

Patterns of Social Exclusion and Inclusion of Migrant Workers in Rural Canada



A report by

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Acronyms

CAFFE	Community of Agricultural Foreign Workers and Friends of Exeter
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CLC	Canadian Labour Congress
CPP	Canadian Pension Plan
CWOP	Caribbean Workers Outreach Program
EI	Employment Insurance
ESL	English as a Second Language
FARMS	Foreign Agricultural Resources Management Services
GROW	Growing Respect for Offshore Workers
H2A	H-2A Temporary Agricultural Program (United States)
HRSDC	Human Resources and Social Development Canada
IAVGO	Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario
J4MW	Justicia for Migrant Workers
LAO	Legal Aid Ontario
MWCP	Migrant Workers Cultural Program
OECS	Organization of Eastern Caribbean States
OHSA	Occupational Health and Safety Act
OHIP	Ontario Health Insurance Plan
SAWP	(Caribbean and Mexican) Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program
SECC	South Essex Community Centre
TWAG	Temporary Worker Advocacy Group
UFCW	United Food and Commercial Workers Union of Canada
U.S.	United States

Executive Summary

In the last 40 years, foreign agricultural workers have become increasingly part of the social and cultural fabric of Canadian rural communities, particularly in Ontario and Quebec where more than 20,000 migrant men and women are employed each year. The dependence of Canadian horticulture on foreign workers has grown significantly since the 1970s, as trade liberalization and the integration of global agri-food markets has deepened. This dependence can be observed not only in the burgeoning numbers of foreign workers in the labour market and government initiatives to increase the speed and efficiency of employer access to the offshore labour market. It is also evident in the growing prevalence of longer contracts, the presence of foreign workers in Canada throughout the calendar year, and the extension of guest worker programs to a broader range of commodities and businesses. Most workers from Mexico and the Caribbean come to the same Canadian farms year after year and many spend a greater part of their working lives on Canadian soil rather than in their homelands.

This long and growing transnational relationship has held implications for the rural Canadian communities that receive the tens of thousands of migrant workers each year. This report summarizes and updates the main findings and recommendations of a study looking at rural community-migrant relations released in 2003 as part of a comprehensive review of the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program by the North-South Institute. The study explored the relationships that have developed in southern Ontario between migrant workers, their employers, and the broader rural resident community.

The study found that a broad range of worker/employer relationships can be observed in the SAWP, from exemplary to poor. While most migrant workers report a satisfactory relationship with their employer, their structured vulnerability and gaps in government oversight of temporary foreign worker programs provide the scope for abuses to occur. Overall, workers' experience in Canada remains largely dependent on the subjective goodwill of the employer to whom they are assigned.

Migrants work long hours and have little time to engage in social activity after preparing their meals and readying themselves for work. They often live great distances from town and experience additional barriers to their mobility. When they do interact with rural residents, these interactions are largely commercial rather than social in nature. For the most part, residents are either unaware or choose to ignore the migrant worker community living in their midst.

This general picture of social exclusion, however, is beginning to change. Migrant workers and rural residents are forming friendships and in some cases, marriages. Moreover, other transformations are underway that present new forms of social inclusiveness, particularly in the rise of a number of community groups seeking to ally themselves with migrant workers. These groups have become increasingly relevant in extending outreach to migrant workers, ensuring that their rights are respected, and pressuring provincial and federal governments to extend these rights.

These groups have held significant impacts in many migrant workers' lives and made steps in extending social membership in Canadian society to them. Their reach remains limited, however, to a small proportion of the tens of thousands of migrant workers complementing the agricultural labour force. Their efforts are not an adequate long-term measure for meeting the social needs of migrant agricultural workers and facilitating their integration into rural communities. The Canadian government and labour sending governments must take more systematic and concerted actions to support these efforts to recognize and meet the human and social needs of Canada's migrant agricultural workers.

Introduction

For over 40 years, agricultural workers from the Caribbean and Mexico have spent extended periods working in Canada under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). While the first Jamaican workers, some 264 men, were employed seasonally to pick tobacco and tree fruit in southern Ontario, today's SAWP employs over 20,000 male and female migrants in a wide range of agricultural industries, runs from January through to December, and has been extended to almost every Canadian province. As these workers have come to assume a greater profile in the production of food and agricultural products, they have also increasingly become part of the social fabric of rural Ontario.

The four-decade tenure of the SAWP, the growing numbers of migrant workers in rural communities, and the increasing length of their contracts gives rise to a number of questions about how host communities receive the migrant workers in their midst. To what extent are migrant workers included or excluded from social life in Canada? What types of relationships do migrant workers form with rural Canadians, including their employers? In 2003, The North-South Institute completed an extensive set of studies looking at the multi-faceted aspects of the Canadian Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program. The research included a study of social relations between Caribbean and Mexican migrant agricultural workers, their employers and residents of rural Ontario. This report summarizes and updates the main findings and recommendations of that study.

The research for the 2003 study was based in the province of Ontario, where over 80 percent of workers are employed. The research design included a portfolio of ethnographic strategies, with interviews serving as the principal method of inquiry. Researchers recruited participants from the main stakeholder groups, including government and industry representatives active in the administration of the SAWP, growers employing migrant farm workers, Mexican and Jamaican farm workers, residents of rural communities, and members of groups that engage in advocacy and/or service provision for migrant farm workers. In total, the research team conducted lengthy in-depth interviews with 104 informants and logged hundreds of hours in participant observation.

This report is divided into three main sections. The first section sets the stage by exploring the social and political factors that structure migrant workers' everyday realities in rural Canada. Some of these are general to all guest worker programs that bring migrants from lower- and middle-income countries to labour markets in the North, while others are specific to the SAWP. In addition, factors owing to the occupational status of farm labour and the rural context are also considered. The second section explores the character of relationships that develop between migrant workers and their employers. Although most workers reported reasonable satisfaction with their employers, the research found a considerable range of worker/employer relationships, from exemplary to poor, a result of migrants' structured vulnerability and gaps in government oversight of temporary foreign worker programs. The third section explores worker-community relations. This section argues that while migrant workers are largely

socially excluded from Canadian society, transformations are underway that present new forms of social inclusiveness. One phenomenon is the emergence of a growing number of community-based civil society organizations (CSO)s that seek to assist workers with their social, spiritual, and practical needs while they are in Canada.

Factors influencing worker relationships with their employers and the broader community

Any exploration of the interactions between migrant agricultural workers and the rural communities that receive them must take into consideration the specificities of the historical and political context in which they unfold. Hierarchies based on socially constructed and historically specific classifications such as race, gender, or occupational category—among others—organize and shape the relations that develop between migrant workers, their employers, and the broader community in Canada. The structural inequalities implied in migrants' position as temporary visa workers from lower- and middle-income countries in the South and as members of racialized groups frame the context in which social interaction takes place. In addition, other social relations can also influence workers' experiences in Canada. Women, for example, face challenges such as sexual harassment or difficulty accessing medical services to meet gender-specific health needs. This section of the report explores the structural factors that frame the types of relationships that can develop between workers, their employers, and the broader community. These include immigration regulations that restrict temporary foreign workers to a single employer, some particular characteristics of the SAWP, and factors related to the realities of farm work and rural life.

Clearly one of the principal dimensions of the power relations the SAWP establishes is workers' immigration status. SAWP workers are issued work permits that are only valid with a single employer. As a result, they do not enjoy the ability to circulate freely in the labour market, setting them apart from citizens, permanent residents, and even people in Canada without status who can “vote with their feet” and move to worksites offering better conditions. This lack of labour mobility has led scholars to refer to them as a “captive” or “indentured” labour force.¹ In addition to the implications it has for migrant workers' bargaining power, the immigration status of temporary visa workers also means they are ineligible for the range of services and protections associated with citizenship or permanent residency that facilitate integration, such as government-funded English classes.²

State citizenship is also a factor. The sending countries participating in the SAWP are low and middle-income countries in the so-called “developing” world. All of these countries, albeit to differing extents, face challenges of high rates of poverty, growing income inequality, and a deficit of higher-paying jobs. Their economies increasingly depend on worker remittances. Furthermore, globalization has held particularly difficult

¹ Basok 2002, Satzewich 1991.

² Basok 2003.

outcomes for the rural population in these countries, landless workers and small farmers alike. For example, Jamaica is facing sluggish economic growth, particularly in the agriculture sector, and high rates of unemployment (11.3%).³ Wages in the SAWP often represent twice or three times the amount of income these workers could earn at home. The majority of SAWP participants, therefore, value highly the opportunity to work in Canada. This reflects heavily in their on-job performance and willingness to work in comparison to Canadian farm workers.⁴ Employers face serious challenges recruiting and retaining Canadian workers in agriculture.

The control employers have in this respect is enhanced by their ability to choose the sending countries that will supply them with labour.⁵ Employers may switch supply countries if they are dissatisfied with the performance of workers or the government agent of a particular migrant-sending country. Employers' ability to choose between supply countries thus operates as a mechanism to foster discipline not only among workers, but also their government agents. Government agents perceive that if they are too vociferous with complaints regarding housing or labour conditions with growers, they could lose the farm to a competitor nation. As one government agent remarked:

I am also very guilty of not being pro-active with the employers because you don't want to be aggressive to a person to lose the farm, because that's a big stick you have over your head... The problem a liaison officer has is [being] constrained by the fact that if he is too hard he may lose the whole farm.⁶

The racial/national composition of the SAWP has shifted since the late 1980s, as Mexican workers have come to represent the majority of all farm placements. Although the reasons explaining this shift are complex, it appears that grower preference for Mexican workers is based on perceptions of Mexicans as more hard-working and less likely to socialize with the broader Canadian community.⁷

Employers' ability to choose the country that will supply them with workers thus affects the representation of worker interests before their employers. SAWP workers depend heavily on their government agents to defend their interests because they face serious obstacles to formal labour representation through a union. Most workers (80 percent), for example, are employed in the province of Ontario where farm labourers do not have the right to form unions and bargain collectively. In provinces where unions are able to represent farm workers, however, foreign workers may be reticent to seek their support out of fear of losing their job for that season, if not permanently. Research on U.S. guest

³ ECLAC 2005.

⁴ See Basok 2002, Binford 2004, Preibisch and Binford 2007, Preibisch 2007. Basok (2002) writes that SAWP workers comply with their contracts since "failure to meet the growers' expectation would result not just in a loss of their particular employment but in the loss of an opportunity to earn a decent income outside their country" (14).

⁵ The SAWP allows growers to select the nationality and sex of their workers. For example, hypothetical Grower A can request 50 Jamaican men, 10 Jamaican women, and 50 Mexican women.

⁶ Interview, July 2002.

⁷ Although Mexico did not join the SAWP until 1974, workers from this country represented over half of all participants by 2001. A recent study (Preibisch and Binford 2007) documents and analyzes the racial/national replacement of black Caribbean workers by Mexicans.

worker programs has found that workers who ally themselves with unions put their jobs at risk and have been blacklisted from future participation in these programs as a result of union sympathizing or activity.⁸

The nationality and race of the workers are other factors structuring migrant workers' experiences in Canada. SAWP workers are racialized⁹ as 'Black' or 'Mexican' next to their largely white employers and rural communities. Current research on the position of racialized groups in Canada has suggested that racial discrimination is a fundamental factor in the class formation of Canadian society, to the extent that a 'colour-coded vertical mosaic' or social hierarchy of race has emerged.¹⁰ Thus despite Canada's commitments to notions of diversity and multiculturalism, racialized groups are subject to social marginalization and persistent expressions of xenophobia.¹¹ Canadian rural residents' perceptions of migrant workers often conform to racial stereotypes that range from their ability to work to their level of religiosity or conviviality.¹² Furthermore, foreign workers can also face racism in their interactions with their employers and the broader community.

In addition to these factors, the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program has a number of particularities that also frame workers' agency, notably recruitment norms. Historically, recruitment has shown preferences on the basis of family status (favouring applicants with dependants over singles), gender (favouring men over women), class (favouring small-scale farmers or farm workers), and in terms of rural-urban location (favouring rural dwellers over urbanites). The recruitment bias towards applicants with dependants is based on the assumption that they are more likely to return to their families rather than attempt to remain in the country after their contracts end or seek permanent immigration status through marriage to a Canadian citizen. The fact that workers migrate without their families, however, means that they are more willing than Canadian workers to accede to employer requests to work longer hours and over weekends.¹³ Workers' limited social commitments are one of the reasons they are particularly valuable to employers, a point this report discusses further.

The recruitment bias in terms of gender reflects cultural norms in both Canada and the sending countries, in which men are considered to be more suited to farm work than women.¹⁴ The vast majority of SAWP workers are male; in 2005, there were 450 female participants and 19,824 men (Table 1).¹⁵ That is, for every female worker there are 44 men. The masculinized nature of this program of temporary labour migration has important implications for both male and female participants' experiences working and

⁸ Griffith 2003, Southern Poverty Law Centre 2007.

⁹ Racialization refers to "a process by which racial categories are constructed as different and unequal in ways that have social, economic and political consequences" (Galabuzi 2006:251).

¹⁰ Galabuzi 2006, Geschwinder and Guppy 1995, Li 1998, Lian and Matthews 1998.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Bauder et al. 2003, Henneby 2006, Preibisch 2004, Preibisch and Binford 2007.

¹³ Basok 2002, Colby 1997, Smart 1998.

¹⁴ Preibisch and Hermoso 2006.

¹⁵ The first country to send women workers was Barbados, in 1978 (Jennifer Domise, personal communication).

living in Canada. In particular, women’s scant representation among the worker population strongly influences their migratory experiences. For example, women tend to face greater restrictions on their mobility than men, with some employers instituting curfews as well as monitoring and restricting their movement off the farm. Women also face barriers in meeting their gender-specific health needs, particularly in terms of their reproductive health such as difficulties accessing birth control or methods to prevent sexually-transmitted diseases.¹⁶ Their mental health needs are also different. Recent research suggests that women suffer greater anxiety around separation from their children than their male counterparts. Most female migrants in the SAWP are lone parents, while most men are married. While men leave knowing their children are being cared for by a parent during their migratory absences, women must rely on extended family members, neighbours, or in some cases, older children. Their stress is compounded by the fact that while migration for men involves fulfilling their primary gender role of breadwinner, for women it means abandoning theirs—motherhood—at least as it has traditionally been defined.¹⁷

Table 1: Canada – Flow of Seasonal Agricultural Workers by Gender, 2003-2005

Sex	2003	2004	2005
Male	18,292	18,576	19,824
Female	389	445	450
Total All	18,681	19,021	20,274

Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Facts & Figures 2005

Recruitment preferences in terms of favouring land-poor farmers or landless farm workers) and rural location, where poverty in the sending countries is concentrated, adds another dimension in that it further ensures that the candidates coming under the SAWP will highly value the income they earn in Canada.¹⁸ SAWP workers earnings are much greater than what they could accrue in the absence of migration. However, because their wages are relatively low, they have to return for several years before they are able to accumulate savings to finance investments. Basok (2002) contends that guest workers can become locked into what Reichert famously termed the “migration syndrome”¹⁹—a cycle in which remittances earned in Canada are constantly needed to sustain the household’s living standards and shifting expectations. As one Jamaican national interviewed for this research stated:

¹⁶ Preibisch and Hermoso 2006, Evelyn Encalada and Jennifer Domise, personal communication.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Binford 2004, Russell 2003, Verduzco and Lozano 2003.

¹⁹ Reichert, 1981.

When I first started, I thought that I would be able to achieve what I had in mind at that time in five years. It's been 16 years now. [...] It's that things keep popping up. There are so many things that I didn't foresee when I first started. And you know it doesn't go like from A to B and from B to C. Sometime you start at A and you might reach to B then you have to go back to A again.

Indeed, migration-based livelihood strategies constitute one of the most secure sources of income for many rural households in the Caribbean.

The SAWP contains other mechanisms that shape labour relations and social interaction in the broader community. Key among them is employers' right to repatriate workers under certain conditions. No one would deny an employer the right to dismiss an employee on reasonable grounds; however, under the SAWP, dismissal usually means prompt return to his/her home country.²⁰ In actuality, rates of forced return are low, but because there have been incidents where workers were repatriated arbitrarily and unfairly, the threat of repatriation itself acts as an effective mechanism of control. Our 2003 research confirmed previous findings that workers have been deported for becoming injured or sick, refusing unsafe work, making complaints related to housing or working conditions, or challenging an abusive employer.²¹ As one Jamaican worker stated: "when you working for a white man and you can work, it is the greatest thing. But if you sick, even with your teeth, it seems as if you're finished."²²

A further mechanism particular to the SAWP is a policy that allows employers to request their workers for the following year by name. This policy ensures employers do not have to continually reinvest in training. It also provides workers with some stability in terms of estimated earnings and length of stay, and allows them to accumulate knowledge about their worksites and the tasks they are performing. In most cases, employers request the same employees year after year. In 2002, the following percentages of workers had been named by their employers: Barbados (83.8 percent), Jamaica (91.4 percent), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (84.9 percent), Trinidad and Tobago (78.4 percent), and Mexico (79.7 percent).²³ Since renewal of employment is conditional on the growers' request of workers by name, this mechanism fosters a high degree of self-discipline among workers who perceive that their continued participation in the SAWP hinges on a good evaluation or who fear losing their placement to a less desirable work placement.²⁴

Another factor shaping labour relations and social interaction is the housing arrangements specific to the SAWP, whereby employers are required to provide accommodation to

²⁰ Repatriation may also entail other negative consequences, such as being blacklisted from the SAWP altogether or returning to a less attractive placement.

²¹ Basok 2002, Knowles 1997:79, 95, Quashie-Sam 2007, Preibisch 2000, 2004.

²² Interview, September 2002.

²³ FARMS 2005.

²⁴ Workers are very aware of housing and working conditions on other farms and compare these to their own placement. They are also aware that a number of employers continue to receive SAWP workers despite routinely engaging in poor labour management or offering substandard housing. In this situation, even poor housing or oppressive working conditions can seem desirable next to the worst-case scenarios.

workers at no cost (often on their property).²⁵ The housing arrangements in the SAWP have many benefits for workers, particularly because low cost rural housing is often scarce and of very poor quality. On the other hand, the fact SAWP workers are housed on their employers' property extends the reach of employers' control over farm workers' behaviour beyond the sphere of work, to include, in some cases, restrictions on workers' mobility off the farm.²⁶ The arrangement also fosters paternalistic, personal labour relations.²⁷

The extra level of control over the workforce that employers are accorded through housing workers on their properties is reinforced through "farm rules" for SAWP workers that employers can, according to their contract, establish. These rules are intended to serve as guidelines regarding care of the property. There are no standardized specifications, however, on what farm rules can and cannot contain, leaving their content open to the interpretation of the individual employer. It is not surprising, therefore, that the research found a wide variation in farm rules. While some employers have limited their specifications to the care of property or use of farm vehicles, others have included curfews, prohibited visitors of the opposite sex, or obliged workers to inform them of their whereabouts when outside the farm after work hours. Even when employers did not stipulate such restrictive rules, some sending countries had implemented a code of behaviour for their workers that included similar limitations on worker mobility.

Some final dimensions that contribute to the relationships that develop between migrant workers, their employers, and the broader community include: the occupational status that farm labour occupies in Canada, the rural settings in which most of it takes place, and the hours that migrant workers invest in their jobs. Farm labour is near the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in Canada. Farm workers are among the lowest paid, least protected workers²⁸ in the Canadian labour market, yet they work they perform is among the most dangerous.²⁹ In addition, in Ontario, where most are employed, farm workers have fewer legal rights than workers in other sectors. They are not covered under the Labour Relations Act, they are not free to join unions, and the provincial Occupational Health and Safety Act applies only partially to them.

Secondly, the farms and other agricultural operations employing foreign workers are located in rural settings, often far from population settlements. Figure 1 depicts the geographical distribution of workers according to county. Despite high concentrations of workers in the counties of Haldimand-Norfolk (tobacco) and Essex (greenhouses), workers tend to be isolated. Even in areas of high concentration, farms can be located

²⁵ The provision of housing is a key difference between the SAWP and the new Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) that the Canadian government began piloting in 2003.

²⁶ Basok 1992, Preibisch 1994, Wall 1992.

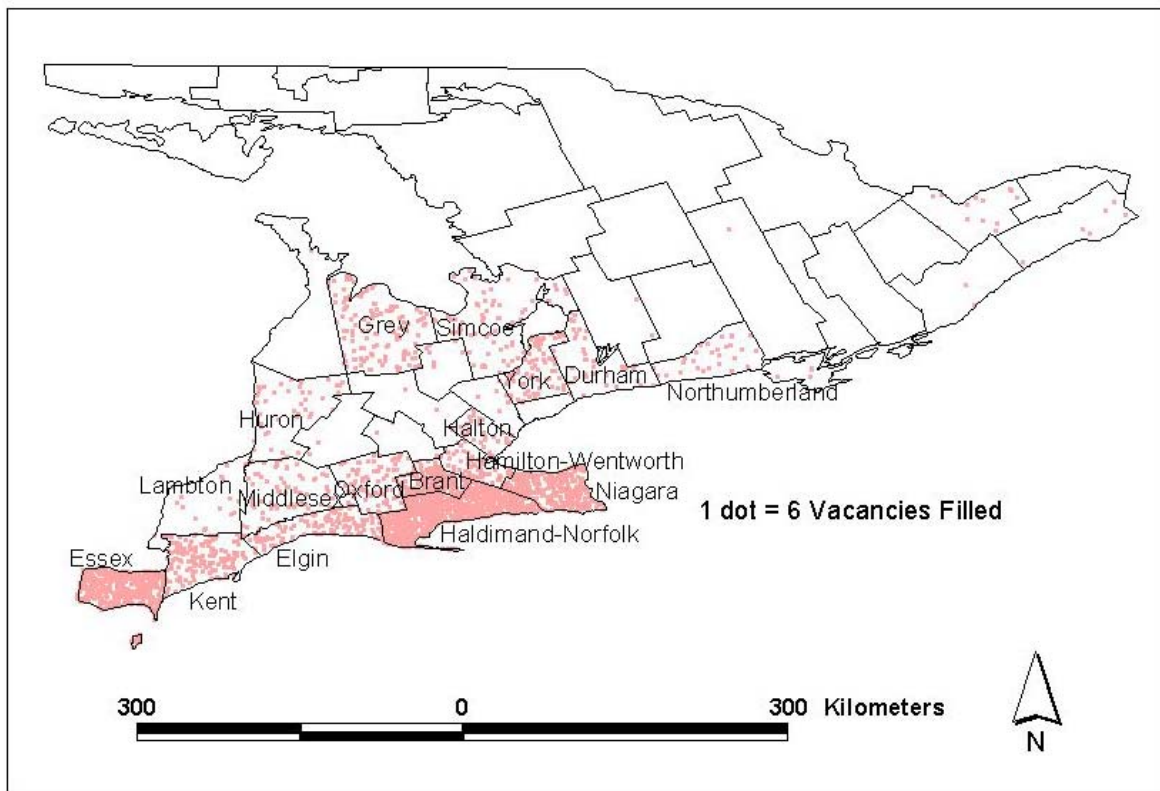
²⁷ Cecil and Ebanks 1991, Wall 1992.

²⁸ Verma 2003, Wall 1992.

²⁹ Farmers and farm workers account for 13 percent of all occupational fatalities in Canada (Hartling et al. 2000).

great distances from towns.³⁰ In rural areas, public transport is scarce and private transport is expensive. Bicycles are a common mode of transport for those workers located closer to towns. Foreign farm workers remain largely invisible to the greater part of the Canadian populace and suffer additional barriers to access the protections and services than foreign workers located in cities.

Figure 1: Geographical distribution of workers in Ontario's counties



In addition to the specificities of the rural context, migrant agricultural workers face other constraints to exercising a social life. They carry out physically demanding tasks and work very long hours.³¹ As one government official remarked, “they don’t have time for a social life.” Some migrant workers do not enjoy a day off, especially during the harvest, and by the time they finish their shifts they have little time or energy to do more than cook before bed.³² One Jamaican worker, lamenting the fact he could not attend church in Canada because he worked seven days a week remarked:

³⁰ In 2002, only seven percent of the Jamaican workers surveyed in the NSI country-level study lived within two kilometres of the nearest town, while 21 percent were located more than 21 kilometres away (Russell 2003).

³¹ Russell (2003) found Jamaican SAWP workers averaging 6.7 days per week and 9.5 hours per day. Similarly, Verduzco and Lozano (2003) found Mexican workers regularly working seven days a week, laboring 9.3 hours per day on average, and some reports of shifts up to 17 hours long.

³² The lack of time to socialize is confirmed abundantly in the literature (Basok 2002, Colby 1997, Knowles 1998).

Here you have no choice. [In] harvesting time Sunday, you got to work, Saturday, you got to work [...]. Its okay, cause like right here, you can't even really serve two masters at the same time. 'Cause you supposed to have a day set apart for yourself to worship. If the boss come around and say you got to work Saturday, you got to work Sunday, then you got to work. You don't have a set apart day here, you just have to cope with the system, 'til you reach back home.³³

Workers often agree to employer requests to work long hours in part because it is the only way they are able to increase their earnings. Their wages are also subject to a series of deductions, some by the Canadian state (Employment Insurance, Canadian Pension, etc.) and others related to the SAWP (a portion of their airfare, administration costs, etc.).

In sum, a discussion of the relationships that develop between workers, their employers, and the broader community must consider the wider social and political environment of the SAWP. The structural inequalities linked to migrants' position as temporary visa workers from lower- and middle-income countries and as members of racialized groups frame the context in which social interaction takes place. Further, the unique features of the SAWP must also be considered, in addition to farm work as an occupation and the rural context.

Worker-Employer Relations

Discussions of the merits and shortcomings of the SAWP often focus on the existence of a minority of "bad" employers who exploit an otherwise model program, as illustrated in the following quotes:

The majority of the farmers I deal with take their workers to Niagara Falls while they're here in the season. The majority of them don't have them work Sundays; they make sure they have Sundays off. The farmers make sure that they have access to religious services. They have telephones, they have TVs, VCRs, you know, so in all honesty I have to say there's about 3 percent I deal with that are problematic employers and will continue to be, and even though I try to re-educate them, it's not going to happen (Government official, Canada).³⁴

From what I see out there I would say that you probably have a ratio of 70 percent 'good' and 30 percent treat them like numbers. That's kind of the ratio I would pick out of there. For the most part they're pretty good (Resident, Simcoe County).³⁵

³³ Interview, September 2002.

³⁴ Interview, September 2002.

³⁵ Interview, September 2002.

You have a number of farmers—I would probably say 60 to 65 percent—that are incredible. It's that other percentage, it's that other 35 percent—that are on the fringe and if there's no watchdogs, if there's no one putting any pressure on them to at least adhere to the very minimal agreement that is there, then they think they can get away with it and they try and usually succeed (CSO member).³⁶

To generalize, I would say that it appears that a pretty high percentage of farms is complying with the terms of the contract, whether that would be 75 percent or less, I don't know. I think that most situations are more or less living up to the agreement. Where the agreements and expectations aren't being lived up to by the employers, in a certain sense they really is no mediation, it's a black hole. If you have a bad employer, if you have a bad circumstance, it is really difficult to get that to change (CSO member).³⁷

As these quotes demonstrate, most of the stakeholders interviewed for this research agreed that abusive employers constituted a minority. Debates over the number of good versus bad employers, however, oversimplifies the implications of structural features of the SAWP discussed in the previous section that frame labour relations and contribute to the social exclusion of migrant workers in the broader community. Thus, while most employers may indeed be “good”, the absence of rigorous monitoring of the treatment of foreign workers means that their experience in Canada is largely dependent on the subjective goodwill of the individual hiring them. As a leader of one CSO described the working environment facing farm workers:

It's either heaven or hell; the employer has such incredible power to determine the nature of the atmosphere of the work place that doesn't exist in larger corporations. So if your owner is mal-adjusted [or] not mature, that controls your “everyday”, plus it controls your personal time because you work for him. If the employer is more enlightened, progressive, decent, then that carries the tone.³⁸

The 2003 study documented a wide range of worker-employer relationships. Some employers went out of their way to accommodate their foreign workers during their stay in Canada. Some welcomed their employees into their homes, socialized with them occasionally, provided recreational spaces for them, or visited workers' home countries. In general, most workers surveyed for the NSI studies stated they had good relationships with their employers, with workers from some countries more content than others. The Jamaican case study found that on average, migrant workers rated their employers' attitude as good.³⁹ Workers from other countries had similar overall results, with the following percentages indicating that they were treated with respect by the farm employer: Trinidad and Tobago (67%), St. Lucia (89%) and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (82%).⁴⁰ Similarly, workers who participated in in-depth interviews in

³⁶ Interview, September 2002.

³⁷ Interview, July 2002.

³⁸ Interview, November 2002.

³⁹ Russell 2003.

⁴⁰ Downes and Odle-Worrell 2003. There was not comparable data for Barbados and other participating countries.

Canada by and large characterized their relationships with their employers in positive terms.

On the other hand, the research also documented instances of poor working and living environments, both in interviews and while visiting worksites. In terms of housing, for example, researchers observed crowded, dilapidated accommodation that posed considerable health risks to workers. In one case, some workers were housed in a tiny camper-style trailer that had propane leaking from the stove. In terms of working conditions, the abuse documented ranged from unsafe working conditions and extreme overwork to verbal and physical assault.

Furthermore, the general tendency among workers to provide a positive report of their employer contrasted with other indicators of their satisfaction with working and housing conditions or levels of workplace health and safety. For example, nearly a fifth of all Barbadian workers surveyed in 2002 by Downes and Odle-Worrell reported their housing conditions in Canada to be worse than those they had at home.⁴¹ Eighty percent of the workers from Trinidad and Tobago who reported applying pesticides were not given protective clothing to wear when applying pesticides, nor were they trained in handling chemicals.⁴² Further, at least half of all the Caribbean workers polled who were injured or sick during their stay in Canada continued to work on the job.⁴³ These inconsistencies are not unexpected, as workers understandably may be cautious with their responses to researchers.⁴⁴

The size of farm played a role in the type of labour relations that developed between workers and their employers, but no clear relationship was found in the research between size of farm and the quality of housing and working conditions that foreign workers experience. Small farms provide the opportunity for closer, more personal relationships to develop between employers and their workers, who often work alongside each other. One Canadian government official, commenting on a region in which smaller farms predominate, noted that:

The majority of [employers] see their workers as part of the family, especially for the ones that have had them for years. On the off season, when they're back home in their country they often phone or write. They get to know their families, they go to visit them; a lot of growers will go to Jamaica to visit the workers and stay with them, some of them will stay with them in their homes [...]. A lot of them consider them family because they have been here so long and they've grown up with their families, even generations in some cases.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Downes and Odle-Worrell 2003.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., Russell 2003.

⁴⁴ In the in-depth interviews, workers were careful when speaking negatively about their employers and those that had complaints were more guarded with their responses. They spoke with ease, however, about negative employer-employee relationships in the past or those observed on neighbouring farms.

⁴⁵ Interview, October 2002

The interviews for this research found that a number of employers and workers have nurtured friendly relationships that fit the description above. On other farms, however, social interactions between workers and employers or members of the employer's family were rare.

Social interaction between migrant workers and their employers is less likely on large farms employing high numbers of workers, where direct contact with employers tends to be limited. One worker in Niagara described his relationship with the employer as follows:

[It's] just like any other boss, because you hardly talk to those people, because you hardly see them. The only time you see them if they maybe drive, come to the farm, past you and they say "hi guys" and then they gone. You don't really reason with them, always they, always reason with the foreman and the foreman talk to us.⁴⁶

Although there is more opportunity on small farms for closer relationships to develop between employers and migrant workers, the research found no clear relationship between the size of farm and treatment of workers.⁴⁷ While small farms allowed more personal relationships to develop, they could also act as an extremely isolating and vulnerable environment for a foreign worker confronting an abusive situation. This had the potential of being amplified on the numerous small farms hiring a sole worker.

Foreign workers on large farms, however, face different concerns: they may have to deal with poorly trained supervisors or they may feel a sense of alienation as a result of negligible interaction with their employers.⁴⁸ In reference to one large employer, one member of a migrant worker advocacy group stated:

The big farm that I deal with all the time is Farm X. They have all these supervisors, foremen that deal with different crews. The owner doesn't care about what happens to the workers. They're a big, big company and once you get to a company that large, you don't care if you get the same workers back or not. In fact it's preferable to not get the same workers back because as soon as they start knowing too much then that's when they start causing problems. That large company has a different mentality.⁴⁹

On the other hand, these larger farm operations tend to have more formalized labour relations and to employ human resource managers. Given that Canadian horticulture is undergoing important transformations with trends towards larger, more corporate farms,

⁴⁶ Interview, October 2002.

⁴⁷ This would confirm Cecil and Ebanks (1991) survey research with 300 workers from the Caribbean that found that the relationship between workers and farmers does not appear to be related either to the size of the farm or to the proportion of foreign workers to domestic workers on a given farm.

⁴⁸ Supervisors are sometimes Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Latin American or Caribbean ethnicity, often former SAWP workers who had been sponsored for permanent immigration by the employer or migrant farm workers with seniority. Several informants claimed that the supervisors were more problematic than the employers themselves.

⁴⁹ Interview, October 2002.

it is likely that issues of labour management, including supervisor-worker relationships, will require further investigation.

In sum, although there are obvious differences in the type of employer-worker relationships on small, family-run farms and corporate operations, it is not clear whether the size of farm—family or corporate—has any relationship to the quality of working and housing conditions that foreign workers experience. This suggests that the potential for problems is linked more to the structure of the SAWP and the lack of government and industry oversight on the employment of foreign workers in Canada.

Studies on the relationships between employers or supervisors and their migrant farm workers have characterized them as manifesting a high degree of paternalism which is facilitated mainly by the fact foreign workers live on property owned and controlled by their employers.⁵⁰ One grower stated that the benefit of having workers housed on the property is that if they weren't at work on time, he could go fetch them. Another warned his crew to keep their accommodations more tidy or his wife was going to come to do unannounced inspections to see if they were complying. Workers do not have the same rights to personal privacy that they would be accorded under a rental agreement; employers can and do enter workers' accommodation without advance notice or permission. Furthermore, migrant workers often rely heavily on their employers to provide them with a telephone, help fill out forms, take them to town, or do their banking. This high level of dependency on the employers' goodwill can also shore up personal, paternalistic labour relations.⁵¹

In addition, employers can extend their authority and influence beyond the workplace through the establishment of farm rules, as mentioned in the previous section. These often include curfews and prohibiting visitors on the farm, particularly those of the opposite sex. The surveys of workers conducted for the NSI research found that many employers placed constraints on their workers' social behaviour outside of work. As Table 2 notes, roughly a third of workers from Barbados (33%) and Trinidad and Tobago (38%) claimed that the farm employer objected to off-farm socializing with other community residents.⁵² In addition, 31 percent of workers from Barbados and 41 percent of workers from Trinidad and Tobago claimed that the farm employer objected to community residents visiting the worker on the farm on days off. A number of workers from these two countries—as high as 17 percent—felt they might be sent home or transferred to another farm if they did indeed receive a visitor on the farm. In interviews, growers also spoke of other mechanisms to control or monitor their workers' movements beyond the farm, such as hiring security guards or not making transportation easily available to workers.

⁵⁰ Wall 1998:267.

⁵¹ Basok 2002, Binford 2003, Knowles 1998, Larkin 1989, Wall, 1998.

⁵² Downes and Odle-Worrell 2003, Russell 2003.

Table 2: Percentage of workers indicating employer constraints on social activity

	Barbados	Trinidad	Dominica	St. Lucia	SVG
Employer objects to off-farm socializing	33	38	7	15	12
Employer objects to visitors on farm outside of work hours	31	41	11	22	15
Worker could be sent home or transferred if s/he received a visitor outside of work hours	17	16	8	11	16

Paternalistic labour relations are also fostered through the variable pay rates and systems of rewards established on farms. Wage levels have remained low. Some improvements were made in 2003, with new rates negotiated based on a Statistics Canada national wage survey conducted for HRSDC.⁵³ Low wage levels have prompted some employers to create reward mechanisms or pay higher wages than the negotiated rates. Russell (2003) notes that approximately 28 percent of Jamaican migrant workers reportedly received year-end bonuses. While many of these bonuses are presumably in appreciation, some employers have established pay differences to recognize seniority or rank, rewarding those employees with more responsibility or those who had special training. While such actions may be well-meaning and greatly appreciated by the workers, these individual gestures to improve wage rates or recognize skill or experience can cultivate paternalistic labour relations, as expressed in the following account:

The starting wage had not moved for two years, I think it was \$6.75 or something and I said to the men, “We would like to make a wage adjustment” and we adjusted them all to \$7.25. You get very little response; you don’t get a thank you, that’s difficult for them to say, the head goes down sort of thing. So if you’re looking for a sense of affirmation of the effort, you won’t get it other than [when you] knock on the door at seven o’clock at night saying, “Look I really need a couple of guys to come out and help me do this.” Bang! Two guys are ready. So I think that’s sort of the affirmation you’re looking for.⁵⁴

Arbitrary systems of rewards are problematic in the context of low wages for agricultural workers. Indeed, these gestures can serve to reinforce paternalistic relations in the absence of improved wage rates and/or objective measures for skill and experience.

Fundamentally, the relationships between employers and their foreign workers rest on a number of hierarchies based on citizenship, class, and race. One of the common themes in employer perceptions of workers was their third world status. As one employer stated: “you’re talking about third world countries and [if] you don’t train them right and then keep an eye on them... you know, most of these guys have never held a steady job.” This was linked to the perception that for most workers, a Canadian job was highly valuable

⁵³ Brem 2006.

⁵⁴ Interview, October 2002.

compared to their livelihood opportunities in their home countries. Indeed, it is not that long ago that Canada referred to its temporary foreign worker programs as charity.⁵⁵ This perception can form the basis for justifying lower pay or labour standards than those accorded Canadian workers. In addition to their citizenship status, race factors into employer-worker relationships. Very few employers expressed overt racism in interviews, but many held racial stereotypes about their employees' ability to perform work and their behaviour on and off the job.

The general findings about relationships between migrant workers and their employers show that most workers reported a good rapport, but scope for problems is institutionally imbedded within the Program. Migrant workers are housed on their employers' property and are heavily dependent on them, circumstances that promote paternalistic labour relations. In the absence of expanded rights for foreign farm workers, greater monitoring and enforcement of foreign workers programs, the experience of migrant farm workers in Canada will remain largely dependent on the subjective goodwill of the employer.

Worker-Community Relations

In the last 40 years, foreign agricultural workers have become increasingly part of the social and cultural fabric of Canadian rural communities, particularly in Ontario and Quebec where more than 20,000 migrant men and women are employed each year. The dependence of Canadian horticulture on foreign workers has grown significantly since the 1970s, as trade liberalization and the integration of global agri-food markets has deepened. This dependence can be observed not only in the burgeoning numbers of foreign workers in the labour market and government initiatives to increase the speed and efficiency of employer access to the offshore labour market, but also in the growing prevalence of longer contracts, the presence of foreign workers throughout the calendar year, and the extension of guest worker programs to a broader range of commodities and operations. Most workers from Mexico and the Caribbean come to the same Canadian farms year after year and many spend a greater part of their working lives on Canadian soil rather than in their homelands.

Despite this long and growing transnational relationship, foreign agricultural workers continue to experience social exclusion from the broader community in rural Canada. For the most part, residents are either unaware or choose to ignore the migrant worker community living in their midst. This general picture of social exclusion, however, is beginning to change, through the development of personal ties as well as the emergence of civil society organizations (CSOs) that have become increasingly relevant in ensuring that migrant agricultural workers rights are respected and who pressure provincial and federal governments to extend these rights. The following section first explores the ways in which social exclusion is experienced by SAWP participants and then turns to the forms of inclusiveness that seek to extend social membership in Canadian society to the migrant community.

⁵⁵ Arat-Koc 1989, Preibisch 2000.

Social exclusion

The level of awareness of the existence of Caribbean and Mexican migrant workers among the population of southern Ontario is generally low. As one civil servant remarked:

I think that most communities are ignorant of them. I think that people who work for HRDC [Human Resources and Development Canada]⁵⁶ or know somebody who works for this department, or know people who are in the agricultural industry are conversant. The rest of the people don't have a clue. They don't know what countries [the workers] are coming from, they don't know the duration of time they stay here, they don't know what they really do, they don't know what their wages are.⁵⁷

Various factors play a role in facilitating or impeding social interaction, but the extent to which residents become aware of migrant workers and interact with them depends in part on physical proximity. Towns receiving the highest proportion of the foreign agricultural labour force have become economic and social hubs for migrant workers on weekends. The town of Simcoe, within the county of Haldimand-Norfolk, hosts hundreds of migrants on Friday nights looking to buy their weekly groceries, telephone home, and do their banking. Similarly, the town of Leamington in Essex County, where high numbers of Mexican workers are employed, has become a "Mexican Paradise,"⁵⁸ attracting workers not only from the local area but others hundreds of kilometres away who come to dine and dance with their compatriots. One interviewee in describing the town of Leamington said:

On a Friday or Saturday night we have quite a Latino culture downtown, like that's all you see. My sister lives out of town, she lives in Georgetown, she had to run into a grocery store on a Friday night and was like (gasps): "what happened? Did I get off at the wrong town?" Because it's very different, you know, that's what you see.⁵⁹

The opportunity for social contact between residents and migrant workers in these areas is considerably greater than in other Canadian towns that host very few workers in their vicinities. There are several counties employing fewer than 250 workers; in some cases just two workers.

Social contact between migrant workers and the broader community occurs primarily on Friday evenings, when the employer, his/her spouse, or a designated employee takes workers to town to do their shopping and banking. In the weekly pilgrimage, workers arrive by the busload in the downtown core of rural communities. The weekly shopping trip, as Smart (1998) observed, constitutes the most significant social contact between migrant workers and the Canadian community. Some of this contact is friendly

⁵⁶ Now Human Resources and Social Development Canada, HRSDC.

⁵⁷ Interview, July 2002.

⁵⁸ Borrowed here is the name of one of the most popular clubs in Leamington.

⁵⁹ Interview, July 2002.

interaction between migrant workers and the staff of the businesses they frequent. One merchant expressed the nature of these commercial interactions as such:

It's the same people every year and they'll come in and say, "Hey I am back." They're pretty funny and they'll say, "Oh I am leaving, bye." Because you see them every week you become their only friend, because they don't have a lot of friends, and they'll come in and chit chat and tell you about their family. And they'll say "my son goes to school" or "I have four kids" and they just want somebody to talk to because they're working all day long. They're pretty sociable people, they're all nice and I have never had any trouble with any of them, they're all polite and they're all really nice people. Sometimes they just want to talk about their family or they miss their family or talk about back home, so they become like a friend. Because you see mostly the same faces all of the time.⁶⁰

In general, business owners and staff interviewed in 2002 claimed to have good relationships with workers. Very few, however (including the merchant above), actually knew an individual worker by name. Business owners or employees claimed to have little contact with workers outside of the working environment and rarely knew someone who had any type of relationship with them. These findings confirm previous findings that migrant workers' encounters with Canadians are mainly commercial rather than social.⁶¹

Apart from the interactions between migrant workers and the staff of local business establishments, rural communities appear to make few efforts to recognize the presence of migrant workers and engage with them socially. Some residents intentionally avoid them. For example, they may refrain from shopping on Friday nights. While it is probable that some do so to escape the congestion, others do so in order to avoid the migrant workers. Previous research with West Indian migrant workers found that in several rural towns, residents would engage in intentional avoidance such as crossing the street or distancing themselves from them in the shops,⁶² a finding corroborated in the 2003 study. Researchers heard cases of rural residents ignoring greetings from migrant workers. One Jamaican worker reported: "sometimes you say hello and they don't answer but give you a bad look. This is an insult."⁶³ These incidents also took place in the workplace, when customers buying produce on farms refused to speak to migrant worker staff or looked for a white employee with whom to leave their money. It is not surprising that some migrant workers felt that Canadians held negative views of them.

Racist attitudes undoubtedly persist in rural Canada, where some residents may seek to maintain an image of their communities as white settlements. The employers who hire migrant workers are often at the receiving end of these attitudes. One interviewee explained that some employers conceal workers' accommodations behind packing sheds or greenhouses in attempt to accommodate their neighbours: "The farmers are still very careful to keep the housing for the offshores out of sight because neighbours will

⁶⁰ Interview, July 2002.

⁶¹ Cecil and Ebanks 1991, Smart 1998.

⁶² Cecil and Ebanks 1991, Larkin 1989.

⁶³ Interview, October 2002.

complain.”⁶⁴ The migrant workers interviewed for this research noted how some restaurants and bars were less receptive to their presence than others. One business owner interviewed felt that serving Caribbean workers caused her to lose clientele who didn’t want to patronize a “black bar.”⁶⁵ Some manifestations of racism have involved physical threats and attacks, leading some migrant workers to fear leaving the farm or cycling on rural roads.⁶⁶

Racist attitudes towards Caribbean workers were particularly apparent in the negative views held by residents and growers regarding intimate relationships between migrant men and white Canadian women. Some employers tried to actively police the sexuality of migrant workers through curfews, prohibiting visitors from the opposite sex, and openly discouraging workers from establishing relationships with local women. There was some evidence that employers felt they are responsible for controlling workers’ behaviour and experience pressure from rural residents to do so. Migrant workers could pay heavy costs for becoming involved with local women. Liaison staff reported a case in which a worker was beaten by Canadian men for fraternizing with white women in a public establishment.

The lack of social interaction between migrant agricultural workers contributes to racialized perceptions that are expressed in stereotypes held by rural residents. Similar to the views of employers, a common perception of migrant workers was as essentially poor people from poor countries for whom “the Canadian dollar is like gold.” These assumptions were then used to justify unequal entitlement relative to Canadians, in terms of lower wages or substandard housing. Another common narrative in interviews with community residents was the perception of Mexican and Caribbean workers as hard working. Migrant workers in general were seen as suited to agricultural work, unlike Canadians, with Mexicans appropriate for some tasks and Caribbean workers for others.

Growers and other rural residents made other distinctions beyond migrant workers’ suitability for agricultural work when comparing nationalities or races. Mexicans were seen as family-oriented, good Catholics, more “careful with their money” since they were perceived to buy fewer consumer goods than the Caribbean workers for export home. Additionally, Mexican workers—very few of whom speak English—were considered quiet and reserved. Racial stereotyping is well illustrated in the following interview excerpt in which two merchants contrasted Mexican and Jamaicans workers:

⁶⁴ Interview, October 2002.

⁶⁵ Interview, October 2002.

⁶⁶ The Hamilton Spectator 2000, Larkin 1989, Quashie-Sam 2007.

- A: [The Mexicans] are pretty quiet overall; they really don't say a whole lot.
 B: The Jamaicans are much more out going, lively, bouncy and that kind of stuff, it's in their nature. With the Negroes they get the rhythm and that's how they shop, with the rhythm.
 A: Yeah, they're always singing up and down the aisles.
 B: And with the Mexicans, they're more family oriented people in one way.
 A: They're just more reserved.
 B: Yeah, they're more reserved in nature.⁶⁷

A common stereotype associated with Caribbean workers was as womanizers or as polygamists. In addition, some rural residents perceived family structures in the Caribbean as less stable than those in Canada. This flawed (and racist) depiction of family formations in the Caribbean contributes to the portrayal of Black men as hypersexualized subjects that pose a risk to Canadian women and society at large. It also contrasts sharply with the findings by Russell (2003) for Jamaica that reported a low divorce rate in rural areas and found 76 percent of Jamaican workers in stable relationships.

In general, the broad range of stereotypes assigned to migrant workers that were identified in the research are of note because of the consequences they may hold for the treatment of migrant workers. Scholars have noted that such stereotypes can serve to reinforce views that Canadian residents are somehow more deserving than foreign workers and thus legitimize foreign workers' unequal treatment in the labour market and society.⁶⁸ The ideological consequences have repercussions for the commitment of Canadians—both rural and urban—to upholding the dignity and human rights of the migrant community.

The findings of the 2003 study on the social dimensions of the SAWP in Canadian rural communities confirmed indications in the literature that, in general, migrant workers are socially excluded from the communities in which they live. Research in the late 1980s on Caribbean workers concluded that “Ontario offers a peaceful reasonably decent working environment with economic opportunities but, even after more than 20 years, the workers are collectively strangers in a land where many spend a good part of their lives.” Larkin's ethnographic study (1989) on Jamaican SAWP workers concluded that:

[F]or some West Indian men the friends they make in the bunkhouse will be the only ones they have for their entire stay in Canada. [...] [A]s soon as the men arrive they find it is only the farmers who are friendly and almost all of the white Canadian they see reject them or ignore their presence.⁶⁹

Indeed, NSI researchers found that close to 70 percent of Jamaican workers socialized with each other, as opposed to members of the broader community.⁷⁰ Researchers studying Mexican workers have come to similar conclusions, characterizing the

⁶⁷ Interview, October 2002.

⁶⁸ Preibisch and Binford 2007, Sharma 2006.

⁶⁹ Interview, October 2002.

⁷⁰ Russell 2003.

relationship between migrants and the general community as marked by racism and social exclusion.⁷¹ One study, that interviewed people who had participated as guest workers both in the Canadian SAWP and the American H2A, indicated that 75 percent claimed to have experienced more racism in Canada than the U.S.⁷²

Social Inclusion

Despite a general context of social exclusion, the nature of relationships between the migrant and permanent communities is undergoing small, but perceptible transformations through the development of personal ties between migrant workers and the broader community. The numerous parties and outings to clubs reported during the 2003 study, involving migrants socializing not only with themselves but with Canadians, indicate that there are exceptions to the dominant narrative of the socially isolated migrant. Furthermore, the past ten years have witnessed the emergence of non-state actors⁷³ seeking to ally themselves with migrant workers. These actors have become increasingly relevant in addressing many needs of migrant workers. Moreover, many of these actors have taken it upon themselves both to ensure that migrants' rights are respected and to pressure different levels of government to extend these rights.

Personal ties

Most migrant workers socialize with their own countrymen and women. Others, particularly those in areas with high worker concentration, have made friends beyond the bunkhouse. While many of these are within their same cultural community of Latin American or Caribbean immigrants, some have been formed outside it. Friendships between migrant workers and members of the broader rural community often developed in church, the workplace, or in the stores where migrant workers shopped. Others, as we relate below, have formed as a result of groups seeking to provide support for migrant workers.

Friendships provided human contact outside of the working environment and importantly, a measure of social support. Friends were called upon to assist with money transfers and to help access health care in time of emergencies in Canada and at home. One employer related the case of his Caribbean employee:

[Worker A] has probably had 20 opportunities to get married; it's just that he's a likeable fun kind of guy [...]. His dad died the second year that he was here and the community that he goes around with after hours put together enough money to send him home. I don't know how much money specifically they gave him but they gave him enough money that he could take the plane home and come back. So he went home for a week for his dad's funeral.⁷⁴

There were indications that managers and supervisors had also befriended employees. As one employer noted:

⁷¹ Basok 2002, Colby 1997, Smart 1998.

⁷² Colby 1997.

⁷³ The term non-state actor refers to a member of a civil society organization such as a community group, faith-based group, migrant rights organization, or labour union.

⁷⁴ Interview, October 2002.

[Manager A] will take them to events in Virgil, it's a heavy farming community so then they have a party there for offshore labour once a year, so she takes them to that. She takes them bowling. We will do, like the end of the season, we had a barbeque at the house, you know for everybody. But on a day-to-day basis, not really, because we don't really do that with any employees, the social attachment we have a separation there from that. She'll take them bowling, she's taken them to Niagara Falls and to Toronto, she just likes that and that's fine and we support that and we'll lend the vehicles to do that.⁷⁵

While friends provided human contact outside of the working environment, they were also an important source of support. Friends were called upon to assist with money transfers, to help access health care, in time of emergencies in Canada and at home. These relationships helped migrant workers exercise rights they are accorded and often denied; furthermore, they worked to reduce to some extent workers' dependent and paternalistic relationships with their employers.

Intimate relationships have also developed between the migrant and permanent communities. For some workers, relationships formed in Canada have resulted in changes in their migratory status and they have become permanent residents and/or Canadian citizens. Table 3 shows that in 2002, 41 workers were repatriated to their countries before the end of their contracts for reasons of marriage.⁷⁶ Migrant agricultural workers have parented Canadian children and some are currently paying child support. Some marriages are between workers and their employers or his/her children.

Table 3: Total Worker Returns for reasons of marriage, 1994 - 2002

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Barbados	13	4	7	5	5	9	11	8	11
OECS*	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	2	1
Jamaica	11	6	8	12	15	16	14	20	22
Trinidad-Tobago	7	13	5	1	2	3	7	19	6
Caribbean Total	32	25	23	18	22	28	32	49	40
Mexico	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Combined Total	32	26	23	18	22	28	33	49	41

*Organization of Eastern Caribbean States

Source: FARMS 2003.

Organized Support

One of the key spaces for social interaction between migrant workers and Canadian society is the church. In both study sites, some migrant men and women attended church regularly, although the majority of SAWP participants work through their days of worship. The few we interviewed who are able to attend church described rural faith

⁷⁵ Interview, October 2002.

⁷⁶ FARMS 2003. This indicates that their contracts were terminated because they were re-entering the country to marry Canadian citizens.

communities as welcoming and had made friends with other SAWP workers as well as Canadians. One Jamaican worker said: “I enjoy myself [at church]. [You] meet a lot of friends and also meet some other guys that we have from Jamaica. [You] meet some of the other guys that you didn’t know were in the program.”⁷⁷ Another claimed:

[attending church] makes me feel more at home here. And the fact that I can have fellowship with people, who are like minded, with the same faith, makes a lot of difference [...]. I would be... maybe feeling lonely or whatever it is, without some kind of fellowship.⁷⁸

As a result of growing numbers of migrant parishioners, a number of churches in rural Ontario have responded by creating worship programs especially for them.⁷⁹ For example, a number of rural parishes of the Catholic Church offer mass in Spanish for Mexican workers.⁸⁰ Some United Church congregations have brought pastors from Jamaica to offer services for workers and to minister to them on farms. This program is offered to workers in two regions where large numbers of Jamaican workers are employed. Although the above two examples were led by parishioners, employers have also taken the initiative to provide worship services in Spanish for workers, as is the case with the Springdale Christian Reform Church in Bradford.

In addition to meeting workers’ spiritual needs, faith communities in rural Ontario have also formed groups to provide outreach to migrant workers and, in some cases, advocacy. The motivations of these groups are diverse; some are evangelical while others are inspired by social justice concerns. All of them, however, seek to attend to workers’ spiritual needs, provide opportunities for social contact, and strengthen interaction between migrants and local residents. They do this by organizing barbeques or cultural potluck meals, hosting sporting events such as cricket matches or soccer games, and arranging outings to tourist attractions such as Niagara Falls. Some of these groups also organize a type of “reality tour” whereby local residents visit the workers in their home communities.

One of the longest standing groups is the Caribbean Workers Outreach Program (CWOP), which began in the early 1990s. The CWOP works primarily with Jamaican workers and has two chapters, one in the Niagara region and a second in Simcoe. Although the CWOP has its roots in the United Church, the Niagara chapter is ecumenical, drawing support from over 20 local churches.⁸¹ The CWOP adopts a human-centred, compassionate approach aimed at bringing employers and workers together through cricket matches, cribbage games and worship services.⁸²

⁷⁷ Interview, October 2002.

⁷⁸ Interview, October 2002.

⁷⁹ The Catholic Church, the Christian Reform Church, the United Church, and Free Reformed Church.

⁸⁰ There a number of churches now offering mass in Spanish, including St. Vincent de Paul (Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara), St. Michael’s (Leamington, Essex), Holy Martyrs of Japan (Newmarket, York), and Our Lady of LaSalette (LaSalette).

⁸¹ The denominations involved in the CWOP in the Niagara region include Baptist, Anglican, the United Church of Canada, Christian Reform, United Missionary, United Mennonite, Mennonite Brethern, and Pentecostal.

⁸² Gibb 2007.

The Free Reformed Church of Vineland also hosts a number of “migrant outreach events” geared primarily to Caribbean workers. The initiatives of these groups have also focused on Mexican workers. The Niagara Christian Assembly, for example, works with the CWOP to address the spiritual needs of Mexican workers. One of the most active faith-based organizations is Project El Sembrador, operating largely in the Holland Marsh green belt north of Toronto. This group was formed in 1999 by a social ministry team from three parishes in the region, Catholic Community Services, and a Spanish-speaking prayer group. An important function of these groups is to function as mediators between employers and workers when misunderstandings or conflicts emerge. The CWOP, for example, does not encounter employer resistance to visiting workers on farms. This access allows them to become aware of worker needs and link them to appropriate resources.

The localized initiatives by faith-based groups in rural communities have led to greater engagement with the church hierarchy at regional and national levels. For example, after consultations with priests and volunteer lay people, the London Diocese of the Catholic Church created a Migrant Ministries Committee in 2003. One of the outcomes of this committee was a paper submitted to the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Council of Catholic Bishops. In addition, KAIROS, the social justice organization of eleven Canadian churches and church agencies, has emerged as a key advocate for migrant workers. Although KAIROS did not begin addressing migrant workers issues until 2004, they have played a significant role in facilitating networking among migrant organizations, churches and other groups working together for justice for migrants in Canada. KAIROS has collaborated with other groups to build a national migrant worker justice network in Canada, organizing the first National Migrant Justice Gathering in June 2006, and drafting a Statement of Unity on migrant rights for lobbying politicians.⁸³ KAIROS has also made formal presentations to the Canadian federal government on issues facing migrant workers. Currently this group is involved in planning two regional gatherings on migrant justice.

In the last ten years, the efforts of faith communities in rural Ontario have been accompanied by an upsurge of civil society organizations focused on migrant worker rights and a renewed interest in the labour movement to organize farm workers and address the issue of foreign workers. The origins, motivations and activities of these secular actors vary widely but, like the faith-based groups, their commonality is found in the desire to improve the experience of migrant agricultural workers while they work and live in Canada. Some of these groups focus on providing material outreach (used clothing, protective gear) or hosting recreational activities (bus trips, sporting matches). Other combine these activities with initiatives aimed at empowering workers through literacy or skill transfer. A shared goal of most groups is to improve worker/community relations through public education and social events aimed at bringing migrants and residents together.

⁸³ <http://www.kairoscanada.org/e/refugees/migrants/unityStatement.asp>

Some of the groups are based in the rural communities receiving migrant workers. One example is the Community of Agricultural Foreign Workers and Friends of Exeter (CAFFE). This group was initiated in 2002 by a former greenhouse supervisor and English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. CAFFE holds a Friday night drop-in centre in the town of Exeter in South Huron county geared at providing an alternative social space, facilitating language and skills acquisition, and promoting social integration. The Migrant Worker Cultural Program (MWCP) is another example of a CSO that has emerged in a migrant-receiving community with the goal of improving relationships between migrant workers and the larger community. This CSO based in Leamington was the first to receive government funding to support outreach with migrant workers.⁸⁴ The MWCP has a range of activities, including bike safety education and training workshops. Their work has followed up a bicycle safety program funded by the South Essex Community Centre in 2002 (SECC). Although the SECC does not have an ongoing program geared at migrant workers, funding from the United Way that year allowed them to run the “Building Bridges Through Bicycles” program, and works to consolidate community-provided translation services within the community. SECC plans to revive its Immigrant Advisory Committee in 2008 and include representatives working with migrant workers. The Centre is also partnering with the MWCP and St. Michael’s Church to explore using videophone technology with the migrant worker population for translation purposes, particularly in terms of health care issues.⁸⁵ One final example of a very recently formed localized initiative is Growing Respect for Offshore Workers (GROW) in Niagara-on-the-Lake, an organization formed in 2006 that seeks to improve the relationship between migrant workers and the rural communities in which they work.

Other CSOs are Toronto-based. One example is ENLACE Community Link formed in 2001. Made up of approximately 30 Spanish-speaking volunteers, ENLACE’s activities include distributing a Spanish-language newsletter, holding information sessions on worker benefits, hosting activities to promote worker health and safety, and organizing social events. The group also funds an emergency telephone line and intervenes on workers’ behalf when emergencies arise either in Canada or Mexico. While both these groups are focused on Mexican workers, the Toronto-based Frontier College targets Caribbean workers as well. Frontier College is a national non-profit organization that aims to empower through literacy. Since 1990, Frontier College has placed volunteers on Canadian farms where they labour alongside migrant workers and lead literacy and ESL programs outside of working hours. Their “Labourer-Teachers” often act as translators and intermediaries for workers and employers. In 2005, Frontier College created a learning centre in Leamington that has hosted ESL activities and special events including a talent night and a play. The play was one of the first-ever initiatives to involve Mexican and Caribbean workers in the planning and execution of a public event.

⁸⁴ In 2003, the Secretary of State for Rural Development and Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario granted \$50,000 in Government of Canada funding from the Canadian Agricultural Rural Communities Initiative for the creation of a centre for migrant workers in the Leamington area.

⁸⁵ This is part of a pilot project headed by the Chatham-Kent Multi-Cultural Coalition in which SECC participates. The project uses videophone technology to better connect rural communities serving immigrant populations with urban centres with greater translation and interpretation resources.

The most proactive efforts to defend foreign workers and ensure their rights are respected and expanded have come from the labour movement. Efforts to organize agricultural workers have a long history in the province of Ontario.⁸⁶ The union actively campaigning for farm workers at the current time is the United Food and Commercial Workers of Canada (UFCW).⁸⁷ UFCW's efforts galvanized in 1995 when the then Ontario provincial government repealed newly minted legislation that would have allowed farm workers to unionize. Since then, UFCW directed its efforts at the courts, levelling three constitutional challenges in the Supreme Court, two against the province of Ontario and one against the federal government. The first two challenges concerned agricultural workers in general, focusing on the issue of unionization and farm worker health and safety.⁸⁸ The third challenge launched against the federal government concerned foreign agricultural workers exclusively and took issue with the fact that foreign workers pay premiums under the Employment Insurance Act yet cannot claim the associated benefits because they must leave the country when they are no longer working.⁸⁹

Direct support for foreign workers has also occurred outside the courts. In 2001 labour activists formed the Global Justice Care Van Project, a coalition to support and enhance the rights of migrant workers. With financing from several unions, the Care Van first launched a campaign to document and expose migrants' working and living conditions. The following year, UFCW opened the first Migrant Agricultural Workers Support Centre in Leamington, offering a range of services to migrant workers including assistance with social benefits, legal counselling and translation. The centre also began engaging in raising workers' awareness of their rights. Since 2002, UFCW has opened an additional four centres, including one in Quebec. These centres, located in areas of high worker concentration, are heavily used by migrant farm workers, particularly Mexicans. In addition to the efforts of UFCW, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) formed a Temporary Worker Advocacy Group (TWAG) in 2006 to lobby the federal and provincial governments around migrant worker rights under the SAWP, the new Temporary Foreign Worker Programs and the Pilot Program for Low-Skill Workers.

Labour activists have also organized outside formal union structures by forming the Toronto-based Justicia for Migrant Workers (J4MW). The J4MW collective, comprised of students, researchers and social justice activists, focuses its efforts on raising awareness of issues surrounding migrant workers and lobbying for policy change. The group also provides outreach to both Mexican and Caribbean workers, responds to emergencies on farms, and helps workers access resources. A principal contribution of J4MW has been to increase the profile of foreign farm workers with the Canadian public through their electronic list serve, website, and public events. Another group linked to the labour movement is Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario (IAVGO), one of the 79 community legal clinics in the province of Ontario funded by Legal Aid Ontario

⁸⁶ Wall 1996.

⁸⁷ UFCW is a union representing about 230,000 workers in the food industry.

⁸⁸ See Verma (2007) for further information.

⁸⁹ UFCW, in negotiation with the federal government, has since dropped this claim due to high numbers of migrant workers successfully claiming Employment Insurance (EI) parental benefits. Migrant workers are able to make these claims thanks to a legal loophole discovered by an advocate of migrant worker issues, Consuelo Rubio.

(LAO). IAVGO's involvement with migrant workers has been largely around educating workers and community groups around workers' compensation matters and Employment Insurance (EI) issues.

The growing numbers of foreign workers in rural areas have considerable implications for municipalities which have responsibilities for local roads, public health and other services used by migrant workers, but this level of government has been slow to respond to the needs of the migrant community. There are, however, some municipal and regional initiatives currently in place. Municipal police in at least three rural communities offer bicycle safety training for migrant workers. Each summer since 2000, the Health Department of the Regional Municipality of Niagara has included foreign workers among target populations for its mobile Health Bus campaign. One night a week, the Health Bus is posted in a region of high worker concentration, the town of Virgil in the Niagara region, offering treatment for minor medical conditions as well as some dental services. The Bradford Public Library has been making efforts to serve the migrant worker population. Migrant workers are able to hold library cards and use computers to access the Internet. The library is also seeking to expand its collection of Spanish-language materials. Unfortunately, these latter two initiatives—the Health Bus and the Library—are closed on Friday evenings and weekends when they would be accessible to the vast majority of workers in the communities where they are based.

CSOs have made significant impacts in the lives of individual workers and Canadian society at large. They have created an alternative social space for workers to interact with others outside their employer-owned accommodations and a relative limited range of options: the mall, bars, or restaurants.⁹⁰ These social spaces, along with farm visits by CSOs, provide some of the only social contact workers receive outside the circle of their co-workers.

Events organized by CSOs also provide workers an opportunity to see something of the country in which they work. Many workers' experience of Canada is limited to the town where they buy groceries. As one CSO member, commenting on one outing, observed: "We had 40 people who were here as our seasonal workers. And of those, only three people had ever seen Toronto before and almost all of the people had worked in our area for, well somewhere between three and 15 years."

Secondly, the social activities that involve participation by migrant workers and local residents have helped improve migrant-community relations in a context where interactions are normally limited to the commercial transactions in businesses when migrant workers buy their groceries or send money home. For many of these groups, diminishing the segregation of migrant workers from the permanent population is a long-term goal in community development. In the short-term, social events can contribute to a more enriching human experience for Mexican and Caribbean men and women coming to

⁹⁰ Workers' desire for companionship with each other and/or the broader community is evident particularly in their attendance at the events of churches they do not attend in their home countries. For example, the research found Muslim Trinidadian workers attending church-organized events in Niagara and Catholic Mexican workers attending Baptist worship services in the Holland Marsh.

Canada to work. Recent research in the U.S. has found that facilitating communication between new immigrant workers and communities has been positive for all involved.⁹¹

Thirdly, CSOs have attempted to improve workers' mobility and enhance their access to services. This has included organizing the distribution of used bicycles⁹² and providing transportation to events, to take workers to receive medical care, or to do shopping. They also provide translation for Mexican workers using the health care system or accessing benefits. The provision of ESL and basic literacy classes has been given particular focus by groups working with migrant workers, recognizing the ways in which the language barrier experienced primarily by Mexicans⁹³ poses serious problems in the workplace (in terms of training, health and safety issues, communication with management), in the broader community (communicating needs, social interaction), and as they seek to defend themselves in their interactions with employers, residents, and government officials. Acquiring basic English skills can facilitate migrant workers' access to other services, such as health care and banking.

Fourthly, it is evident that CSOs have also played an important role in disseminating resources among the migrant community that inform them of their rights as migrant workers and how to exercise those rights. In the following passage, one volunteer explained her experience with one of UFCW's Migrant Worker Support Centres:

A lot of people needed translation in the hospital or were kind of afraid to go to the hospital alone because they didn't think that anyone would understand them there. Income tax questions, pension questions, a lot of pension questions. Compensation questions, people wanting to go home for various reasons, their spouse is sick, they just want to go home or they're really unhappy here. Occasionally they would have problems with their bosses as well that either required someone to translate so that they could have a discussion with their boss or people requesting to be transferred to another farm, there were quite a few instances of that.⁹⁴

A number of CSOs aim to educate workers on their rights and how to exercise them—from providing income tax workshops to simply reminding workers to get documentation when they visit the hospital in case they need to make a Workers' Compensation claim—so as to empower migrants to resolve issues themselves. One member of a CSO said:

⁹¹ Grey and Woodruff 2002, Griffith 2003.

⁹² Bicycles are important in providing workers with greater mobility for those workers who live within cycling distance to towns or cities. They are a less accessible means of transport, however, for workers living at greater distances and those who, for physical or cultural reasons, are less inclined to use them. For example, one migrant told researchers he felt his age constrained his ability to cycle into town after a hard day's work as his younger co-workers did. In addition, in the case of Jamaican workers, access to bicycles is gendered; riding a bike is seen as a masculine activity unlikely to be taken up by most women (J. Domise, personal communication).

⁹³ Cecil and Ebanks (1991) report that 20 percent of Caribbean workers report difficulty being understood.

⁹⁴ Interview, October 2002.

We've been handling problems, all kind of problems, they don't have a Social Insurance Number; they don't have any information about CPP. They don't have enough information so we try to guide them the best way to solve their problems. We say: "we don't solve your problems, we help you solve them."⁹⁵

The efforts of all these groups have helped raise the profile of migrant workers in the immediate rural community and province-wide. CSOs also lobby the agricultural industry, the Canadian government, and labour sending countries to be more accountable for the treatment and well-being of migrant workers. Some of the groups believe their effectiveness lies in raising awareness with the Consulate and Liaison Service staff through dialogue. Others, such as UFCW, have pressed for legal and institutional changes through the courts. The mere presence of these groups is a reminder to industry and government that civil society has them under scrutiny. One group related the following perceived impact of their actions:

We also went to visit one farm and the people who were working there had been asking for a telephone for several years, and we'd never talked to the employer, we didn't even really discuss the issue of the phone but the following week they got a phone. So we think that there's something very useful for the workers that there's a group out there that's interested in [their] welfare.⁹⁶

Stan Raper, the National Coordinator of UFCW's Agricultural Workers program, speculating on the impact of the union's work claimed:

I think from the national report, from the national media stuff that we did we got people's attention, we got the federal government's attention, I think we got the Consulate's attention. I know that we have the labour movement's attention [...]. I think that if nothing else, the growers see us now as kind of like a watch dog group that if something's going to happen, a lot of people are going to know about it and so they've had to be pretty cautious in terms of how they treat their workers.⁹⁷

The efforts of these largely volunteer CSOs attempt to extend what has been historically denied to migrant agricultural workers: social membership in Canadian society.

Indeed, industry and government actors have done little to address the social needs of the foreign migrant workforce and community groups have only very recently been able to access financial resources for social initiatives involving migrant workers. One example is the \$50,000 allocated to the MWCP (see earlier footnote). This same organization was also awarded \$10,000 from one grower organization to do a needs assessment of the migrant worker community. In addition, the University of Guelph received a small grant from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs' Sustainable Rural Communities research program to host a workshop for the community organizations involved in migrant worker outreach in 2005. According to one participant, "an initiative

⁹⁵ Interview, August 2002.

⁹⁶ Interview, June 2002.

⁹⁷ Interview, September 2002.

to bring organizations supporting migrant workers together was something long overdue.”

The North-South Institute received a grant in 2004 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to partner with community groups in disseminating findings from its major review of the SAWP in Ontario rural communities. The Institute produced a “plain-language” summary of key research findings⁹⁸ in English and Spanish that was distributed principally through workshop presentations in three rural communities that receive migrant farm workers. Each workshop brought together diverse stakeholders including employers; community, church and labour organizations; elected members of municipal and regional government; and a few business leaders. The community dialogues on the SAWP culminated in a networking and capacity building workshop at the University of Guelph in December 2006 that brought together leaders from the wide range of groups who target migrant workers for a second time. This workshop included a dialogue between community groups and officials from HRSDC and the Ontario Ministry of Labour.

There have been a number of local initiatives following on the NSI workshops, for example, the Bradford Public Library housed a display on the SAWP in 2006 that recognized the important contributions of seasonal agricultural workers to the local community. The workshops also supported increased networking and collaboration between community groups that have tended to work in isolation. As mentioned, Leamington’s SECC is partnering with the MWCP and St. Michael’s Church to explore using videophone technology for translation purposes. In Bradford, members of El Sembrador and the UFCW Migrant Workers Centre held a workshop in 2006 to discuss changes in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). Further, municipal councillors who attended one workshop in 2006 have begun dialoguing with Project El Sembrador. Finally, an additional outcome of the 2006 workshop was an agreement for the groups to establish a council to further networking and knowledge exchange. These efforts to improve networking have been bolstered by the coalition-building led by KAIROS and will no doubt continue to flourish as a result of the regional gatherings to be held in late 2007. Furthermore, a group of academics, researchers and students formed the Canadian Labour Migration Research Network in 2006 to better coordinate research on migrant worker issues, increase networks between researchers, and raise the profile on labour migration research.

A further recent gain is an initial dialogue between groups working with migrant workers and government at the provincial and federal level. At the 2006 workshop hosted by the NSI and the University of Guelph, officials from the federal HRSDC and provincial HRSDC met formally with community organizations for the first time. In part this meeting reflects a change within the federal HRSDC to hire a manager in charge of Stakeholder Relations for their Foreign Worker Program. While the creation of this position reflects the increasing profile of foreign worker programs in the Canadian economy, it is likely that the work of CSOs and growing media attention may have also played a role in the need for a public relations manager. The increased visibility that CSOs have brought to bear on worker concerns may have also had some bearing on the

⁹⁸ Gibb 2006.

establishment of satellite consular services (Mexico) and a liaison office (Jamaica) in Leamington.

Despite the many contributions that CSOs have made to the lives of individual workers and Canadian society as a whole, their impact is limited. Direct contacts between CSOs and migrant agricultural workers represent only a small fraction of the tens of thousands of temporary foreign workers coming to Canada each year. In the province of Ontario, many of these groups focus their efforts on Mexican workers. A recent qualitative study in the town of Simcoe found that workers from the Caribbean were not aware of the UFCW Migrant Workers Centre or had the impression that it was just for Mexican workers.⁹⁹ Another important limitation is the fact that most of the groups are operating with extremely limited funding and, with few exceptions, are supported entirely by volunteers.

Moreover, the goals of these organizations may not necessarily be shared by the migrant workers themselves, and some may even work contrary to their interests. Some faith-based and secular initiatives that have emerged at the local level, especially those in which employers are members, have sought to promote evangelism and cultural exchange, avoiding the power relations that separate the permanent and migrant communities. On the other hand, activists in the labour movement may employ aggressive tactics to achieve their goals at the expense of individual workers, who may forfeit their transnational livelihoods and thus a fundamental opportunity to improve their well-being and that of their families. Interviewees in the 2003 study claimed both their employers and home representatives had warned against their involvement in the Migrant Resource Centres. Reprisals against guest worker organizing have been documented elsewhere, including research with H2A workers in the U.S.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Quashie-Sam 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Encalada 2006, Southern Poverty Law Centre 2007.

Conclusions

This report summarizes and updates the main findings and recommendations of the study completed by the NSI in 2003 that explored the relationships between migrant workers, their employers, and the rural communities in which they live. In terms of worker-employer relationships, the study documented a wide range, from exemplary to exploitative. Migrant workers are in a structural weak position next to their employers and their relationships are often marked by personal, paternalistic ties. Fortunately, most employers are complying with the SAWP contract in their treatment of migrant workers. This is not the result however, of migrants sharing the same rights and capabilities as Canadian workers, careful monitoring of foreign worker programs by the Canadian government, and/or strong enforcement measures for those who abuse their workers. In sum, the experience of farm workers in Canada is largely dependent on the subjective goodwill of the employer.

Migrant workers are an increasing presence in rural Canada. The majority remain invisible to most Canadians, however, in part because they work long hours in order to send more money to their families and in part as a result of their limited mobility. Barriers to their mobility are both social and geographical in nature; while farms are often located at great distances from towns, employers do not always facilitate migrant workers' movement beyond the farm. Social interaction between migrant workers and rural residents is often limited to the commercial transactions that occur largely on weekends, when migrant workers are taken to town to buy groceries, send money home, or phone their families. Many of the rural people that know migrant workers, therefore, are those who work in the rural businesses that they frequent. This limited social interaction between migrant workers and the rural community gives rise to cultural misunderstandings, racialized stereotypes, and at its most severe, overt racism.

The pattern of social exclusion has undergone important changes in the last five to ten years. This can be seen in an expansion of personal relationships that have formed between migrant workers and resident Canadians and the growing strength of civil society organizations that focus their efforts on migrant agricultural workers in Canada. Although the history of civil society's engagement with migrant agricultural workers is fairly short, these groups have had an impact on a number of workers' lives and made steps in extending social membership in Canadian society to them. Their reach, however, is limited. Their efforts, while important, are not an adequate long-term measure for meeting the social needs of migrant agricultural workers and facilitating their integration into rural communities. They can provide direction, experience, and insight, but the Canadian government and labour sending governments must take more systematic and concerted actions to recognize and meet the human and social needs of the tens of thousands of migrant workers making key contributions both to the Canadian economy through their labour and to their countries of origin through their remittances.

Recommendations for Labour-Sending Governments

The following recommendations have been drafted as proposals that migrant-sending governments could pursue in their efforts to improve the experiences of their countrymen and women participating in the SAWP:

- Liaise with CSOs and support them in their efforts to meet the needs of migrant workers and facilitate social integration in rural Canadian communities
- Promote cross-cultural training for Canadian employers of foreign temporary workers, through workshops involving the Liaison Office and Canadian CSOs with experience in this area
- Remove sending-country restrictions (e.g. curfews) on workers' mobility to allow those workers who choose to engage in social activity outside of work to do so
- Discuss the content of farm rules at the next bilateral negotiations with the view of establishing what they should and should not contain (e.g. additional restrictions on worker mobility such as curfews)
- Encourage employers to provide workers with additional transportation than that required by the contract, such as use of bicycles or farm vehicles for those workers with an international driving license
- Provide workers with low-cost maps of the rural communities in which they live, indicating medical services and shopping districts
- Address issues facing women migrants, such as greater restrictions on their mobility than those facing men
- Address the gender-specific health needs of migrants, such as providing women with additional information regarding health care facilities in the areas where they work. It could also involve efforts to increase women's awareness of their health needs, either by providing information to women or supporting CSOs in Canada that do so, such as Justicia 4 Migrant Workers
- Link migrant women (and men) to services within rural communities that provide support for those who experience sexual harassment and violence
- Address workers' roles as parents, by linking them to groups in Canada and the Caribbean that support migrant parents and children of migrants. In particular, lone household heads should be prioritized for support
- Work in coordination with the Canadian government (HRSDC), Mexican authorities, and employer groups (FARMS, FERME, etc.) to ensure that abusive employers are not supplied with workers under the SAWP
- Continue to explore ways to reduce the costs of remittance sending and leverage the development impact of migrant workers investments. This could include providing migrant workers with workshops on financial literacy, perhaps in collaboration with Frontier College

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