

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns Update
A periodic report on our work, one issue at a time
May 2006

Migration

Why focus on migration?

In Africa, Asia, the Pacific and throughout the Americas, including in the United States, **Maryknoll missionaries live and work with people on the move.** Whether they are fleeing war, repression or violent conflict, or looking for work, the consequences for their families, as well as for sending and receiving communities, are tremendous. Some of the driving forces for migration and some of the barriers migrants encounter are local or attitudinal – and can best be addressed at that level. But many other factors causing people to uproot, as well as the threats and obstacles they meet on their journeys, have deep roots in international practice or policy - and have potentially effective international solutions. The [Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns \(MOGC\)](#) enters the debate at an international level, but always making an effort to stay connected to grassroots experience.

The Gospel is clear about welcoming the stranger and Catholic social teaching on migration is extensive. [Strangers No Longer](#), for example, says that "... the root causes of migration – poverty, injustice, religious intolerance, armed conflicts – must be addressed so that migrants can remain in their homeland and support their families (#28)" and "When persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families, they have the right to find work elsewhere in order to survive. Sovereign nations should provide ways to accommodate this right." (#35)

What is MOGC hoping to accomplish?

1. Identify and change the root causes of involuntary migration, including economic injustice that perpetuates poverty; war and violent conflict; and human rights violations or repression
2. Help cast the current debate about U.S. immigration policy in a global context; to promote just and compassionate U.S. immigration laws; to counter punitive and isolationist tendencies driven by fear of the "other" in U.S. law and in U.S. foreign policy
3. Identify and use – or help Maryknollers use - international treaties and human rights instruments to protect the rights of migrants; to engage actively in the UN debate about migration that will help strengthen and implement such international agreements

How is MOGC working in this area now?

Root causes of involuntary migration: The MOGC has a deep and long-term commitment to end poverty and promote economic justice. Our work is extensive for debt cancellation, just trade agreements and a global economy that enables people around the world to have a dignified life at home - to care for themselves, their loved ones, their communities and the earth without having to migrate – or to migrate with legal protections. (See our [MOGC update on our work to end poverty.](#))

The MOGC also has a deep and long-term commitment to promote peace and respect for basic human rights. We actively oppose war, trafficking in violence, militarization and repression – with a focus on the violence perpetrated by the United States or devastating the regions where Maryknoll missionaries live and work. Our significant involvement with [Pax Christi](#) and our participation in the

[Catholic Peacebuilding Network](#) enable an MOGC contribution to specific peacebuilding and conflict resolution endeavors.

Just and compassionate immigration policy: At our suggestion, and with the encouragement of Maryknoll missionaries working on the U.S.-Mexico border, joint Maryknoll leadership issued a [statement on U.S. immigration in March 2006](#). It was released in [Spanish](#) and English by Maryknoll Media Relations and has been circulated widely.

We have sent out action alerts on immigration reform to our email/fax list of almost 500 people and will continue to encourage Maryknoll friends to advocate for just and compassionate legislation.

In an effort to broaden the context of the current U.S. immigration debate and to heighten awareness of the millions of people on the move around the world, we are gathering from Maryknoll missionaries information and stories about people migrating from, into or through their communities.

UN debate about migration: At the same time, we are preparing a reflection paper on migration that we hope will form the basis of a broader Maryknoll position paper on the subject to guide our work on U.S. policy and at the United Nations. We will integrate information from Maryknollers working with migrants and Catholic social teaching on the subject.

We are learning about existing international treaties and human rights instruments that can protect the rights of migrants and will participate actively in preparations for and activities around the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration that will take place in New York in July and September 2006.

With whom is MOGC working on migration?

In addition to our many partners in the work for economic justice and for peace, our principal partners in this work on migration “per se” are:

- **Maryknoll missionaries working with migrants and refugees.** As always, Maryknoll experience is our most valued resource and guide. We hope to stay in regular contact with interested Maryknollers and have begun an email conversation to facilitate that communication. (Please send a message to ogc@maryknoll.org if you would like to be added to that list.)
- **Border Working Group.** A coalition of faith-centered and human rights groups based in Washington, D.C. that works in dialogue and collaboration with partners on the U.S.-Mexico border for just and humane U.S. border and immigration policies.
- **Religious at the UN Migration Working Group.** A coalition of religious groups with NGO status at the UN who are participating in the UN High Level Dialogue process on migration.

To stay in touch with the MOGC’s work on migration, go to our [website](#) which will be updated regularly.