

Crisis on the Move: Causes & Consequences of Mobility in the Americas

Ahead of the [9th Summit of the Americas](#), CARE USA, the Pulte Institute for Global Development at Notre Dame University, and the Central America Research Alliance convened civil society experts in Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss the intersection of humanitarian crisis, migration, and displacement across the Americas, and how policymakers can support a more equitable future for all.

Overview

The May 25 event focused on a critical aspect of life in the Americas – the state of migration and displacement and its impact on the well-being of communities across the Western Hemisphere. The U.S., as organizers of the Summit of the Americas, opted not to include migration and displacement as part of the Summit’s core thematic pillars or formal civil Society working groups, effectively insulating the issues from inclusive input and consultation from civil society partners. As regional leaders gather at the Summit, the discussions and recommendations below are intended to spotlight the drivers and impacts of human mobility and catalyze resources and rights-based policy solutions to respond to humanitarian needs and support durable solutions to displacement.

Speakers¹

Key Note: John Feeley, Former U.S. Ambassador to Panama | **Moderator:** Daniel Almeida, Senior Advocacy Advisor, CARE | **Closing Speaker:** Tom Hare, Senior Researcher, Pulte Institute & Co-Director, CARA

Panel 1: Migration, Displacement & Humanitarian Crises

[Guerda Previlion](#), President & Executive Director, IDEJEN, Haiti

[Mercedes Pérez](#), Head of Migrant Programs, CASM, Honduras

[Adriana Pérez Rodríguez](#), Director, Observatorio de Asuntos de Género de Norte de Santander, Colombia

Panel 2: Mobility Policies: Impacts & Gaps

[Levelt Michaud](#), National Direct, Jesuit Migrant Services, Haiti

[Natalia Ortiz Barrientos](#), Chairperson of the Board of Directors, INCEDES, Guatemala

[Verónica Supliguicha Cárdenas](#), Coordinadora General de Proyectos, Fundación Alas de Colibrí, Ecuador

The following themes and recommendations reflect the diverse contributions of the panelists, CARE, the Pulte Institute, and the Central American Research Alliance. Inclusion may not confer the explicit endorsement of all organizations represented.

Key Themes:

People are on the move for diverse, but fundamental reasons. Even within a given national context, there are many non-exclusive push-pull factors causing mobility like armed conflict, political turmoil, socioeconomic collapse, and/or gender-based violence. Simplistic solutions or rhetoric and policies that seek to deter human mobility will not override the reality that people move when their basic, humanitarian needs for protection, shelter, livelihoods, or food are not being met.

Human mobility is not a problem, it is a right. The right to migrate and seek asylum in a third country is protected in International Law and reinforced by regional and national mechanisms. Instead of implementing policies to prevent freedom of movement, policy approaches should promote “rootedness” – the fostering of communities that people want to live in – through investments into core

¹ To see additional resources provided by the panelists, click on their name. For more information on all our speakers, [click here](#).

areas of society like inclusive economic development, climate adaptation, governance, and gender equality. To achieve this, regional, and international policy cooperation is key, especially as states are increasingly thrust into overlapping roles of host, destination, and transit country for people on the move from the Americas and beyond.

Comprehensive strategies must address humanitarian needs holistically. Addressing the root causes of mobility is critical for creating long-term change, but for the millions in the Americas already in need of life-saving assistance, there isn't time to wait for long term solutions. To meet urgent humanitarian needs, short- and medium-term approaches must be scaled up and facilitate durable solutions. This includes regularization of asylum pathways, access to social protection in host countries, and services for people on the move. At the same time, deteriorating pressures on social protection systems are impacting communities in host countries and those who remain in countries of origin; access to rights and services must be universal and account for their needs.

Civil society is a vital partner, but they can't work alone. Across the region, civil society is highly developed and often fills the role of the state in supporting migrants, displaced people, returnees, and vulnerable host populations. In some cases, like Haiti, there is simply no state framework to address key issues like the re-integration of deportees, leaving NGOs and faith communities to fill the gaps where they can, with limited resources. In other places like Guatemala, there may be positive policies in place, but they are not funded, implemented, or enforced. Real progress will be a product of collaboration between civil society, government, and affected populations.

Rights-based and compassion-centered approaches are key. Policies and rhetoric about migration and displacement need to reinforce the dignity and humanity of all people on the move and must uphold rights enshrined in international and national laws. Border management strategies and policies related to people's right to asylum should be approached first and foremost from a human security perspective. This includes building political will to end deterrence-based measures, including the levy of high fines in Honduras that leave people on the move stranded and vulnerable at the border. Moreover, not all migrants are treated equally. Women, BIPOC, LGBTQI+, and other marginalized people are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment and discrimination and require focused interventions to ensure their needs are met.

Recommendations:

1. **Scale-up humanitarian aid and comprehensive development assistance.** Across the Americas, humanitarian needs have tripled in just three years. People and communities need immediate, flexible assistance to cover their basic needs and sustainable mechanisms to build resilience against future shocks. Fostering rootedness, requires sustained investments beyond the economic sphere, including youth, climate adaptation, good governance, and gender equity.
2. **Lead with local knowledge.** Donor governments should provide flexible funding to local and community-based organizations, especially those led by marginalized communities and women led groups and networks. This supports the accountability of local power structures and ensures that programs to provide humanitarian assistance and promote rootedness are designed and implemented optimally to suit local realities.
3. **Put existing conventions into action through partnerships.** States should work with civil society to design accountability and enforcement mechanisms to implement national, regional, and international legal conventions that have already been adopted in the Americas, like the Cartagena Declaration. Where gaps remain, states should explore regional policy approaches through inclusive processes that involve the participation of all Latin American and Caribbean states.
4. **Uphold people's right to move.** The U.S. and other states should improve asylum processes and enact border management practices that ensure all people on the move receive equitable, humane treatment, in line with International Law. This should be achieved through regularized, human security-based approaches including the provision of temporary or humanitarian visas.