

**INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION INITIATIVE
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE LATIN AMERICA PROGRAM**

Central America/Mexico Migration Corridor

Outcomes of the portfolio review held on September 8, 2014

This is a portfolio that the International Migration Initiative (IMI) and the Latin America Program (LAP) have implemented jointly since 2010. It aims to address the vulnerability of migrants in transit, the exploitation of migrant workers, and the lack of opportunity driving migration in countries of origin. The portfolio review¹ focused on the outcomes of the work to date and the effectiveness of IMI/LAP's main tool for this work—the *Central America Mexico Migration Alliance (CAMMINA)*, a donor collaborative created in 2011 by OSF, Ford Foundation-Mexico, and Fundación Avina.

We selected this portfolio to review because it is in a moment of transition. As of 2015, LAP and IMI will no longer share a program officer and a budget. LAP's migration budget for Central America and Mexico will be transferred to IMI, and IMI will hire a new Program Officer to succeed Carolina Jimenez who left OSF in July. In addition, the three partner foundations in CAMMINA have embarked on an evaluation process to determine the future of the collaborative at the conclusion of the next three-year cycle in 2017.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

The review brought to light a number of significant issues. At the macro level, we discussed the geographic parameters of the corridor and its limits with regard to targeting policy in the United States. We also acknowledged migration trends in other parts of Latin America and their potential implications for our work. At the micro level, we assessed CAMMINA as funder collaborative and as our main vehicle for this work. The observations and questions raised during the review of this portfolio will form the basis for refining our priorities in this region and for IMI's overall strategy.

Macro level: Parameters of the corridor

The Central America/Mexico migration portfolio has evolved over the last four years in response to a changing environment. Mexico passed an unprecedented migration law in 2011; El Salvador and Honduras followed with new laws designed to protect their citizens abroad. At the same time, progress has lagged. Weak state institutions and the deteriorating security situation pose a serious threat to advocates, the safety of migrants, and the ability of countries of origin to protect migrants' rights. Mexico has been hardening its immigration enforcement, and earlier this September, the Obama administration announced plans to delay executive action on U.S. immigration reform, which has enormous rippled effects for migrants in this region.

The strategy for this portfolio has been to improve regional policy frameworks in Central America and Mexico, build a field of strong organizations and leaders, and create greater coordination among funders. The work has focused on strengthening the ability of Mexican and Central American civil society to influence their governments, rather than to influence U.S. policy. This choice was intentional; a strong immigrant rights field already existed in the U.S. and we thought that our resources would be best placed in the region where there was a gap. We have made significant gains, particularly in Mexico; but our work might have led to different outcomes had there been a more deliberate effort to connect with policy goals

¹ **Participating in person:** Chris Stone (President, OSF); Maria Teresa Rojas (Director, IMI); Naomi Polin (Program Coordinator, IMI); Sandra Dunsmore (Director, Grant-Making Support Group – moderator); Dan Sershen (Associate Director, Results Assessment, Strategy Unit); Daphne Panayotatos (Program Coordinator, Results Assessment, Strategy Unit).

Participating remotely: Pedro Abramovay (Director, LAP); Demetrios Papademetriou (Chair, IMI Advisory Board); Cathy Ross (Senior Program Officer, LAP); Leslie Gross-Davis (Director, US Programs Equality Fund)

in the United States. This was particularly relevant over the summer, as public attention on the US/Mexico border pushed governments to address the rise of Central American migrant children entering the United States. On the one hand, the border crisis created an opportunity within OSF for substantive collaboration among US Programs, IMI, and the Latin America Program. On the other hand, programmatic lessons were learned. Chris Stone feels that OSF was not prepared adequately to propose solutions to policymakers either in the United States or in Central America as the state of affairs unfolded rapidly. The experience highlighted the need for IMI to have a stronger “inside track” political strategy along with our efforts to build the field. Beyond targeting policies and practices in Central American and Mexican countries as we have been doing, it is necessary to target the foreign policy agenda of these governments toward the United States. We also need to define an appropriate role for IMI to engage in the United States alongside US Programs.

Chris Stone and IMI Chair Demetrios Papademetriou each noted that the migration paradigm of the last fifty years has shifted. South-South migration already is larger than South-North migration, according to the World Bank. IMI and other migration donors, however, are still focused primarily on traditional patterns of mobility from low income countries to wealthy countries in the Global North. As international migration in the next decade will take place between high growth developing countries (e.g. in Asia and in Latin America), emerging economies will play a significant role. Although countries such as Brazil and Chile already are experiencing high levels of migration, they have been unequipped to manage it effectively thus far. IMI’s work could be instrumental in shaping new policies and practices in these countries, which could bring with them new models for reform. By prioritizing work in “non-traditional” corridors intra-regionally (such as Peru and Bolivia to Chile, among others), IMI’s work could change perceptions of migration, and the allocation of resources, in the field.

Micro level: CAMMINA

As we assess the future of CAMMINA and OSF’s role in it, several questions raised in this discussion will guide our thinking. The first question relates to the value of potentially defining CAMMINA’s work more narrowly. Early on, CAMMINA’s goals were framed broadly enough to align with each of the foundations. We took a wide-reaching approach, but we may have been attempting too much. It also has been difficult to differentiate CAMMINA’s grant making from that of IMI/LAP and the other donor partners.

The second set of questions relates to propensity toward risk. LAP Director Pedro Abramovay remarked that one of the major benefits of a formal collaboration is to help donors enter a new field. In the early stages, working collectively provides additional financial and social capital that can be crucial to enable donors to take new risks, which they wouldn’t take otherwise. Once a collaborative becomes more established, however, the effects may reverse. Often over time, donor collaboratives can become more transactional, and develop into a funding infrastructure that does not lead to creative new thinking and change. This could be a disservice to the field and hamper the ambition of the donors. In practical terms, the dilemma has two main implications: first, has OSF gained everything it could from CAMMINA? And, second, at this stage in its evolution, is CAMMINA beneficial for the field?

With these two issues in mind, IMI and LAP and our donor partners will deliberate what the future of the donor collaborative should be. Options include—but are not limited to—bringing in new foundations, spinning off into an independent entity, or dissolving the donor collaborative and developing a new path forward. IMI and the donor partners will explore these options and others in the months ahead.

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

As we begin to prepare IMI’s 2016 strategy in the next six months, we will consider the salient issues and questions raised in this conversation. Among them, we will determine what our “inside track” political strategy should be, and critically, what is the most effective means of implementing it. We also will consider

where OSF is strategically positioned to intervene. Where and when we should engage elsewhere in South America? Where are the viable opportunities, how should we enter new jurisdictions?

We also will continue conversations about CAMMINA. Is CAMMINA the optimum vehicle for OSF's migration work in this region—is this how we should continue to allocate the majority of our resources? How do we address “role confusion” between CAMMINA and the donor partners (Ford, Fundación Avina, and OSF)? How do we ensure that CAMMINA serves as a mechanism to facilitate bold, creative thinking? Should CAMMINA continue to exist, and if so, in what form?

Underpinning these macro and micro level issues, IMI will need to re-evaluate its goals and priorities, both in this corridor and more broadly in its global program strategy. IMI's mission currently aims to address the most severe abuses in the migration system. Based on our experience over the last four years, this mission may be too far-reaching; some aspects of our work may be more effective if targeted toward situations where conditions are less (or moderately) severe. We will explore ways to tailor our strategy for new contexts, and continue to hone a clear global vision.