

Dear RIO members,

We're pleased to share with you our newest edition of the RIO newsletter.

This edition takes a closer look at customer service among remittance service providers. Customer service is something that has typically received mixed marks from migrant consumers. For this article, the Dialogue uses "mystery shoppers" to provide more detail, delving into much more specific issues that comprise the customer service experience, including wait time, call quality, the operator's ability to answer questions, and cultural sensitivity.

In this Newsletter, we also present an analysis from the Latin America Advisor on President Obama's recent trip to Cuba, and what it means for relations between the United States and Cuba. Experts weigh in whether the trip was successful and whether Cuban officials showed a willingness to improve relations and advance reforms.

Finally, we are pleased to share a Q&A on "What's at Stake This Year for US Immigration Policy?" Andrés Rozental, Jim Kolbe, Arturo Sarukhan and Ray Walser share their perspectives on US-Mexico relations, undocumented immigration, and the potential for immigration reform under the next administration.

We hope that you enjoy this issue, and invite your comments, ideas and feedback.
Best regards,

Manuel, Laura and Julia

In this Issue

1. Customer Service: Current Trends and Areas for Improvement

Customer service, which is a key component of remittance services, is the focus of this article. We draw from two different sources – migrant surveys, and new Dialogue Scorecard data -- to assess consumer-related issues in remitting. Together, these different sources help to assess customer service in a complimentary manner. For example, the surveys suggest that while migrants value customer service as part of the total package of services offered, up to 40% do not feel that they receive good customer service from their remittance

service provider.¹ The Dialogue's "mystery shopping" analysis provides more detail on this, delving into much more specific issues that comprise the customer service experience, including wait time, call quality, the operator's ability to answer questions, and cultural sensitivity.

2. Obama's Visit to Cuba

This week, Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president in 88 years to visit Cuba. Obama had a one-on-one meeting with President Raúl Castro, and the two held a historic joint news conference. Obama also delivered a televised speech from Havana's Gran Teatro on the importance of democracy and human rights, and later met with dissidents in the U.S. Embassy. Was Obama's trip to Cuba a success? Did Cuban officials display a willingness to improve relations and advance reforms? What did Obama and Castro accomplish during the visit? Will businesses that want to work with Cuba find it easier moving ahead? Will Obama's visit win over more congressional support for ending the embargo?

3. What's at Stake This Year for US Immigration Policy?

Immigration was a central theme in the U.S. Republican and Democratic debates this month, as candidates jockeyed to curry favor with voters on issues related to the security of the United States-Mexico border and the legal status of the more than 11 million immigrants believed to be living illegally in the United States, the majority from Mexico and Central America. How are U.S.-Mexican relations faring amid heated rhetoric in the United States over the role of migrants in the economy, border security and the state of immigration policy and enforcement? How will the results of the elections for lawmakers in November affect the outlook for changing immigration policy in the United States? What's fueling the heated debate over immigration in the U.S. presidential election, and will the next president be willing and able to pass major reforms to U.S. immigration policy?

4. In the news

¹ While 60% of migrant consumers feel that the remittance company they use offers good customer service, 40% do not. See Table 1 for additional detail.

1. Customer Service: Current Trends and Areas for Improvement

Customer service, which is a key component of remittance services, is the focus of this article. We draw from two different sources – migrant surveys, and new Dialogue Scorecard data -- to assess consumer-related issues in remitting. Together, these different sources help to assess customer service in a complimentary manner. For example, the surveys suggest that while migrants value customer service as part of the total package of services offered, up to 40% do not feel that they receive good customer service from their remittance service provider.² The Dialogue’s “mystery shopping” analysis provides more detail on this, delving into much more specific issues that comprise the customer service experience, including wait time, call quality, the operator’s ability to answer questions, and cultural sensitivity.

Our first source, the migrant survey, sheds light on which remittance service provider (RSP) characteristics are most important to migrant consumers. The survey was conducted in 2013 and includes a sample of 2,000 migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean.³ Of particular note, customers say that they value ease of use, transparent pricing structures, low prices, and good customer service. They also evaluate the specific companies they use based on their customer service.

To complement this evaluation, the Dialogue has been conducting an analysis of customer service using “mystery shopping.”⁴ This falls within the Dialogue’s Scorecard Project, which ranks remittance companies based on a number of criteria, such as pricing, payout presence, and customer service. As part of the “mystery shopping,” companies are being evaluated based on wait times, ability to respond to questions on payout, pricing and products, and the overall attitude of the customer service representative. The Dialogue’s mystery shopping data contains 180 customer service observations have been made for 30 companies throughout the last year and a half, since data collection started. Observations cover services to all 10 countries included in the Scorecard.

We find that, on average, most RSPs score quite well in terms of the service they are expected to provide. Therefore, when comparing perceptions (customer opinions, as measured through migrant surveys) and practice (actual service provision, as measured and recorded by mystery shoppers), we find what may be a disconnect.

This article is a first step in an effort to understand the differences between perception and practice or reality. It offers questions about improvement as well as methods to better measure perception, for example. We are pleased to share with RIO members our preliminary results, and hope to engage them in a discussion of how customer service can be monitored, evaluated, and ultimately improved in order to provide the level of customer service that migrants deserve and expect.

² While 60% of migrant consumers feel that the remittance company they use offers good customer service, 40% do not. See Table 1 for additional detail.

³ The survey included 100 Haitians, 1000 Mexicans, 100 Hondurans, 100 Dominicans, 200 Salvadorans, 200 Guatemalans, 100 Jamaicans and 200 Colombians. The survey was conducted in-person by survey teams stationed in New York, Chicago, DC, Miami and Los Angeles.

⁴ Calls were made pretending to be a consumer looking for information regarding ways to send money to each specific country, including products available and payout locations.

The Relevance of Customer Service: Migrant Surveys

In surveys with migrants, customer service receives mixed marks. On the one hand, customer service appears among the top five characteristics of migrants’ remittance company, after ease of use, clear pricing, and low costs. On the other hand, only a slight majority of migrants (59.8%) feel that their remittance service provider offers good customer service, as the table below indicates.

Table 1: “Would you say that your remittance company...”

Characteristic	“Agree” or “Strongly Agree”
Is easy to use	88.8%
Has clear Prices	81.4%
Has a clear FX rate	77.7%
Is cheap	68.4%
Offers good customer service	59.8%

Source: Survey of 2,000 migrants, Inter-American Dialogue, 2013.

Among the most frequently mentioned companies,⁵ Intermex, Ria and MoneyGram received the highest ranks for customer service by migrant consumers in the United States. Table 2 provides additional detail for the most frequently mentioned companies.

Table 2: Characteristics of Remittance Company

Customer Survey Response		Dolex ⁶	Intermex	La Nacional	MoneyGram	Ria	Sigue	Wells Fargo	Western Union
Good Customer Service	Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	4%	0%	1%	3%	4%	0%
	Disagree	0%	0%	15%	3%	4%	3%	4%	4%
	Indifferent	40%	20%	50%	36%	33%	45%	42%	36%
	Agree	33%	55%	22%	33%	13%	14%	12%	32%
	Strongly Agree	27%	25%	9%	28%	50%	35%	37%	27%
Sum of Agree + Strongly Agree		60%	80%	31%	61%	63%	49%	49%	59%

Source: Survey of 2,000 migrants, Inter-American Dialogue, 2013. Note that Dolex and Quisqueyana are combined.

New Research on Customer Service

The Dialogue’s “mystery shopping” project, a part of the Scorecard, can help flesh out these customer responses by providing additional details on some of the specific components of a customer experience, including wait time, ability to answer questions, cultural sensitivity, and other customer service matters. These details can help pinpoint the successes and challenges of remittance companies in providing reliably good customer service.

Each “mystery shopper” evaluates their overall customer experience using a score from 1-5, with five being the highest.⁷ Top performing companies for customer service included Intermex, Order Express

⁵ The chart below lists companies with the largest customer base among survey respondents. RIO is happy to share data for additional companies, though sample sizes may be small.

⁶ This includes respondents who mentioned Dolex as well as those who mentioned Quisqueyana.

and MoneyGram. The top ten companies for customer service, according to this metric, are listed in the table below. Note that there is a large degree of overlap between these findings and the migrant survey responses reported in the previous table.

Table 4: Top Customer Service Scores

Company Name	Average Score (5 highest, 1 lowest)
Intermex	5.0
Order Express	5.0
MoneyGram	4.8
Xoom	4.4
Dolex	4.3
Girosol	4.0
Sigue	4.0
Viamericas	4.0
Barri	3.9
Ria	3.8

Source: Scorecard Project, Inter-American Dialogue.⁸

Mystery shoppers also measured the wait time they experienced when contacting a company. Wait time includes being put on hold, being transferred, and/or having to select many different options before being helped by a real person. The top companies for quick response time, according to this sample, were MoneyGram, Intermex and Reymesa. The slowest RSP for customer response was DineroSeguro, a product of the United States Postal Service, which took over 10 minutes to respond to customer calls.

Table 5: Wait Time by Company (phone or online chat) by Quickest Response

Company Name	Wait Time Ranking: Quickest Response is 1
MoneyGram	1
Intermex	2
Reymesa	3
Viamericas	4
Girosol	5
Order Express	6
Sigue	7
Orlandi Valuta	8
Dolex	9
Cibao	10

Source: Scorecard Project, Inter-American Dialogue.⁹

⁷ Customer service experiences can be subjective. To ensure uniform evaluations, the following basis was used: 5: Outstanding service with complete, detailed and willing information provided in a professional manner. 4: Easy to reach, courteously and promptly answers client’s questions; 3: Answers questions as requested without further exchange; 2: Trouble answering questions, long periods of wait, inconsistent answers, call transferred multiple times; 1: Refuses to answer questions, and/or is rude and unprofessional; Does not answer phone during business day, phone number disconnected, phone number difficult to find. For more information, see pages 8-9 of “The Market for Money Transfers: Ranking of Remittance Service Providers in Latin America and the Caribbean,” Inter-American Dialogue, 2012.

⁸ This is an early preview available to RIO members. Results subject to change as additional data points are collected.

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The language used and the country in question may also factor in. Spanish language customer service received higher marks and shorter wait times, on average.

Table 6 Customer Service by Language Used

Language Used		Average of Customer Service Score	Est. Wait time
Spanish	General	3.9	1 minute
English	General	3.5	2 minutes
	Native English Speaking customer	3.7	-
	Non-Native English Speaking customer	3.4	-

Source: Scorecard Project, Inter-American Dialogue.¹⁰

Customer service personnel may be more adept at answering questions related to certain countries, according to the mystery shopping data. As the table below shows, customer queries about sending to Honduras, Jamaica, El Salvador, and Mexico received above-average customer ratings.

On the other hand, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Guatemala received below average scores, in many cases because representatives were unable to provide full information on services and payout. From an industry perspective, this is concerning. While these countries may not be the largest remittance recipient countries from a regional perspective, they were among the fastest growing in 2015.¹¹

Table 7: Customer Service by Country of Query

Country		Ave. Customer Service Score	Example
Above Average	Honduras	3.9	“Super friendly, short wait time”
	Jamaica	3.9	“Very clear information”
	El Salvador	3.9	“Very nice, actually took the time to provide specific answers”
	Mexico	3.8	“Friendly and clearly explained”
Average	Average	3.7	
Below Average	Colombia	3.7	“Have been told contradictory information by different people, sometimes on the same day, making it hard to know what services they actually offer”
	Dominican Republic	3.5	“Half answered question”
	Cuba	3.3	“Gave a short answer and hung up on me”
	Guatemala	3.0	“Transferred me three times and put me on hold”

Source: Scorecard Project, Inter-American Dialogue.¹²

The Dialogue’s Scorecard research also provides some insights on what areas of customer service may need improvement. Response time is an issue for many companies. Here it is important to note that customers not only experience the wait time per se, but also the number of steps they have to take in order to reach a human, and having to select numerous options and routes from the main menu may be

¹⁰ This is an early preview available to RIO members. Results subject to change as additional data points are collected.

¹¹ For more detail, see “The Continued Growth of Family Remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean in 2015,” Orozco, Porras and Yansura, 2016.

¹² This is an early preview available to RIO members. Results subject to change as additional data points are collected.

off-putting. Call quality is another issue, with many callers reporting background noise, static, and even dropped calls. Some call operators are uninformed or only willing to provide very vague information. Finally, in a small number of cases, the operator is rude or culturally insensitive. In the example below, the operator had not heard of Peru and was not aware that it was a country.

Table 8: Most Common Customer Service Issues

Issues	% of Interactions	Example
Response is slow	17%	"The customer service rep came on, I asked my question, then they disappeared for 10 minutes before I finally gave up and closed the chat."
Call Quality Issues – Background noise, dropped calls, etc.	15%	"Extremely loud background noise with lots of static."
Operator is uninformed on basic issues	12%	"Very nice, but wasn't able to explain difference between "direct cash" and "open cash"."
Information provided is too value to be helpful	11%	"Trabajamos con todos los bancos."
Operator is rude to customer	10%	"Rudely said they did not speak Spanish."
Operator is culturally insensitive	3%	"She seemed confused about what Peru was. Did not know it was a country."

Source: Scorecard Project, Inter-American Dialogue. ¹³

Conclusions

Customer service is a key component of the remittance business. While surveys show that customer service is valued, they also suggest that many customers are not satisfied with the customer service they are currently receiving. To help pinpoint specific components of this service, as well as to identify successes and challenges, the Dialogue’s “mystery shopping” project has evaluated 180 customer interactions.

Taken together, it is clear that there are areas that the industry can improve. One important aspect to consider is how companies can use new technologies, including mapping, price calculators, social media, and online chat, to alleviate some of the pressures that phone customer service is facing, as well as to provide quicker, friendlier platforms for connecting with customers.

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2. Obama's Visit to Cuba

This week, Barack Obama became the first sitting U.S. president in 88 years to visit Cuba. Obama had a one-on-one meeting with President Raúl Castro, and the two held a historic joint news conference. Obama also delivered a televised speech from Havana's Gran Teatro on the importance of democracy and human rights, and later met with dissidents in the U.S. Embassy. Was Obama's trip to Cuba a success? Did Cuban officials display a willingness to improve relations and advance reforms? What did Obama and Castro accomplish during the visit? Will businesses that want to work with Cuba find it easier moving ahead? Will Obama's visit win over more congressional support for ending the embargo?

Jorge Domínguez, professor of government at Harvard University: "President Obama's visit to Cuba had several effects. At the broadest level, his address to the people of Cuba sketched his vision for U.S. policy toward Cuba and for relations between the two countries. He lifted the 'embargo' on the exchange of ideas, citizens, businesses, religious communities and more. Hitherto U.S. policy had cooperated with Cuban State Security, albeit inadvertently, in blockading access to such sources of information. A politically more open Cuba needs such access. At the more tactical level, Obama modeled, subtly but clearly, a way to be the president of a country. He handled himself nimbly and skillfully at a press conference that his Cuban host bungled. Obama had edged Raúl Castro to a press conference stage, to which he is most unaccustomed. Obama reminded Cubans, by his looks and words, that the United States has an African-American president, while Cuba does not, and that even two Cuban-Americans have been leading U.S. presidential candidates. And he showed that it is fine for a president to display a sense of humor, through his interview with Cuba's leading television comedian, contrasting a humorless Cuban leadership. The president's visit shed light on human rights abuses in Cuba. The Cuban government every Sunday has arrested members of the Ladies in White, who march out of Santa Rita Church. Thanks to the president's visit, that routine arrest this past Sunday could be filmed by international television cameras. An opening between the United States and Cuba opens the prospect for international public shaming of such abuses. There were also new agreements provoked by the visit. These ranged from Starwood Hotels' agreement on a joint venture for hotel management to the accord between the two agriculture ministries on health inspections for traded products. Ultimately, the success of the trip will be visible only in the future, most likely after Raúl Castro steps down as president in 2018. But, during this Holy Week visit to Havana, the president of the United States seems to have become Saint Obama, even in the words of Cubans whose words were printed by Granma, the communist party newspaper."

Otto Reich, president of Otto Reich Associates LLC and former assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs under President George W. Bush: "Any recent U.S. president could have taken such a trip, but only if he had been willing to grant the Castros the large number of unilateral concessions that preceded Obama's visit. That U.S. president, however, would have also had to: grant political legitimacy to the hemisphere's last military dictatorship with nothing but promises in return; pretend to be the equal of the unelected 'President' Castro, the head of a one-party state; pretend to believe Castro when he states, at a joint press conference, that there are 'no political prisoners in Cuba'; and pretend that there is a genuine 'private sector' in Cuba. Many if not most of the 'cuenta-propistas' who met with Obama at the much-touted seminar were government agents, not real entrepreneurs, as illustrated by their inability to answer Obama's repeated request to 'tell me what you need,' 'tell me what I can do to help you.' However, I believe President Obama's visit was actually helpful. Why? Because now Obama

knows what Cubans have long known: the Castro government is inherently and irretrievably dishonest and untrustworthy. From the visit's beginning diplomatic snub at the airport (the U.S. head of state received by a cabinet official); to the violent arrests of peaceful demonstrators before, during and after the visit; to the distortion of Obama's words by the government-controlled media, the Castro dictatorship has once again shown that it does not deserve the goodwill of the international community, much less of the world's most vibrant democracy. As for the U.S. business community that believes there is profit to be made there, I say let them go, but at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer—no credits, subsidies or government guarantees. If they are so callous as to exploit Cuban workers who receive eight cents of every dollar paid to the Castros for a worker's labor, they will reap their just rewards. Just ask the Canadian, Spanish, Chilean and other businessmen who preceded them and who languished in jail after their properties were confiscated. As a capitalist myself, I know there have always been capitalists that give capitalism a bad name."

Vicki Huddleston, retired U.S. ambassador and former chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana: "The visit was an unqualified success. It showed the United States—in the person of its president—rising above current differences and looking to the future. President Barack Obama mentioned his daughters in his statement to the media after his meeting with President Raúl Castro; I suspect he did so to underline that this process is for future generations. Raúl demonstrated that he is a pragmatic and thoughtful leader who is not adverse to change and reform in Cuba. But in typical Cuban government fashion, they were careful to ensure that they were seen as equals and treated with respect at every step of the way. Raúl's statement to the media (for no apparent reason), that implied that the United States might be meddling in Venezuela, and also the little debate with Obama about human rights, demonstrated a prickly approach. Raúl did, however, attend Obama's speech, despite knowing the issue of the dissidents would be raised. By taking along members of Congress, business people, and Cuban-Americans, Obama built a powerful constituency for Cuba, looking forward. Each of these groups has work to do: Congress must modify or repeal laws that govern U.S. policy on Cuba; Cuban-Americans are still a powerful force, and their support for reconciliation and normalization is critical; and U.S. businesses can sway Congress. There is every reason to anticipate—given our history before the Revolution and geography—that Cuba will be an excellent investment for U.S. businesses in tourism, services and transshipment. The trip served to introduce the U.S. business sector to Cuba so that it will be more comfortable with establishing connections on the island, though there will be many challenges to normalizing relations on this front as well. Hopefully, the 40 members of Congress in the delegation will advocate for continuing and broadening the process of normalization. They are key to making the next half century one of friendship between our two governments. The Cuban hosts certainly indicated a willingness to improve relations. But as both presidents said, the development of our new relationship is a long and complex process."

Carlos A. Saladrigas, chairman of the Cuba Study Group and Regis HR Group: "The visit was indeed historic and a resounding success. Obama connected with the Cuban people on a very personal level. The contrast was enormous. Obama was jovial, accessible and greatly at ease. By his side was an aging, stiff leader uneasy about contact with the press and far from accessible. Obama drew from his personal story to show all Cubans that change is a good and constructive force, not to be feared. A young African-American became the leader of the most powerful nation in the world, precisely because his country changed. Cubans saw a leader honest about his nation's own shortcomings, and who readily acknowledged his nation's policy failure. Cubans have never heard their leaders accept any faults of their own, other than to try to perfect things that never worked, and never will. With an easy, relaxed demeanor, Obama obsoleted the Cuban narrative of almost six decades; the United States is no longer

the enemy, but rather a constructive partner. America will not midwife a democracy for Cuba; it will be up to the Cuban people to do so, in full respect for their national integrity and sovereignty. Obama praised Cubans for their creativity, industriousness and entrepreneurial spirit. He told them to look into a mirror and see their future. The United States will no longer force Cuba to change—it can't. But Obama openly reminded Cuban leaders to unleash the potential within their people— ironically, the critical strategic asset that is, to a great measure, the Cuban Revolution's best success story."

3. What's at Stake This Year for US Immigration Policy?

Immigration was a central theme in the U.S. Republican and Democratic debates this month, as candidates jockeyed to curry favor with voters on issues related to the security of the United States-Mexico border and the legal status of the more than 11 million immigrants believed to be living illegally in the United States, the majority from Mexico and Central America. How are U.S.-Mexican relations faring amid heated rhetoric in the United States over the role of migrants in the economy, border security and the state of immigration policy and enforcement? How will the results of the elections for lawmakers in November affect the outlook for changing immigration policy in the United States? What's fueling the heated debate over immigration in the U.S. presidential election, and will the next president be willing and able to pass major reforms to U.S. immigration policy?

Andrés Rozental, member of the Advisor board, president of Rozental & Asociados in Mexico City and senior policy advisor at Chatham House: "The use of immigration in political campaigns is nothing new in the United States, but rarely has it been as vitriolic, based on falsehoods or even as racist as during the 2016 presidential campaign. Both Republican and Democratic candidates have bent over backwards to scapegoat Mexicans for the country's economic malaise and have made ridiculous promises to build high walls, secure an already very secure border and stop hordes of Mexicans from coming to the United States. Mr. Trump has, of course, been the worst of all, promising to round up and deport 11 million illegal immigrants (about half of whom are not even Mexican), start trade wars and forbid American companies from moving manufacturing facilities south of the border. The prominence given by the candidates to the anti-immigrant, anti-Mexican message has, of course, had repercussions in Mexico, where many of us watch with bemusement at the incredible number of unfounded claims, exaggerations and even downright lies. There is a binational consensus today that net immigration from Mexico to the United States is zero. So to begin with, there is nothing to warrant any wall or additional fencing along the border to keep hypothetical illegal immigrants from swarming across. None of the candidates ever mentions the economic contribution that Mexico and Mexicans make to the U.S. economy, or the number of American jobs that depend on exports to Mexico, nor the millions of citizens of both countries who legally cross the border every day. As long as Congress and the White House delay expending the political capital to approve the necessary changes to immigration policy, politicians will continue to use the issue to further their short-sighted personal ambitions, poisoning the bilateral relationship with Mexico in the process."

Jim Kolbe, senior transatlantic fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States and former Republican member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Arizona: "U.S.-Mexico relations might best be described as 'steady.' While there is a gap in the top U.S. diplomatic team resulting from the inability to confirm our ambassador to Mexico, the working relationship remains close. Cooperation on anti-narcotics interdiction efforts is solid, particularly in the sharing of intelligence where the working

relationship between agencies is probably at its highest level. However, there doesn't seem to be a particular chemistry between Presidents Obama and Peña Nieto, such as was on visible display during the recent visit of Canada's Prime Minister Trudeau. It is an open question as to how the working relationship might be altered by the U.S. elections this fall, but the answer will depend in large part on who becomes president. Two of the Republican candidates, while not from Mexico or South America, are Hispanic and at least share a common language, though they have spoken harsh words about immigration. A close working relationship would almost certainly continue under a President Hillary Clinton administration, while reverting to a state of 'benign neglect' with a President Sanders whose New England orientation provides him with few close ties to Mexico. But all bets would be off if Donald Trump were to assume the presidency. Although the practical changes in the relationship might be surprisingly small, certainly the tone would be one of deep and frosty formality. Regardless of who assumes the presidency, it is hard to imagine any real breakthrough on immigration legislation in the United States Congress. As the issue has polarized the American public, it has similarly divided the Congress. Breaking that ice floe will require a long spell of global warming on the American political scene."

Arturo Sarukhan, board member of the Inter-American Dialogue and former Mexican ambassador to the United States: "During the past two decades, Mexico-U.S. relations have become so institutionalized throughout both governments that it will fortunately take much more than the bluster, xenophobia and demagoguery of Donald Trump to derail them. Nonetheless, regardless of the electoral outcome in November, the tone and substance of the presidential campaign will leave scars. A walking-fact-free zone, Teflon-coated to hard data and with facts as loose as his lips, Trump and his zero-sum view of Mexico, Mexicans and the relationship hark back to the 19th century. By pimping the fears and concerns of a segment of public opinion, he has rewound the public narrative and perceptions among a considerable number of Americans back by at least 20 years. No amount of PR and public diplomacy will easily dispel the stereotypes and urban myths that he has fed. Both countries lose with Trump's vision. That's why it's important for voices on both side of the border to join together and hit the airwaves with data and facts, to work jointly with Latino organizations and the Mexican-American diaspora in the United States and with the American and Mexican private sectors that are so invested in a constructive and forward-looking economic relationship. Crafting a narrative that pushes back on images of migrants as a threat and trade as a loss are not only crucial for the future success of immigration reform or our global competitiveness, but also for our common prosperity and security. We must not allow this campaign to damage the two countries' strategic relationship, built by the twin processes of economic integration—per NAFTA—and geopolitical convergence, per 9-11. And we must raise our voices and remind voters of what history has taught us when we allow nativist populists to achieve political power."

Ray Walser, co-chair of the Western Hemisphere working group at the John Hay Initiative: "This year may very well represent the nadir in the U.S. immigration debate. From child migrants to Syrian refugees, immigration, legal and illegal, represents the sum of all fears. Legislative efforts to resolve the status of an estimated 11 million undocumented individuals are at a standstill. Executive measures designed to provide temporary relief for some four million illegals are snarled in court challenges. Playing on economic and ethnic insecurities, tapping deep frustration with Washington gridlock, Republican candidates, particularly business mogul Donald Trump, have stirred emotions to a fever pitch with promises to deport millions, build a 'beautiful' border wall at Mexico's expense, challenge birthright citizenship and revise downward legal migration. Trump's closest rival, Senator Ted Cruz,

proposes a draconian top-to-bottom overhaul of border security and immigration enforcement including revocation of Obama’s executive orders, a national tracking system and criminalization of visa overstays. On the Democratic side, front-runner Hillary Clinton holds to the more liberal line, calling for comprehensive reform with a pathway to citizenship, upholding Obama deferrals and humane, targeted enforcement (‘felons not families’). The immigration polarities cannot be more striking. Clearly, the future of immigration reform beyond 2016 hinges on winning the White House and gaining majority control in the Congress. Our Mexican and Central American neighbors recognize the fractious spectrum of opinion in the United States and have worked on thorny issues with the Bush and Obama administrations. Yet, they are right to be concerned that a collapse of moderation and a resurgence of U.S. nationalism will have negative consequences for their people and for America’s standing and leadership in the Americas and the world.”

4. In the news

- President Obama’s trip to Cuba marked the first sitting US president to visit the island in almost a century. The visit was accompanied by [business leaders](#) from the US, who attended the entrepreneurship event planned as part of the visit to Havana. PayPal’s CEO, Daniel Schulman, was there and announced they [hope to offer remittance services to the island by the year’s end](#) through Xoom. Meanwhile, [Western Union](#) also announced increases in services to the island, which already included US-outbound remittances for Cubans and will now be available across the world, as is now allowed by regulations.
- The European Union court has released a sentence requesting [proportionality from Spain’s](#) money laundering regulations, which have been accused of [constraining remittances with excessive controls](#). Meanwhile, [Nicaragua reports increased remittances from Spain](#) and the Banco Central de [Ecuador reports](#) a drop of 18.3% in incoming remittances from that country.
- During a Congressional Hearing entitled “Helping the Developing World Fight Terror Finance” on Tuesday, March 1, 2016 the Task Force to Investigate Terrorism Financing heard testimonies from a group of experts including Clay Lowery, Vice President of Rock Creek Global Advisors and Visiting Fellow, Center for Global Development. During his remarks, Mr. Lowery said “To me, it is pretty clear that these two legitimate policy objectives [preventing finance from getting into the hands of bad actors and allowing finance to flow in the most efficient and competitive manner possible] have come into conflict, particularly in poorer countries around the world. Those most affected are likely to include the families of migrant workers, small businesses that need to access working capital or trade finance, and recipients of life-saving aid in active-conflict, post-conflict or post-disaster situations.” He used remittances as an example of his point and also underlined the role remittance companies can play on key actions, including monitoring, building knowledge and generating data for fighting Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing through tools such as know your customer. The video for the hearing, including Q&A, can be found [here](#), along with transcripts of presentations.
- Donald Trump released a document describing his proposal to pressure Mexico into paying for a wall along the border, including threats to block remittances to Mexico until the country provides US\$5 to 10 billion for the construction. The Dialogue’s Manuel Orozco has been quoted on this, noting that “Trump doesn’t seem to have considered the full ‘impact of tying cross border money transfers to legal status (...) ‘This could have wide repercussions beyond money transfers.’” For further reading, visit [this link](#), this [one](#), or [this one](#).