



# **ACTION ALERT**

## **MIGRANTS IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD**

Globalization has yielded an increase in the flow of migrants around the world and especially from the developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean to the developed countries including Europe and North America. In 2005, 191 million people, 3 percent of the world's population, were estimated to be international migrants. Nearly 40 percent are moving from one less developed nation to another.<sup>1</sup> After the United States, Russia is home to the largest number of migrants in the world. As women now account for nearly half of the migrants around the world, there is growing concern about the policies that protect “women’s security and human rights.” In many instances they are subject to extreme economic exploitation and sexual abuse.

“In the worldwide scramble for skills, advanced countries will require more migrants to undertake low-paying work that their native counterparts are unable or unwilling to do—particularly at the low wages and working conditions offered.”<sup>2</sup>

Migrants are typically defined as “someone who moves from one country or region to another by chance, instinct or plan.” If they move to the country and settle permanently with permission from the authorities of the country they are referred to as immigrants. If they move to the country to work for a period of time they are known as migrant workers. If they move to the country without legal permission they are called undocumented persons.

Refugees are also migrants. They are individuals who move from one country or region to another because of natural and man made disasters, including military conflict and ethnic cleansing. Refugees also include individuals who seek asylum from a country because of alleged political conditions that exposes the person to harm.

Faced with competition from countries that produce similar goods at a lower price, many business persons feel justified in importing cheaper migrant and undocumented workers so that they can compete globally. In the U.S., farmers and sweatshop operators have encouraged the use of undocumented workers allegedly in the absence of a viable guest worker program.

Often governments in countries that do not adequately distribute the wealth of their countries tacitly encourage workers to leave and in turn expect them to send back home funds (remittances) to support the families left behind.

Where levels of migration and undocumented immigration are perceived to be large enough to cause a reduction in wages and/or a loss of jobs for legal residents and citizens of a country, migration can cause strong negative reactions. These reactions often lead to violations of the rights of the migrants and the imposition of discriminatory conditions on the innocent vulnerable women and children accompanying the migrants.



### **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN’S ACTION NETWORK**

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Ongoing discussions on immigration and farm workers by the U.S. Congress will impact the lives of migrants in the United States. The United Nations has reacted to violations of the rights of migrant workers and members of their families including women and children by enacting “The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families” on December 18, 1990. As of 2007 only 52 countries are parties to the Convention. Unfortunately, none of the developed countries where legal and undocumented migrant workers reside, including the United States, have signed the Convention.



As we move into the season of Thanksgiving and Advent, let us think about the inequality that shapes the lives of those--both near and far-- whose hands bring nourishment to our bodies. Include a mission moment to remember migrant workers in your December local unit meeting. Use meal prayers from the Harvest of Hope from the National Farm Worker Ministry ([www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org)).

Read *The Book of Resolutions 2004*: #233 Concern for Workers' Task Force and #266 Immigrants in the United States: Ministries of Hospitality, Advocacy, and Justice

Track the AgJobs Bill (S. 232/H.R. 371) now before the U.S. Congress. How could migrant farm workers benefit from this legislation? Visit the website of the National Farm Worker Ministry, [www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org) to learn more about this legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Population Reference Bureau [www.prb.org/Articles/2007/623Migration.aspx](http://www.prb.org/Articles/2007/623Migration.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> The State of the World Population 2006 Report: *Unequal Opportunities in a Globalizing World* pg.3