

A conversation with Dr. Michael Clemens and Cynthia Rathinasamy, December 15, 2015

Participants

- Dr. Michael Clemens – Senior Fellow, Center for Global Development (CGD)
- Cynthia Rathinasamy – Program Coordinator, Migration and Development Team, CGD
- Alexander Berger – Program Officer, U.S. Policy, Open Philanthropy Project

Note: These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by Dr. Clemens and Ms. Rathinasamy.

Summary

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with Dr. Clemens and Ms. Rathinasamy to get an update on the grant it made to support CGD's migration work in March 2014. Conversation topics included updates on two CGD working groups funded by the grant and CGD's plan to host an event series in 2016.

U.S.-Mexico bilateral labor agreement working group

The working group hopes to conclude negotiations and publish a report in the spring/summer of 2016. So far, the main points of contention have been the proposed labor agreement's numerical quota and fees.

Numerical quota

In the Senate's immigration reform bill, the W-visa quota was set at a maximum of 200,000 per year and 600,000 at any given time. These figures include renewals (the visa would have been required to be renewed every 3 years).

Net migration flows used to be between 300,000 and 400,000 per year, but are now zero. There is no data on gross migration flows. To inform the working group's negotiations, CGD is in the process of commissioning research to estimate gross migration flows. The aim is to get a sense of realistic numbers that negotiators can use to determine an appropriate quota.

Application fee

The working group will likely propose including an application fee. CGD is gathering data to help negotiators determine an appropriate fee amount and has commissioned research on employer compliance costs under current regulations. It is quite expensive for employers to participate in the existing guest worker program.

Study group on migration and development policy in the U.S. government

At this group's first meeting, Kathleen Newland, Senior Fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, presented a background paper. A one-pager proposing potential options for migration and development policymaking in the U.S. government, building on the discussion at the first meeting, is currently being developed. These will be discussed at a second meeting, which is expected to take place in early 2016. Some working group participants suggested that CGD itself operate as an external migration and development forum or meeting space.

Potential plan to host event series

In 2016, CGD plans to organize an event series on pressing migration issues, such as the current refugee crisis. Recent events on the refugee crisis have tended to focus on building context and providing information. While this type of event serves an important purpose, the CGD event series' primary aim will be to identify action-oriented solutions. Possible topics include private refugee sponsorship, European or U.S. policy levers to stimulate both short- and long-term change, and skilled migration.

*All Open Philanthropy Project conversations are available at
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