



Subscribe!

May 2020

Dear friends,

Warm greetings from Bangkok! We hope you and the people around you are doing well in these challenging times. For our part, we are grateful for the privilege of having homes, computers, and jobs that allow us to work from home - a privilege that the vast majority of the world's workers do not have.

Here at the GAATW International Secretariat we started the year with a mix of excitement and anxiety. We were excited to have our newly developed strategic plan and a clearer vision for our work in the next five years. We were anxious that some experienced colleagues had left the organisation at the end of 2019 and we were about to hire several new colleagues (see more below, under News from the GAATW Secretariat).

Now, in early May, these emotions have remained but changed somewhat. Our newly hired colleagues arrived in Bangkok just before the start of lockdowns, physical distancing and work from home measures. In mid-March we organised four half-day sessions for orientation of the new staff over Zoom. It was odd but worked well. The new colleagues are settling well, and the team has already built cohesion. In April, we formed an internal study group to learn more about the methodology of popular education and critical literacy first developed by Paulo Freire in the 1970s. The study group will analyse and discuss the points of convergence between Feminist Participatory Action Research, a methodology we have been using since our inception, and Popular Education. With new projects starting or due to start in the coming months, our aim is create learning materials to use in some of our work with migrant and trafficked women and marginalised communities. We are excited about the new team and these future work plans.

But we are anxious about the state of the world and what the future holds. When will the pandemic subside, when will there be a vaccine or enough immunity, how many people will have lost their lives, how many livelihoods will be destroyed? What will the post-pandemic world look like, what will be the "new normal"? Will political decisions be made keeping the interests of the 99% in mind or will the 1% continue deciding the rules of the game? Will we avoid the mistakes of the post-2008 era when bailouts allowed corporations to reap even higher profits once the crisis was over? Will we see a (re)emergence of the welfare state that invests in public health, education, sustainable agriculture and decent public sector employment? Or are we moving towards a paranoid world of closed borders, violence and suspicion towards migrants, constant surveillance and tracking, even greater market dominance of pharmaceutical and technological corporations, and another decade of growth - of the wealth of the already wealthy?

It is tempting to think "we'll see". But we shouldn't sit idly and wait to see what happens. As we noted in [our comment on COVID-19 and trafficking](#) , and in our [statement for International Workers' Day](#), the pandemic has exposed the failings of the current global socio-economic and political world order. It's as if the virus has washed our windows for the first time in decades

and revealed the sorry state of the world outside. Now is the time to think, mobilise and, where possible, act.

We know that working from home has not reduced workloads. On the contrary, as a colleague from one of our member organisations put it, it is now 'work for home and work from home', especially for women. But if any of you would like to join us in thinking about what a post-pandemic world looks like, especially for women, work and migration, or invite us to join existing groups of people thinking about it, do get in touch. Perhaps the first step to a different, better, world is to imagine it - it's easy if we try...

As always we welcome your feedback and contributions to future issues at borislav@gaatw.org.



Goodbye, dear friend

GAATW-REDLAC, GAATW's network for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the GAATW Secretariat mourn the passing on 5 May of our friend and colleague Jaime Montejó. Jaime was an activist and co-founder of Brigada Callejera de Apoyo a la Mujer "Elisa Martínez" A.C., and a contributor of the independent news agency *Noti-Calle* in Mexico City.

Always supportive of sex workers, trafficking survivors and migrant women, Jaime was a fervent defender of these groups' human, civil and labour rights. He was dedicated to the prevention of HIV, AIDS and STIs and to community mobilisation against trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation.

With his passing, we lose an honorable, attentive, humble and caring friend, a partner in our struggles and social leader. We will always remember our long work days, made better thanks to his stories, pictures and smiles in Bangkok, Buenos Aires, Cartagena de Indias, La Paz and Sao Paulo, among others.

To Elvira, his wife and partner in dreams and struggles, we send a solidarity embrace.

AMUMRA (Argentina), ASBRAD and IBISS/CO (Brasil), Corporación Espacios de Mujer, Fundación Renacer and SINTRASEDOM (Colombia), ECPAT (Guatemala), CHS (Perú) and GAATW-Secretariat.

Message from Bianca Fidone, GAATW's new Board Member for Latin America

Dear colleagues and friends,

The GAATW International Secretariat asked me to write a few lines about my new role as Board Member representative for Latin America and I gladly accepted since it is also an opportunity to introduce myself to the rest of our Alliance.

In December 2019, I took over this position from our friend and colleague Andrea Querol, who did an outstanding job for the last six years. Being chosen by all my colleagues from GAATW REDLAC took me by surprise, but at the same time filled me with joy and reinforced my engagement in the fight against human trafficking.

As an Italian woman living in Colombia since 2007, I thought I would be the last person to assume this responsibility, not only because I am not originally from Latin America but because I have always liked to work behind the scenes. Of course, I participated in the regional and interregional meetings and contributed actively to the projects and processes that GAATW has implemented. All this helped build a trusting relationship and credibility with my colleagues in the REDLAC, who are now my friends.

From December 2019, I assumed the Board position with responsibility, commitment and dedication, which compels me to present the proposals, ideas, projects as well as the needs of Latin America to the world of GAATW and also to return to this continent the discussions, solutions and global proposals. One of my goals is to boost the presence of civil society organisations of the region in the Alliance and to share their experience with other regions.

It is not an easy task, but I will strive to accomplish it with determination and love, so that the link between the GAATW (global) and REDLAC (local) gets stronger.

GAATW in times of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and its harsh containment measures have had disastrous consequences for billions of workers globally. Migrant workers, workers in the informal economy and people without any social security have been hit the hardest. States have set up relief measures by doing cash transfers and home delivery of food and other essential items for those in need.

But as always, there are many people who do not come under the official lists of people in need. The undocumented workers, the workers whose work the state does not recognise as work, people who are not officially "below poverty line" and many others. Our members and partners have joined other like-minded organisations and individuals to reach out to such people. We at the GAATW Secretariat feel honoured to have been able to contribute to some of these emergency aid initiatives. We are grateful to our grant making partners who allowed us to use part of the project funds for this much needed urgent assistance. Below are a few (but by no means all) examples of the actions we and our members have taken.

[Read on...](#)

News from the GAATW International Secretariat

Staff Changes at the GAATW-IS

In the past few months, we said goodbye to some of our colleagues and welcomed new ones to the team. Alfie Gordo, who had been with us since 2005, became a mother and moved back to the Philippines to care for her child. Leah Sullivan and Chus Alvarez left the organisation after 4-5 years with us to pursue other career opportunities. We are deeply grateful to Alfie, Leah and Chus for all their contributions to the work of the Alliance; we miss them very much, and we wish them all the best in their new lives.

To fill the vacant positions, and to support the work on new projects, we hired five new colleagues. Cris Sto. Domingo from the Philippines joined our team in November as Programme Officer Communications. She has a background in social sciences and broadcast media and is passionate about women's rights, freedom of expression and democracy in Southeast Asia. Namrata Daniel joined in January as Programme Officer Labour and Migration. She is from India and has previously worked in the areas of Dalit rights and sex workers' rights. Emilia Cebrián joined the team in March as Programme Officer for Latin America. She has previously worked as Community Work Programme Coordinator for a university in Buenos Aires and in a Community Secondary School on the issues of gender-based violence and women's rights. Smriti RDN Neupane also joined our team in March as Programme Officer Research. Smriti is from Kathmandu, Nepal and has previously worked in several international organisations doing research on women's rights and unpaid care work. Sussi Prakapranant joined us in March too as Programme Officer Campaigns and Advocacy but unfortunately had to leave in April due to health issues. With 2020 being the first year of our new strategic plan, we are excited that our team is growing and getting infused with new energy and ideas.

New Issue of *Anti-Trafficking Review* , 'Technology, Anti-Trafficking, and Speculative Futures'



Over the past decade, scholars, activists, and policymakers have repeatedly called for an examination of the role of technology as a contributing force to human trafficking and exploitation. Attention has focused on a range of issues from adult services websites and the use of social media to recruit victims to the utilisation of data analytics software to understand trafficking and identify 'hotspots of risk'. At the same time, technology has also been positioned as a disruptor of human trafficking that can be reworked and transformed 'from a liability into an asset'. Yet, critical anti-trafficking scholars have cautioned that claims about the relationship between technology and trafficking rely on limited data and a number of assumptions.

The [new issue of Anti-Trafficking Review](#), guest edited by Jennifer Musto and Mitali Thakor, analyses these assumptions and the currently available technological tools that purport to address trafficking and exploitation. It contains six thematic, research-based articles, and

three short articles. They explore common myths about the role of technology in (anti-)trafficking, apps designed to prevent trafficking and exploitation, the shutting down of sex work ads websites, and the use of digital evidence in trafficking investigations.

Draft CEDAW General Recommendation on Trafficking

Since the end of 2018, the CEDAW Committee has been developing a new General Recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration. GAATW has actively engaged in the process by attending expert meetings and making written submissions, often in cooperation with our partners from the International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia-Pacific (for details, see [previous issues of the e-Bulletin](#)). In early April, the Committee released the [first draft of the General Recommendation](#) and a [Call for Comments](#), inviting interested parties to submit their views on the draft....

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News from our Member Organisations

Our Alliance is Growing...

In the past several months, we welcomed nine new members to GAATW: [Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra \(BNSK\)](#) and [Light House](#) from Bangladesh, [Women's Initiatives \(WINS\)](#) from India, [Saejowi Initiative for National Integration](#) from the Republic of Korea, [Sunita Foundation](#) and [Pourakhi Nepal](#) from Nepal, [Organization for Fast Relief & Development \(OFRD\)](#) from Afghanistan, [International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe \(ICRSE\)](#) from Belgium/Europe and [PION](#) from Norway. With them, our member organisations now number 87. We look forward to working with all our members as we begin the implementation of our new strategic plan.

The Cost of Material Witness Warrants to Trafficking Victims in the United States

The Human Trafficking Legal Center released a new report, "[Prosecution at Any Cost? The Impact of Material Witness Warrants in Federal Human Trafficking Cases.](#)" The report exposes the troubling practice of arresting human trafficking victims to secure their testimony against their traffickers. Trafficking victims' testimony can be critical to putting their traffickers behind bars. But many are reluctant to testify, and with good reason. Some fear retaliation from traffickers, while others wish to move on with their lives. Few have lawyers. The result is a system that detains victims to bring their traffickers to justice.

In federal human trafficking cases, victims face arrest and imprisonment to secure their

testimony. Material witness warrants are used to hold both adult and child victims in detention...

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Improving Responses to Labour Exploitation in the UK

A new report by FLEX, [Opportunity Knocks: improving responses to labour exploitation with secure reporting](#), looks at how immigration enforcement and labour inspection/policing work together in the UK. It explores the methods by which information flows between them, the legal basis for such flows and the extent to which personal information is being passed in this fashion. Using evidence of the detriment of such practices to migrant workers and examples of effective firewalls from jurisdictions abroad, the report makes the case for 'secure reporting' mechanisms (i.e. firewall) to be implemented in the UK.

Advocacy for a National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking in Serbia

In March, ASTRA organised a regional conference in Belgrade to discuss the establishment of the position of a National Rapporteur in Serbia. This is an independent body that monitors the achievements and results in the field of combating trafficking in human beings and the effects of public policies at the national level and makes recommendations for their improvement. Since 2011, all EU countries have a National Rapporteur or an equivalent mechanism, and Serbia is determined to follow these best practices set out by the EU. At the conference, attended by government institutions and civil society from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Albania and the Netherlands, participants heard about the experiences of North Macedonia and Finland with this position and, in particular, its mandate and process of establishment and added value...

[Read all news from GAATW members](#)

If you'd like to contribute to this e-Bulletin, please contact borislav@gaatw.org

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Resources

[Editorial: Between Hope and Hype: Critical evaluations of technology's role in anti-trafficking](#)

Jennifer Musto, Mitali Thakor and Borislav Gerasimov

Over the past decade, scholars, activists, and policymakers have repeatedly called for an examination of the role of technology as a contributing force to human trafficking and exploitation. Attention has focused on a range of issues from adult services websites and the use of social media to recruit victims and facilitate trafficking to the utilisation of data analytics software to understand trafficking and identify 'hotspots of risk'. This article introduces the Special Issue of *Anti-Trafficking Review* devoted to the role of technology in (anti-)trafficking. It outlines the main assumptions and critiques some of the proposed 'solutions' in the field and presents briefly the articles included in the issue. It concludes that the factors that enable and sustain human trafficking are varied and complex and require political will - not tech solutionist fixes.

[The gendered dynamics of trafficking in persons across Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand](#)

UN WOMEN

Trafficking is prevalent across the Greater Mekong subregion, yet the specific gendered experiences of those affected remain underexplored. Relatively little is known about the extent to which initiatives aimed at prevention, return and response and reintegration are gender-responsive. This report aims to fill these gaps. It brings together a wide-ranging literature and policy review and primary qualitative data to provide insights into how gender and trafficking intersect across Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand. It identifies a range of gaps and challenges and identifies priorities for future policy and programming.

[IOM Handbook on Protection and Assistance for Migrants Vulnerable to Violence, Exploitation and Abuse](#)

IOM

The handbook presents best practices and lessons learnt in migrant protection and assistance, based on IOM's experience in providing protection and support services to trafficked persons and other vulnerable migrants, and on the provision of return and reintegration services to migrants from around the globe. It draws on IOM's extensive experience in capacity-building for governments and technical guidance on the development and implementation of counter-trafficking, anti-smuggling, and migration management laws, policies, and programmes. It is applicable in countries of origin, transit, and destination.

[Vulnerability, Human Trafficking and COVID-19](#)

Marika McAdam

In this publication, independent consultant and advisor Marika McAdam outlines several ways in which COVID-19 impacts trafficking: people's increased vulnerability to trafficking and exploitation, trafficked persons' vulnerability to the disease, and what the pandemic means for those who exit trafficking and exploitation. She highlights good practices across countries and regions and makes policy recommendations to governments. She concludes with a call for "actual commitment to ensuring that we do not revert back to the type of 'normal' that entrenches and monetises vulnerability, and positive action to confront the economic, social and structural inequalities that create it in the first place."

[The dorms are not the problem](#)

Alex Au, Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2)

In this article, Alex from our Singapore member TWC2 argues that the dorms for migrant workers, where a huge number of COVID-19 cases was discovered in the past few weeks, are "only a manifestation of a much deeper, structural problem". That is, the entire system of labour migration through which Singapore imports cheap labour to advance its prosperity. This includes the exorbitant recruitment fees that migrants pay, the minimum wages, which are far below living wages, and the unethical employers who do not pay even these wages and overtime. He concludes that Singapore must address these root causes and not simply look at the dorms.

[A Feminist Stimulus](#)

Bama Athreya

In this article, labour rights, gender equality and social inclusion expert Bama Athreya argues that Conditional Cash Transfers for care work might be a better response to the current pandemic than Universal Basic Income. She shows how "UBI proponents embrace a fiction that the loss of formal wage employment equals the loss of work. ... The obvious fallacy here is that unpaid care work will still be unpaid. And women would likely still do the majority of it, as those now juggling child care, elder care or household cleaning and cooking with the demands of remote work are discovering en masse." This would allow us not only to recognise women's unpaid care work but also to "accelerate change in attitudes toward male caregivers".

[Unchecked corporate power paved the way for COVID-19, and globally, women are at the frontlines](#)

Felogene Anumo

"For years now, feminists and women rights organizations have sounded the alarm on the adverse impact of corporate power on the environment and human rights. No part of this world remains untouched from its harm. Presently, corporations make up 71% of the world's top 100 economic revenue collectors. States mimic viral interactions to act as 'hosts' for corporations, global elites and other actors who have unprecedented control of resources, labour, information and finance. The current pandemic is brazenly putting a spotlight on the urgency of questioning, challenging and resisting mainstream global capitalism. If we don't stop the destructive effects of corporate power on our planet and our health, Covid-19 is here to remind us that nature might do it for us!"

[The tech 'solutions' for coronavirus take the surveillance state to the next level](#)

Evgeny Morozov

"The world is currently enthralled by solutionist tech - from a Polish app that requires coronavirus patients to regularly take selfies to prove they are indoors, to China's colour-coded smartphone health-rating programme, which tracks who is allowed to leave the house. Governments have turned to companies such as Amazon and Palantir for infrastructure and data modelling, while Google and Apple have joined forces to enable "privacy-preserving" data-tracing solutions. And once countries enter the recovery phase, the tech industry will gladly lend its technocratic expertise to the clean-up. Italy has already put Vittorio Colao, the former CEO of Vodafone, in charge of leading its post-crisis task force. ... But the solutionist responses

to this disaster will only hasten the diminishment of our public imagination - and make it more difficult to imagine a world without the tech giants dominating our social and political infrastructure. ..."

[New normal? How about making a better one?](#)

Guy Ryder

"With the war against Covid-19 still to be won, it has become commonplace that what awaits us after victory is a "new normal" in the way society is organised and the way we will work. This is hardly reassuring. Nobody, in fact, can quite say what the new normal will be. Why? Because the message seems to be it will be dictated by the constraints imposed by the pandemic rather than our choices and preferences. Well, we've certainly heard that message before. The mantra which provided the mood music for the crash of 2008-2009 was that once the vaccine to the virus of financial excess had been developed and applied, the global economy would be safer, fairer and more sustainable. But that didn't happen. The old normal was restored with a vengeance and those on the lower echelons of labour markets found themselves left even further behind."

[Feminist experiences of organising politically across virtual worlds](#)

AWID

Activists from the Association for Progressive Communications, AWID and FRIDA reflect on their experience of working virtually - because of the COVID-19 pandemic and not only. They discuss issues such as the pros and cons of remote work, in particular those connected to building community and organising, individual and collective care at work, access to tools for remote work and equal pay for equal work. They conclude that the current crisis "makes it clear that nurturing feminist economies are not only needed in this moment but they are necessary to renew the process of envisioning another world."

[COVID-19 Crisis from a feminist perspective: overview of different articles published](#)

WIDE+

This article presents a selection of the different feminist perspectives and information shared on the Coronavirus pandemic, with links to further overviews. In this way, WIDE+ aims to contribute to the further discussion for a feminist future.

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