The growing economic-social gap among countries, impoverishing of large sectors of the population, social inequity, lack of social cohesion, economic crises, slow growth of labor offers that bring on unemployment, natural disasters and violence are the main factors that cause millions of Latin Americans to emigrate to the Northern region of the American Continent of other countries of this region.

On the other hand, some countries that receive migrants have restrictive policies that force millions of people to live in irregular migration situations, victims of labor exploitation, human rights violation, social vulnerability, human trafficking and other consequences.

In this complex context, management of migration flows requires public policies on migrations that are explicit and that include migrant populations.

One of the essential elements to define, put into practice and evaluate public policies regarding migration is the diagnosis of elements linked to migration processes and their impact on societies of origin, transit and destiny. Ignoring them generates, in many cases, inadequate or inefficient public policies to receive and integrate migrant populations.

Adequate governance of migration also requires co-responsibility among governments and civil society actors of countries of origin, transit and destiny to define and develop policies and programs that ensure the dignity and rights of migrants and their families. In this sense, consensus among government actors and civil society actors is an essential condition to ensure legitimacy and efficacy of migration public policies.
The growing participation of civil society in the definition, execution and evaluation of migration policies and programs results in a substantial change in these policies and programs. At first migration public policies were seen as “State policies”; however, an active intervention of civil society and its results now allow us to define them as “society policies”.

The broader character these policies have taken on, in terms of the participation of social actors and the topics of their foundations, allow us to observe important changes in international regulations and the position adopted by some countries. In this sense, the range of foundations that are the basis to define migration public policies has widened, from the security perspective (in general, main argument of the countries that receive migrants) to the cost-benefit of migrations, or those who privilege the human rights of immigrants like most countries in Latin America.

The privileged role of ethical foundations in the definition and execution of public policies of migration allows us to observe displacement that happens as “State policy” and that could be understood as “humanity policy”.

The future of migration public policies face a special challenge regarding the way the relationship between civil society and governments is articulated. This articulation can be focused on negotiating migrants’ rights –this public opinion has grown in most parts of the developed world- or accepting the human development principle of immigrants as basis for all policies; this has been accepted by different civil society organizations that defend said rights.

To answer the challenges brought on by the definition, execution and evaluation of public policies regarding migration, the Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN) has implemented a monitoring system of migration public policies and permanent connection with decision makers on this topic.

One of the specific activities of this monitoring system is conducting research on critical aspects of international migrations and their connection to public policies.

After having conducted an exploratory study on migration public policies in the American Continent¹, SIMN carried out an investigation

on migration public policies and the participation of civil society in the
definition, execution and evaluation of said policies in the four largest
countries in Latin America: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.

This research offers an updated diagnosis of the main trends of mi-
gration flows and initiatives that are carried out by the political and
social actors that work on migration topics in these four countries,
this will allow decision makers to have new elements to define and
implement new public policies and programs on migration.

Lelio Mármora, along with Gabriela Altilio, María Laura Gianelli Du-
blanc and Yamila Vega presents the main migration trends in Argen-
tina, migration policies and laws implemented throughout history in
this country and finally, a broad overview of the activities promoted
by civil society actors related to the definition, implementation and
evaluation of Argentinian public policies and programs on migration.

A research team coordinated by Neide Patarra and with the partici-
pation of Duval Magalhães, Paulo Parise, Dirceu Cutti, Helion Póvoa
Neto and Mariana Aydos and Elizângela Lacerda present a diagno-
sis on migrations throughout Brazil’s history, the main regulatory and
institutional instruments which have led migration governance in this
country and finally an overview of the main perceptions and actions
of social actors in Brazil regarding the promotion of migrants’ rights
and migration public policies.

Roberto Vidal, Rosa María Martín, Beatriz Eugenia Sánchez and
Marco Velásquez present a vast panorama of migration, refuge and
displacement in Colombia, a description of migration, displacement
and refuge policies that have been developed and a detailed account
of the regulatory framework of citizen participation to define public
policies on migration, displacement and refuge in this country.

After Jorge Durán’s presentation of the main trends of immigration,
emigration, transmigration and refuge in Mexico, Cecilia Imaz, who
coordinates this issue, presents the institutional and legal framework
of Mexican public policies. Subsequently, Rodolfo Casillas analy-
zes humanitarian aid work carried out by civil society organizations
to help migrants; they focus their attention on migrant shelters and
houses. Finally, Florenzo María Rigoni presents a wise overview on
Central American migration flows in Mexico.
Research on migration public policies and civil society in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico reveals that men, women, youth and children who migrate, are displaced or are refugees have rights and are central actors in the construction of a culture of coexistence in which all can enjoy the inalienable rights that they possess inherently by being what they are: human beings. In this sense, consultation and coordination among State and civil society actors, including immigrants, are prioritary in the social and political agendas of these countries.