



Migration Symposium 9 & 10 May 2019 on Curaçao

Migration and Socioeconomic Development

Policy challenges and options

Break Out Session 1: Reaping the benefits and minimizing the cost of migration

Migration is an aspect of development itself and brings significant and long-lasting benefits. What are socioeconomic advantages of immigration? For example: meeting labor demands, cultural diversity, innovations, tax incomes. But immigration comes also with challenges for individuals, communities and institutions. For example: fear for displacement of local labor, fear for less social cohesion and cultural identity. What kind of policies are needed to address these challenges? And to maximize the benefits? The Caribbean perspective.

Moderator: Michela Macchiavello (IOM)

Note taker: Demi Vreeke

Introductions by:

Shirley Pantophlet Gregoria (SER Sint Maarten): *Migration, the rise above poverty*

The advantages of both the low and high-skilled immigrants on the country of origin and host country will be explored. The benefits for the migrant, his/her local counterpart as well as the children of the migrant, and ways to curb the negative effects by means of policies and the like, will be discussed.

Michael Watts (Canadian Embassy Bogota): *How migration drives Canada's economic prosperity and nation building*

The Government of Canada has adopted a multi-year levels plan for 2019 to 2021. The longer planning horizon helps all partners better prepare for future admissions and reflects a commitment to a well-managed system. This plan builds on an increase to 330,800 in 2019, 341,000 in 2020 and 350,000 in 2021. These are the most ambitious immigration levels in



recent history. The plan supports economic growth, helps spur innovation, and helps employers address labour market needs across the country. It helps in planning for the future and helps address demographic challenges related to an ageing population. Finally, it demonstrates leadership in a rule-based international migration environment with an openness to trade, talent, and protecting those in need.

Notes Break Out Session 1, Part 1

Major policy issues

Introduction round participants

- Expectation of topics to be discussed by the participants:
- Social impact of migration, high costs of migration, needs of the country/goals of the country; specific needs considering labour migrants (age, level etc.), environment etc.
- One of the participants addresses that she fears a vicious circle during the discussion → It is important to make the connection to the population, to not only have a policy level discussion.
- It is addressed that so far mainly the benefits of (Venezuelan) migration were discussed but that it is also necessary to discuss the huge impact and challenges faced by it.

Moderator:

Provides small summary of the goals of the different parts of the Break Out Sessions. The first session will mainly focus on main and major policy issues regarding migration to the islands. During the second part, in the afternoon, it will be discussed what kind of recommendations the participants of the Break Out Session have derived from the first session. How do we proactively respond to the issues discussed?

Introduction by Michael Watts

Addresses the importance of governments in the region to have a clear message of how they see the future. Migration is central to Canada; it is a part of the country's national character.

Canada has passed the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act in 2001.

However, a lot of nations that try to manage migration now and in this region have not been independent that long, in contrast to Canada. Now countries are catalyzed to quickly implement things which might lead to very short term solutions and less well thought trough policy developments, not the best case scenario but necessary.

An example from Canada is that the country has a migration minister who is involved in deciding how many migrants the country takes, how to select them, who creates reports on annual basis on temporary workers and students and on whom of those decide to stay.

Currently there is the Immigration Levels Plan which is developed for at least 3 years (2019 – 2021). It is a relatively short plan but it definitely points out the importance of consultation and

of migration as a development tool. The plan is developed and discussed in cooperation with other ministries such as that of education and health, which causes that everyone is able to share and use the same data.

Short term (labour market needs) vs. long term (human capital); Canada's program deals with both phenomena. Because of all the data people for example have the tool available to prevent people coming in (migrants) from taking a 'local's or native's' job, since the demand in certain sectors is displayed and elaborated on, and so on.

Introduction by Shirley Pantophlet Gregoria

Migration is an effective way to rise above poverty levels.

Migration is usually thought of as only low skilled workers migrating, we should think about both low and high skilled people crossing borders. Right now it is mostly discussed that the low skilled migrants are taking jobs. However, 'natives' look for another place or country to rise above income levels; it is not the case that much of the domestic workers are coming from the islands originally nowadays. Besides this, the migrants bring certain needs as well which provide opportunities for locals (one could think of doctors, assistance, education etc.). Over time those migrants will upgrade themselves as well, and if not them, then their children.

High skilled immigrants move away for other reasons than low skilled immigrants, those reasons might relate to a particular crime situation in a country or new opportunities/other options that are present in another country, this leaves positions open for others in the home country to fill in.

Often it is also the case, like on the islands, that many youngsters move away, mainly to study abroad. However, many do not come back which is a disadvantage because of what we call the brain drain and because the country invested a lot in them already. We, the islands, need to try to encourage them to come back. The usage of technology, media, institute collaboration programs and encouraging them to contribute to the islands could help to do this.

To conclude; there are a lot of opportunities to maximize the benefits of different types of migration.

Introduction by SER Curacao member Juan Pablo Zimmerman

Low skill migrants do not bring that much problems, the thing is that government assistance is necessary in order to prevent problems from happening. It all has to do with a certain mindset! The government has to inform local people about the meaning of immigration and they have to change certain laws. The prices we charge to them right now are too high. It is necessary to develop a proposal on including more immigrants (long and short term) for a better Curacao.



Moderator

So now that we have heard some great examples of how tackle certain migration issues from Canada, the statement that not only locals try to improve their capacities but migrants do so as well and the perspective that a lot can be received by migrants once we are more welcoming, the floor is now open for discussion.

Discussion Major Policy Issues

- Question for Canada and Curacao; What are your economic pillars? Aruba only has two economic pillars; the tourism and their own pillars, the talented and great people.

- Answer by Michael Watts

I have to admit Canada has a enormously diverse economy. However, there are some pillars a certain region is dependent on. As an example; the east coast's pillar, which was fishing, collapsed. This created a massive outflow of Canadians from the east coast to other parts of Canada in the late 1980's. People who fished did not come back, but the economy evolved. As a consequence, they started looking for migrants to help to diversify the economy over there, for entrepreneurs etc. A form of controlled migration. In another area of Canada, the western provinces, they were dependent on fossil fuels. Alberta has been recruiting people to work in coffeeshops, restaurants etc. since many people work in the high level jobs but not much people were left for the kind of jobs just mentioned. The government of Canada decided to sent representatives of the government to the Philippines to recruit new people to fulfill the demand of 'low skill jobs'.

- Comment question maker

But we need to be really, really careful to say; 'let's open the door'. We do not have the size and the money.

- Comment other participant

Small island challenges: what are the weaknesses? There is a culture of fear, the people are the policy makers and breakers. The island has a lot of characteristics that makes it difficult to share one central vision because there are so many little parties. Vision is communicated but not executed. Populism is in play as well! To decide what society we want to be we need to acknowledge the weaknesses on the islands.

- Comment other participant

What you measure is what you change. My recommendation is the MIPEX, embrace MIPEX (The Migrant Integration Policy Index; <http://www.mipex.eu/>). It measures 167 policy indicators in 8 policy areas of migration. Furthermore, mindset is one of the biggest obstacles. Either believe you are the victim, which is not the case, the case is, is that you do not know what you want to be...

- Comment

Most offences are from migrants (police experience). I am not against migration but pro good structure; population management plus good migration.

- Comment

Yes, so data collection is really important, it is a valuable information source to others.

- Comment/answer Pablo-Zimmerman

The economic pillar of Curaçao is tourism as well now, as you all know not the refinery anymore. The skills necessary to work on the island are not there, most have to be imported, it helps the people here.

- Comment

But isn't it an idea to invest in learning locals those skills?

- Answer

This is a political problem. There is 25% of youth unemployment.

- Comment

There is a mismatch between labour market needs and those unemployed.

- Comment Watts

Biggest sector of employment in Canada did not exist until 20 years ago. A lot of IT was imported. Very friendly foreign worker programs exist and because of that a lot of companies settle there now. The islands could create such industries as well, there are long term and very strategic opportunities.

- Comment

Important is to say that it is not 'or-or' but do both: 'and-and', not 'either-or'.

- **Moderator**

Three comments important to point out:

1. To connect to Watts; it is true that islands rely mainly on tourism, the refineries are not doing well. We think too little about new developments that are possible and happening nowadays, diversification is necessary. The future is important; there is climate change, water finishes, oil is drying up.
2. Secondly, the number of reports of criminal records of migrants drop once they can enter and reside in legality. Italy has lately adopted more inclusive policies in order to drop the crime rates of migrants for example.



3. Finally, despite of unemployment, there are short, medium and long term issues. But it is indeed ‘and-and’; At the same time use short term migrants to fill in the gaps and try to learn locals to improve as well.

- Comment

Aruba did import low skilled workers for many, many years but there is a problem there with values and norms. What do we want? Import knowledge, not problems.

- Comment

There is a fear. Temporary workers are needed, okay, but after five years it becomes an issue if they want to stay because we want them to leave again.

- Comment

Yes but that is definitely possible if you put this in your policies!

- Comment

But they are with so many, they threaten Aruba’s community.

- Comment

There is room in law and policy. It is about dialogue with stakeholders. What are the needs and where is the room in the law and in the policies? I have to point out that the economy is not only based on the refinery but logistics etc. are also upcoming. If we want to know where we want to go, we need to have dialogue. Policy makers need to talk to the field in order to create a good balance. We need to look for the space there is and which practical solutions are possible.

- Comment

A Masterplan or master strategy is necessary.

- **Moderator**

So actually things are more clear than imagined. Having a national or regional strategy is of great necessity to give an answer to the question; ‘Where are we going?’

- Comment

You only get better if you measure.

Summary

- A regional or national strategy is necessary in order to decide together how to go around a topic such as migration, especially in the case of such a large influx of Venezuelans.
- A decision needs to be made on how to tackle the local unemployment: ‘How can the local youth be adapted and facilitated to enter the labour market?’



- Very important in deciding where to go in strategy is that this strategy should reflect the various opinions of people.

Notes Break Out Session 1, Part 2

Policy Recommendations

Moderator

For the second part of Break Out Session 1 I believe we have an excellent basis to start from. First, I will discuss on what I believe would be a good summary of this morning:

- A vision of what society wants is yet not clear.
- Therefore, it is difficult for policy makers to come up with a solution.
- There is a need to get clear what a national or regional strategy should involve.
- Once agreed upon a vision, a strategy can be developed which should be addressed in a certain way.

Discussion on Policy Recommendations

- Watts

A concern for the short term is the oppositional nature of politics. Extensive consultations are necessary; you do not want fast but well thought through and sustainable solutions, this takes many years.

- Comment

Two suggestions;

- Create a system based on openness, transparency and sharing data. Now there is a tendency not to share data because of fear of what is going to happen with those data.
- Change the law. The system is based on loopholes in the law now, it is outdated. It is necessary to put laws in place that can go on for more time, that are more sustainable.

- Comment

Bring laws to get people out of illegality, out of the informal economies.

- Comment

It is about mentality. Politics could change and influence this mentality, they should guide the nation in this.

- Comment

Yes, guide the people more. Laws would help people to get out of informal economy.

- Comment

Another Suggestion. Politics should start doing what they are paid for; make policies and make sure that those policies work. Come with visions, come with policies, guide your nation. Educate your people with your vision.

- Comment

Insight in what is happening is really important. Data bases that can be combined would help to understand what is happening; ‘Who is regular and irregular? How to tackle their issues?’ Politics are holding you back with this, but it would give an idea about what is happening.

- Comment

The vision should come first, data should be used to support such a vision and then policies and regulations should support both. The problem now is the lack of a clear vision.

- Comment

It is important to listen to concerns and passion of the population like we listen to those of people in the room. According to me, a system of checks and balances needs to be there. There is data, but because of political intervention there is no free flow of data. Data is necessary to be openly used in order to help the decision making processes.

- Comment

There should be political will. Data is there. The migration debate is now influenced by Venezuelans but migrants are coming for many years already. We need to reinvent. Right now we are talking in circles, nobody makes it happen.

- Comment

No one wants to take the responsibility. ‘Where does the island want to go?’ We need vision and policies.

- Comment

An economic vision is important to include as well.

- Comment

Aruba’s society is ageing very fast but we are also getting a low number of children. There are not enough people to take the places left on the labour market. Demographic trends should influence what you want and can do. Migration can not be stopped anyway.

- Comment

We just heard Venezuela opened its borders with Aruba again, to be honest this causes mixed feelings. Also because now we are talking about migration and not even about refugees. It is important to respond to those things happening, those developments.



- Comment

It is important not to write a policy for urgent issues, but for the long term with urgency issues included in it. A long term, flexible policy is necessary. The conditions for addressing urgency in those policies need to relate to global trends.

- Comment

But the reality of small islands differs.

- Comment

It is not only a small island thing, the bigger problem is that we are small islands from our big brother the Netherlands, who signs a lot of petitions etc.

- Comment

But you are not the only ones who have to deal with those kind of issues!

- Comment

Population is getting older, there is a vision. For Curaçao one of the visions was to extend the retirement age to a higher age; that is a vision already. This means that migration policies and ideas are supposed to fit into that vision. It needs to be a collaboration of different ministries. The political will should be there.

- Comment

‘In Aruba, Curacao and Sint Maarten, is there a vision for the population?’

- Comment

‘Which ministry should tackle the tourism issue if you import people for this?’

- Comment

General affairs?

- Comment

It should not be a thing of multiple ministries in the end.

- **Moderator**

Should we go for a regional approach then?

- Comment

No, we are all in different situations.

- Comment

Political will is very important. We saw a lot of problems coming but when it was almost too late, only then we started to do something about it.

- **Moderator**

Which stakeholders do you think should be involved?

- Comment

Business. If you have a constitution stating that the migrant workers get similar wage.

- Comment

It requires tripartite consultation.

- Comment

The most representative of Labor, the most representative of business, the most representative of government.

- Comment

Try to improve education as well, to prevent people from leaving the island.

- Comment

You need data, education, labour; analyze what the labour community needs etc.

- Comment

IT will be the biggest thing; 'where are IT programs?' We are not adapting to important developments. Why is that not changing?

- Comment

This comes back to the vision again, there is no vision.

- Comment

Everything comes back to that.

- **Moderator**

So **to summarize**: It is quite clear that creation of vision is necessary with the participation of various stakeholders; the employer sector must be involved, the civil society and the labour union should be involved. When we have a clear vision and data available, various activities can be done. Education, data, and a system of checks and balances are key. Is there anything to add to this?



- Comment

But we tell this year after year, when do we start with this?

- Comment

Yes, but you can not start when you do not know where to go?

- Comment

There is a problem with only stating a vision. I would prefer this group to state which direction this vision needs to go. Just the idea to develop a vision is too broad in my opinion.

- Comment

We do not have the facts to base this vision on, this addresses the importance of data again.

- Comment

Yes, we can not formulate the vision, but we can have some conditions or what we in Dutch call ‘randvoorwaarden’; some concrete things on the time of staying, age etc.

- Comment

When we state what the vision should be, it should be a question; where are we going?

- Comment

Important to add is that it should be a mutually agreed upon vision. We should not give up, otherwise we could all go home.

- Comment

It would help to formulate a time frame according to me, that helps to stop the continuous discussion about the vision.

- Comment

Another difficult but important point of discussion is that we need to vote within two years.

- Comment

A new prime minister with a different vision.

- Comment

And then we can start all over again with this discussion.

- Comment

I keep repeating the checks and balances idea. This prime minister change involves a bigger problem; a system of checks and balances and monitoring of independent bodies would help.



- **Comment**

For example, the presence of United Nations should or could be implemented by government. This would be something that could survive multiple cabinets.

- **Moderator**

Thank you all for the enlightening discussion. I will add the importance of an independent monitoring body.

