

Chapter 14

Callos and Guatitas:¹ Radio and migration in Ecuador and Spain

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Announcer (Quito): *Emilio, with us we have a woman who has come back from Spain to authenticate her documents, and she'd like to ask you a question.*

Immigration advisor (Spain): *Go ahead.*

Woman in Quito: *Yes, I came back from Spain one month ago to see how the authentication of my documents was going. At the Spanish embassy here in Quito they told me that the embassy has nothing to do with that process and that coming back here was useless. What can I do now?*

Immigration advisor (Spain): *Before going back to Ecuador, you should have visited the Labour Ministry here in Madrid.*

Woman in Quito: *But I didn't know that, and here I am. So what can I do now?*

Immigration advisor (Spain): *Through Cáritas here in Spain we can try to find out what the situation is with your documents and provide you with advice. In our next program ...*

Every week radio creates a bridge joining Ecuadorian immigrants in Spain, their relatives in Ecuador, legal advisors, and radio announcers on both sides of the ocean. The scripts change but the main subject, migration, remains the same. Spain has become one of the most attractive countries for the huge numbers of people who left Ecuador in search of a better life following that country's 1996 socio-economic crisis.

Migration has always been a part of life for Ecuadorians, particularly for those from the country's southern region. Most Ecuadorians probably have at least one relative living in the United States, but in the last few years the number of people leaving the country has increased five-fold, causing the term *migration* to be replaced by that of *exodus*. So far there are no indications that the upward trend is going to level off.

There is more at the root of this situation than the worsening economic crisis; in reality, people have even lost hope in the future. A rapid succession of heads of state between

¹ Callos y Guatitas is the name of the radio program that is discussed in this chapter. The name comes from a dish made of tripe that is popular in both countries and referred to as *callos* in Spain and *guatitas* in Ecuador.

1996 and 2000², a lack of confidence in its institutions (especially its Congress), the bankruptcy of the country's financial system, as well as the "everyday" difficulties inherent to a foreign-debt-ridden state unable on several occasions to pay the salaries of civil servants, have all not only aggravated the economic crisis but also created a crisis in terms of social expectations, turning the traditional migratory stream into a flood.

Paradoxically, the economic reality is such that the migration resulting from the crisis is also the main component of its solution. According to data from Ecuador's Central Bank, in the year 2000 Ecuadorians abroad sent a total of US\$1,316,000,000 to their friends and relatives back home, making these payments the second-largest source of foreign income, surpassed only by oil exports. Traditional export products such as bananas, shrimp, and cocoa remain far behind.

New Directions

Given the increasingly restrictive measures concerning entrance into the USA, migrants have diversified their destinations. In the last few years Spain has become one of the most significant destinations for Ecuadorian migrants. Data on foreign residents in Spain show that the presence of Ecuadorians in Spain was negligible between 1955 and 1980. In all of Spain there were approximately 125 listed in 1960; less than 500 in 1970; and just under 600 in 1980. But the number of Ecuadorian foreign residents began to grow significantly in 1996, with annual increases higher than 40 percent for both 1996 and 1997. Since then, Ecuadorian immigration has continued to rise at a dramatic rate: 70 percent for 1998, 84 percent in 1999, and 123 percent in 2000. In 1996 there were only 2,900 Ecuadorian residents in Spain, but by 2000 Spain's Ministry of the Interior reported 30,878 Ecuadorian residents. If we add to that figure the 22,954 Ecuadorians who applied for legalisation of their immigration status during 2000, the total, according to *official* statistics, rises above 50,000 people. Studies conducted by NGOs, however, have produced different data. Extra-official estimates are that as many as 200,000 Ecuadorians have entered Spain. Most of them in extremely precarious situations – with no legal status, and an accompanying series of problems such as misinformation, fear, and uncertain working conditions.

The arrival in Spain of large numbers of Ecuadorians was both rapid and silent. Most Spaniards became aware of the Ecuadorian situation only in February 2000, following the tragic events in the locality of Lorca, province of Murcia, where a small truck full of illegal Ecuadorian immigrants on their way to do farm labour was hit by a train. Several were killed, and Ecuadorians suddenly and tragically became visible in Spanish society.

A Program that Inspires Hope

Because of its size, this migratory wave has had significant social and economic repercussions, both for those who remain in the country and those who migrated. From the social perspective, thousands of Ecuadorian families have been torn apart, resulting in a situation that has produced new kinds of relationships and exchanges. Although this situation has caused many people to suffer, it has also generated some positive change in both societies. On the economic level, for example, many families now rely on the money that arrives from Spain. Furthermore, new houses are springing up in the home towns of emigrants who have already begun to use their savings to prepare for retirement.

The new situation can be interpreted in different ways, but for many organisations and individuals involved, the starting point was that migration is not a problem but rather a process with both negative and positive components. It is a reality that is best treated as an

² Sixto Durán, Abdalá Bucaram, Rosalía Arteaga, Fabián Alarcón, Jamil Mahuad, the military indigenous triumvirate, Gustavo Noboa each had a turn as head of state, with mandates lasting as little as a day.

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opportunity. With this in mind, four Ecuadorian and three Spanish institutions have implemented a joint program named *Migration, Communication, and Development*.

The four Ecuadorian institutions that took part in the program's design are the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (ALER, Latin American Radio Education Association), the Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio (FEPP, Ecuadorian Populorum Progressio Fund), the Comisión Ecuatoriana de Pastoral Social (CEPAS, Ecuadorian Social Pastoral Commission), and the Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones Sociales (ILDIS, Latin American Social Research Institute). The three Spanish institutions are the Coordinadora de Radios Comunitarias (CRC, Community Radio Coordinating Council), Cáritas Española, and the Campaña Deuda Externa ¿Deuda Eterna? (Foreign Debt – Forever Debt? Campaign). The objective of the program is to turn Ecuadorian migration into a positive element for cultural exchange and the development of Ecuador and Spain. All seven organisations have arrived at a similar analysis of the migrational phenomenon. They consider it to be a continual coming-and-going process through which the situation of Ecuadorians in Spain and the resources that they obtain there produce significant results in their native country. They therefore approach this situation from the perspective of an engulfing globalisation in which migration is but one component.

The program is not designed to convince people that they should or should not emigrate or that they should return to Ecuador, but rather to provide conditions that will enable emigrants and potential emigrants to make their own choices about leaving, returning, bringing their families back together, investing in Ecuador, and so forth. The program will continue for five years, but this time frame will be reviewed in light of the results obtained and migratory trends.

This work is being conducted in six areas: communication, rights counselling and education, development projects, financial and ethical money transfers, debt for development, and research.

Communication

This area of the program is designed to establish contacts between immigrants in Spain and their relatives in Ecuador, to deal with migration-related legal matters, to address the migratory issue from other perspectives, and to make it more visible. In this framework, a weekly radio program linking Spain and Ecuador is produced on the airwaves. The next step will be to set up Internet teleconference rooms in various Spanish and Ecuadorian towns and provinces so that communication will be easier and more efficient. Further in this chapter, following the description of the other areas of the program, we will return for a more in-depth look at this area.

Rights Counselling and Education

One of the basic needs of migrants is information on their rights, particularly in terms of their legal status and social security benefits. Most of the activities in this area are designed to disseminate information, although issues such as psychological support for migrants' relatives remaining in Ecuador are also addressed. A manual has been published so that immigrants in Spain will know what their rights are, how and when to proceed with paperwork, and where to go for help and counselling. There is also coordination among various organisations in an effort to find solutions to particularly difficult cases.

Development Projects

Work in this area is being carried out primarily in Ecuador, where attempts are made to involve the families of emigrants. The intention is to promote and support the productive investment of the funds being received in Ecuador, which historically is often used for luxuries, such as the construction of mansions or the purchase of automobiles, instead of

productive economic initiatives. If emigrants so wish, they can consider the possibility of returning to Ecuador with some guarantee for the future by, for example, investing in a young company. A total of US\$270,000 will be available annually over a four-year period to provide technical support for such initiatives in the south of Ecuador.

Financial and Ethical Money Transfers

Another major problem is related to how money is sent from Spain to Ecuador. Some of companies that offer this service have been known to charge commissions of up to 14 percent to wire money from Spain to Ecuador. This part of the project seeks to help emigrants send money more easily and at a lower cost. One of the activities involves working with several Spanish banks so that money may be sent to Ecuador via Codesarrollo, the financial agency run by FEPP³. The radio program also plays a role in this area by announcing the rates charged by the various money transfer companies, which currently range from 3.7 to 14 percent.

Debt for Development

Productive employment projects could be financed in part through *debt-for-development* initiatives in which part of Ecuador's debt to Spain is forgiven on the condition that the money be matched with investments from Ecuadorians living in Spain and invested in business and development activities in Ecuador. A technical proposal is being developed that would see a portion of Ecuador's US\$200 million debt put into this fund.

Research

Joint research is being conducted in Ecuador and Spain. So far we have an overall approximate idea of the situation of Ecuadorians in Spain. One important finding of the research was that there are now 200,000 Ecuadorian immigrants in Spain. This figure, much higher than previous estimates, is now used by both the Spanish and Ecuadorian governments in planning their programs and services. Another study looked at the reasons why so many Ecuadorians have left their country and a third at the remittance phenomenon. The latter study uncovered a great deal of information about the money transfer market and the abuse committed by the companies involved.

Callos y Guatitas

The package of activities described above was designed to address a wide spectrum of social, legal, ethical and financial questions. How could potential migrants get better information before they left Ecuador? What measures could be taken to give migrants the confidence required so they would invest in Ecuador? How could the issue of organised crime be addressed? It was obvious to the agencies involved that communication would be key if these issues were to be addressed. *Callos y Guatitas*, a live radio program broadcast simultaneously in Ecuador and Spain, was selected as the primary communication tool to bridge the realities of Ecuador and Spain, to connect families, and to provide information to help migrants fend for themselves throughout the entire migration process. The program's name comes from a dish made of tripe that is popular in both countries and referred to as *callos* in Spain and *guatitas* in Ecuador.

To understand the importance of this program, we need to be familiar with the misinformation that circulates on both sides of the ocean, fomenting the development of organised crime and the abuse that many migrants and their families have experienced. On the one hand, many Ecuadorians believe that it is easy to find a job in Spain. Some have even been convinced that at Madrid's Barajas Airport there are windows where job contracts are signed. Nothing could be further from the truth for those who have just arrived in Spain. Such

³ *Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progresio*, one of the agencies participating in the Migration, Communication and Development program.

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misinformation is promoted by *coyotes* and criminals, whose income comes from the huge sums of money that emigrants have to pay before they can embark on their adventures. On the other hand, the life of an Ecuadorian in Spain is not a valley of tears, nor is racism as significant a component of Spanish society as those opposed to migration would have us believe.

Thus the public image of an Ecuadorian immigrant's reality in Spain does not necessarily reflect the reality. Often the immigrants do not tell the true story of their situation in Spain, choosing instead to exaggerate their success. Some Ecuadorians who have been in Spain for two or three months without managing to achieve stability decide to stay in Spain as transients rather than to return to Ecuador and be perceived as "failures". In this context, a radio program such as *Callos y Guatitas* becomes an invaluable tool. Its concrete objectives are the following:

- To encourage public communication between Ecuadorians in Spain and in Ecuador, thus contributing to a more favourable context for communication on the personal level.
- To communicate the reality of immigrants in Spain so as to reduce their often-experienced feeling of loneliness.
- To provide information on the migratory process: legal information, paperwork, immigrants' rights, sending money to Ecuador, and so on. This is intended to combat *coyotes* and organised crime.
- To keep emigrants connected with their country with information on politics, culture, sports, and so on.
- To promote the formation and development of Ecuadorian immigrants' associations in Spain.
- To offer an overview of the situation and to disseminate information on the different opportunities available to migrants via the Migration, Communication, and Development Program.

Callos y Guatitas has been on the air every Sunday since April 22, 2001. It is produced by the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (ALER) and the Coordinadora de Radios Comunitarias de España. At present it is broadcast simultaneously via the ALER satellite service on 19 stations in Ecuador as well as on four in Madrid. There is currently an effort under way in Spain to increase the number of stations included in this broadcast.

The program is produced simultaneously in Ecuador and Spain. Its two hosts, one in Madrid and the other in Quito, direct the program and present the various sections coming from each country. The first problem was to decide on a broadcasting time. Depending on the time of year, the time difference between the two countries is six or seven hours. In an attempt to reach targeted listeners in both countries, we finally settled on Sunday at 10:00 in Quito, when it is 17:00 in Madrid. At 10:00, many rural Ecuadorians are at the marketplace, where they can walk around and still follow the program on one radio receiver after another. It is also a good time for Ecuador's city dwellers. At 17:00 in Spain, immigrants may be at home or may have gone to a common meeting place where the radio is often turned on. The time difference means that "good morning" is answered with "good afternoon," and vice-versa, and that there are always two versions whenever the time is announced.

The program is divided into segments. *So that's the way it works* provides information on the immigrant situation in Spain, especially on political or administrative changes and on new social resources. *What's happening at home?* is a summary of Ecuador's weekly news for the benefit of Ecuadorians in Spain. *The Cause of the Cause* offers special reports on specific issues related to migration. *We're organising over here, too* turns the program's airwaves over to immigrant organisations. *Just ask* allows migrants and their

relatives to ask questions on legal matters. Sometimes these questions are received by telephone, but usually by e-mail. *Hello, who's speaking?* is a section that enables immigrants in Spain to speak directly with their relatives in Ecuador. The family members are usually present in the studios of the radio stations, and this allows for more fluid communication in which the radio hosts can also take part.

In addition to the segments described above, the program also includes more general subjects that may vary in accordance with current events. An example of this was a Mother's Day extension of the *Hello, who's speaking?* section in which many sons and daughters were able to send live Mother's Day greetings and even sing songs.

One of the challenges faced by the program's organisers has been to design it to be useful to stations with limited financial resources that do not have access to expensive technology. Various broadcast methods are now being used. In Ecuador, ALER's satellite network (ALRED) sends a signal from its Quito station to the satellite, and the other stations receive it by means of their dish antennas. The Spanish stations use the ConVoz⁴ information network, which produces a daily information program for many Spanish community and municipal stations and is located in the same building as the studio where the program is produced in Madrid. The stations have a telephone connection to a server through an ISDN line. The WinMedia program compresses the signal at the server end and then decompresses it in the computer of each radio station. This system provides very high quality audio and the only drawback being a seven-second delay. Given that it requires only a small investment and that the software free, this system is very efficient.

Callos y Guatitas can also be listened to live on the Internet on the Web pages of two Spanish stations: Radio Vallekas⁵ and Radio Enlace⁶. This means of listening to the program is available to some immigrants in Spain who live outside Madrid and who cannot tune in to it on the radio.

The *Callos y Guatitas* program has just ended what might be termed its "implementation phase". Some initial technical and production difficulties have been overcome; the broadcast network has been established in Ecuador and is becoming established in Spain; and new areas have opened up. An example of the latter is the use of the Internet. Although it was not originally foreseen, it may become an important factor in disseminating the program, particularly to immigrants in Spain.

The Communication, Migration, and Development Program is, above all, a means to address situations that the new world reality has placed in our path. The program's contribution should be seen much more in terms of quality, not quantity, given the limited financial resources of the organisations that are promoting it. The objective of the program, first and foremost, is to offer a general overview of migration by providing immigrants and society with positive ideas for making the most of the immigration process and by encouraging development in both Ecuador and Spain. The program is therefore actively seeking partnerships with other organisations with a similar vision and activities in both countries. It is not, therefore, the sum of its activities but rather a means to coordinate these activities and the synergy produced by them.

From the above it is easy to understand why, at this time, the first task is simply to make the work and the potential known, to help people understand the reality of migration and the keys to addressing this issue, and to ensure that there is a connection between migrants and their families and between Ecuadorian and Spanish society.

⁴ <www.redconvoz.org>

⁵ <www.radiovallekas.org>

⁶ <www.radioenlace.org>

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Callos y Guatitas faces several challenges, the first of which is to achieve maximum exposure. The greater the number of stations carrying it in both countries, the easier it will be to disseminate new ideas. At the same time, increasing the opportunities for listening via the Internet in areas where it is not available by radio and even in other countries where similar immigration patterns are beginning to develop – increasing numbers of Ecuadorians are arriving in Italy, for instance – is a means of expansion that has not yet been fully exploited.

The second challenge is to include the other areas of the program in the communication strategy. One example of this that is being tried involves broadcasting information from the research on how money is sent from Spain to Ecuador. The research provided detailed information on the ways in which money is sent and on costs and commissions. Over the coming months *Callos y Guatitas* will disseminate this information, introducing more competition into the market, reducing prices and helping prevent the current forms of abuse.

Great Potential

José Tonello, director of the Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio, says that fifty years ago many people emigrated from his native region in northern Italy, one of the country's poorest. As a result of that emigration, this area is now rich and prosperous. His perspective is also that of the Ecuador-Spain Migration, Communication, and Development Program. In this context, the *Callos y Guatitas* radio program is a contribution to the ways in which popular and community radio stations are interpreting both new technologies and their own roles in society.

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