

A Cut Too Deep: US Foreign Aid Withdrawals and the Collapse of Protection for Women and Girls in Honduras

SNAPSHOT

"Our overall funding came from the US, and it has all been withdrawn. If a woman in life-threatening danger comes to us today, we have no way to help her move to another city. We are on our own."

- Women's organization, Honduras, 2025

Introduction

Within weeks of the inauguration of President Trump in January 2025, US foreign aid was suspended globally. Honduras—one of the largest recipients of US foreign aid in Latin America, with approximately US\$184 million in funding in 2024—was **among the hardest hit**. This abrupt withdrawal has deepened ongoing humanitarian crises in Honduras, driven by violence, poverty, forced displacement, and impunity. Over 330,000 Hondurans are currently living abroad as refugees or asylum seekers and 900,000 in-transit migrants have crossed the country in the past two years, triggering a humanitarian emergency at the borders (INM, 2025). Women and youth are especially at risk. Criminal groups exert territorial control through extortion, recruitment, and gender-based violence (GBV), pushing many to flee. For several years, Honduras has been listed among the world's **most neglected displacement crises**. For many women, migration is not a voluntary decision, but rather a "choiceless choice."

The GBV sector has been among the hardest hit by recent funding cuts. With minimal support from the Government of Honduras, the GBV sector has always been highly dependent on international support. Now, frontline services for women and girls—particularly migrants in transit, those forcibly returned from the US and Mexico, and those at risk of violence—have, at best, been drastically reduced; at worst, they have been terminated entirely.

A Cut Too Deep: US Foreign Aid Withdrawals and the Collapse of Protection for Women and Girls in Honduras, a new report by the Women's Refugee Commission, is the first to document both the immediate and anticipated long-term impacts of these funding cuts on the availability, accessibility, and quality of GBV services in Honduras—particularly for women on the move. The report is based on a desk review of data and policy, field visits to four sites in Honduras, and semi-structured interviews with 25 stakeholders working on migration and GBV assistance, including UN officials, national and international NGOs, grassroots women's organizations, and public authorities.

Key Findings

Finding #1 – For many Honduran women, migration is not a choice, but a survival strategy.

GBV, including sexual violence, femicide, and systemic impunity, is a major but under-recognized driver of women's migration in Honduras. Many are fleeing a combination of criminal violence and state neglect. For those deported or forcibly returned from the US or Mexico, protection remains out of reach, leaving them vulnerable to the same violence that forced them to flee.

Finding #2 – Even before US funding cuts, the GBV response system was structurally fragile.

The response system in Honduras was already structurally weak. Most services were donor-dependent, short-term, and highly localized, and the broader system struggled to reach rural, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant communities. By 2025, the system was at a breaking point—vulnerable to collapse even before the latest round of cuts.

Finding #3 – Shrinking availability: Limited state action amid growing GBV service gaps.

Despite over 21 organizations scaling back or terminating GBV services in 2025, there is little state action to fill the gap. Following US funding cuts, the national women's shelter system has collapsed, with state funds diverted to unbuilt facilities. Referral networks have also broken down, leaving survivors trapped, with no clear path to protection.

Finding #4 – Diminishing access, declining use: Survivors face mounting barriers to protection.

Migrant, deported, and displaced women and girls in Honduras face growing barriers to accessing GBV services. Following the US funding cuts, between 60 and 100 percent of services have been dismantled—particularly along migration routes and in migrant return centers—while programs which encouraged reporting have disappeared.

Finding #5 – Rising exploitation risks for migrant women.

As humanitarian actors withdraw from border areas, criminal groups are swiftly stepping in, increasingly trafficking migrant women into prostitution to fund their return journeys. No formal GBV programs exist to support women in transit or upon return and the risk of exploitation is rapidly rising.

Finding #6 – The quality of GBV services has seriously deteriorated

US funding cuts have led to a sharp decline in the quality of GBV services for survivors. Survivor cases are now processed through general intake systems without trained personnel to address their specific needs. Economic empowerment programs have vanished, leaving women trapped in cycles of financial dependency and exposure to violence.

Key Recommendations

To the US Government

- Ensure that individuals fleeing persecution, including gender-based persecution, can fully and fairly apply for asylum in accordance with US and international law.
- Uphold minimum care and safety standards in immigration enforcement and detention.
- Reinvest in GBV programs previously supported by the US State Department and USAID.
- Extend and redesignate temporary protected status (TPS) for Honduras.

To the US Congress

- Restore funding and oversight of immigration enforcement to the Department of Homeland Security's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman, and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman.
- Restore and safeguard funding for humanitarian aid and GBV services in Honduras.

To national and local civil society organizations in Honduras

- Document the impact of international aid cuts on women's safety and access to GBV services, generating evidence for advocacy and accountability.

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To the Government of Honduras

- Assess and report on the consequences of US aid reductions for the GBV sector.

- Strengthen mechanisms to assist and protect women returning via reverse migration, including appropriate screening and referral systems.
- Enforce actions to dismantle and sanction criminal networks involved in trafficking and organized violence targeting migrant women.

To the Honduran Congress

- Approve budget increases for national GBV prevention and response and monitor the enforcement and accountability of GBV-related laws and budgets.

To municipal governments

- Document the impact of international aid cuts on women's safety and access to GBV services, generating evidence for advocacy and accountability.

To international donors

- Restore GBV as a priority in humanitarian funding for Honduras, providing multi-year, flexible funding for national and local women's organizations providing GBV prevention and response for displaced, deported, and at-risk women.

To United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations

- Recognize Honduras as a GBV emergency and reflect this in response plans and funding strategies.
- Integrate GBV response throughout all coordination and programming efforts in Honduras.

To regional governments

Establish cross-border coordination mechanisms to protect women exposed to violence or exploitation during migration and integrate GBV prevention and response services into return protocols.

[Read the full report.](#)

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Women's Refugee Commission

The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth who have been displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice. Since our founding in 1989, we have been a leading expert on the needs of refugee women, children, and youth and the policies that can protect and empower them. womensrefugeecommission.org.

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