

# Return Migration, Labor Reintegration and Expectancies. Guidelines for Development Policies

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## ABSTRACT

In this paper, we study the conditions of economic reintegration of returning migrants from United States, which is one of the greatest challenges they face returning to Mexico. To analyze and evaluate the process of economic reintegration, a survey was applied to returned migrants with the objective of collecting information to identify and determine four types of mobility. The four types of mobility are: sectoral, labor, income, and job position, considering a before and after the migration experience. The results show the reintegration has not been easy in most cases. In fact, most households improved their economic situation in comparison with their condition before migrating. Additionally, most have expectations of returning to the US, or want their children to study and live there. Therefore, these migrants were not completely satisfied with their economic reintegration process. In the end, we propose some guidelines for public policy in economic development and economic reintegration.

**Keywords:** US-Mexico migration, returning migration, labor reintegration, gender, development policy.

**JEL Classification:** J15

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## RESUMEN

### **Migración de retorno, reintegración laboral y expectativas. Pautas para políticas de desarrollo**

En este trabajo, se estudian las condiciones de reintegración económica de los migrantes en retorno de los EEUU, que es uno de los grandes retos que enfrentan al regresar a México. Para analizar y evaluar el proceso de reintegración se aplicó una encuesta a migrantes retornados con el objetivo de obtener información que permitiera identificar y determinar cuatro tipos de movi- lidades. Los cuatro tipos de movi- lidades son: sectorial, laboral, en el ingreso y en la posición en el trabajo, considerando un antes y un después de la experiencia migratoria. Los resultados muestran que no ha sido fácil su reintegración en la mayoría de los casos. De hecho, la mayoría de los hogares mejoró con respecto a su situación antes de migrar. Adicionalmente, la mayoría tiene expectativas de regresar a los EEUU o desearían que sus hijos estudiaran y vivieran allá. Por lo tanto, estos migrantes no estaban completamente satisfechos con su proceso de reintegración económica. Al final, propo- nemos pautas para políticas públicas en desarrollo y reintegración económica.

**Palabras clave:** migración, retorno, reintegración laboral, género, polí- ticas desarrollo.

**Clasificación JEL:** J15

## **INTRODUCTION. RETURN MIGRATION'S CONTEXT IN MEXICO AND PUEBLA**

Migration is the mobility of the population, product of the inequality of the living conditions between two places or regions that can be in the same country or two different ones, therefore, it is determined by the economic, social, cultural, political, religious and even environ- mental conditions, mainly. In 2019, there were more than 272 million of persons in the world who live outside their country of origin. This represents 3.2% of the world population (OIM, 2019:21). It is estimated that almost two thirds have migrated for labor purposes (OIT, 2018).

However, migration shows specific characteristics depending on the places and their historic evolution, in the case of migration from Mexico towards the United States, the economic factors have been

the most important ones and after those, the development of social networks (Durand & Massey, 2003). Indeed, the conditions of inequality and the lack of advancement in the country have forced a great number of Mexicans to look for progress opportunities in the country of the north, such mobility has been favored by the contacts and relationships they have with relatives and friends somewhere in the United States. By 2019, the population of Mexican descent (second and third generation) surpassed 39 million. Furthermore, the number of migrants without authorization to work or permanent residency in the USA were 4.9 million persons. (BBV-Conapo, 2020)

On the Mexican side, immigration has also been rising for the past 38 years, product of the economic crises, the Mexican peso's devaluation, inequality and social underdevelopment, that have not only caused bigger unemployment rates but also have drastically reduced the purchasing power of wages, through which the wage differential with the United States has broadened and continues to grow. This has, naturally, affected every State in the country, including the State of Puebla, where immigration has extended to almost every municipality in 2010 (Corona, Ortiz & Corona, 2014). Also, this migration has continued by 2020 at an increasing rate (INEGI, 2020a).

From this perspective, other factors have influenced the natural return of migrants to Mexico, such as the 9/11 terrorist attack. This event changed the migration policy in the USA, now focused on national security to stop terrorism. Therefore, the vigilance increased on the Mexican border with more military presence. Moreover, many states passed anti-migration laws such as the Arizona law. This law criminalizes undocumented migrants and punishes any person who hires them. The federal government enforced deportation legislation. However, the event that boosted the exit of migrants from the USA was the 2008 financial crisis. The reason was that a lot of migrants lost their jobs and they suffered harassment from migration authorities during this time. Hence, they decided to return to their communities in Mexico. (Gandini, et al., 2015:11).

Certainly, the economic recovery in the labor market where migrants work was slow and following the rhythm of the American economy (BBVA-CONAPO, 2015). This has severe consequences. For instance, the US uses migration to regulate its labor markets; therefore, an economic recession means that there is a surplus of labor and

it should be removed. As a result, the number of deportations increased noticeably. In fact, when the US economy recovered to its pre-crisis levels in 2014 more than 2.4 million persons had been deported. Most of them were from Mexican origin (PEW, 2014). As expected, once the labor market had recovered, the return of migrants diminished, and more individuals decided to migrate to the US. But, the conditions became more dangerous and costly for migrants (Cruz, 2019:58).

During the Trump administration these tendencies changed. The migration increased at a low rate but the returning migration did not decrease (Canales y Meza, 2018:132; BBV-CONAPO 2019:66). As a matter of fact, the voluntary returns and forced deportations cases grew (INM, 2019). According to the 2018 Encuesta Nacional de Dinámica Demográfica, 286,761 migrants have returned, which confirms the importance of the returning migrants in Mexico (ENADID 2018).

In Puebla's case, as it was mentioned, immigration extended throughout most of the State's municipalities and it was even bigger than emigration, proportionately; in other words: many more people came in than the ones that left in 2010 and in 2020. According to the 2010 data, the one available to the date when we write this paper, the ratio of homes with returning migrants increased over three times, from 0.66 to 2.08 during the five-year periods 1995-2000 and 2005-2010 (INEGI, 2011). Meanwhile, in Cuautlancingo, our case study, these proportions increased 4.7 times, from 0.39 to 1.86 (INEGI, 2011). These numbers show an upward trend in returning migration since 2010 until now.

This, without a doubt, must stand out because it represents an important number of people that can contribute to that municipality's development, which has grown in its drive through urbanization and in industrial activity in the past 17 years (INEGI, 2019), it is one of the most prosperous municipalities surrounding the city of Puebla, capital city of the State which has a strategic location between Mexico city and Veracruz. Currently, its economic profile is molded by activities that are closely related to globalization, even though there are still semi-rural activities to be found there. The automotive industry has its main settlement with the Volkswagen plant and the supply park FINSA, its automotive related exports and other industrial exports are benchmarks in the State (INEGI, 2020b), notwithstanding migration keeps occurring both in and out of the municipality which represents a challenge for governing authorities, politicians and society.

This paper attempts to analyze the process of economic reintegration of the returning migrants in Cuautlancingo, considering the use of remittances and savings as a mean for labor reintegration, occupational mobility, income and working position improvement; it is complemented with the identification of the obstacles and necessary conditions for the returning migrants reintegration, which will allow a better focus of public policy recommendations, which is what the paper addresses at the end. It is worth stressing that this study conducted a desegregation of the data by gender with the purpose of incorporating the variant of gender to the analysis.

## **1. RETURN MIGRATION. CONCEPT AND THEORY CONSIDERATIONS**

The international return migration is a natural movement of population that returns to their country of origin after living outside for a time in a destination country. It is linked to the labor life cycle of the migrant (Castillo, 1997). Its historical analysis has generated classifications to distinguish them based on the returning conditions. These conditions will make their reintegration process more easy or difficult (Durand, 2006). Following Durand's theory, we identify returning migrants with achieved goals and a successful return story. They become role models in their communities. They are heroes that conquered all obstacles. Their achievements are evident because they own houses, cars, land. Their reintegration is resolved because they have enough savings and new income sources due to the investment of their remittances.

Another group is composed by migrants with unaccomplished goals. These migrants interrupted their migration experience abruptly. They return voluntarily, involuntary or by force. In the first case, they return voluntarily because it is the best decision under their circumstances. The most common cause to return are family emergencies not just for this case, but it also applies to the other two as consolation. In the second case, they return involuntarily because they lost their job, they could not adapt, or they developed a health problem, among other motives. It is important to mention that the first and second cases hope to migrate again. In the third case, the migrants were forced to return by law. In other words, they were deported because they commit some fault in the destination country and they are expelled or banned

from reentry. They are stigmatized in their communities if they did not send enough remittances to improve their living conditions. For these individuals, the reintegration conditions are very diverse because this process will depend on the economic foundation they built with their remittances or their savings.

During the seventies, from the perspective of reintegration processes analysis, we can start to visualize the reintegration problems associated with economic behavior, entrepreneurship, gender condition, and the obstacles to reintegrate. In the early years of this century, the analysis focused on the returning migrant as an agent of development derived from two effects. The first effect emerges from the productive use of remittances (Batista et al., 2014), which goes beyond the basic needs consumption or the purchase of real state. The second effect occurs because the migrants themselves own their human capital. In other terms, they have accrued knowledge, information, work discipline and ethics during their migration experience. They also learn the institutional rules and culture of the destination country. Undeniably, the level of human capital is a key determinant of the reintegration process (Wang, 2015).

In the recent years, with Globalization expanding along with its efficiency culture, the returning migrant is considered as a transmitter of innovation and technology, who can contribute to the progress of their country of origin (Klagge and Klein-Hitpab, 2010). Likewise, the returning migrants are considered as entrepreneurs with a vision that surpasses self-employment because they create new jobs for their local economy (Zelekha, 2013).

Once we incorporate these conceptual considerations, we can improve our comprehension of the reintegration process, especially in the workforce, that returning migrants endure inexorably.

## **2. HOW IS RETURNING MIGRATION STUDIED FROM AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE?**

The immigrant left in search of opportunities for progress which can be synthesized in the search of income that is nowhere to be found in his or her environment because even while holding a job, the wage was so low that it wouldn't allow, in many cases, the settlement of the minimum necessary for his or her livelihood or even saving for his or

her personal or family development, or start-up a business and build assets. Certainly, the scarcity of gainful employment in the communities or inside the country plus the network of relationships he or she has, practically left this person, either individually or with a family, without a choice but to emigrate (Durand & Massey, 2003). The immigrant, during his or her stay in the United States, generally sends remittances to the family, and depending on the situation this person lives there, the activities performed, capacity, skills and attitudes this person can acquire, the use of those remittances and his or her expectations, the choice of staying or leaving will begin to be planned (Durand, 2004; Corona, 2008).

What happens when the migrant returns?

The return of a migrant should be a cause for celebration, most return after having sent remittances, learnt from that culture (about law and savings), with attitudes and expectations that are driven by the destination's culture, many of them with savings and desire to progress in their community (García y Del Valle, 2016:7). In other words, the person who left is not the same that returns and surely the family conditions they find at the time of their return have also evolved, however, the economic and social conditions of the community and the country, not so much, and in many cases they have become worse, which can represent a great obstacle for the returnees (Corona & De Ávila, 2017).

Certainly, studies about returning migrants have found that their reintegration has not been completely achieved and it is full of challenges. The case of Veracruz (Mestries, 2013); as well as in other states like Zacatecas, Michoacán, Guerrero, Puebla, Oaxaca, and Chiapas (García y Del Valle, 2016:2; Cruz, 2019:72) are well documented. In the case of Mexico City, some testimonies of bad experiences during reintegration are described by Meza (2017:144). According to a report from BBVA a big portion of returning migrants work on informal jobs (BBVA, 2015:46). Unfortunately, this trend has continued because the economic conditions of the municipalities where they return have not improved substantially.

Then what is the main challenge of returning migrants? The readjustment to their former environment, which includes a reintegration process to family and community, labor reintegration and harnessing what was acquired during their migratory experience, but Will it be easy, and will it be the same for men and women? To research about

their economic reintegration, the study of returning migrants in the municipality of Cuautlancingo, Puebla is addressed.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

We applied a survey in the municipality of Cuautlancingo, Puebla to collect information from returning migrants. Seventy-two persons who had a migration experience larger than six months answered the survey. Indeed, returning migrants prefer to be anonymous for economic and safety reasons. We could interview them via recommendation. As expected, returning migrants that were deported or did not bring enough money are stigmatized by their community. On the other hand, returning migrants with money are asked to give loans to family or they can get robbed. Consequently, it is more difficult to collect information from them. However, we could complete the surveys following three conditions. First, Cuautlancingo is a large municipality and it is part of the metropolitan area of the city of Puebla. Second, we had contacts with social organizers in the municipality. Third, we guaranteed confidentiality and safety to our interviewers.

It is important to mention that this paper is part of the Returning Migration in the State of Puebla project. This project is a collaboration between Universidad Iberoamericana and the Benemérita Autónoma de Puebla. Both institutions formed research teams who participated in seminars and field work collectively to collect the data in Cuautlancingo.

As we mentioned before, the instrument to gather the data was a questionnaire with questions about the daily activities of the returning migrants. A section of the questionnaire focused on their economic reintegration and their future households' expectations. Furthermore, we analyzed the sections of migration experience; migration economy; remittances and savings; employment reintegration; and expectations for the future. This analysis allows us to propose public policy to support returning migrants. We built a database that we processed with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software to obtain our statistical analysis.

Our main objective was to analyze the process of employment reintegration in the local economy and markets. After obtaining a diagnosis, we identify four types of mobility and we measured them. The four types of mobility are sectoral, occupational, income, and job position.

Our goal is to compare each household's labor conditions before migrating with its current labor situation after returning to their hometown communities. We believe the main contribution of this paper is the dynamic analysis of the returning migrant's employment situation.

## 4. RESULTS REPORT<sup>1</sup>

### 4.1. *Particulars of the sample*

For the conducting of this report, a convenience sample was carried out, with a snowball sampling technique to 72 returning migrants from the municipality of Cuautlancingo during the first semester of 2016, 57 surveys were conducted on men and 15 on women, each representing 79% and 21% of the sample's population respectively. From this point forward, we will refer to percentage proportions to facilitate understanding of this report's results.

The great majority was married or in a domestic partnership (couples who are not legally married), from the women (W) 66.7%, and men (M) 78-9%. Almost every M, 98% were head of family, whilst on the side of the W, 53% were wives and 40% head of family. It is important to mention that a significant portion of women (40%) have the obligations and responsibilities of both parents, at the same time without a partner, adding challenges to their reintegration.

In relation with level of education, the greater proportion corresponded to junior high school, 60% of women and 40% of men; then the high school level followed for the women, 20%, and elementary school followed for the men, almost 23%; less than 9% were college graduates of both genders. With regard to their academic performances, both women and men claimed that it was good, although the proportion for the former was 57% and 46% for the latter. The results indicate that the returning women migrants had a higher education level and performance than the men.

The households of the returning migrants obtained their economic resources, mainly, in the local and regional environment, through a job or community work (64%), through entrepreneurship (18%) or through a working position in a nearby city (10%). In relation to the income

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<sup>1</sup> The collaboration of Rocío del C. Osorno Vázquez in data processing is appreciated.

level, 41% of homes drew between 1 and 3 minimum wages (MW), 30% between more than 3 up to 5 MW, 10% between more than 5 until 7 MW, and another 10% over 7 MW. This means that the great majority of returning migrant's homes found themselves far away from what the migrant was earning in the USA, and therefore living an almost impossibility to save, to continue building assets and to guarantee a progressive well-being for their families in Mexico.

#### 4.2. *The conditions of migration*

According to the survey and table 1, the average age in which both W and M migrated was around 30. The duration of their migratory experience was 5.6 years for M and 3.1 years for W, a short migratory experience on average taking into consideration other returnees from different municipalities but more than enough to acquire job skills and part of the culture of the place of destination (Corona & Ortiz, 2016).

It is important to add that almost half of the respondents from both genders returned during the American economic crisis (2008-2013), after the last year of said crisis, more M than W returned (19.4% and 13.4% respectively).

All these results coincide with studies in other central and southeastern states of Mexico (García y del Valle, 2016), where apparently the condition of returnee makes them share characteristics of the migration experience.

TABLE 1  
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RETURN MIGRATION SAMPLE IN CUAUTLANCINGO

Characteristics	V	MEN (M)	Women (W)	Total
Returnee migrants	F	57	15	72
Gender	%	79.2	20.8	100
Age of exit	Years	30.02	29.87	29.99
Age of return	Years	35.74	32.93	35.15
Duration of migration	Years	5.642	3.07	5.11

Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo.

The main reasons why they migrated were: a) to gather money and buy goods (33%), b) unemployment (15%), c) debt (14%). On the other hand, the main reasons for their return were related to: a) personal reasons (46%), b) deportation (22%), c) recent unemployment (4%). It is important to specify that deportation affected M more and disease W.

The preferred destinations for 40% of the respondents was New York, for 28% California and 10% Illinois; 78% of the respondents went to one of those 3 States. It is worth noting that over 75% of the migrants loaned money from a family member or a friend for the trip to cross the border, also known as “la pasada”. Therefore debt shadowed them, but it is also an indicator of the power that social capital has, and family and community networks.

### *4.3. The migratory working experience*

Most of the migrants in the USA worked in the service sector, mainly at restaurants, small businesses, personal care, childcare and others; another part of them worked in construction, mainly the men, and another few in field related work. The type of work, in general, wasn't manual and had low qualification level.

The income that most of them earned weekly, M and W, was about 200 to 400 dollars, in this group the W had a bigger percentage; after that, the group that earned between 401 and 600 dollars a week, following the previous group, although in lesser proportion, was the one between 601 and 800 per week, in both previous groups the M had a bigger percentage, which shows that even in the country in the north, W tend to obtain lesser income than the M. The 3 groups mentioned accommodate 88% of the respondents.

To an extent, most of the W (80%) and of the M (91%) saved a portion of their income, furthermore 33% of the surveyed group even had a bank account in the USA. Regarding labor benefits, only 13% of the W and 19% of M had them, perhaps some days off or some help due to sickness if they were lucky.

During their work stay, 47% of W and 49% of M acquired capabilities and abilities to perform their jobs better and increase, through that, their productivity, that was also shown by the level of income they achieved. Additionally, there were more M that learned English, speaking and understanding of it, than W (81% and 33% respectively), this probably granted them a broader range of mobility in labor markets and the opportunity to improve their income.

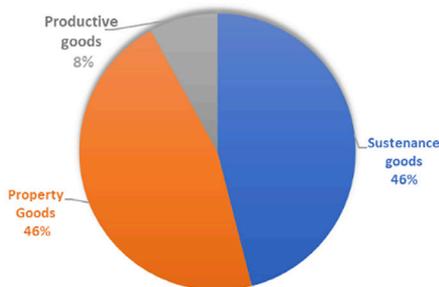
Other important data was: over 70% of M and W obtained their jobs in the USA through a friend or family member, which confirms that social networks are powerful in terms of migration; regarding investments, very few W and M had acquired properties in the USA,

however, before returning, the women sold their bought goods but not the men. It seems women accepted the irreversibility of their return.

#### 4.4. Migration's use of resources: remittances

In relation to the main purpose of their migration, more than 80% of men and women sent remittances to their families in Mexico. Studies made about the use of remittances have coincided showing that over 80% of them are used for consumption, the purchase of sustenance goods. However, the longer the migration period lasts, the income improves and the type of job of the migrant, the family will funnel more and more for: a) property purposes like remodeling, construction or purchase of a house, b) productive purposes like entrepreneurship or consolidation of a business, c) human capital like education and health, mainly.

GRAPH 1  
GENERAL USE OF REMITTANCES



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

In general, the remittances of the returnees of Cuautlancingo (see Graph 1), were used for sustenance goods in almost half the cases, property goods were acquired at the same rate and only 8% were invested in productive goods, which is very normal because remittances are part of wages that would be used in the same way by any family, the difference resides in the international component of those particular wages. By gender, the M averaged a spending of 30% on consumer goods, 19% for housing and 8% for education for their children. While the W spent 40% of remittances on consumption goods, 29% for the education of

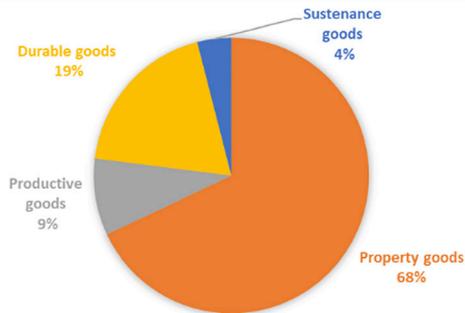
their offspring and 14% for housing. It is important to clarify that the use of remittances, and economic resources in general, depends on the meeting of primary and urgent needs, and only afterwards advancing towards the secondary needs.

According to the spending results, it seems that women were more interested in educating their children. Furthermore, it can be deduced that nearly half of the returnees could increase their property goods, which has helped reduce economic pressure in their labor reintegration process.

#### 4.5. Migration's use of resources: savings

At the time of the return, the use of savings can have the same aims but not the same proportions because it would be expected that the least amount of them would be destined for consumption, again conditioned by the aforementioned migratory experience, that would allow them to accumulate more savings, and also by the use of remittances that families would have made (see Graph 2).

GRAPH 2  
USE OF SAVINGS



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

Considering the results of the survey in relation to savings, 34% of migrants returned with an average saving of \$250,000; 18% with an average saved of \$75,000; 14% with \$37,500, and 16% with \$15,000 Mexican pesos at constant prices. Particularly, the 14% returned with over \$500,000 and only 6% with less than \$6,000. It's worth to highlight that the proportions of W were greater than those of the M within the

groups that saved less, the group that saved \$250.000 on average, and the group that exceeds one million.

Regarding the use of savings, as it was to be expected, the use of savings for sustenance goods only represented 4%, whilst its use for property goods was reflected on 68% of the cases, followed by durable goods such as cars, appliances and devices with 19% while only 8% was mainly used for productive purposes. This shows that the economic behavior of the returning migrants is consistent with the objective of having left their land to work in the USA in the first place, obtaining a better income to acquire more goods while at the same time depending on the economic life cycle of the family which would guide the final purpose of their expenditures or savings.

From the results, it is deduced that a good part of the returnees had the opportunity to invest their savings in the improvement of their estate and the equipping of their homes, which not only did it represent an increased standard of living but also boosted their economic capacity to deal with the labor reintegration process.

#### *4.6. The experience of return from an economic perspective*

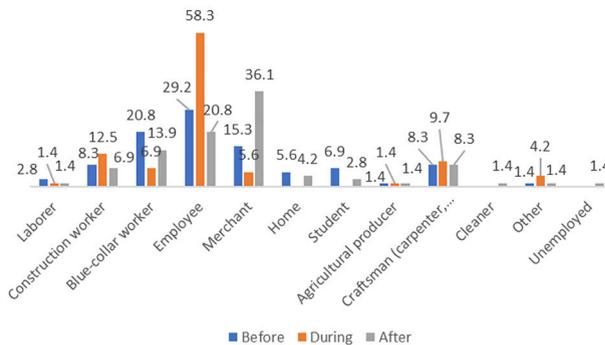
The main challenge of return migration is the process of reintegration to the family, to the community, labor reintegration, which is what allows to build a foundation of their economic stability in their new destination. Labor reintegration consists in retaking an activity that allows them to receive an income to buy consumer goods, which also involves four main parameters. According to our research, these parameters are the economic sector where the persons works, the type of activity to undertake, the income that is obtained and the position performed at work. In the case of the return, its valuation is made considering the migratory experience, comparing labor parameters before and after the original migration took place, so we can determine changes in labor mobility.

##### *Sectorial labor mobility: occupation before, during and after*

This analysis observes the working continuity within the economic sectors in the country of destination, subsequently in the original country for the return. In the case of the returning migrants from Cuautlancingo (See Graph 3), before migrating most of them were employees (29%), followed by laborers, merchants, craftsmen by trade, and masons in construction, of course there were students, housewives, day laborers,

and farmers but in minor proportions. In the USA, the proportion of employees increased to 58%, followed far away by craftsmen by trade, construction workers and merchants and even farther away the ones who worked the fields. At the point of return, the biggest proportion was merchants (36%), followed by employees and laborers, even lower craftsmen, masons and housewives, and the others far below.

GRAPH 3  
LABOR OCCUPATION BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

On graph 3, it is observed that before departing, migrants were in a predominantly tertiary sectoral labor structure, characterized by abundant manual labor and low productivity. By becoming employed in the USA they settle in and mold a tertiary labor structure too, primarily oriented towards services, offering less manual labor, a certain amount of qualification, higher productivity, and higher income. After returning to Cuautlancingo, the majority of activities, undertaken by migrants to generate an income, are equally from the tertiary sector where trade activities predominate, underqualified manual labor that suffers from low productivity and low incomes; those who manage to procure a job do so under precarious conditions, when that isn't possible they become small merchants whose majority operates informally, very much in the style of that which has happened to the returnees in the national scope.

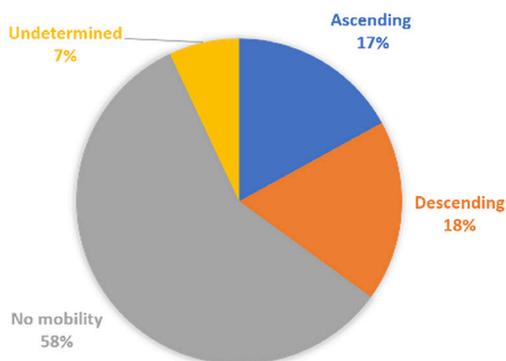
In a nutshell, sectoral labor mobility of returning migrants continues following the sectoral structure of the local economy, the difference is found in the opportunities that the American economy offers, because even though they return to Mexico with better qualifications,

opportunities are scarce, thus few of them progress when they return. The solution therefore isn't to be found in migration or return migration but in the development of the economy to generate opportunities for progress for the people in their places of origin, that's nothing new but it has now been proven.

### *Occupational mobility*

One of the most important parameters is the occupational mobility, which can be referred to as the capacity to have a better job or occupation than the one that was had before migrating from the place of origin, this can be ascending, descending or without mobility (Cobo, S., 2008). In the particular case of returning migrants from Cuautlancingo (see Graph 4), the results indicated that the majority, 58%, didn't show mobility between the work performed before migrating and after it, they continued doing underqualified manual labor; while only 17% showed an ascending occupational mobility which, again, demonstrates that migration can be used to increase the income level of the people involved, but it is very limited for improving the structural conditions of the functioning of the economy, which is a job better left for government authorities and firms, mainly.

GRAPH 4  
OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY AFTER THE RETURN



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

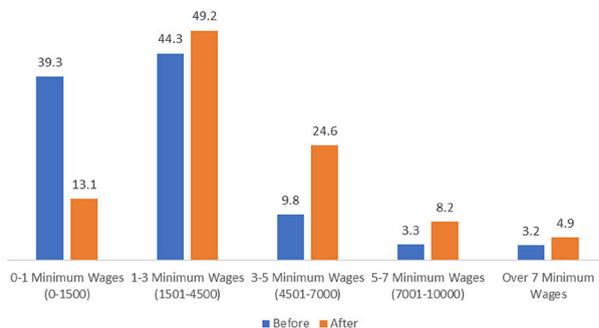
### *Income before and after migrating*

The other parameter of labor reintegration is the mobility of the income before and after migrating. Even though this calculation is board-based,

it displays whether the people's level of income improved. According to the data from the survey conducted in Cuautlancingo, the results showed an improvement in the people's income level, since, as it is shown on Graph 5, the distribution changed significantly after the return, the ones who earned up to 1 minimum wage of income dropped from 39% to 13%, those who earned over 1 minimum wage up to 3 minimum wages rose from 44% to 49%, those who earned over 3 up to 5 minimum wages rose from 10% to 25%, the same happened to those who earned over 5 minimum wages up to 7 minimum wages going from 3% to 8% and the same goes for those who earned over 7 minimum wages, rising from 3% to 5%.

By gender, most of both M and W earned a higher income than the one they had before migrating, however, it still was too low in comparison to what they used to earn during their migratory experience, that's why 53% of M and 47% of W wouldn't save. The majority of the few returnees that could save would do so in proportions that would represent 10 to 15% of their income, being the M the ones that saved the most. It is worth noting that the savings accounts of the M increased almost 4 times, while the W's accounts only increased 40%, this explains why M returned with bigger savings than the W. Notwithstanding, the group of M's is the one that needs to access loans after migrating. It is also observed a low usage of mortgages loans and an increased proportion of returning migrants from both genders that know how to use their savings, 75% of M and 67% of W.

GRAPH 5  
INCOME IN MEXICO, BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATING



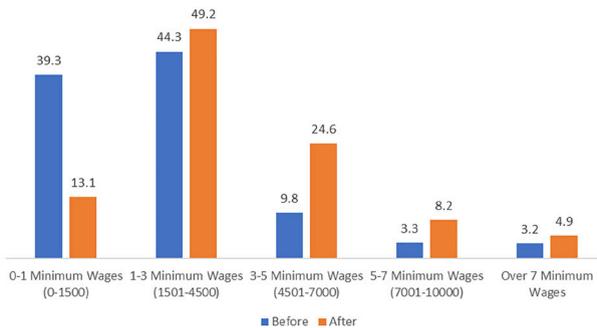
Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

### *Work position*

The fourth proposed parameter for labor reintegration is the work position, in the case of the returnees of Cuautlancingo, some people improved it since the proportion of employers rose from 11% to 17% after returning, the same happened with self-employed people whose proportion increased from 15 to 35%, under this category it is necessary to consider that those who are engaged in commerce are included. The category of public servants had also a small increase moving from 9% to 12% (see Graph 6).

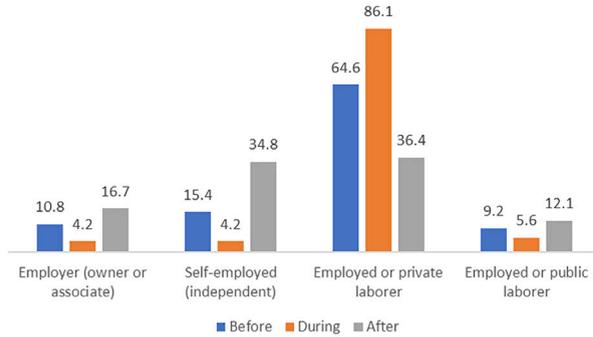
The categories that compensated those increases were employees and private laborers whose proportion decreased substantially from 64% to 36%. The previously mentioned means that the migratory experience helped improve many people's work position, some who became owners or associates in firms and those who became self-employed, it is necessary to clarify on self-employed people which may include informal commerce activities with irregular income, without any benefits, as previously mentioned in this text.

GRAPH 5  
INCOME IN MEXICO, BEFORE AND AFTER MIGRATING



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

GRAPH 6  
WORK POSITION OF RETURNEES



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

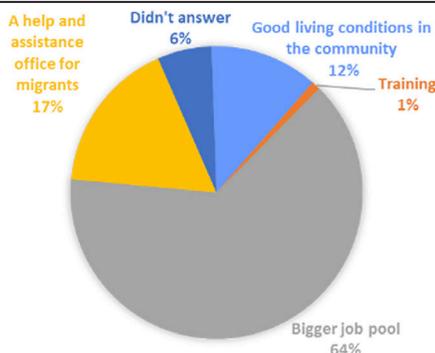
Once the process of labor reintegration has been studied, it can be concluded that migration can solve economic problems in an individual or family level, but its reach is very limited to solve problems within the economic structures of the communities of origin, even more so for the national economy.

#### Conditions and obstacles for economic reintegration

One of the most important aspects of return migration refers to the conditions of reintegration itself, because this would be what would allow them to lay the foundation for a stable stay, at least economically. In this tenor, according to 64% of the respondents, what's missing is jobs which is one of the main reasons for migration and the return itself that limits strongly their economic reintegration.

Similarly, 17% of respondents considered important the creation of an agency that offers both attention and help for migrants, so they could access clear and appropriate information of what they are able to do or request, to which public or private institutions are they able to resort to, since a big interest of them was the certification of their working skills and training, these institutional challenges were also identify by Manchinely and Morales (2019:50). Another 12% emphasized the importance of good living conditions in the community, including security, since this exactly came to be a part of their life during their migratory experience (See Graph 7).

GRAPH 7  
REINTEGRATION CONDITIONS

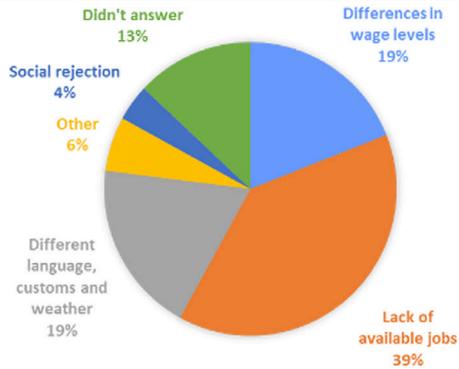


Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

Since a significant group of returnees is in a productive age, several of those conditions for labor reintegration are related with the capability to access formal employment and social benefits, as well as access to work training, competencies certifications or credits and monetary support for the financing of productive projects.

Now, to be able to have the full landscape of the process of reintegration that returnees from Cuautlancingo live, it is convenient to complement it with the obstacles that they themselves observed along the way (see Graph 8). From their own perspective, the main hurdle was the lack of available jobs for 39% of the respondents; followed by two other important obstacles, one was the wage differential between Mexico and the USA, something that was strongly felt by those who earned over 10 times more in said country, and the other one was the conditions of the environment such as language, weather and customs, both with 19%. In this same list of hurdles, social rejection followed, something that is barely recognized in Mexico, but it's something that is practiced frequently, plus other less frequent obstacles.

GRAPH 8  
REINTEGRATION OBSTACLES



Source: Results of a sample of 72 returning migrants surveyed in the municipality of Cuautlancingo

With those answers, it is clear that returning migrants face severe problems of labor reintegration, mainly due to the poor functioning of the economy at the national and regional level, plus the social deterioration that comes along in terms of poverty and inequality. In this fashion, it is observed that the returnees can have more expertise, better skills and attitudes acquired during their migratory experience, but it seems that the majority can't find the best employment opportunities to take advantage of those qualities in their new destination, thus they work wherever they can find work which generally translates to a low income. That situation brings along feelings of frustration that will shine over their expectancies of permanence, which will be explained hereafter.

#### 4.7. Expectancies for the return

Among their expectancies, the majority planned to open a business, following the aspiration they had before migrating which was acquiring real estate properties and establishing a business, a genuinely economic aim. In the results, those who reached their goals of migration are mostly M rather than W, although not in many cases, since most of the returnees went back home without achieving them, since 65% of the respondents planned to reside in the USA for up to 5 years before returning, which accumulates frustration.

The answers that crown the satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the returnees in their current residence are related with their plans or future expectations. On one hand, 73% of W and 54% of M would like to send their children to the USA to live and study, which means that the greater majority doesn't trust the current conditions at Mexico and in their place of origin for the development of their children. On the other hand, 53% of W and 45% of M planned to return to the USA sooner or later. Regardless of their success in their strategy, those plans reveal that for the majority of M and almost half of the W the reintegration, mostly economic, hasn't been satisfactory.

Due to all the above, it is urgent that the authorities of all levels and most of all the municipal authorities tend to the issues that returning migrants face, people that can be agents of change and progress if they are seen and treated as a vision of the future.

Otherwise, while reintegrating themselves to the community without recognition or opportunities, their work experience and expertise will continue being squandered and they could instead become one more problem for the communities by not having a more favorable environment for their adaptation process.

### **Guidelines for the design of development policies**

First, considering the analysis previously conducted, it is important to generate a change in the way in which returning migrants are seen. As they themselves expressed through the survey, they require opportunities to access better living conditions in their communities and attention towards some of the obstacles that returning migrants encounter, such as social rejection. It must be considered that returning migrants are persons worthy of respect and admiration, because they decided to look for opportunities of progress in a foreign country, enduring distancing themselves from their families, loneliness and nostalgia for their homeland, accepting risk and confronting dangers. Now that they have returned, they should be true agents of change, persons who can aid the progress of the municipality because they brought knowledge, skills, and attitudes with them, both new and different but complementary at the same time.

Returning migrants aren't the same people they were before leaving long ago, through their migratory experience, they lived part of the society's culture of the country of destination, in the USA institutions

are strong and they condition the behavior of the social agents in most of the cases, through which respect of law, freedom, authority and citizenry are fundamental. Isn't this something that we are lacking and need urgently? Returning migrants have lived it and the greater part of them recognize that as something that can be taught in their community, they are the men and women that can spearhead a change of attitude and social behavior. It is recommended that the municipality invites them to participate and tends to them.

Second, even though returnees have the same condition and face similar problems, because of the conducted analysis it is advisable that policies and programs integrate a gender perspective that engages in the development of disaggregated information by gender, that promotes and drives actions of awareness, orientation, attention and planning. The lack of attention to that perspective can continue to lead to further exacerbation of stereotypes, discriminatory practices and inequality in the work environment, reinforcing wage gaps and the continuous reproduction of double or triple shifts a day for women, mainly.

Third, considering that the conundrum that returning migrants face is very complex, since it encompasses all spheres of family and community life and the economic reintegration, the design, planning and execution of actions and strategies for their attention must have a comprehensive focus, in order to avoid partial practices that may foster inequality and delve in other issues.

The best way to address the problem of migration is attacking its causes, if there is no leaving there won't be any returning either, hence it is recommended that municipal policies be focused on local development with a comprehensive focus to achieve entrenchment that prevents emigration and offers opportunities of progress for those who return.

It is important that community development returns, the restoring of the social tissue and the integration of local productive facilities, based on regional resources and the consumption of what is produced in the community. Defending and experiencing the local culture is crucial for achieving an economic insertion that is both selective and strategic for the globalized world. Cuautlancingo has, within its economy, globalization, big companies and centers of consumption, however, they aren't enough to offer progress opportunities to all of those who need and will need a job or a gainful entrepreneurship.

It is also the opportunity to internationalize solutions, summoning Cuautlancingo natives that have made a fortune living in the USA so that they can bring financial and social capital to invest in businesses and help their people. This is, naturally, not easy or free, confidence in government authorities must set a precedent which will only be mustered with honesty, transparency, accountability and a climate of security.

Fourth, it is important to strengthen the bonds of trust and communication with other levels of government and non-State actors to bolster the mechanisms of joint responsibility and collaboration towards those themes. At a local level, it is critical that authorities engage their communities, in knowledge and execution of strategies and actions framed within the Special Migration Program (known in Spanish as PEM), as the strategy to communicate, sensitize and promote respect and appreciation of migrants and also as a strategy to broadcast such programs that bring attention to returning migrants, searching the opening of spaces of cooperation, dialogue and collaboration for the development and implementation of diverse projects of a productive, financial and social nature.

Fifth, the true solution for the problems starts by listening to the affected people. In this paper, there is an attempt to diagnose some of the issues of return migration precisely by asking questions to the people. They are the ones who are better aware of their own necessities and, for the most part, how to meet them, that's why the government authorities in the municipality must be up to the challenge of creating the proper conditions for dialogue, participation and collaboration.

As a result, participation from local authorities, collaboration with the different non-governmental actors such as companies, ONG's, academia and, mainly, returning migrants by means of dialogue becomes vitally essential for the development of support strategies that foster the reintegration of the returnees.

The best solutions are the ones that accept the participation of the affected people, there for it's recommended:

#### *The role of the returnees*

The returnees must communicate and organize, together they can achieve more than by themselves; social networks can be a great tool for establishment, linkage, and communication. For that effect, it is

necessary to consolidate community managers and network experts to connect them. That will prove useful for the establishment of community firms, caring aid, and even political protesting whenever necessary.

#### *The role of the municipality*

He who governs should listen to the governed (returnees) to pose the best solutions within a comprehensive perspective of regional strategic development. For this purpose, they will have to orient and use public spending to dynamize the local economy, which at the same time will encourage investment and the generation of new entrepreneurships. This is possible in Cuautlancingo because it is found in a prime location, with an economic structure - although not as integrated locally - that is a great generator of industrial production, especially in the stream of globalization. But it was already mentioned that confidence is fundamental, therefore the authorities must work hard to reestablish it, by being honest and congruent with a sense of social justice and environmental commitment.

#### *The role of the community*

The members of society must recognize that migrants and returnees are valuable, trustworthy persons. Employers must acknowledge them as capable of performing high-responsibility task, as well as support decidedly those who wish to become entrepreneurs. Members of the community must shelter and aid those who need it most. For that, churches can play a very dynamic and important role. Members of the media must utilize their channels to inform about migrants, their necessities, their achievements, and their contributions to the society in which they reside. Universities can also contribute their talents for the deployment of the municipal dynamic.

In a nutshell, the solution invites almost everyone, it will depend on how public the government wants their development policies to be, because it is up to them to create the conditions to generate the alliances and accords to address this and other social and local issues.

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