Labour Mobility alternatives for a broken model

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Labour Mobility: alternatives for a broken model

Authors: **Cristina Fuentes Lara, Alai Carril Zerpa y Tatiana Makarova**

Research direction: **Cristina Fuentes Lara**

Design and layout: **Alberto Reverón - NSUE Studio**

Design of visual elements: **Isabella Carril Zerpa**

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Summary

This report proposes an alternative and deeply critical look at the current system of international labour mobility, focusing especially on migrants as key actors within global productive dynamics and systems of structural inequality. Based on the analysis of 46 labour mobility programmes - eight of which have been classified as highly successful and 17 as successful - it presents a rigorous diagnosis of the failures of the current model, while exploring practices and policies that represent strategies of resistance and viable paths towards a fairer, more dignified and sustainable system.

In contrast to the dominant imaginary that criminalises or instrumentalises labour migration, this report shows that there are concrete experiences, spread across four continents, that offer alternative models based on regularity, multi-stakeholder cooperation, respect for human rights and mutual benefit. These experiences challenge the idea that precariousness is inevitable and show that the current system is not driven by structural necessity, but by political and economic decisions that reinforce dependency, lack of protection and subordination.

Our findings reveal that labour mobility has been built around three major axes of inequality: the commercialisation of the migration process, the erosion of the state's role as guarantor and the construction of legal regimes that condition access to fundamental rights on the basis of migration status. This structure translates into a profoundly conditioned autonomy, systematic job insecurity and social exclusion that permeates the life experience of millions of people in transit.

The highly successful programmes studied are characterised by the implementation of robust evaluation mechanisms and the integration of measures aimed at guaranteeing fundamental rights: access to health, social security, education, decent employment conditions, and effective channels for complaints and oversight. In addition, they rely on multilateral and community-based governance strategies that place collaboration between the various actors in the system at the centre. However, even these programmes have significant limitations, such as over-dependence on the employer, low portability of rights, and lack of skills matching.

 The report also focuses on the symbolic and discursive dimensions of labour mobility, which produce stigmatised subjectivities, forms of intersectional discrimination and normalised cultural hierarchies. The figure of the migrant as a "temporary worker", "low-skilled" or "integrated" reinforces narratives that make knowledge invisible, limit social mobility and justify forms of legalised exploitation.

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Faced with this panorama, humane and efficient alternatives have become real spaces of resistance. The strategies, promoted both by governments and by community actors and civil organisations, are articulated around four main axes: the creation of regular mobility routes, the promotion of ethical recruitment, the development of legal frameworks with a rights based approach, and the strengthening of transnational community networks. Programmes such as SaMi, Bridges to Health or Pathways International stand out, not only for their positive results, but also for the innovative and collaborative approach with which they address the challenges of labour mobility.

This report is not only a diagnostic exercise, but a methodological and political proposal to rethink the labour mobility model from a comprehensive, critical and transformative perspective. The analysis carried out invites us to overcome the logics of exceptionality, welfare or mere economic efficiency, and to move towards a system that recognises the structural, social and political value of migrants in contemporary labour frameworks.

The evidence gathered shows that another model of labour mobility is possible, and that it is already underway in different contexts. Acknowledging these practices not only allows us to assess the failures of the current system, but also constitutes a first step towards the collective construction of inclusive and sustainable alternatives, where mobility is not synonymous with precariousness, but rather with rights, opportunities and dignity.

Introduction

This research aims to provide a differentiated perspective on migrants' labour mobility. In current media and social knowledge, migration is analysed from a reductionist point of view of the movement of people, linked to exceptionality, threat or economic utility. Through this report, we aim to take a step further and explore other perspectives on human mobility, emphasizing migration models that are regular, dignified, autonomous, participatory, transparent and collaborative processes prevail.

For this purpose, an investigation of labour mobility programmes that met these characteristics was carried out. In addition, pilot programmes were omitted due to the lack of tracked results in addition to those that were replicas of other programmes, while the geographical diversity was prioritised in order to transcend the South-North vision of migratory flows. A total of 46 programmes in four continents were evaluated following indicators of evaluation by results, processes, economics and impact. After the evaluation, 8 highly successful and 17 successful programmes were identified. In-depth interviews were conducted with the coordinators of these programmes, whose responses were coded according to the thematic analysis technique - for a more detailed methodology, see Annex 1.

The findings of this research show that the current model of labour mobility is structured around the commercialisation of the migration process, the outsourcing of state functions and an exclusionary legal framework that links rights to migration status. In this context, migrants face systematic inequalities that manifest themselves in precarious employment, labour discrimination, conditional autonomy, social exclusion and various forms of violence. Nevertheless, the report identifies a series of institutional and community practices that, without representing total solutions, function as experimental spaces of resistance. These initiatives make it possible to envision viable alternatives to a hegemonic system characterized by structural lack of protection. They propose inclusive regulatory frameworks, ethical recruitment processes, effective monitoring systems, accessible complaint mechanisms and collaborative governance models. Taken together, these experiences open up the possibility of labour mobility that is not synonymous with subordination, but with rights, opportunity and dignity

This report is organised into five thematic sections that provide a critical and multi-scalar understanding of the dynamics of international labour mobility. The first block contextualises the urgency of addressing labour mobility and offers a structural analysis of the current system, highlighting the legal, economic and political frameworks that configure it, as well as the logics that articulate its functioning. The second section presents a

mapping of programmes regarded as successful and highly successful in various global contexts. The third sections delves into the limitations and inequalities that persist even in these programmes, analysing how mechanisms of exclusion, subordination, discrimination and violence affect migrants. The fourth section, the analytical core of the report, explores in detail the strategies of resistance that are deployed throughout the migration cycle. Finally, the fifth section contains the main conclusions, which provide the keys to imagining and implementing an alternative model of labour mobility that is fair, sustainable and focused on the dignity of migrants.

This document is not only a diagnosis of the current model of labour mobility, but also a methodological and political proposal. This research is the beginning of a change in the way labour mobility systems are studied and structured. It is a novel analysis where recognising and systematising these existing practices is the first step towards collectively constructing alternatives that prioritise dignity, social justice and institutional co-responsibility, and it is especially a first step towards rethinking our own system of labour mobility in Spain

1. Why do we talk about labour mobility?

While anti-migration narratives such as "migrants come in search of better opportunities" or "they take jobs away from nationals" are gaining prominence, the benefits that labour mobility brings to destination countries and communities are underrepresented or even omitted from public discourse[1]. The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the essentiality of jobs

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[1] For more information on this matter, consult: Noja et al. (2018); IOM (2023): https://lac.iom.int/en/blogs/five-contributions-migrants-growth-latin-american-economies; World Migration Report (2020):
https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/wmr_2020_en_ch_5.pdf#page=5;
OIM (2025):
https://lac.iom.int/es/blogs/como-contribuyen-las-personas-migrantes-la-sociedad;
OIT (2024):
https://www.ilo.org/es/resource/news/los-migrantes-internacionales-son-una-fuerza-vital-en-el-mercado-laboral; Basok, López-Sala y Avallone (2023).

predominantly held by migrants [2]. Even more so in ageing societies where a large part of the young and contributing workforce is of migrant origin.

First, certain sectors rely heavily on foreign labour due to specific socio demographic dynamics, such as population ageing, the health crisis and shortages of medical personnel. According to ILO (2024) a significant proportion of migrants, 68.4%, worked in the service sector, compared to 51.5% of non migrants. This disparity reflects the global demand for care and domestic work, especially among women. In Spain, migrants have played a key role in the country's economic growth, which reached 3.2 per cent in 2024. This growth was driven by strategic sectors such as tourism (+7%), agriculture (+7%) and manufacturing (+3.9%), areas where the presence of migrant workers is particularly significant[3].

Second, migrants positively impact the economies of receiving countries by contributing as entrepreneurs, investors, and consumers, as well as contributing significantly to the support of the pension system through the payment of direct and indirect taxes. In addition, migrants also play a key role as providers of savings in household economies and as "senders" of remittances, which largely sustain the economic development of their countries of origin. These remittances not only support entire families, but also strengthen local economies. Moreover, in the return process, migrants contribute to the exchange of knowledge and talents, generating a valuable social, economic and cultural contribution

But beyond the direct economic and social benefits, we would like to highlight some less visible yet important contributions for local communities and the formation of translocal and transnational community networks[4]. First, contrary to views that consider migrants as peripheral or in need of integration, migrants are an integral part of local and translocal development, contributing to place-building processes and translocal networks through entrepreneurship, cultural activities and participation in social movements.

In addition, migrants build meaningful social networks-often with non-migrants- that generate belonging, trust and mutual support. They are part of the "weak ties" in the neighbourhood, which are very important in combating loneliness, especially among older people. These weak networks manifest themselves in everyday interactions (at the supermarket, in local shops, etc.). And finally, they create horizontal trans-local networks,

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[2] See in porCausa (2022):
https://porcausa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Informe_Esenciales_2022.pdf
[3] For more information on this matter, consult:
https://elpais.com/opinion/2025-05-19/frente-a-las-islas-de-forasteros-la-prosperidad-compartida.html
[4] For more information on this matter, consult: Çağlar y Glick Schiller (2018).

strengthening the economies of a city or community and connecting with other cities and the world.

The pandemic also exposed the extent of job insecurity and discrimination, particularly affecting socially vulnerable groups such as migrants. It is therefore essential to address the issue of the current labour mobility system, as it is a counterproductive model. In order to understand its consequences, it is necessary to analyse the elements and logics that sustain and reproduce it, and that limit access to decent working conditions.

2. The Labour mobility system

As history tells us, migration was not always rejected by receiving countries. Between 1948 and 1973, thousands of people migrated to Britain, a country that, after the Second World War, urgently needed to rebuild its economy and actively encouraged immigration from its colonies. This wave of migration, known as the Windrush Generation, not only helped restore the British economy, but also brought with it a valuable assemblage of music, art, literature and dance that revolutionised the cultural landscape. Their legacy lives on today, contributing significantly to the UK's contemporary creative industries. However, in 2018 thousands of people from this generation were unfairly deprived of their rights to live and work in the country, and many of them were threatened with deportation or even deported.

The story of Windrush Generation as well as other cases in migration history[5] exemplify a drastic shift in migration policies and the labour mobility system in general: from the discourse of "welcoming migrants" to the criminalisation of migration as "illegal", especially from the late 20th century to the present day. This shift reflects how the roles of different actors, the dynamics of mobility and the legal framework regulating migrant labour have been transformed. Together these changes have shaped a labour mobility system that is precarious, unequal and increasingly focused on migration control.

Figure 1 seeks to show how this current system works. It represents the main actors involved and the problems that have been identified from both theoretical analysis and interviews with stakeholders. .
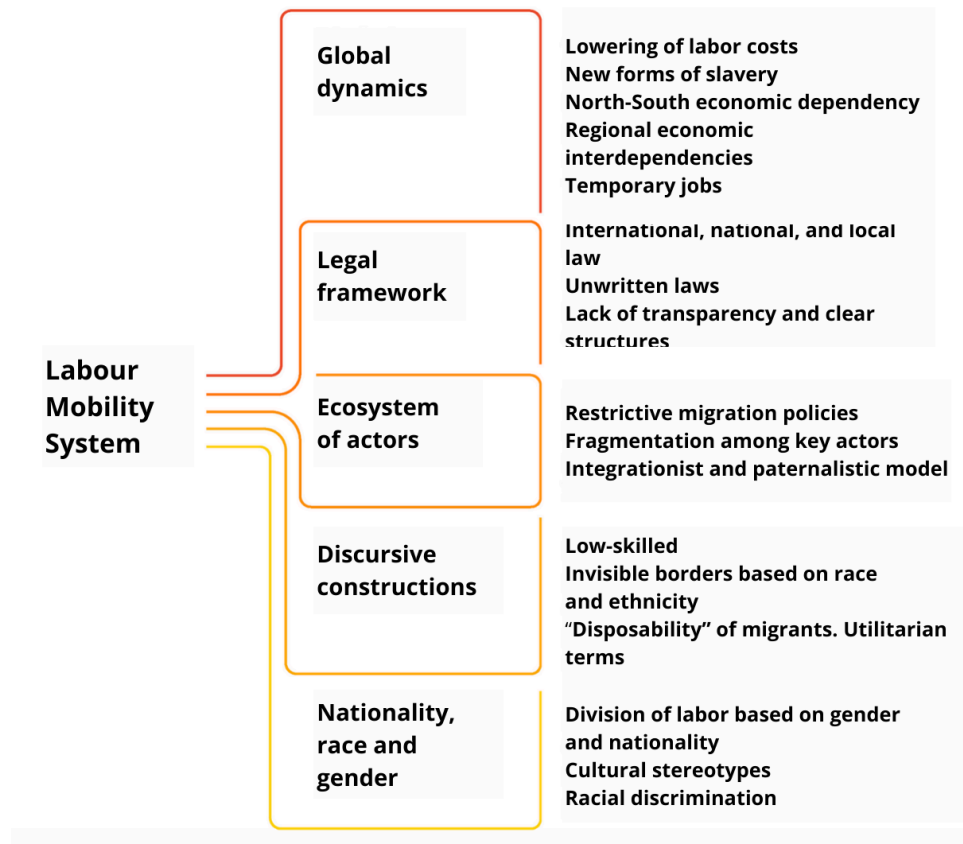
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[5] For more information on this matter, consult: Lynn Sthepen (2011).

Figure 1. The labour mobility system

Labour Mobility System	Global dynamics	Lowering of labor costs New forms of slavery North-South economic dependency Regional economic interdependencies Temporary jobs
	Legal framework	International, national, and local law Unwritten laws Lack of transparency and clear structures
	Ecosystem of actors	Restrictive migration policies Fragmentation among key actors Integrationist and paternalistic model
	Discursive constructions	Low-skilled Invisible borders based on race and ethnicity "Disposability" of migrants. Utilitarian terms
	Nationality, race and gender	Division of labor based on gender and nationality Cultural stereotypes Racial discrimination

Source:
Proper elaboration based on the primary and secondary data

The current labour mobility system is largely shaped by three trends: the commercialisation of the migration process, the legal framework that criminalises migration, and a state that does not effectively guarantee human and labour rights.

On the one hand, there is misguided state interventionism: it imposes "narrow-door" models and promotes temporary jobs that do not guarantee basic rights, but that are used as instruments of migration control. In this context, temporary employment becomes a security tool within migration policies. It is about managing migratory flows through work, replacing migrants in an irregular situation with others with a more controlled regular status. Its appeal lies in the promise that once the work - for example, in agricultural sector - is completed, the migrant will be required to leave the country as stipulated in their contract[6].

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[6] For more information on this matter, consult: Anchón (2014, p. 74).

At the same time, the state is absent where it is most needed: in the protection of labour rights, human rights and the public interest. Thus, it shifts from being a guarantor of rights to a mainly punitive role. In this context, an industry has emerged around labour mobility, where basic rights - such as access to health care - are transformed into services that are managed and offered to migrants by the private sector.

Another characteristic of the labour mobility industry is the cheapening of labour. The neoliberal logic in the field of labour can be compared to the spatial speculations of capital, where a "wasteland - a worthless place" is created[7]. This exists in the labour mobility industry when precarious, worthless jobs, unattractive to the local population, are created and thus chosen to be "filled" with "disposable", foreign, already dependent labour[8]. An example of this is related by the Plataforma Derecho a Techo (Right to a Roof Platform): "while the capitalist agro-industry under plastic continues to expand and generate millions in profits, the day labourers who sustain the business are abandoned to their fate" (El Salto, 2025), referring to the labour situations in areas of Almeria. At this point, legislation and migration policies are instruments to regulate this devaluation of labour.

3. Successful labour mobility programmes

Successful labour mobility programmes are an alternative to the current chaotic, unequal and unfair labour mobility model. These programmes are a source of inspiration on how to build on equity in mobility. Specifically, with regard to the highly successful programmes - see table 1 - a number of common characteristics can be observed. These programmes have been running for more than ten years, the youngest programme is the PALM Scheme and was launched in 2018, and they have ongoing evaluations over time to ensure their viability and effectiveness.

Among the benefits of the programmes is the cooperation between the ecosystem of actors - migrants, host countries, intermediary agencies and businesses - an example of this is the Migration Work for Sustainable Development (M4SD) programme that supports local and national

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[7] See in Franquesa (2020).
[8] For more information on this matter, consult: Knott (2016); Knott y Neis (2017); López-Sala (2022) y Briones-Vozmediano y González-González (2022).

governments in creating inclusive policies that address migration, promoting concrete initiatives in employment, education, health, human rights and social security. Specifically, providing migrants with access to services - health, education, housing, legal - is a feature of highly successful programmes, such as Bridges to Health, which promotes access to health services by connecting migrants to needed services and building on community networks.

As well as the need for the recruitment and migration process to be ethical and transparent, for example, the Safer Migration Programme (SaMi) also provides comprehensive care for migrants and families with legal, financial and psychosocial support.

Although these programmes are highly successful, they are not perfect. Among the drawbacks of these programmes, there are still calls for more monitoring of the workers benefiting from the programme, the requirement to fulfil certain qualifications, or that the measures are insufficient to promote the well-being and inclusion of migrants.

Table 1. List of successful programmes

Programme	Why did it emerge?	What does it do?	Level of success
Safer Migration Programme (SaMi)	To protect Nepalese migrants and improve their working conditions abroad.	Provides information, training, legal, psychosocial and financial support to migrants and their families.	✔✔ Highly successful
Bridges to Health	To improve access to health and food security for migrant workers in the agricultural sector.	Offers health services, vaccinations and community gardens through different initiatives.	✔✔ Highly successful
PALM Scheme	Filling shortages of low-skilled workers in sectors such as agriculture, hospitality and care for the elderly.	Facilitates the temporary hiring of foreign workers and requires companies to provide housing and health services.	✔✔ Highly successful

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Points System	To attract skilled workers who can contribute to the economy without the need for corporate sponsorship.	Allows to apply for permanent residence, access to health care, family reunification and eventual citizenship.	✔✔ Highly successful
Migrant Worker Community Program	To support the inclusion and well being of migrant agricultural workers in their community.	Offers health services, English classes, legal support and community activities for migrants.	✔✔ Highly successful
Employment Permit System (EPS)	To meet the demand for low skilled workers in key sectors through bilateral agreements.	Selects and trains migrants in language, law and safety for employment in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture.	✔✔ Highly successful
Triple Win Programme	To meet the demand for nurses in Germany through regulated migration.	Facilitates international recruitment of nurses and includes recognition of their qualifications.	✔✔ Highly successful
Migration Work for Sustainable Development (M4SD)	To maximise the benefits and reduce the negative impacts of migration on development.	Supports migrants, communities and governments to integrate migration into sustainable development strategies.	✔✔ Highly successful
Aged care expansion program (ACP)	To fill the shortage of skilled labour in elderly care.	It trains and finances elderly care workers with contracts of up to 4 years.	✔ Successful

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Stronger Together	To correct deficiencies in the current labour scheme and improve conditions for migrant workers.	Promotes education, good labour and recruitment practices, and improves the financial situation of workers.	✓ Successful
eMigrate System	To facilitate and regulate labour migration of Indian workers abroad.	Manages employer registration and worker applications with clear and regulated contracts.	✓ Successful
Programa de Trabajadores Agrícolas Mexicanos Temporales (PTAT)	To regulate the admission and protect the rights of Mexican agricultural workers in Canada.	Guarantees housing, fair pay, medical services and equitable treatment of workers.	✓ Successful
Empleate sin fronteras	To facilitate access to formal employment for Venezuelan migrants in Colombia.	Offers training and support to bridge gaps and strengthen labour skills.	✓ Successful
ChileValora	To formally certify labour competencies regardless of origin or academic degree.	Recognises and certifies labour skills, including migrants since 2018.	✓ Successful
Eligibility to apply as a federal skilled worker (Express Entry)	To select skilled workers with specific experience who wish to reside permanently in Canada.	Assigns points based on skills, experience and adaptation to assess candidates for permanent residence.	✓ Successful

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The Refugee Employability Programme	To facilitate the employment integration of refugees in their host countries.	Offers training, language classes, counselling and networking for up to 18 months.	✔ Successful
Temporary and Circular Labour Migration Model	To support Colombian communities vulnerable to natural disasters through temporary migration.	Offers temporary employment in fruit harvesting in Catalonia for up to nine months	✔ Successful
Canada/Guatemala Temporary Guest Worker Program	To fill agricultural labour shortages in Canada with Guatemalan temporary workers.	Facilitates the recruitment and placement of agricultural workers through intermediaries in both countries.	✔ Successful
Hand in Hand for International Talents	To attract qualified professionals from specific countries to fill the high demand in Germany.	Provides linguistic, professional and integration support, as well as visa and cost management.	✔ Successful
Pacific Access Category (PAC)	To promote safe mobility and provide better opportunities for Pacific citizens.	Selects annually by lottery migrants for access to permanent residence in New Zealand.	✔ Successful
Samoan Quota Resident Visa	To strengthen historical ties and provide opportunities for Samoans from limited socio economic backgrounds	Facilitates permanent residency in New Zealand through an annual lottery, promoting employment and social integration.	✔ Successful

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Pathways International	To enhance and expand protection and safe resettlement pathways for refugees and migrants.	Promotes models of community sponsorship and skills-based pathways with diverse actors.	✔ Successful
Intrare (Incubadora de Trabajo para Refugiados y Retornados)	To support the socio labour inclusion of refugees and returnees in Mexico.	It offers accompaniment, training and strengthening of productive initiatives for formal employment.	✔ Successful
Joint Labour Migration Programme	To guide African states in the comprehensive and coordinated management of migration	Provides guidelines for migration policies covering governance, labour, borders and rights.	✔ Successful
Talent Beyond Boundaries	To connect skilled refugees with job opportunities.	Facilitates contact between refugees and employers seeking skilled talent.	✔ Successful

Note: For more information on the programmes see Annex 2.

Highly successful and successful programmes are spread globally across four continents - see map 1. While programmes that work with labour movements from the Global South to the Global North predominate, there are also successful South-South labour mobility programmes such as the Joint Labour Migration Programme, Employ Without Borders or the Employment Permit System (EPS).

Map 1. Successful labour mobility programmes

Successful programmes for labour mobility around the world

Global distribution of selected programmes and connections between countries of origin and destination
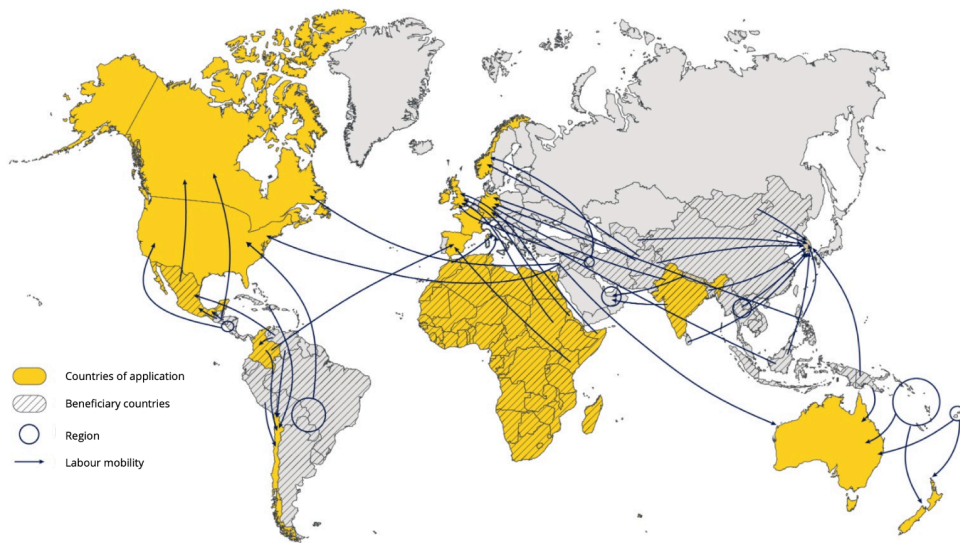
Source:
Proper elaboration based on the primary and secondary data

4. Limitations and inequalities of the current labour mobility system

On the one hand, the programmes analysed - identified as successful or highly successful - offer an alternative to the current system in the aspects previously mentioned. On the other hand, they also highlight many of the system's inefficiencies and inequalities, of which these programmes themselves are not exempt.

To better understand this picture, we draw on both interview testimonies and secondary data, which allows us to broaden our view of inequalities and to recognise different constraints within the current model of labour migration.

Figure 2 illustrates the complexity of the system and the diverse links that connect the different elements of this network. These connections help us understand labour mobility as a dynamic and intersectional trajectory; one in which migrants face multiple inequalities - often at the same time - as they move through their labour project.

Some of these inequalities are more visible and linked to basic needs. Others are more subtle but no less damaging, aggravating the precariousness of the everyday lives of people migrating for work.

Figure 2. Inequalities and constraints in the labour mobility system

Limitations and inequalities		
	Lack of access to fundamental rights	**Access to healthcare** **Access to decent housing** **Retention of documents** **Wage deductions**
	Discrimination in violence	**Violence** **Harassment** **Police violence, repression, and criminalization** **Higher likelihood of experiencing abuse**
	Social exclusion	*Credophobia* **Cultural discomfort** **Social isolation** **Invisible deportation** **Loneliness**
	Conditional autonomy	**Migratory debt** **Lack of recognition of desires, goals, and dreams** **No clear boundaries between personal and work life** **Inability to change jobs** **Paternalism** **Irregularity narrative**
	Labour discrimination	**Weak labour protections** **Precarious jobs** **Lack of union protection** **Non-recognition of qualifications** **Lack of recognition of skills**

Source:
Proper elaboration based on the primary and secondary data

It is important to note that the inequalities discussed in this section don't represent an exhaustive list. The aim is not to classify or describe them individually, but rather to organise them in a way that highlights how they are linked to the dynamics that generate them. These inequalities can manifest in many ways, and take different forms in different socio-cultural and geographical contexts, as will be seen through the stories we will share. Even so, it is possible to identify certain common trends at the global level.

4.1. Lack of access to basic rights

The working conditions of migrants are marked by the lack of access to fundamental rights. Among the most recurrent situations are: limited access

to health services, difficulty in accessing decent housing, withholding of personal documents and unjustified deduction of wages.

This exclusion from access to rights is directly related to the network of actors involved in the whole process of recruitment and employment. One of the most frequently reported problems today is the unfair conditions of recruitment, especially when unregulated or uncertified intermediaries are involved. In addition, many migrants suffer from fraud or the withholding of their documents, which limits their ability to change jobs and negotiate better working conditions.

Another central problem is the control exercised by employers. In many cases, working conditions are not adequately monitored, or monitoring is haphazard and ineffective.

In the legal framework, rights are often granted according to citizenship status, creating an "invisible border" that excludes those who are not recognised as citizens. Citizenship thus becomes the main criterion defining who has access to rights and who does not, leaving many migrants without the most basic protections.

The lack of independent monitoring mechanisms by both public bodies and civic organisations, the opacity of the recruitment process and the commercialisation of the process, and the absence of comprehensive legal frameworks that explicitly recognise migrants as rights holders are major factors perpetuating the lack of access to basic rights. Ensuring transparency, free recruitment and legislation that clearly includes migrant workers is key to moving towards a fairer system.

4.2. Discrimination in employment

Dependence on recruitment agencies severely limits migrants' bargaining power in the labour market. This situation often translates into weak working conditions: low wages, long working hours, temporary contracts and lack of union protection, as evidenced by the testimonies of migrants: "They pay you less. You do a lot, they asked you to do a lot more work because you don't have papers, because you are a foreigner". (Podcast El Hilo episode: "I came to work": migrant women in search of decent work, 10:44 min - 10:52 min).

 In addition, the general temporalization of certain labour sectors - a trend driven by global economic dynamics such as new forms of slavery, cheap labour and the phenomenon of temporary work - has generated an increase in insecure or informal jobs, with high levels of risk. In the logic of capital, where the main objective is to reduce costs, there is a tendency to create precarious, undervalued jobs with few protections. These jobs, often

avoided by citizens who have greater employment guarantees, end up being occupied by migrants, who face higher levels of vulnerability.

Discursive constructions around labour mobility not only shape migration policies and employment structures, but also reproduce conditions of precariousness and exclusion for migrant workers. One of the main ways in which this occurs is through the categorisation of workers as "low-skilled", "temporary" or "labour migrants", labels that make invisible the diversity of knowledge and skills that these individuals possess and that reinforce their subordination in the global labour market. One of the most common problems is the lack of recognition and accreditation of degrees and qualifications, which impedes professional growth and locks migrants into low-quality jobs.

There is also a more subtle dimension: the valuing of practical knowledge and the influence of cultural differences at work. Often, prior training for migrant workers is designed exclusively to fit in with expectations of productivity and work ethic constructed from the perspective of the Global North, without considering approaches from other realities. For example, in the care sector, it is key to recognise specific knowledge that can enrich work rather than impose a one-size-fits-all model. This, in turn, gives rise to practices in which knowledge and skills are used that are not recognised as such and are therefore not remunerated, especially in the case of domestic work[9].

Moreover, in many cases, labour relations reproduce a logic of subordinating workers, assuming that only they must develop interpersonal skills and understand concepts such as customer service, while employers are exempt from this process, even though they are often the ones who need to improve their behavior and avoid abusive situations. Instead of focusing exclusively on training migrants to adapt to these expectations, cultural mediation processes should be developed to foster mutual learning.

In Canada, employment programmes for "low-skilled" workers have been designed to fill vacancies in sectors with low wages and little job security, such as agriculture and the food industry[10]. In sectors such as construction in Europe, where migrants have to do the most dangerous jobs with the lowest skill requirements. The pressure to complete tasks quickly leads to the omission of safety protocols, putting workers' lives at risk. In the case of Spain, it highlights a particularly high prevalence of informal employment contracts and also points to weaker enforcement of labour protections for migrant workers compared to other countries[11].

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[9] For more information on this matter, consult: Opazo-Valenzuela y Pérez-Rincón (2023, p. 185).

[10] Elaborate on the topic in Marschke, Kehoe, Vandergeest (2018).

[11] Elaborate on the topic in Sheperd et al. (2021).

Labour informality, lack of access to legal contracts, combined with the constant threat of immediate dismissal, creates an environment of precariousness and dependence on the employer.

4.3. Conditional autonomy

The autonomy of migrants in the labour context is deeply conditioned by multiple factors, ranging from the most visible to the most subtle. Among the most obvious examples are the so-called "migration debt", the dependence on the employer for the management of documents and permits, and the impossibility of changing jobs without jeopardising their migration status.

The role of intermediaries is particularly relevant in the recruitment of migrant workers, where the presence of agencies and brokers can often lead to situations of exploitation and indebtedness[12].

However, this lack of autonomy is also expressed in more subtle ways, such as the demarcation between the personal and professional. In many cases, migrants are reduced to their role as workers, which erases other dimensions of their identity. This reduction prevents the recognition of their desires, aspirations and life projects.

Paternalistic narratives and attitudes, as well as the narrative of "irregularity", also contribute to reinforcing conditional autonomy. A clear example is found in the integrationist approach, where it is assumed that the migrant must fully adapt to local systems, without questioning existing structures. The concept of integration, as currently implemented, imposes a homogenous model of adaptation, limiting migrants' agency and neglecting their cultural practices. Furthermore, integration has become an identity marker that stigmatises people by classifying them as "integrated" or "non-integrated" within public narratives.

This approach is often accompanied by paternalistic attitudes, in which the sponsor, employer or other power figures assume the role of "educating" the migrant, as if the migrant had no agency of his or her own. These practices not only limit their autonomy, but also reproduce unequal hierarchies and reinforce relationships of dependency that hinder the construction of more horizontal and equitable links.

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[12] For more information on this matter, consult: Marschke, Kehoe, Vandergeest (2018); Strauss y McGrath (2017).

This perspective also assumes that host societies are homogenous, static and non-migrant entities, thus reinforcing the distinction between local and migrant populations.

4.4. Social Exclusion

Dependency on a single employer creates social bubbles and limits opportunities to become involved in the local community and to expand their social networks beyond the work and residential environment.

Family separation generates a disconnection not only with the host country, but also with loved ones. This feeling of isolation limits their ability to establish links with the community and contributes to the difficulty of feeling a sense of belonging. This disconnection highlights how migration policies that do not favour family reunification perpetuate social exclusion.

A particularly concerning phenomenon is that of "invisible deportation": strategies that, without formally expelling migrants, generate living conditions so unbearable that they are forced to abandon their jobs, their migration project, and leave. It is a covert form of exclusion that consists of creating unbearable conditions incompatible with the fulfillment of basic needs.

In addition to the dependence on the employer, there are also forms of pressure arising from the community. Applying the perspective of legal pluralism[13], we see that apart from the legal framework, labour mobility is conditioned by unwritten rules, cultural or racial prejudices, the label of "illegal", or the fear of the unknown, of certain cultural or religious practices - *credophobia* - generate an environment for social and cultural isolation that increases the feeling of loneliness and deepens emotional precariousness.

4.5. Discriminacion in violence

Migration status significantly increases exposure to different forms of structural and social violence and discrimination. Migrants in these conditions are more vulnerable to sexual violence, harassment at work or on the streets, police violence, repression and criminalisation. They are also more likely to find themselves in situations of abuse, without access to effective complaint or protection mechanisms.

Current monitoring systems face limitations in their effectiveness in detecting and preventing labour abuses, especially in vulnerable sectors such as domestic work. Practices such as fraud, document retention and abusive wage deductions are common, facilitating the exploitation of

[13] Elaborate on the topic in Poblete (2020).

migrants. These abuses, which often occur outside of public scrutiny, are exacerbated by a lack of transparency in monitoring processes. For example, "the diaspora can really help in monitoring migrant workers when they are in the destination countries. I say this because many African countries do not have consular services in all the countries where migrant workers are located. And this is where the diaspora can now play a key role in filling that gap," as explained by the JLMP coordinator.

Finally, addressing these inequalities requires an intersectional view, which considers how different factors - such as race, age, social class or gender - intersect and structure the exclusion that many migrants face in the world of work.

The feminisation of precariousness is another key dimension of this phenomenon. Migrant women, in particular, employed in domestic, care and cleaning work, face abuse and labour exploitation where migrant women describe the situation of slavery[14].

This type of discrimination is reinforced by stereotypical perceptions in sectors such as construction, where certain jobs are relegated to migrants of certain nationalities[15].

In addition, the African migrant population in Spain, for example, faces a double barrier of exclusion. On the one hand, the legal and economic restrictions that affect all migrants and, on the other hand, specific racial discrimination, which further limits their access to quality jobs[16]. The residential and occupational segregation experienced by African migrants is not accidental, but the result of a process of racialisation of precarious work, where certain groups are trapped in specific sectors of the labour market, such as agriculture and domestic work, with no possibility of upward mobility.

The denial of permanent residency status not only restricts access to basic rights, but also generates forms of political, social and cultural exclusion, which can lead to feelings of devaluation and dehumanisation[17]. As the coordinator of the Bridges to Health programme points out, the migrant population's fear of going out or socialising in Vermont (United States), due to racialisation: "We work in northern Vermont, right on the Canadian border, with people who often lack documentation. There is a lot of fear of going out into the community, there is concern about being racialised. We're a very white state, so anyone who looks different than someone who lived in Vermont 40 years ago will stand out in the community and there's some concern about border police." (Coordinator, Bridges to Health).

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[14] Elaborate on the topic in McIlwain (2020).
[15] Elaborate on the topic in Shepherd et al. (2021).
[16] Elaborate on the topic in Domingo i Valls, A., Bayona, J., y Gastón, S. (2022).
[17] Full reference in Basok, T y George, G. (2021).

Gender also plays a key role in the segmentation of the labor market, highlighting that immigrant women, especially those from Latin America, are more likely to become trapped in feminized and poorly paid jobs, such as domestic work and elder care. As evidenced in the episode of the podcast *El Hilo* "I Came to Work": "There is a continuum of violence, from the very beginning, when they cross border checkpoints. The situation of a male migrant is not the same as that of a female migrant. There are many processes of sexual abuse, extortion; they are even the main victims of human trafficking, and later, in the process of entering the labor market, they are more likely to face harassment on the street, at work, and sexual harassment. There is a sexualization, which means that many times employers even ask them, in order to attract customers, to dress in a certain way, to behave in a certain way." (*El Hilo* podcast episode: "I Came to Work": Migrant Women in Search of Decent Employment, 9:59 min – 10:44 min).

Domestic work can give rise to more subtle forms of discrimination that go beyond extreme cases of physical violence. Among these are discrimination based on origin, racialization, and social and institutional violence, which manifest in derogatory treatment, prejudice, and the underestimation of migrant women's abilities[18].

5. Strategies of resistance to the limitations of the current system

The selected programs develop different strategies to address the limitations of the current system, operating within its inertia and chaos, but with the aim of putting forward a fairer, more dignified, and more equitable proposal. These initiatives emerge from diverse spheres, including states, civil society, and even the private sector; and they arise in response to the specific needs of their contexts: the lack of access to healthcare drives initiatives such as *Bridges to Health*; the obstacles to the labor inclusion of migrants motivate the implementation of measures to facilitate this process

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[18] Elaborate on the topic in Opazo-Valenzuela y Pérez-Rincón, (2022, p. 180).
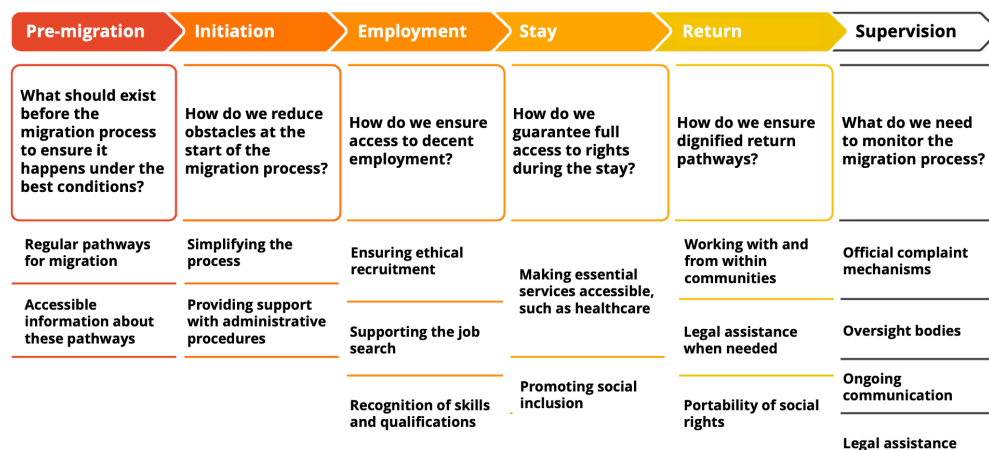
(*Intrare*); and the effects of migration on communities of origin, the situation of migrants' families, and the legal vulnerability of Nepali workers lead *SaMi* to develop strategies to address these challenges.

Thus, each programme resists the constraints of its particular contexts, giving rise to different types of measures that can be grouped into four clusters: (1) measures aimed at ensuring access to basic rights, (2) measures aimed at the community, (3) to promote ethical recruitment and (4) to foster regular mechanisms to migrate. These measures address issues that arise throughout the entire migration process, from before the migration process begins to the stay in the destination country and return in relevant cases, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Strategies of resistance throughout the migration process

Pre-migration	Initiation	Employment	Stay	Return	Supervision
What should exist before the migration process to ensure it happens under the best conditions?	How do we reduce obstacles at the start of the migration process?	How do we ensure access to decent employment?	How do we guarantee full access to rights during the stay?	How do we ensure dignified return pathways?	What do we need to monitor the migration process?
Regular pathways for migration	Simplifying the process	Ensuring ethical recruitment	Making essential services accessible, such as healthcare	Working with and from within communities	Official complaint mechanisms
Accessible information about these pathways	Providing support with administrative procedures	Supporting the job search		Legal assistance when needed	Oversight bodies
		Recognition of skills and qualifications	Promoting social inclusion	Portability of social rights	Ongoing communication
					Legal assistance

Source:
Proper elaboration based on the primary and secondary data

5.1. Pre-migration

The work to ensure a dignified and fair migration process begins before it starts, and requires two fundamental elements: regular mobility pathways and accessible information about them.

5.1.1. Vías regulares para migrar

By regular channels we refer to mechanisms established through laws, migration policies and bilateral agreements between countries that allow for regular migration, facilitating safe migration. In some contexts these mechanisms do not exist; therefore, initiatives such as the Joint Labour Migration Programme (JLMP) act to fill these gaps. In other contexts, although mechanisms exist, they are insufficient to address current needs, leaving a part of the migrant population outside their legal framework. Given

this reality, programmes such as Pathways International and Talent Beyond Boundaries have focused on expanding these mobility channels in order to "level the playing field and enable refugees to access existing labour mobility mechanisms" (Analyst, Pathways International).

Programmes such as the JLMP go beyond the creation of these avenues for migration, also offering alternatives to rethink the way in which these legal frameworks are constructed. As the coordinator explains, the JLMP programme emerged in 2015 as a result of a decision at the Summit of African Member States to contribute to the fight against poverty and inequalities on the continent. It is an effort to promote and facilitate labour mobility because "people have been travelling for work, but there was no governance or structure or legal framework to support the mobility of these African workers" (Coordinator, JLMP). Since its creation, the programme has focused on working with governments in the region to create bilateral agreements and policies that favour mobility by involving employers' organisations, trade unions, civil society, diaspora, government institutions and international agencies[19].

On the other hand, initiatives that are already well established in their implementation offer examples of what these legal frameworks should entail. In the context of temporary mobility, programmes such as the Temporary Mexican Agricultural Workers Programme (PTAT), Canada/Guatemala Temporary Guest Worker Program, PALM Scheme and Employment Permit System (EPS) have focused on building mechanisms that reduce the legal vulnerability of migrant workers and guarantee their access to fundamental rights.

Programmes such as PTAT and the Canada/Guatemala Temporary Guest Worker Program are based on bilateral agreements between countries to facilitate labour migration, setting out conditions such as fair remuneration, transparent recruitment processes, adequate accommodation, medical care and fair treatment[20]. However, in practice, ensuring compliance with these conditions represents a significant challenge. All of these programs promote circular mobility and, although they have been recognized as advances in migration governance, they fail to overcome the discursive constructions that associate migrants with categories such as "low-skilled" or "temporary," as well as the practical limitations arising from these labels. Thus, despite having legal frameworks that aim to provide protections,

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[19] For more information about the programme, consult:: African Union, International Labour Organization, International Organization for Migration, & United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2020).

[20] For more information about the programme, consult Consulado de México en Leamington (23 de enero de 2024).

migrant workers continue to occupy a subordinate position within the labor market[21].

Moreover, within the framework of temporary mobility pathways, the involvement of intermediaries is often inevitable, creating a high level of dependency that limits workers' bargaining power and, in some cases, leads to issues such as migration-related debt. Some programs have addressed this reality by regulating the agencies involved in the process, while others, such as the PALM Scheme and the Employment Permit System (EPS), have opted to eliminate intermediaries and recruit exclusively through government mechanisms. Both measures, which will be analyzed in greater detail later, have shown positive results in reducing issues such as migration-related debt and fraud[22]. However, issues such as precarious working conditions, low wages, and grueling work hours remain constant in these contexts.[23] This is because these legal frameworks grant disproportionate power to employers, on whom workers depend for their permits, housing, and access to healthcare services, thereby perpetuating relationships of dependency.

There are few examples of proposals that limit the power of employers over their workers in accessing fundamental rights, and none of them are in the area of temporary mobility. A relevant case is that of the Pacific Access Category (PAC) and Samoan Quota Resident Visa, both developed in New Zealand. In these programmes, the process begins with a job offer that allows the visa to be processed; however, once granted, the migrant worker's residency status does not depend on his or her relationship with the initial employer, which allows him or her to change employers freely and without the risk of losing his or her residency permit[24].

In addition, there are other migration mechanisms that are not tied to an employer in the destination country, such as Canada's Express Entry program and Australia's Points-Based System. Both operate under a similar logic, awarding points based on conditions and qualifications, which allows skilled professionals to migrate without the need for a sponsor.[25].

5.1.2. Accessible information on migration pathways

Returning to the types of measures taken before the migration process begins, it is necessary for communities and potential migrant workers to be

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[21] Elaborate on the topic in Labrecque, 2020; Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (28 de agosto de 2024).
[22] Elaborate on the topic in Denisova y Khadka (2018).
[23] Elaborate on the topic in Hodge (2023).
[24]For more information about the programme, consult: Immigration New Zealand (3 de junio de 2025).
[25] For more information about the programme, consult: Department of Home Affairs (23 de septiembre de 2024); y Government of Canada (3 de febrero de 2025).

aware of their existence. For this reason, programmes such as the JLMP and Safer Migration Programme (SaMi) have been tasked with working with communities of origin to raise awareness about labour mobility, and to provide potential migrant workers with "essential details on how to migrate, what they need to know and who to contact if they have problems in Nepal or at their destination" (coordinator, SaMi)

5.2. Beginning of the migration process

Once these initial barriers are overcome, the process of migrating can be long and tedious, full of bureaucratic procedures to regularise administrative status, access to healthcare and even employment. Thus, the paperwork itself acts as a barrier to accessing basic rights as "the administrative burden of paperwork is overwhelming. There are piles and piles of paperwork" (coordinator, Bridges to Health).

To address this issue, the eMigrate programme, developed in India, seeks to simplify the process of overseas employment through a platform that "connects all key stakeholders on a unified digital platform. This fosters better collaboration and improves overall operational efficiency" (Representative, eMigrate). However, despite its success in simplifying the management of paperwork, the programme is not without its problems, especially with regard to biases in its systems and its ban on women under 30 years of age from migrating[26].

Other initiatives, such as *Intrare* or *Bridges to Health*, have focused on providing more consistent support in managing administrative procedures. *Intrare*, a program based in Mexico, operates in a context where regularization processes can be quite complex, since, at times, "there are migrants who cannot regularize their status in Mexico; they would have to go to the Mexican consulate outside the country to request documents and attend interviews. That is extremely expensive and impossible for people" (founder, *Intrare*). For this reason, support for regularization includes registering the person, assisting them in obtaining any missing documents, and providing guidance throughout the entire process. These procedures, as noted by the *Intrare* program, are further complicated because they involve a financial cost for the migrant, making them even less accessible. Therefore, in some cases, accompaniment is combined with financial assistance.

5.3. The search for employment

Beyond these bureaucratic procedures, in the migration process, access to employment is also compromised by various factors such as finding oneself

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[26] Elaborate on the topic in Raju, N (12 de febrero de 2018).

in an unknown labour market, the lack of formal and social recognition or the existence of recruitment processes that violate the rights of migrant workers. For this reason, the programmes develop different types of measures to address each of these problems.

5.3.1. Ethical recruitment

As mentioned above, recruitment is one of the main moments of violation of migrant workers' rights, sometimes leading to situations of exploitation and indebtedness. To address these problems, programmes such as the JLMP have focused on regulating international recruitment agencies. As the representative of a recruitment agency in Uganda points out, this regularisation makes it possible to standardise and combat human trafficking "we try as much as possible to raise public awareness against human trafficking. It is very, very useful because we see a lot of people coming to us" (representative, recruitment agency in Uganda).

Other programmes such as the Triple Win Programme also maintain this model, working with recruitment agencies in the countries of origin in the selection process. However, it is worth mentioning that this programme has been criticised due to the opacity of the process, as well as the fact that the certification of recruitment agencies is voluntary, and only a minority of agencies have adopted it[27].

Another strategy adopted by programs such as the PALM Scheme and the EPS has been to eliminate intermediaries. In the case of the PALM Scheme, worker recruitment is carried out in collaboration with participating governments and approved employers in Australia. Interested workers must register with the National Coordination Unit (NCU) or the relevant government office in their country, where pre-selection and coordination with pre-approved companies take place[28].The EPS program operates similarly, with each participating country having a government agency designated under the bilateral agreement, responsible for managing the entire process.

Going even deeper, there are initiatives that consider that the regulation or elimination of these intermediaries is insufficient, and that a more profound change is needed, involving a restructuring of these processes as well as raising awareness among recruitment personnel. This is what the Intrare programme is trying to do by collaborating with and supporting companies in the recruitment of migrants, creating a process that begins by training and raising awareness among the team responsible for recruitment within

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[27] Elaborate on the topic in Hanrieder y Janauschek (2025).
[28] For more information about the programme, consult: Departamento de Empleo y Relaciones Laborales de Australia. (s.f.). *PALM scheme*. Gobierno de Australia. https://www.palmscheme.gov.au

the companies "What are the barriers to talent and how can we overcome them? (Intrare, founder). The aim is to change recruitment processes within companies to create a truly inclusive process. This strategy is also applied by the Stronger Together programme, which also provides consultancy services and monitoring of the recruitment process.

In addition to these changes, there is also a need for more continuous support to companies. This is the initiative of the Hand in Hand together for International Talent programme in which, in addition to guiding companies in the search for and recruitment of migrant workers, they take care of all the preparations: coordinating interviews, doing the necessary paperwork for visas, etc. "So we are very practical and can accompany companies throughout the whole process" (coordinator, Hand in Hand together for International Talent). This type of support helps to reduce bureaucratic barriers that can hinder the recruitment of migrant workers.

5.3.2. Training and accompaniment in the job search

Secondly, other initiatives focus on assisting migrant workers in their search for employment, especially around two aspects: training and accompaniment in the search for work. In terms of training, programmes such as SaMi seek to offer training in skills in demand in destination countries, such as scaffolding, electricity and plumbing, to ensure their employability in the countries to which they migrate. In Mexico, the Intrare programme, in addition to acting as intermediaries in the process, offers employment training, using technology to make these services more accessible.

Similarly, programmes such as the Refugee Employability Programme, Empléate sin Fronteras and Talent Beyond Boundaries combine training in job skills with intermediation between migrant workers and employers, and in some cases, they maintain the accompaniment even after the signing of the contract to facilitate sustainable labour market insertion.

These initiatives show positive results in access to employment for the migrant population. However, it should be noted that they often start from a paternalistic perspective, which assumes that migrants lack the necessary skills to integrate into the labour market, without questioning the structures of the system itself that perpetuate their exclusion. Thus, the emphasis is on adapting the individual, without transforming the conditions of the environment towards real inclusion.

5.3.3. Recognition of qualifications

One of the structural limitations of the current migration system is the lack of recognition of migrant workers' qualifications and skills, which functions

as a mechanism of employment discrimination. In this sense, although programmes such as Australia's Points System or Canada's Express Entry are aimed at people with qualified profiles, they do not offer effective channels for the homologation of their qualifications or professional experience. This contributes to phenomena such as over-qualification and lower labour market insertion compared to non-migrants[29].

In contrast, initiatives such as Triple Win and Hand in Hand Together, developed in Germany, do provide formal recognition mechanisms, allowing professionals such as nurses to arrive in the country with their degrees already recognised and to practice their profession upon arrival[30].

In addition, programmes such as ChileValora have established systems for the assessment and certification of labour competencies through specialised centres independent from the government, thus allowing formal recognition of skills acquired outside the traditional education system or in other countries.

5.4. Stay in the host country

The programmes interviewed identify challenges in access to basic rights, mainly social exclusion and difficulty in accessing rights such as health and food security.

5.4.1. Access to healthcare services and food security

The programmes act in two contexts to solve these problems: with the destination community and together with the migrant population to promote access to these rights. This is the case of the Bridges to Health programme, developed in Vermont (United States), which, having identified a gap in access to health services by the migrant population of the community, has developed mechanisms to promote access to information. Thus, based on a process of dialogue, they jointly identify health needs, gaps and priorities and, from there, "we respond to the needs they have identified and try to create opportunities for them to learn more about what their options are" (coordinator, Bridges to Health). In this way, the programme creates spaces for information exchange and acts as an intermediary between migrant workers and their families and the health system.

In addition, the programme is developed together with the target community, employing community health workers, established social networks and volunteers to ensure an accessible service. This approach is one of the factors for the success of the programme "We are not physically

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[29] Elaborate on the topic in Tani (2019) y Hawthorne (2015).
[30] For more information on the programme, consult: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ] GmbH (2021).

in a health centre or a hospital, so we have a lot of flexibility to really address barriers" (coordinator, Bridges to Health).

Another problem encountered by this programme is the food insecurity of the migrant population, a product of the fear of racial profiling in a predominantly white context. For this reason, in addition to having volunteers who are in charge of food distribution, the programme has developed the vegetable garden initiative, which aims to give individuals greater autonomy in the food they consume, this "gave them the opportunity not only to grow things that they might not be able to find in the grocery shop, but also just to have something within their reach to make a decision that day" (coordinator, Bridges to Health).

5.4.2. Social Inclusion

Another major problem faced by migrant workers is social exclusion. Some initiatives, such as the Migrant Worker Community Program, have emerged with the aim of "helping migrant workers assimilate into the community during their stay in Canada", through actions ranging from health services and English language classes to activities that encourage community participation, such as cultural events and sports activities[31]. Similarly, programmes such as Pathways International, in addressing labour migration pathways for refugees, highlight the need to "complement [these pathways] with integration services" (analyst, Pathways International).

When discussing such programmes, it is essential to problematise the concept of integration. This notion is often based on a conception of host societies as homogenous, static and non-migrant entities, reinforcing distinctions between "natives" and "migrants", and the differentiation and otherisation of migrants.[32] This vision rarely implies a transformation of the social structures that reproduce exclusion, and is limited at best to facilitating partial or conditional inclusion. This is evident in communities such as Leamington, where the Migrant Worker Community Program is being developed, and where the migrant population works mainly in the agricultural sector under temporary visas. There, community initiatives fail to overcome the structural barriers imposed by temporariness. Thus, despite the services provided, migrant workers continue to experience a lack of a sense of belonging, job insecurity and difficulties in establishing links that transcend their role as a labour force.[33]

Finally, another strategy that emerges in addressing social exclusion is awareness-raising work in the host communities. These actions seek to "show the added value of these migrants coming to a given country and working there; what their contributions are and how they have a positive impact on society" (coordinator, JLMP). While these campaigns can play an important role in reducing prejudice, they also run the risk of instrumentalising migrants by focusing exclusively on their economic or social usefulness. In this way, their presence continues to be valued in terms of their contribution, rather than recognising their rights and dignity unconditionally.

5.5. Return

Although labor mobility does not always follow a circular logic, in which workers return to their countries of origin after a period of work, when return

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[31] For more information about the programme, consult: Migrant Worker Community Program. (2023).
[32] Elaborate on this topic in: Astolfo y Allsopp (2023); Araújo (2011) y Collyer et al (2020).
[33] Elaborate on this topic in Basok y George (2021).

does apply, it is also a key element. In relation to this phase of the process, programs such as Migration for Sustainable Development have developed initiatives that operate at the community level, understanding that the community always plays an active role in the inclusion of returned migrants.

On the other hand, some programs have implemented specific measures to support the communities and families that remain in the country of origin. This is the case with the SaMi program, which has launched two areas of action. First, they provide psychosocial support to those affected by the emotional and economic impact of migration, whether due to the loss of a loved one abroad or severe financial difficulties. At the same time, they offer training in remittance management, saving, and investment, as well as guidance on organizing the household in the absence of the migrant worker.

In addition to individual support, these initiatives strengthen community networks so that people know where to turn when they need help. As the program coordinator explains: "Thanks to these efforts, we stay in contact with the community, and people facing migration-related problems can turn to the MRC for assistance. Once they know help is available, they actively seek it out at the center."

In this way, SaMi not only alleviates immediate difficulties but also strengthens the social fabric in their communities of origin. Similarly, SaMi provides legal assistance to migrant workers who require it, ensuring they receive appropriate compensation when necessary.

Finally, programs such as the Temporary and Circular Labour Migration Model, developed between Spain and Colombia, include bilateral agreements that guarantee the portability of social rights. This way, during their stay in Spain, migrant workers are affiliated with the Spanish social security system, allowing them to accumulate and combine periods of contribution made in both countries[34].

5.6. Supervision

Throughout the migration process, it is essential to have mechanisms in place to ensure effective oversight. For example, the eMigrate programme has put in place official complaint channels specifically designed to make it easy and safe for migrant workers to report problems. Other initiatives go beyond establishing these channels by also creating bodies to monitor the working conditions of migrants, make regular reports and coordinate the necessary actions to address these problems. For example, the PALM Scheme works with the Migrant Worker Taskforce, while other non

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[34] For more information, consult: Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores y de Cooperación. (8 de enero de 2011).

governmental organisations such as Stronger Together have developed monitoring mechanisms independent of government institutions to monitor the recruitment processes and working conditions of migrant workers.

In other initiatives, communication and dialogue have become key tools for monitoring the migration process. Through transnational networks, migrants from different regions share information and work together to protect their rights, no matter where they are in the world. In the JLMP programme, for example, dialogue mechanisms have been established so that "African workers' associations can now engage their counterparts in the Gulf region - or other parts of the world - to sign agreements to jointly support and monitor the welfare of African migrant workers wherever they are" (coordinator, JLMP).

Similarly, the SaMi initiative takes advantage of family ties to maintain contact with workers once they arrive at their destinations: "We communicate mainly through families, as direct contact with migrant workers is limited" (coordinator, SaMi). These community networks allow both the exchange of information and the early detection of possible irregularities.

Other programmes, in addition to fostering dialogue, have designed structured follow-up systems. In the recruitment agency interviewed, for example, they have created the "ABC Collection of Complaints", a four level protocol that ensures swift responses and appropriate escalation according to the seriousness of the case:

1. **Level one:** the line manager deals with the complaint.
2. **Level two:** if the supervisor is unable to resolve the complaint, he/she escalates it to the manager.
3. **Level three:** in case of further impossibility, the manager escalates the matter to the general manager, both in Uganda and in the country concerned.
4. **Level four:** if the problem requires government intervention, the relevant embassy is contacted.

Finally, initiatives such as SaMi also offer legal and legal assistance in cases of fraud or other situations that require it, thus completing a protection network for migrant workers.

6. Conclusions

This research emerges in a context where the international labor mobility system has proven to be deeply insufficient and failing. Despite the structural role that migrant workers play in strategic sectors, their experiences continue to be marked by precariousness, discrimination, and systematic violations of rights. Moreover, dominant narratives oscillate between utilitarian and stigmatizing discourses, oversimplifying a phenomenon that is profoundly complex, dynamic, and multidimensional.

In response to this reality, the report proposes a differentiated perspective on labor mobility that goes beyond hegemonic views and highlights alternative models based on regular, dignified, autonomous, participatory, and collaborative processes. These models recognize migrants as rights-holders and as key agents in building a fairer, more efficient, and sustainable labor system—driven by common interest rather than a logic of subordination—while fostering mutual benefits for all involved actors.

Although labor precariousness affects people globally, its impact is intensified among migrant populations, who face a dual vulnerability: on one hand, structural discrimination within the labor market; on the other, a legal and political framework that conditions access to fundamental rights on immigration status. This combination generates profound inequalities that limit autonomy, restrict opportunities, and reinforce forms of social and labor exclusion.

However, in the face of these adverse conditions, concrete experiences emerge as spaces of resistance. These initiatives, arising from governments, local communities, civil society organizations, and even the private sector, do not constitute definitive solutions nor radical breaks with the dominant system, but they do offer innovative alternatives that illuminate possible pathways toward its transformation.

The programs analyzed implement measures across the entire migration cycle: from creating regular migration pathways and rights-based legal frameworks, to designing ethical recruitment processes, implementing monitoring systems, and working jointly with communities to promote social inclusion. In some cases, these strategies have successfully reduced abusive practices such as indebtedness or document retention; in others, they have promoted the portability of social rights or the recognition of qualifications.

The report also emphasizes the importance of recognizing that migrants are not merely a labor force: their trajectories are shaped by family ties, transnational networks, and life projects that require comprehensive approaches. Therefore, initiatives that prioritize accompaniment, the

construction of welcoming communities, social awareness, or dignified return are also essential to advancing toward a more humane system.

Nevertheless, even the most successful programs present significant limitations: excessive dependence on employers, limited portability of rights, lack of qualification recognition, and the persistence of paternalistic and integrationist discourses. Yet, their existence demonstrates that an alternative model of labor mobility is possible and is already being implemented in various contexts.

These experiences not only allow for an accurate diagnosis of the current system's failures but also open the door to imagining and designing transformative public policies. They constitute an essential starting point for collectively rethinking the future of labor mobility based on justice, equity, and dignity.

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Annexes

Annex 1. **Research Methodology**

The research carried out is mixed, with a quantitative research phase and a subsequent qualitative phase. The integration of quantitative and qualitative methods was developed by the combination strategy in which the quantitative method is integrated subsidiarily within the qualitative method, in order to strengthen the validity of the data (Bericat, 1998).

1. Data production techniques

The data production techniques in this research were divided into two phases. The first phase was quantitative, using secondary data, and the second phase was qualitative, using primary data.

First, a series of categories were established to identify successful labor mobility programs. Six categories were determined: regular, dignified, autonomous, participatory, transparent, and collaborative.

1. **Regular:** The entire migration process must occur through legal and regular channels.
2. **Dignified:** The migration process must respect the dignity of the person migrating. The category of "dignified" is subdivided into three subcategories for operational purposes:
   - **Recruitment:** Ethical recruitment should be guaranteed through formal channels, avoiding informal recruitment agencies that charge commissions or situations in which migrants must take out loans to cover transportation, visas, etc.
   - **Stay:** Optimal working conditions should be guaranteed, including access to basic rights such as housing and healthcare, and a fair wage.
   - **Return (in cases of circular migration)**
3. **Autonomous:** The mobility process must guarantee the autonomy of migrants, which is ensured through decision-making opportunities and control mechanisms.
   - **Decision-making opportunities:** Migrants should have the ability to make informed decisions, requiring transparency in recruitment processes regarding job type, salary, working conditions, legal procedures, etc.

- **Control mechanisms:** Safeguards should exist in cases of dismissal, exploitation, or restricted access to basic rights (housing, healthcare), especially when the visa is tied to the employer.

4. **Participatory:** Migrants should have the possibility of being part of the host community and the right to unionize.
   - **Community participation:** Migrants should be able to integrate into the community where they work, avoiding isolation or limiting social interactions to work only.

   - **Unionization:** The possibility of joining labor unions should be ensured.

5. **Transparent:** The process should be transparent, with mechanisms for complaints and supervision.
   - **Complaint mechanisms:** Accessible complaint and reporting mechanisms should exist for all migrant workers.

   - **Supervision:** Mechanisms and protocols should be in place to monitor working conditions, housing, recruitment procedures, etc.

6. **Collaborative:** Cooperation should exist between governments, NGOs, companies, unions, and other actors.

Once the criteria for identifying labor mobility programs were established, evaluation indicators for the programs were determined. This quantitative evaluation aimed to assess the effectiveness of labor mobility programs and provided information necessary to complete the categories of successful programs. The evaluation indicators were of four types: results, process, economic, and impact.

- **Outcome evaluation:** Analysis of the program's effectiveness in relation to its objectives.

- **Process evaluation:** Assessment of whether the program was carried out following acceptable ethical and quality standards, including the functioning of transparency and supervision mechanisms (number of reports produced, number of complaints addressed), existing complaints, and participant satisfaction levels.

- **Economic evaluation:** Analysis of the program's cost relative to the results achieved. It distinguishes between programs with a productive purpose (economic benefits generated by the project, quantitative data) and programs with a social purpose.

- **Impact evaluation:** Analysis of the program's consequences on the community at large, not only on the target population.

A total of 46 labor mobility programs were evaluated across four continents. Of these, 25 were considered successful, with 8 classified as highly successful. To be considered successful, a program had to meet three success categories; highly successful programs met more than four categories.

The second phase of data production, qualitative in nature, consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with coordinators of successful and highly successful programs, recruitment agencies, and other stakeholders relevant to the research, such as legal advisors. Contacts with coordinators were made via email and the professional network LinkedIn. Interviews were conducted in English using the online communication platform Google Meet. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. In total, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted, three of which belonged to programs evaluated as highly successful.

2. Data analysis techniques

The data analysis technique used in the research was thematic analysis. This technique identifies, analyses and reports on patterns or themes within the data. In such a way that the emphasis is on the "how" and "what" of the data content. The main objective of thematic analysis is to distil broad areas of interest into concise, analysable themes that reveal significant aspects of the data. First, open coding is carried out where codes are identified across the whole set of interviews. Once this process is completed, secondly, selective coding is carried out in which codes are merged and code families are established. Code families are thematic unions of codes that are related to each other, and the formation of families increases their abstraction capacity. In total, 212 codes emerge, one in vivo code and 19 code families.

Tabla 2. Families and their codes

Families	Family codes
Basic characteristics of the programmes	Program beneficiaries Change in the program beneficiary profile Change in the program management

	Program duration
	Program funding
	Program management
	Target group of the program
	Program location
	Initial motivation of the program
	Beneficiaries' countries of origin
	Program member countries
	Number of program beneficiaries
	Number of potential beneficiaries
Condiciones laborales de los trabajadores	High costs of the bureaucratic process
	Bureaucratic barriers to accessing services
	Lack of available services for migrant workers
	Workers' rights in the destination country
	Misinformation about regular migration pathways
	Lack of information on available health resources
	Impact of fear related to racial profile on access to services
	Unwritten or social laws between workers and employers
	Employment in essential jobs
	Human rights challenges in destination countries
Debilidades de los programas	Low economic accessibility for beneficiaries
	Lack of regulation of recruitment agencies
	Limited communication with migrants during the migration process
	Economic cost for hiring companies
	Weak governance in migration
	Weaknesses in the recruitment process
	Program slowdown
	Waiting list of candidates to become beneficiaries
	Concern about program scalability
	Resource-intensive programs
Ecosistema de actores clave	Characteristics of origin countries that facilitate the establishment of agreements
	Lack of reliable recruitment agencies
	Fragmentation among key stakeholders
	Issues with destination companies
Evaluación de los programas	Controls for monitoring the application process
	Evaluation criteria and indicators

Post-control strategies
Joint process evaluation
Assessment of the current situation
Algorithm evaluation based on usefulness
Program impact evaluation
Process evaluation
Training evaluation and monitoring
Mechanisms for supervising compliance with workers' rights
Monitoring of partner companies
Process monitoring
Oversight of bilateral agreements

Factores de éxito de los programas

Service accessibility for beneficiaries
Autonomy after government management
Preliminary program information channels
Capacity to resolve identified problems
Collaboration with key stakeholders
Collaboration with regional communities
Community trust as a basis for success
Consolidation of community networks
Family in the country of origin as a pillar of communication
Comprehensive program management
Importance of legal advice
Importance of collaboration with unions for promoting workers' rights
Importance of collaboration with companies
Importance of establishing oversight mechanisms
Importance of being present in the community
Importance of program free of charge for beneficiaries
Importance of prior information
Importance of cultural mediation
Importance of support network in the destination
Importance of being a comprehensive program
Importance of assistance in job search
Importance of language
Participation of social interlocutors in labor mobility dialogues
Recognition of skills of the migrant population
Role of community workers as a bridge

Factores externos que influyen en los programas

Importance of narratives on migration
Importance of a stable political situation in the country of origin
Importance of a free regularization process
Importance of recognizing the skills of the migrant population

Logros de los programas	Change in migration narratives through these initiatives Program development in non-pilot countries Future program development Desire to remain in destination countries Geographical expansion of the program Emerging initiatives for the protection of African migrant workers Interest of new countries in labor mobility initiatives
Medidas dirigidas a las empresas	Support for companies in destination countries Promotion of inclusive practices within companies Mediation between employees and companies Promotion of ethical hiring practice
Medidas dirigidas a la comunidad	Creation of specific centers in the country of origin Care for family members in the country of origin by the program Development of community programs in the country of origin Dissemination of information on available resources Community awareness strategies on labor mobility Training for spouses remaining in the country of origin Management of psychosocial support
Medidas dirigidas a los países	Development of pilot programs Development of labor mobility pathways for refugees within the existing framework Establishment of a legal framework for international recruitment Establishment of regular migration pathways Establishment of the African Union's political approach
Medidas dirigidas a la población migrante	Access to health services for migrant workers Assistance in job search Support in managing administrative procedures Financial aid for the migrant Ongoing support for the migrant Employment training Creation of grievance mechanisms Facilitation of the initiation of the migration process Financial management training for potential migrants

	Promotion of access to social protection Promotion of food security through gardens
Medidas para fomentar colaboración entre actores	Dialogue for the protection of migrant workers Establishment of bilateral agreements for labor mobility Facilitation of agreements between unions
Necesidades identificadas	Need for cooperation with the private sector for labor inclusion Need for cooperation among entities Need for new regularization mechanisms Need for awareness-raising
Objetivos de los programas	Establish grievance mechanisms Facilitate the employment process Political advocacy objective Regional integration objective Promotion of labor mobility within the region Promotion of food security through gardens Promote access to health services
Panorama legislativo	Change in legislation that hinders the program Change in legislation that promotes the program Unregulated labor mobility Security-focused approach that hinders labor inclusion
Principios de los programas	Alignment of the program with international labor standards Consolidation of networks facilitating access to beneficiaries Referrals of beneficiaries from other resources Focus on jointly defining needs Focus on reducing AI biases Representative approach for the pilot program Strategy to prevent fraud or deception Evaluation of the beneficiary's profile Government regulation of recruitment agencies Response to identified needs Feedback to the hiring company Monitoring of the migrant employee Use of beneficiaries as recruiters of other potential beneficiaries

Retos de los programas	High staff turnover Challenges in communities near the border Evaluation challenges Difficulties arising from problems in the healthcare system Difficulties arising from bureaucratic obstacles Implementation difficulties due to lack of resources Difficulties in contacting the beneficiary population Difficulties in measuring program impact Program sustainability challenges Resource limitations Human resource limitations Initial employer reluctance hindering access to beneficiaries Challenges due to stigma associated with migration status and informal employment Challenges due to low awareness among employers Challenges due to lack of information on hiring possibilities for refugees Challenges in recognizing skills and qualifications of the migrant population
Influencias de la tecnología	Automation of the job search process using AI Automation of mediation between companies and employees Automation to improve the efficiency of the application process Collaboration of key stakeholders through technology Monitoring of companies via a digital platform

Source: own elaboration.

The codes and their families are related to each other, as can be seen in the neural network.

Anexo 2. Programas evaluados en la investigación

In the course of the research 46 job mobility programmes were evaluated that fulfilled at least one of the categories of successful job mobility. All these programmes are listed in this annex 2.
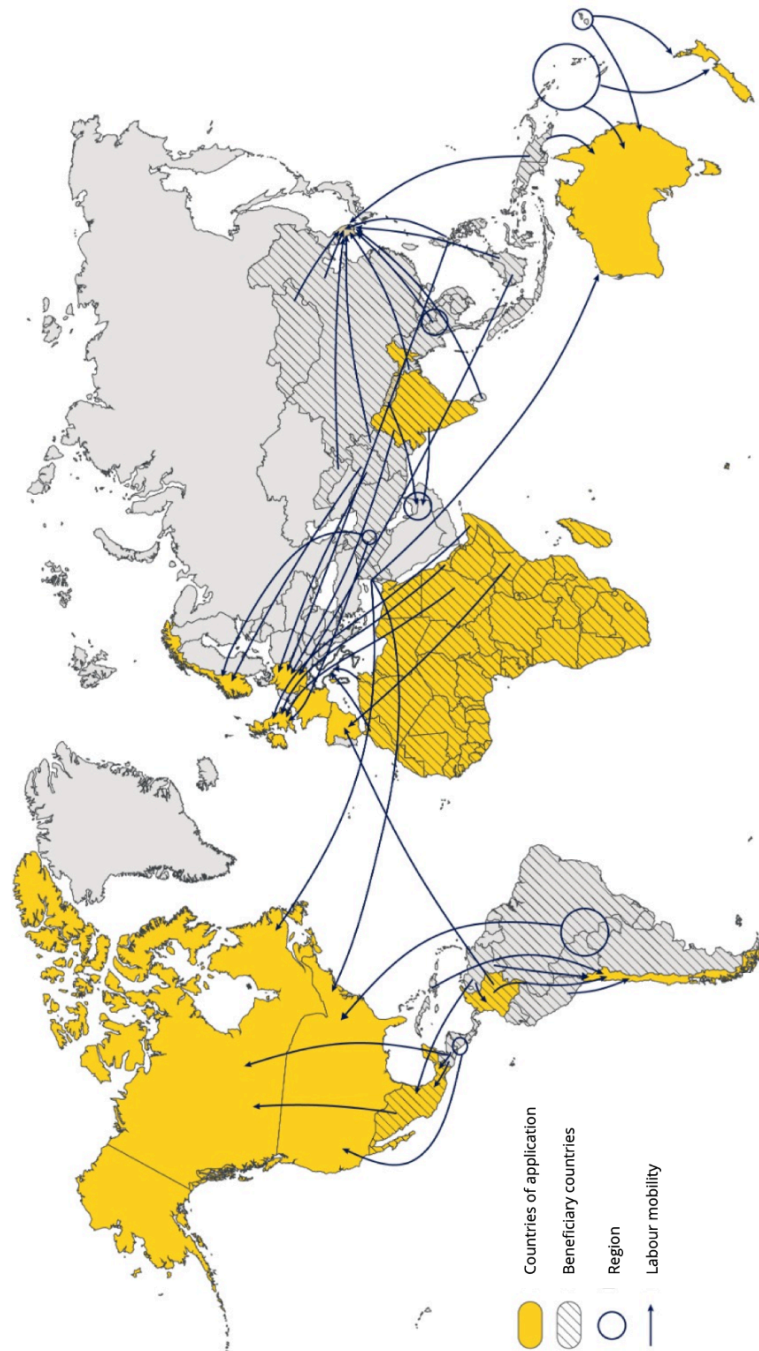
To see annex 2 click here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ujD-r0X8sKWxHZDd-CKmnMAjMM6zVneS/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=100733991435905796909&rtpof=true&sd=true

Anexo 3. Mapping of successful programmes for labour mobility

Successful programmes for labour mobility around the world

Global distribution of selected programmes and connections between countries of origin and destination

Countries of application

Beneficiary countries

Region

Labour mobility

porCausa

Investigación, periodismo y migraciones