

Regional Discussion: AMERICAS

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1. Women constitute 50% (14 M) of the foreign born population in the US.
2. Women are 48% of the legal migrants and 42% of the undocumented migrants. Of the undocumented migrants 2/3 come from Latin America and 13% from Asia, 6% from Canada or Europe and 3% from Africa or elsewhere.
3. The contributions of migrant women in the Americas make to both their home and host countries are incalculable.
4. As discussed this morning, considerably more than those of their male counterparts, the monies they send home go for food, shelter, and other necessities for the families they left behind.
5. Their economic and social contributions to their host countries – especially in the areas of health and home care – significantly enhance the productivity of citizens of the host countries and provide badly needed services and support.
6. Migrant women in the Americas must be recognized as important social change agents: advancing norms and values – especially in the area of gender equality – in both home and host countries.
7. But the price paid by migrant women in the Americas – and their too often left behind children – is often unbearably high.
8. In the Americas, women migrants are especially vulnerable to the wiles of human traffickers, who assume many guises: not only organized crime thug, but also of trusted community member and seemingly devoted husband or boyfriend.
9. 80% of the trafficking victims in the US are women. Of these, 70% are trafficked in commercial sexual exploitation.
10. Women in the Americas trafficked for forced labor also often suffer sexual violation.
11. Fuelled by the internet, pornography and other media, there is a growing demand by men in the Americas for prostitution and other practices of commercial sexual exploitation.
12. Cut-off from support systems at home, often not speaking the language of the host country and unfamiliar with its laws and services, migrant women in the Americas are especially vulnerable to domestic violence both at the hands of host country men and men from their home countries.
13. Internet bride agencies operating within and outside the Americas prey on the economic vulnerability of women in poor countries. These agencies profit

from the demand of affluent men-primarily in the U.S. and Canada- for sexual and domestic servants and slaves. Too often migrant fiancés and brides end up being subjected to domestic violence and even femicide.

14. Often leaving children behind in order to pursue the funds necessary to raise them, migrant mothers in the Americas suffer great emotional loss and deprivation. Their children, especially their girl children are left at risk of physical abuse, sexual violence and exploitation, labor exploitation and educational neglect.
15. In addition, the girl children of migrant mothers in the Americas are too often subjected to sexual abuse at the hands of smugglers and traffickers when they travel to the host country to join their mothers there.
16. Immigration legal remedies for abused victims – especially in the US and Canada – have mitigated somewhat the impact of harsh immigration laws on migrant women and their children.
17. Domestic violence service providers- like my organization Sanctuary for Families (75% of our clients are migrant woman) have served as an important source of assistance to migrant women in the Americas.
18. Nonetheless, too many migrant women- including those who have suffered domestic violence and or trafficking – have been left at the mercy of their abusers and exploiters.
19. Finally, a narrow, force-based definition of trafficking that contradicts the Palermo Protocol, has left far too many sex and labor trafficking victims in the Americas unprotected and at risk. Because these victims cannot prove that they were coerced or forced into trafficking, they are considered “voluntary sex workers” and denied protection and support. This must be changed.