

## Core values

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

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

Irregular migration is a consequence of inequality and too often our foreign policies preserve these inequities. Our faiths compel us to seek to reduce the need for people to leave their homes. The United States should promote development goals and trade policies and international financial institution policies that support local communities in immigrant-sending countries. Investment in development provides sustainable alternatives to migration for individuals seeking safe and secure futures for their families, and would also reduce the need for costly border enforcement, detention, and deportation systems estimated at almost \$18 billion in 2012.

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

Psalm 72:2-4a

The most effective way to mitigate irregular immigration is by promoting sustainable development in immigrant-sending communities and, in the U.S., by promoting more just foreign assistance and trade policies and addressing visa backlogs and family separation.

Immigration reform will be neither effective in addressing concerns about irregular migration nor truly comprehensive until the U.S. Congress recognizes and addresses the underlying causes that drive people from their homes.

## *The face of immigration*

### Antonio Garcia

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

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

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

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Gross national income per capita (US\$, 2011)	
<b>Honduras</b>	<b>\$1,980</b>
<b>Guatemala</b>	<b>\$2,870</b>
<b>Mexico</b>	<b>\$9,420</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>\$48,620</b>

**4,000+**

Number of deaths crossing the U.S.-Mexico border since 1998

**\$3.5 billion**

Annual government subsidies for U.S. corn farmers

**25%**

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

**72%**

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

**How do current immigration bills compare with our faith principles?**

**Border Security, Economic Opportunity and Immigration Modernization Act (S. 744/H.R. 15):** No language addressing root causes.

**Other House immigration bills:** No language addressing root causes.

**2011 Menendez language:** In 2011, Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) proposed language as part of his comprehensive immigration reform proposal that would address root causes. The Menendez language called for a Government Accountability Office study to assess the factors that drive migration in the largest migrant-sending countries, and called on the Secretary of State to lead an effort to develop policy recommendations about how the U.S. might help countries to address the economic, trade, social, and security factors driving high rates of irregular migration. It recommended prioritizing development assistance toward countries and communities with high rates of irregular migration to the U.S. In particular, the language called for effective targeting of funding for rural development, youth employment, and for supporting mechanisms to make credit and financing opportunities available, especially to vulnerable populations. Unfortunately, this language has not made it into any of the 2013-2014 immigration reform proposals.

**“Push” factors**

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



**“Pull” factors**

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



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