university programs do not adequately prepare new workers for the labor market in general, not to mention the more competitive labor market emerging in certain service sectors. (*La Prensa Grafica*, 15 sept. 2007).

These examples are evidence of the contradictory manner in which economic policy and development play out in the lives and livelihoods of Central Americans throughout the region, and the manner in which migration and remittance feed into the system. While some are able to
make substantial improvements to their livelihoods and standard of living, others are barely able to make ends meet. Regional integration policies, such as the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), Plan Pueblo Panama (PPP), the European Union Association Accords and the Millennium Challenge Grant continue to mark the terms of integration and build upon structural adjustment and economic stabilization programs of the 1990s. Focused on providing the logistical integration of the region (ports, highways, airports and telecommunications), the policies are designed to mobilize not only major infrastructure initiatives but also promote the financial integration of the region and even greater levels of privatization of services (health and water for example) giving enormous privileges to foreign corporations over national or local businesses (Moreno, 2007). Contrasting evidence is presented concerning the positive and negative impact of these policies, and monitoring efforts are only just underway as the region celebrates the first anniversary of the implementation of DR-CAFTA. But numerous reports reflect that these regional integration initiatives reinforce an already unequal playing field (Oxfam, 2002; Iniciativa CID, 2006; Moreno, 2006). One particularly onerous aspect of the free trade agreements relates to the ability of corporations to sue states for projected but nonexistent profits hampered by the implementation of environmental, social or fiscal policies. It essentially creates a mechanism obliging states to pay corporations\textsuperscript{4}, and in doing so creating a legal framework for Central American states to subsidize foreign corporations, resulting in an extremely “anti-development” policy for the Central American population. With this sort of framework, is it any wonder that Central American economies and business people are hard pressed to create and sustain attractive jobs for the local population, and thus build viable alternatives to international migration. And while educational coverage has improved, the quality still lags behind. Some analysts, and many people on the street, would argue that the economic model is designed to expel the surplus of low skilled workers in order for them to send back remittances which feed into the economy of consumption being developed in the region (Gammage, 2006; PNUD, 2005).

However, despite this policy framework, local communities are forging alternatives that offer promise, albeit in small doses. The Red COMAL\textsuperscript{5} in Honduras harnesses the efforts of thousands of small agricultural producers focused on food security for the local population. Their network of stores in small rural communities (Unidad Regional de Mayoreo, URM or Regional Units for Bulk sales), especially in Central and Southern Honduras, provides a means of commercialization, education and financing for farmers. The use of Unidades de Intercambio Solidario (UDIS) or Units of Solidarity Exchange as an alternative currency is a radical twist on an old practice of the banana plantation companies that forced workers to purchase all their goods at company owned stores. Exchanged on a one to one rate with the Honduran lempira, UDIS free up lempiras for use outside the network, create a means of exchange among workers, farmers and the stores, and have proven to be safer to carry around than official Honduran currency\textsuperscript{6}. The contrast could not be greater when compared to the 2001 implementation of U.S. dollars as the official Salvadoran currency, fazing out the national currency, the colon. These

---

\textsuperscript{4} See Moreno, 2006 for a full analysis of the mechanism and specific cases related to suits filed by corporations and the rulings passed down).

\textsuperscript{5} http://www.redcomal.org.hn/

\textsuperscript{6} Red Comal staff reported that when individuals have been robbed, their lempiras are stolen but the thieves have little use for UDIS which are left behind. Women mentioned that men are unable to purchase liquor in the network of stores of Red COMAL, and thus the UDIS are way of protecting family income and sustenance.
two examples demonstrate opposing monetary policies taking place world wide. The UDIS represent local community efforts to take back control of their economies and production, whereas the trend towards dollarization puts economic policy in the hands of the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Another successful example in the region can be seen through Aj´Ticonel, an export company specializing in mini-vegetables produced in Chimaltenango, Guatemala by harnessing the collective production efforts of hundreds of small indigenous farmers (Monterrosa, Romemont, de León, y Grajeda, 2006). Together with the sister not-for-profit organization, Opción, this initiative has built skills and production capacity for competing in high end vegetable markets in the U.S. and Europe. And while many argue that the non-tariff barriers of CAFTA are the real problem, Opción/Aj´Ticonel views the sanitary requirements as basic good practices for ensuring clean food, reducing the use of pesticides, and improving the overall health and living conditions of small farmers. A similar, but much more incipient and smaller effort is underway through Red RAIS (Alternative Network for Solidarity Exchange) working with 30 community organizations to sell various types of organically produced food products, aromatic oils, cosmetics and natural medicines. And the Asociación Gremial del Empresariado Rural -AGER- supports the efforts of 27 rural organizations with over 7,500 small rural producers (Aj´Ticonel being one of them).

These are not the only examples in the Central American region of national and local efforts focused on constructing and strengthening the options and capacity of small rural producers. They represent the gamma of perspectives from Red COMAL focused on food security and producing for the local and national population to AGER and Aj´Ticonel more oriented to the export market and competing with the likes of WallMart. What they have in common are efforts to work with small producers willing to innovate and create viable and lasting alternatives to migration.

While these initiatives focus on the productive capacity in rural communities, financial institutions (private banks, microfinance organizations and credit unions) are playing a greater role by expanding their coverage and types of services throughout the region. And they are especially interested in harnessing and channeling the billions of dollars that enter in the form of remittances (see Table 3).

Table 3. Key economic indicators and remittances for the Central American and the Dominican Republic (2005)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Remittances (millions)</th>
<th>Remittances per capita</th>
<th>Remittances as a % of</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belice</td>
<td>$18</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>$62</td>
<td>$83</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>$2,830</td>
<td>$411</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>$2,993</td>
<td>$238</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>$1,763</td>
<td>$245</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>$850</td>
<td>$154</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panamá</td>
<td>$254</td>
<td>$78</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>$2,682</td>
<td>$302</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While all the major banks of Central America (and in deed the foreign conglomerates that are buying them up) are expanding services into low income sectors both in the U.S. and Central America, most of the emphasis is on personal or commercial loans rather than production. But among microfinance organizations and credit unions in the region\(^7\), the expansion of financial services to low income sectors combined with the channeling of remittances is leading to some exciting and positive outcomes, although we are also discovering new challenges. For example, in the department of Intibucá in southern Honduras, families are in fact opening savings accounts in credit unions with a portion of their remittances. In Suchitoto, El Salvador the credit union has been able to encourage remittances recipients to save a portion of their funds, leading to a capitalization of the credit union. Thus loaning out more funds to local business people and agricultural producers, thereby strengthening their activities. As a result, the credit union, which in 2000 was bankrupt, started generating a modest but significant profit in 2005. In Guatemala, a credit union serving the south eastern part of the country around Zacapa and Chiquimula departments (COOSAJO de R.L\(^8\)), has an office in New York to facilitate remittances but also video conferences for families to stay in touch with each other, and e-commerce. With increased savings in Guatemala based on remittances as well as a shift of clientele from private banks to the credit union,\(^9\) COOSAJO also has also helped start up three collective business ventures based on activities present in the local economy. These include a small business training center, a coffee export company (working with small local coffee producers), and a tourism company to diversify the supply aspect of the local tourist market (focused on religious visits to the Cathedral and the Black Christ in Equipulas).

In each of these examples, remittances are channeled into financial institutions that serve the local economy and business people who are then able to improve, innovate or expand their productive capacities. However, these success stories are located in territories in which the local economy has the capacity to absorb increasing amounts of cash in the form of remittances. They serve as an important source of fuel for the motor of the local economy. In those communities where there is essentially no motor, increasing levels of cash only flood the community and rather than resolve problems, create new ones. For example, in one canton in El Salvador, families invest in houses that are never inhabited; one elaborate house serves as a place to raise chickens; one home was wrapped in plastic to preserve their contents—when the family visits they stay in the nearby town because the children get sick when staying in the countryside (probably due to the lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities). Examples are also present of credit unions that are able to encourage new membership and savings among remittance recipients.

---

\(^7\) Microfinance organizations provide loans and additional services to small business people or agricultural producers. Credit Unions are membership financial organizations that offer savings accounts as well as loans and other financial products. The main difference between the two lies in the ability to offer savings (and in a few cases, checking) accounts.


\(^9\) At the end of 2006 and beginning of 2007, a series of banking scandals and insolvency lead to a serious erosion of confidence in the private sector in Guatemala. Credit unions have been one of the beneficiaries as hundreds of Guatemalans have placed their funds in what they consider to be more reliable and solvent financial institutions.
recipients, but are unable to place loans in the local economy, thus creating a serious liquidity problem for the credit union. In some cases, they have had to close their doors because of sustainability problems.

So the lack of economic opportunities for residents along with an established social network of migrants continues to fuel migration; at the same time migration and remittances are able to generate new economic opportunities at home, but are clearly unable to resolve long term development problems in the global economy. The cards are stacked against small producers and businesses with the policies that have sought greater economic integration, yet there are successful, albeit small, expressions of alternatives through out the region of efforts to build an alternative market or economy or seek out the spaces in which to participate in the global economy. The lesson from these examples is one that has also been voiced by the Red Internacional de Migración y Desarrollo as well as coalitions of migrant led organizations, and now by the IADB, World Bank and UNDP: remittances can be an important source of capitalization but can not substitute sound economic policies nor resolve the historic problems of a lack of development in high migration areas (PNUD, 2005; Fajnzlber y Lopez, 2006; IADB, MIF 2006).10

The multiple types of initiatives that seek to link remittances with development11 are creating infrastructure, supplementing weak social investment in the region, and beginning to forge some business spaces in activities linked to the “economy of migration”12. Yet they miss the bigger picture of how the economy is structured and whether or not in the medium term this “model” is sustainable. For this model to function, it requires new migrants to continually leave and send home dollars from abroad. But given the growing limits and restrictions placed on migrants, the feasibility of this is under strain and the costs that migrants, their families and communities end up paying is extremely high and borne almost exclusively by those with scarce resources (PNUD, 2005). In other words, the underlying causes of a lack of viable economic and social opportunities in Central America for the majority of the population will continue to fuel migration. Those opportunities that are being created are either very limited in their scope, although extremely promising, or are mismatched to the skills and abilities of those in search of

---

10 See various declarations in international conferences carried out by the RIMD, www.migracionydesarrollo.org, in particular “Conclusiones de la Conferencia sobre Migración y Desarrollo: Perspectivas desde El Sur, Bellagio, 2006; as well as the “Morelia Declaration, of the 1st Latin American Migrant Summit” in Morelia, Michoacán, México, May 2007.

11 These include government matching fund programs such as Mexico’s 3x1 or El Salvador’s Unidos por la Solidaridad, as well as IADB funding initiatives through the Multilateral Investment Fund, and support from private foundations or other bi-lateral aid programs concerning migration and development (US AID’s 2004-2005 pilot program ALCANCE; in Honduras GTZ (German Cooperation) support for microfinance initiatives; Ford Foundation grants to microlending groups; InterAmerican Foundation support to multiple initiatives in the region mainly around the work of hometown associations, or the Pan American Development Foundations joint initiative with Banco Agricola in El Salvador carried out in conjunction with Salvadoran hometown associations for educational projects).

12 The economy of migration includes a plethora of economic activities above and beyond the remittance market. This “economy of migration” includes activities such as the actual business of migrating (legal documents, coyote fees, hotels and transportation en route), nostalgic trade (food products mostly), nostalgic tourism including airline transportation, international telephone calls between migrants and their families, the market of used goods shipped from the north to the south via migrant networks, construction linked to migration and remittances, shopping malls fueled by remittance dollars, etc.
these opportunities. So in the meantime, young men and women, from rural and urban areas, are continuing to head north, where the skills that they do have are more valued and put to use, even in the incredibly hostile climate of the north.

**Global warming and natural resource depletion/preservation:**

While generally not mentioned as specific problems linked to international migration in the North American corridor, issues related to global warming and natural resource depletion or preservation are becoming more and more evident, with differing territorial impacts. Hard evidence linking this global issue to migration is difficult to come by in this arena, but this set of issues is one that will undoubtedly gain in importance as a key factor contributing to human movement. Specifically, hurricanes, flooding, mud slides, drought, rampant urbanization, mining, and over-fishing have negative impacts in the livelihoods of farmers, small business people, and families in general. Hurricane Mitch in 1998 affected thousands of Honduran and Nicaraguan families and generated in its wake a huge exodus of individuals who migrated north for the first time. The 2001 earthquakes in El Salvador coupled with the dollarization of the economy, triggered a tidal wave of migration of young people from rural areas. Estimates of 750 to 800 people leaving per day have circulated since about 2001 in El Salvador, and in many towns people see migration not as something that is happening every once in a while, but as a regular phenomena with stories of a group of people leaving almost weekly or monthly. And while no one in these communities really talks about global warming or natural resource depletion as a cause of migration, by reading between the lines, it is clear that this is going on. For example, in Chimaltenango Guatemala, Hurricane Stan (September 2005) practically wiped out, and certainly set back, the efforts of Aj´Ticonel when hundreds of small farmers lost their crops to be exported. In Nueva Armenia on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras, Garifuna fishermen complained of the noticeable shortage of fish in their coastal waters. Drought and then flooding have damaged the corn and bean crops of many farmers throughout the region. Faced with few options locally, more people are turning to the social networks established through migration to seek out better or at least more opportunities in the U.S.

Central America has been particularly affected by global warming and the extreme weather patterns that have grown more intense over the last several decades. Not only do these problems generate new migrants, they have the potential of directly causing major movements of vast numbers of people in extremely vulnerable conditions. In 2005, hurricane Katrina in the U.S. certainly demonstrated this fact as did the December, 2004 tsunami in Asia. But although less visible, the region is under continual strain from hundreds of smaller climate and natural disaster related phenomena that continually displace small groups of people. When added together, the impact is not so small and certainly is a contributing factor de migration in the North America Corridor (Muller, 2006).

But again, there are encouraging movements throughout the region. The Red Comal’s efforts in Honduras in working with small farmers to ensure food security, is also part of an analysis concerning the growing environmental vulnerability faced by the population in the region in terms of food security. Red RAIS in Guatemala promotes efforts linked to organic agricultural production and the recognition of the value of traditional crops and medicinal plants used historically by indigenous communities. The Garifuna communities on the Atlantic coast and the indigenous populations of the Peten are finding a renewed value in their cultural heritage and the
links to encouraging tourism based on their environmental resources\textsuperscript{13}. And the territorial planning process in the of the eight municipalities that form the \textit{Mancomunidad} of La Montañona in Chalatenango is one of the better examples in the region of local governments working together to create a regulatory and planning framework that recognizes the important environmental and cultural resources in the region, and among some of the poorest communities of El Salvador (Kandel and Rosas, 2005).

One analytical framework for understanding and valuing these resources and the rural populations in the region play in their maintenance and sustainable use has been presented by PRISMA, the Salvadoran Program of Research on Development and Environment. Based on work in conjunction with rural communities in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica, PRISMA has articulated a proposal that would seek various forms of compensation for eco-systemic services that benefit the general population but are provided by rural inhabitants (PRISMA, 2007; Kandel, Rosas and Dimas 2003). These services are defined as benefits that individuals obtain from eco-systems and divides them into four types of services: a) providing for food, water, combustibles, and fibers; b) regulatory services such as plagues, disease, climate regulation and water purification and regulation; c) cultural services such as spiritual values, cultural diversity and recreation, and d) support services such as soil formation, oxygen production, nutrient recycling, polinization, etc. The proposal would essentially revalue the role rural communities play in societies, creating mechanisms to ensure that peasant and indigenous populations can ensure their self-sufficiency as well as generate income. The proposal has received growing attention on a policy level outside of Central America but has made little headway within the region, and has yet to find a way to be articulated concretely. But the conceptual framework behind it is a powerful way of mitigating global climate change, placing a value on rural and environmental resources, and in doing so, creating alternatives for many areas directly impacted by out-migration.

At the same time, because many migrants live and work in the United States, they over time are adopting modes of consumption typical of the United States and begin to reproduce these in their home communities. This is an emerging issue, but can be clearly perceived in certain towns and rural communities where migrants build their “dream homes” based on US infrastructure or resource use (access to water, drainage systems, sanitation and garbage disposal systems) that are practically absent in the home community. This style of consumption and resource use is present in pockets of communities throughout the region, but most noticeable in El Salvador. At the same time, migrants who return to visit their home communities are quick to notice the environmental problems created by trash, chemical and biological run off into streams and lakes used for drinking water, and a myriad of other environmental problems that persist in the region. In the June, 2007 NALACC delegation, migrant leaders meet with Rick Jones of Catholic Relief Services in El Salvador, who specifically mentioned the roll that migrant led organizations could play in educating their communities in the US as well as at home about how their modes of consumption can contribute to more or less sustainable societies and global warming. This is the first time that I have heard this argument expressed and it certainly resonates true when observing the changes to the built environment throughout the region. Several hometown associations in the U.S. have in fact funded small and isolated initiatives to reforest coastal

\textsuperscript{13} Not without new forms of development problems as related to mega-tourism projects that tend to leave local populations marginalized at best or expropriated and squeezed out.
mangroves in southern El Salvador, or mountain hillsides in San Miguel, or create an export market for organic products in Chicago between Casa Guatemala and Red RAIS. But this sort of global link between migration and the environment will take several years to catch on.

The multiple manners in which natural resources and climate changes play out in the region and the relationship to migration has yet to be seriously analyzed. Yet, conversations sustained throughout the region point to how climate change negatively impacts the livelihoods of thousands of families and leads to displacement of people, some of whom move to marginal communities with in the country while others consider that options are better in another country. Natural disasters are a part of this picture, but at the same time the environmental consequences of the models of development also play a role, as do the modes of consumption that migrants adopt in wealthy nations and begin to replicate back “home”. At the same time, migrants together with home communities could play a significant role not only in building awareness but in forging new types of ties that could build an initial foundation of the conceptual framework that PRISMA has proposed. But just like economic development in the previous section, migrants and their home communities can certainly play a vital and central role in this arena, but larger more significant changes require national and international policy intervention.

So, what does all this mean? Summarizing and some ideas related to advocacy and policy for the future.

It has been my goal in this paper to try and show how migration in the North American Corridor, focused on the experiences in Central America has evolved over the last several decades, with persistent issues that dominated the picture during the 1980s, while new facets also emerge in the migration, development and violence analysis. This is all part of the new global scenario facing the region. To date, migrants and their organizations have been seen mostly as secondary actors invited to play a role after the economic and political recipe has been determined and even cooked. And while the NALACC transnational advocacy agenda is still being drafted for discussion and debate by its members, the idea behind it is a bold move to place migrant led organizations in the center of the discussions.

What NALACC is proposing to do moves the migration/development debate to another playing field with different actors. It is far removed from the traditional emphasis on remittances or hometown associations building infrastructure or sponsoring scholarship programs. It means that visits to the Interamerican Development Bank by migrant leaders would not be to discuss matching funds programs for productive investment schemes, but rather how the loans and donations made by the IADB impact opportunities for local producers in home countries. It means that U. S. congressional visits would involve discussions with those committees responsible for the trade and farm bills, and ensuring fair labor conditions in both sending and receiving countries. And it means meeting with Salvadoran, Honduran and Guatemalan Ambassadors regarding the negotiations, reforms and regulations concerning free trade, fair trade and regional integration. NALACC’s proposal is a radical shift in viewing the potential of migrant-led organizations. It essentially sees them as key actors not only linked to the debates concerning migration reform and the billions of dollars migrants send home to their families and communities, but rather it proposes to move migrants into forums that underlie the root causes of international labor migration. It is a formidable challenge as it requires not only developing a better understanding of the debates and issues but also a whole set of different actors and how
and where to apply political pressure for concrete changes amongst organizations that may have very distinct opinions about the long term goals and how to get there. None-the-less, the fact that the NALACC leadership has embarked on this route, opens up the playing field for rethinking the manner in which many of us conceptualize (and limit) the role of migrants and their organizations. So in an effort to think creatively about the issues, actors and potential role of migrant led organizations in some of these arenas, I would like to propose some initial ideas based on how I have seen things evolve over the last several decades in the region and in the U.S. but renovated based on the engagement of migrant led groups with new types of actors through the NALACC delegations.

These ideas are rough, with lots of holes, but they are presented in an attempt to shift some of the ideas around migration, development and violence. If they resonate in anyway with various actors, I am sure others will help polish and refine them, while throwing out those things that do not make sense. In an attempt to summarize these ideas, Table 4 breaks down the issues discussed in this paper, mentions ideas of some key civil society actors in Central and North America, identifies some of the key policy makers, to then highlight various potential research topics and brainstorming ideas of avenues for developing a transnational agenda for advocacy and action among migrant-led organizations in the US.

**Violence and human rights:** As discussed above, political violence and persistent human rights abuses continue to contribute to international migration throughout the Central American region despite the peace accords and general processes of democratization of the 1990s. However, compared to the 1980s, the levels of political violence and types of human rights abuses have certainly changed. But violence and migration have taken on new “synergies”: the growing narco-trafficking throughout the region generates its own violence and victims as well as a merging of structures between the state and organized crime; homicide rates and extortions have skyrocketed generating additional reasons to migrate; Central American youth gangs are a real and growing problem in the U.S. as well as throughout the region generating new victims, human rights abuses and reasons for young people to fear a new type of “forced recruitment”. Deportations from the U.S. and Mexico to Central America are considered by many policy makers and politicians to be the cause of youth gangs and violence, essentially criminalizing both young people as well as migrants. The level of deportations has essentially converted Central American countries not only as sources of out-migration to the north but also as countries of reception of their co-nationals. And new forms of organizing are emerging in the region as a result, some reminiscent of the committees of the mothers of the disappeared of the 1980s, but now formed around the sons and daughters who have gone missing or been found dead en route to the U.S., further evidence of the victimization of migrants.

Given this backdrop, and the organizational history of many of the Central American groups in the U.S., the issues related to human rights abuses and violence are probably the most clearly understood (at least among the Central American members of NALACC). Yet the ties between those organizations in Central American and migrant led groups in the north, are relatively thin and sporadic. Natural allies exist throughout the region, *Mesas de Migrantes* or *Foros de Migrantes* are active with differing levels of organization and activity in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua. Additionally, the *Red Regional de Organizations Civiles de Migración* (RROCM) is also another natural space and ally working regionally (via the counties...
involved in the Plan Pueblo Panama). The various Migrant Shelters (*Casas del Migrante*) run by the Scalabrinis or other charities are also important spaces of humanitarian support, education as well as advocacy. The staff of these houses are on the front line of migrants humanitarian needs, especially the most vulnerable of migrants. But their work is far from providing shelter and food to migrants in transit. It includes solidarity, education, reflection as well advocacy with policy makers. A clear first step would be forging common points of agenda related to advocacy and policy among migrant led organizations in the U.S. and the existing *Mesas or Foros de Migración* and RROCM targeting a broad sector of actors from church, police, educators, and local governments (in the U.S., Mexico and Central America) in addition to targeting national governments, legislative assembly’s or congresses, and multi or bi-lateral actors (IADB, UN family, World Bank, US AID and European funders\(^{14}\)).

However, my perception is that the new faces of this violence, particularly that related to the criminalization of youth and migrants, and narco-trafficking are relatively less well perceived and understood. And among those organizations working on these issues in Central America, the ties between groups in the region with those in the U.S. are even weaker and thinner. There are expressed concerns among many migrant led groups in the U.S. and they are shared by multiple organizations in the region, especially among the members of the various national and regional civil society forums on migration. But for the most part, structuring an agenda linking efforts among these groups in Central America with those in the U.S. is practically non-existent. The issues related to the criminalization of youth and migrants, as well as the increasing deportations are powerful reasons to try and extend efforts across borders to work towards more integrated policies founded upon humanitarian and human rights principals. And there are concrete actors throughout the U.S. and Central America addressing these issues. A particularly interesting prospect could involve strengthening the space of the Central American Youth Parliament with participation from like groups (young people at risk of gang involvement or active in youth gangs) of Central American youth in the U.S. But for the most part, there is a gap in forging initiatives and efforts between non-govermental actors in the North and those in Central America, where as governments have moved in a much more forceful manner with concrete proposals and policies, albeit more in tune with seeing migrants and deportees as criminals that need to be controlled and preferably incarcerated.

With regards to continuing human rights issues, one particular pressure point, at least for El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, can be exercised through the requirements related to the Millennium Challenge Grant of the U.S. Government which requires that beneficiary countries make concrete improvements in a series of areas, including “ruling justly”\(^{15}\). Thus pressure related to human rights violations and violence can be exercised on Central American governments through the mechanisms established by the MCC, much in the same way that during the 1980s, Congressional funding for Central America had to show improvement in human rights. In addition to the MCC, other key actors include the various Human Rights

---

\(^{14}\) Among European funders, Spanish and Danish aid have expressed more interest in issues related to migration. Danish aid is emphasizing issues related to justice and governance whereas Spanish cooperation is targeting more economic development related initiatives. Many European funders are reducing aid to the region and prioritizing poorer regions of the world.

\(^{15}\) Ruling Justly includes Civil Liberties; Political Rights; Voice and Accountability; Government Effectiveness; Rule of Law, and Control of Corruption. [http://www.mcc.gov/selection/indicators/index.php](http://www.mcc.gov/selection/indicators/index.php)
Ombudsmen offices (many of which have also established agendas related to migrants), the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministries of Security and Justice, Youth Secretariats, among others.

Regional Integration and Economic Development: Other issues related to migration, with equally contradictory manifestations, can be understood best in light of the regional integration and the “models” of economic development implemented throughout the region over the last three decades. While the barriers for products and economic exchange have been reduced and will continue to do so based on free trade agreements, greater obstacles for the movement of people have continued to climb. Many small producers have found themselves squeezed out of opportunities as the agricultural sector, especially those that produce basic grains, has seen profit margins reduced or even required selling at a loss. At the same time, the labor market in Central America demonstrates that things are not so clear cut: Nicaraguan and Honduran earn dollars in El Salvador in sugar cane and coffee harvests, in construction, and domestic services; or recruiting return migrants to work in call centers in San Salvador in what is being considered part of a growing phenomena of “replacement migration” - filing jobs with migrants because the local labor market is unable (or unwilling) to meet the demand. Yet local initiatives throughout the region are creating new opportunities for farmers, either in new crops in a highly competitive global market, such as mini-vegetables produced and exported in Guatemala, or by creating a market of solidarity among small farmers in order to ensure food security as evidenced by Red Comal o RAIS, in Honduras and Guatemala respectively. Migration and remittances link into these issues in multiple manners: creating viable and sustainable alternatives for local employment so that migration is not the only means for getting ahead, or by channeling migrant remittances into financial institutions that are dedicated to supporting the local business fabric as shown by the efforts of credit unions and microfinance initiatives. And although even more insipient, there is some interesting evidence of migrant led organizations are starting to build ties with community development organizations seeking to improve economic opportunities at home. So while the major public policies linked to regional integration and economic growth appear to “export people and recruit remittances”, migrants and their remittances (in various forms, shapes and sizes) are also generating new opportunities. Yet it is clear that migration and remittances can not be the economic motor for development in the region, even though they are providing an important source of fueling for the economies of the region.

In this arena, the issues and actors are quite different. There is a great deal of potential for building efforts in this area with migrant led groups in the North, but still enormous challenges persist. For NALACC members this means continuing to more clearly understand the debates and policy implications as well as the decision makers. This however is where strategic alliances with groups in the U.S. could be particularly innovative. For example, migrant led organizations do not need to become “experts” on the issues, but work with existing efforts the US and Central America to which they can lend their voice. This means exploring links to advocates and lobbyists in Washington DC with whom NALACC could join around issues concerning free trade, the farm bill, European Union Accords, etc.

But migrant led organizations can also move forward in forging new types of ties with rural development organizations in their home countries. This is an arena in which hometown organizations could play a particularly interesting role as they mature and become more
interested in moving their activities from social and charitable support to more “development” related initiatives. Building ties between (Hometown Associations) HTAs, local producers, and NGOs providing technical support to these local producers first requires a process of getting to know innovative and successful projects and looking for appropriate ways in which HTAs could play a role. To date, the vast majority of funding for these sorts of initiatives (which is still quite limited) has not included these sorts of learning processes among HTA, rural development NGOs, and local producers. At the same time, further promotion of the channeling of their remittances through financial institutions that are key economic actors for local producers and small business people can and is making an important impact in local economies. This means encouraging links with credit unions and microfinance organizations, but also helping these financial institutions in the region better understand the opportunities and possibilities for linking up with migrants and their families.16

Key policy makers in this arena include regional integration bodies (SICA, PPP), the Ministries of the Economy and Agriculture, Financial Superintendents, the InterAmerican Development Bank (IADB)- especially through the Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF), the U.S. Trade Representative, U.S. Congressional committees related to farm subsidies in the US, and the European Union, among others.

Global warming and natural resource depletion/preservation: On the horizon, we must not lose sight of the development issues related to global warming and natural resources, and the connections with migration. Central America is subjected simultaneously to hurricanes, regular seasonal flooding as well as drought, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The larger events have triggered massive movements of people to the U.S. over the last decade, but smaller disasters also contribute to migration, either within the country or internationally. A valid but yet unarticulated concern is the transfer via migrants of patterns of consumption in the U.S. to Central America. Migrants are clearly not the only contributors to this spur in consumption as Wall Mart, Price Mart, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Blockbuster Video, the financial sector and hundreds of other examples of global chains set up shop throughout the region. But some migrants are replicating certain styles of living in rural areas that are generating a plethora of relatively unidentified issues related to urban planning, local development, and natural resource use. At the same time, migrants tend to be more aware of problems caused by environmental contamination, trash disposal, and the importance and value of natural resources. Figuring out how to build alliances in this arena will undoubtedly be part of the agenda in the next decade. One place to start is with HTAs and similar migrant led groups that mobilize quickly for channeling humanitarian aid following a disaster. Work around this can include support to HTAs to understand issues related to prevention and mitigation of natural disasters as well as establishing better mechanisms for channeling emergency aid following a disaster. This could include building relationships among those NGOs in the region that are part of the National and Regional Coalitions on Risk Management (Gestión de Riesgos in Spanish) and advocacy efforts

16 I also see a disconnect between microfinance institutions and other local community development actors. There are some innovated synergies that have emerged but in general, microfinance institutions and credit unions keep to “banking” functions. Many NGOs and technical assistance programs do not look to these local organizations to close the circle with regards to more comprehensive and sustainable support for community based economic initiatives. While not something that NALACC needs to think about, I do consider that learning processes focused on key financial actors (i.e. general managers of credit unions with certain leadership skills) could help create more and stronger synergies.
directed at the national and local governmental emergency task forces in the Central American region.

In terms of issues related to rural resources, environmental impacts and cultural heritage, not only can HTAs be potentially important actors to link up with, but developing initiatives to work with 1.5 and 2nd generation Central Americans in the U.S. could prove to open up innovative possibilities for longer term global solidarity in the North American Corridor. Additionally, as tourism gains ground in the region in terms of job creation and economic development, cultivating the “nostalgic” market of tourists specifically in the mode of “eco and cultural tourism”, could potentially develop new synergies for valuing rural life, resources, and culture. While international tourists ebb and flow to new places, Central Americans will continue to return “home” to visit family and friends.