

Chapter 8.9

Using ICT to Foster Human Rights Defense Processes for Mexican Immigrants

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ABSTRACT

Frequently, Mexicans who cannot find solutions for their financial problems migrate to the United States hoping to improve their quality of life. However, they usually face abuses, mostly because they are illegal aliens, but also because they arrive to a society which is not their own. These migrants are mainly excluded from American society not only because of their race and religion, but also because they do not speak English in most cases, do not have studies higher than primary school, and are not proficient in using information and communications technologies (ICT). With this panorama in mind, the Colimenses sin Fronteras Web Portal becomes a tool to support and help them overcome the adaptation process, which might help reduce the discrimination that many of them face upon arriving to the receiving country. It also provides migrants with information about the abuses they might suffer and how to file a legal complaint.

INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization and information technology has blurred cultural and physical borders, increasing the mobility of people who migrate between countries. “Currently, citizen migration

is structurally incrustated in the different economies and societies of most countries. As soon as the receiver and provider countries both depend on migration, it becomes almost impossible to contain” (Pécoud and De Gouchteneire, 2005, p. 142). This is not an exclusive phenomenon between Mexico and the United States; a world-

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wide estimation reports that around 200 million people are living in countries different from their home country.

There are important flows of citizens still colonizing the continent of Australia and more traditional European and African population movements (with an increasing number from Spain) caused, to some extent, by the socio-political reconfiguration of Eastern Europe or religious or ethnical segregation. A good example of this is the migration of women from Eastern Europe to Huelva Spain (Gualda and Ruiz, 2004). Migration from South American countries to Europe, mostly from Argentina, Ecuador and Peru is due mainly to the complex socio-economic situation of these countries. In the case of Central America, we can add natural catastrophes. Central Americans and some South Americans migrate to Mexico, but the majority only passes through, hoping to cross the border into the US.

In the early 1990's, 2.2 million Latin Americans lived in countries different from their home country; however, from within the same region, this provides an overview of the high migration rates. This number has increased from 1.2 million in the 1970's. In the case of Latin Americans living in the US, their numbers were 8.4 and 1.7 million in 1990 and 1970, respectively, and half of them were Mexicans (Martínez Pizarro, 2001, p.95).

Mexicans migrate to the US because of economic reasons and its close vicinity. Mexico is a developing country bordering on the most powerful country in the world; therefore, when Mexicans cannot find solutions to their financial problems, they “look north” in figurative speech, thinking that migrating to a country with a better quality of life will improve their own. Consequently, as soon as their financial resources and social networks allow, they migrate. It is important to mention that Mexico is a large country, geographically speaking, and migrants require considerable amounts of money to travel, plus the cost of hiring a “pollero”

(a common nickname used to identify persons who help migrants cross the US-Mexico border illegally). Thus, their social networks play an important role in accomplishing this complicated and dangerous crossing. This is because, many times, friends and relatives pay for the expenses of traveling and illegally crossing the border, all with the hope that the person they help cross the border will be able to send money back home to their relatives, thus improving the economic situation of those who remain in Mexico.

Unfortunately, this “American Dream” often becomes a nightmare for most migrants and their families because some of them are abused from the moment they intend to cross the border that separates one society from the other. First, they must hire a “pollero” who usually requests elevated amounts of money ranging from 500 to 4000 dollars. This money covers transportation (often through the desert) until they arrive at their destination. Commonly, migrants pay when they get to the requested address (González Velázquez in Rocha Silva, M. A. and Valencia Silva, M.M, 2009, p. 72).

The higher price for a Mexican to cross the border illegally, it's the reflection of the resurgence in the American side security measures, therefore Mexicans has to risk more by going through more dangerous places, in their pursuit for a better life.

The literature shows that between 1990 and 2002 more than 3000 people died attempting to cross the US-Mexico border. In recent years, the number of people captured by the border patrol has decreased, but the number of rescued and dead has remained equal or increased. The proportion of deceased people has increased from 15 to 35 deaths per 100,000 detentions. In comparison, Spain, who has the highest in death rate in Europe, registered only 3 deaths per 100,000 in 2000 (Alonso, 2003).

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