Dear friends,

Greetings from the tropics!

A brief overview of world news related to our areas of work over the last few months:

Countries in the global North continued blatantly disregarding international human rights law that obliges them to protect refugees and migrants: the United States separated more than 2000 migrant children from their parents (most of whom have since been reunited), Italy refused port to ships carrying hundreds of migrants and refugees from North Africa, Hungary passed a bill that criminalises NGOs and attorneys who help refugees and imposes a 25% tax on NGOs that ‘paint immigration in a positive light’, and Australia announced that it wouldn’t sign the Global Compact on Migration because it wants to cling to its overseas migrant detention centres.

The US withdrew from the UN Human Rights Council just days before UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty presented to the Council a damning report from his visit to the United States. Only days later, the US Supreme Court dealt a blow to labour unions, ruling that public sector workers are not required to pay union fees. This ruling will greatly weaken the strength of unions and their ability to bargain with employers on behalf of employees in the public sector. The concept of ‘gender ideology’ which has been undermining women’s and LGBT rights in Latin America, was used by the Bulgarian Constitutional Court to declare an international convention aimed at combating gender-based violence and domestic violence incompatible with the Bulgarian Constitution. This only a day after yet another woman was killed by her intimate partner (since the beginning of 2018, one woman has been murdered by an intimate partner in Bulgaria almost every week).

Even the most heartwarming and happy-ending story during these months - about the Thai boys and their coach who were trapped in a cave for more than two weeks - had a bitter side: the coach and three of the boys are from an ethnic minority group and among 500,000 stateless persons in Thailand, whose freedom of movement and opportunities for work are heavily restricted. While Thai authorities have now given them citizenship, people shouldn’t have to go through life-threatening ordeals to be citizens of their birth countries.

As for our team, the past three months were busy as usual. In May we began a process of consultations for the development of our next strategic plan. Our International Board met in Bangkok to discuss how to implement the findings of the organisational assessment conducted in 2017 and outline the directions of work of the Alliance for the next five years. In June we organised an initial consultation with our members from Latin America in Bogota, where they shared with us the main issues of concern for the region and the ways these can be taken up by the Secretariat. Our International Coordinator shared some reflections from this trip and, in particular, from a meeting with three Venezuelan migrants supported by our member Sintrasedom. The situation in Venezuela, and the rights of its citizens who are fleeing to neighbouring countries, is one of the most pressing issues in the region at the moment and our members are working hard to assist these migrants. Throughout June and July, we also organised meetings with our members in South Asia, and at the moment we are planning consultations with Southeast Asian, Latin American and European members later in the year.
Our plan is to complete the member consultations by November and prepare our draft strategic plan by the end of this year or early 2019.

On the advocacy front, we attended the International Labour Conference in Geneva, where the ILO, trade unions, employers and governments discussed a new instrument to address violence and harassment in the world of work, as well as the final round of negotiations of the Global Compact on Migration in New York (read more about these two events in the International Advocacy Update). We made a submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants for his report on access to justice for migrants and two submissions to the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery - on domestic servitude of migrant women and girls, in cooperation with PICUM and La Strada International, and on the gender dimensions of human trafficking.

We also joined academics, labour rights activists, informal workers and transgender activists in opposing India's draft Anti-Trafficking Bill as proposed by the government to Parliament. We wrote an article for the Economic and Political Weekly (as part of a series of articles critiquing the draft bill), and two letters to the Minister of Women and Child Development, outlining the deficiencies of the draft bill, such as the general approach to trafficking as a criminal problem rather than a social, labour and human rights issue, the conflation of trafficking and smuggling and the protectionist, paternalistic approaches to assistance. Our International Coordinator reflected on her personal blog on the bitter way the bill had been debated in the public sphere, pitting the rights and wellbeing of survivors of trafficking against those of workers, as if the two are incompatible.

In June we visited Kuwait to meet our project partner Sandigan - a group of volunteers who support abused and exploited Filipino domestic workers. We also organised a workshop in Bangkok for eight project partners from South and West Asia and East Africa to plan our new joint project to document women's views and experiences of labour migration (read more in the News from the GAATW-IS). In July, we held our annual mid-year review meeting to reflect on our current achievements and plan for the second half of the year.

Throughout the first six months of this year we worked together with Beyond Trafficking and Slavery (BTS) and Translators Without Borders to translate some of the core BTS material into Spanish. We selected sixty pieces, focusing broadly on human trafficking and 'modern slavery', globalisation, migration, domestic work, sex work, and child labour, and edited the translated pieces for language accuracy. The aim of this effort was to ensure that GAATW members from Latin America, as well as the broader Spanish-speaking audience, can benefit from the insightful contributions published in BTS so far only in English. The result is BTS en español, where the Spanish pieces will be published from July to October. Our colleague elaborated on the importance of this initiative for us as an international feminist alliance.

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

Interview with Sunita Danuwar and Ivana Radović

This year, two members of the GAATW family were awarded the US State Department TIP Report Hero Acting to End Modern Slavery Award - Ivana Radović, Head of Policy and Learning of ASTRA (Serbia) and Sunita Danuwar, Founder Member and Executive Director of Shakti Samuha (Nepal). This award recognises the work carried out by different individuals, in different parts of the world, to end human trafficking. GAATW-IS congratulated Ivana and Sunita for this recognition and asked them a few questions about the award and the work of their organisations.

Read the interview with Sunita and Ivana here.
Understanding Change from the Perspective of Community Workers

Community workers have been on the frontline of delivering direct services and information to individuals and communities. Their role takes on an added value as they create the foundation of community-level interventions, especially in promoting women's empowerment and in providing information about safe migration.

In 2017, GAATW focused on the work and personal journeys of community workers in fostering women's empowerment and social change within the community. We initiated an intensive learning exercise with community workers from India, Bangladesh and Nepal with the overall goal of recognising them as critical agents of change, in building an environment which is conducive to upholding women's rights both in the community and in their migration journeys....

Together we are stronger: A reflection of GAATW-IS trip to Kuwait

On 21-25 June, GAATW-IS staff visited Kuwait to meet our project partner Sandigan and to interact with other local organisations working on migration issues. Sandigan is a group of volunteers who provides immediate relief and counselling to Philippines domestic workers who are abused and exploited at their workplace. We had a moment to interact with domestic workers at the shelter run by the Philippines embassy where many women workers had shared their struggles yet not given up their hope for a better future.

We were also invited to an event organised by Sandigan to celebrate International Domestic Workers' Day with more than 200 Overseas Filipino Workers. It was a touching moment to see a number of domestic workers who were awarded for their years of service to a single employer for more than twenty years. The acknowledgement was for both employers and employees to set a good example of co-existence and respect to each other. We also witnessed the launching of Sandigan's Domestic Workers' Handbook in cooperation with the International Domestic Workers Federation, Social Work Society and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The handbook provides practical information starting from job placement, upon arrival in Kuwait and guidelines in case help is needed by a domestic worker. The handbook also has chapter on the Domestic Workers' Law in Kuwait translated in English and Tagalog...

Safety and Fairness for Women in Migration and Work

In August, GAATW-IS organised two focus group discussions with 20 Bangladeshi returnee and aspiring migrant women, in cooperation with our member OKUP and project partner KarmojibiNari. The aim of the FGD was get the women's perspective on what safety and fairness in migration and work mean for them. We asked questions about their reasons for migrating, the conditions of work abroad (mostly in West Asia), the situation back in Bangladesh after their return, and how they think labour migration can be improved for them and for future migrants.

The women pointed to the low wages in Bangladesh, as well as abusive husbands and indifferent family members, as the main reasons for seeking work in the Gulf countries. Once they were abroad, many faced physical abuse, had no or little time off work or couldn't leave the employer's house. The ‘success’ stories they shared were result of putting up with excessively hard work for low wages and tolerating a wide range of discriminations without protest. The absence of physical beating and inhuman torture was seen as a ‘good’ situation. Regularly paid salary, even when it was less than what was mentioned in the contract, were seen as ‘fair’ because non-payment was a common problem. Overall, it appeared that the lived experiences of women had made them lower the bars for safety and fairness...

New Project: Power in Work and Migration: Learning from the Lived Experiences of Women Migrant Workers
Studies repeatedly indicate that often-times the policies designed to 'protect' women migrant workers, such as the imposition of travel restrictions to certain countries, can be knee-jerk responses to reports of violence and abuse, and are not well-planned strategies that are sensitive to the underlying concerns and needs of migrant workers. Hearing women tell their own stories - not just their problems but also their responses and strategies - and in the process illustrating the impact of big policy decisions in their personal lives can positively contribute to evidence-based policy making on safe and fair migration...

Read all news from the GAATW International Secretariat

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**News from our Member Organisations**

**20th Anniversary of Intervention Centre for Trafficked Women (LEFÖ-IBF)**

On 5-6 June, LEFÖ - Intervention Centre for Trafficked Women organised an international conference in Vienna entitled 'Trafficking in Women 1998-2018: Same Old, Same Old' to mark its 20th anniversary. More than 120 national and international experts discussed and analysed the developments and changes, or lack thereof, in the areas of human trafficking and labour migration, with a special focus on Transnational Referral Mechanisms (TRM) for safe and voluntary return. Participants highlighted that despite the progress made in many areas in the past twenty years, such as the introduction of new laws and structures, many trafficked persons fall through the cracks when it comes to rights protection, especially in the current anti-migrant climate in Europe and Austria. Participants emphasised the importance of cooperation among all relevant stakeholders in order to guarantee that trafficked persons enjoy their rights effectively.

**New Hong Kong Action Plan Falls Short of Human Rights Standards**

The Hong Kong Government launched the Action Plan to Tackle Trafficking in Persons and to Enhance Protection of Foreign Domestic Helpers in March this year. It is a welcome first step, but in its recent submission to the Hong Kong government, our member Justice Centre expressed concerns that the Action Plan's effectiveness is limited by, *inter alia*, the lack of time frames for most new activities, the absence of a commitment to introduce anti-human trafficking legislation and the lack of information about granting immunity for prosecution to victims.

The Hong Kong Government claims that human trafficking is not prevalent in Hong Kong on the basis that it only identified nine victims in 2017. However, Justice Centre Hong Kong's research *Coming Clean* estimated that 8,000 migrant domestic workers were trafficked for the purpose of forced labour. Two years has passed since *Coming Clean* was published and the Hong Kong Government never acknowledged the research. Justice Centre's Head of Research Jade Anderson was invited by the Taiwanese Government to speak about *Coming Clean* in the 2018 International Workshop on Strategies for Combating Human Trafficking in July. We will continue to promote our research findings to contribute to evidence-based policy-making in Hong Kong.

**Online Tools for the Prevention of Labour Exploitation - strategy manual**

Migrant workers in the Netherlands are at risk of experiencing bad working conditions and labour exploitation. They are often not well informed about their rights or are deliberately misinformed by their exploiter in order to make them afraid and dependent. They have a weak negotiating position, are very often dependent on their exploiter due to debts, threats and violence and therefore find it difficult to escape.

For several years, FairWork has been experimenting with online resources to approach its target group, alongside its physical outreach work to provide information. As a result, clients are increasingly starting to find the organisation online.

This new manual is based on an analysis of this work. The manual provides useful tips for NGOs how to reach out to migrant communities in their country, for example, through Facebook groups, Google ad words, Instagram, website optimisation and cultural mediators, to
inform them about their rights and where to seek help in case of rights violations. The manual outlines the steps to carry out baseline measurements, create attractive and engaging posts, advertise content, measure results and make adjustments...

**Sex Worker Rights and Anti-Trafficking in Canada**

On 23 March Supporting Women's Alternatives Network (SWAN)-Vancouver appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The Committee travelled across Canada in March to learn more about human trafficking in order to make recommendations that address the needs of people affected by human trafficking. SWAN submitted an additional brief, based on their 16 years of experience in supporting im/migrant sex workers, outlining how the current anti-trafficking responses increase the vulnerability of im/migrant sex workers while doing little to support trafficked women. The brief points out that the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA), which criminalised most aspects of sex work, has instilled fear in im/migrants working in the sex industry, who are routinely arrested, detained and deported for engaging in sex work. 'We receive calls from im/migrant sex workers who have experienced violence, exploitation and/or trafficking but these women are too afraid to contact law enforcement', the brief states. SWAN highlights the particularly negative impact of 'Operation Northern Spotlight' which has deprived many sex workers of their income but failed to identify large numbers of trafficking victims, despite its huge financial resources. The brief ends with a number of recommendations to the federal government to improve anti-trafficking laws and to allocate more funding for sex worker rights organisations who are best positioned to detect cases of exploitation and trafficking in the industry, but receive no funding for it...

**I am Still a Child**

The Human Resources Development Foundation (Turkey) developed a new campaign to raise awareness about child labour and child marriage among Syrian refugees in Turkey. The front side of these new materials depict situations of child labour and child marriage, with messages in Turkish and Arabic such as 'I am still a child - I feel so tired of working' and 'I am still a child - don’t force me to marry'. The back side provides information about the relevant laws and regulations in Turkey that criminalise these practices.

The postcards are distributed in NGO-run community centres that provide services to Syrian refugees in the country.

*Read all news from GAATW members.*

**Resources**

**Sex Workers Organising for Change**
Borislav Gerasimov
In February 2018, GAATW published its new report 'Sex Workers Organising for Change: Self-representation, community mobilisation, and working conditions', based on research with sex worker rights organisations in seven countries. This short blog post highlights some of the main findings of the research. These include the ways in which anti-trafficking legislation is used to harass sex workers, and the many creative ways in which sex workers, and their organisations, respond to the needs of those in the industry, including exploited and trafficked women.

**Gender-based Violence in the H&M Garment Supply Chain**
Global Labor Justice
This new report details gender based violence in H&M Asian garment supply chains. For women garment workers, violence and harassment isn't limited to violence that takes place in physical workplaces, but also during commutes and in employer provided housing. Women garment workers in H&M supply chains in Bangladesh and Cambodia reported acts of violence that include acts that inflicted sexual harm and suffering; physical violence, verbal abuse, coercion, threats and retaliation, and routine deprivations of liberty including forced overtime.

**Towards Achieving Decent Work for Domestic Workers in ASEAN**
International Labour Organisation
There are an estimated 9 million domestic workers in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Over 2 million of these are migrants - almost one-fifth of all migrant workers in the region. While there is an increasing demand for domestic workers, there is also growing recognition of the lack of protection for the majority of domestic workers, who are overwhelmingly women. Globally, and in ASEAN, domestic workers are often excluded from labour laws and labour protection available to other groups of workers. Consequently, around the world, domestic workers regularly work excessively long and unpredictable hours. Many domestic workers do not receive any rest days and are paid below the minimum wage. This report reviews the current situation for domestic workers in ASEAN and makes recommendations to ASEAN Member States.

**Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work**
International Labour Organization

This report analyses the ways in which unpaid care work is recognised and organised, the extent and quality of care jobs and their impact on the well-being of individuals and society. A key focus of this report is the persistent gender inequalities in households and the labour market, which are inextricably linked with care work. The report contains a wealth of original data drawn from over 90 countries and details transformative policy measures in five main areas: care, macroeconomics, labour, social protection and migration. It also presents projections on the potential for decent care job creation offered by remedying current care work deficits and meeting the related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants**
UNODC

The first UNODC *Global Study on Smuggling of Migrants* shows that migrant smuggling routes affect every part of the world. The study is based on an extensive review of existing data and literature. It presents detailed information about key smuggling routes, such as the magnitude, the profiles of smugglers and smuggled migrants, the modus operandi of smugglers and the risks that smuggled migrants face. It shows that smugglers use land, air and sea routes - and combinations of those - in their quest to profit from people's desire to improve their lives. Smugglers also expose migrants to a range of risks; violence, theft, exploitation, sexual violence, kidnapping and even death along many routes.