Dear friends,

As the summer heat is intensifying in Bangkok, so is the work in our office. In February we published our new report ‘Sex Workers Organising for Change’ which documents how sex workers are organising around the world to demand rights and better working conditions, and the incredible work of sex worker rights organisations in empowering sex workers and assisting women in the industry who experience violence, coercion and exploitation. We organised a convening of over 50 representatives of sex worker organisations, anti-trafficking organisations and human rights funders to discuss the findings of the report and how the sex worker rights movement can be supported by allies in other movements. We also presented the report at a parallel event during the 62\textsuperscript{nd} session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, at several events in Mexico organised by our member Brigada Callejera, and at an event in Wellington organised by the New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (read more further on in this bulletin). Sadly, at the same time as we were presenting this evidence in different spaces, the US Senate passed a controversial law that will hold websites liable for publishing user content related to sex work, for example, advertisements by sex workers, as well as any discussion of sex work-related issues. The bill was opposed by anti-trafficking groups, sex workers and survivors of trafficking alike, as well as advocates of free speech, who warned that it will force sex workers into more precarious conditions, prevent websites from reporting suspected trafficking cases, and censor free speech online. Despite this opposition, the bill passed with overwhelming support from both democrats and republicans. Less than two weeks after it was signed into law, the impact was already visible on Craigslist, Twitter and Reddit, among others, and was felt by sex workers as far away as UK, Australia and New Zealand. As advocates had warned, the closure of online advertising spaces would push sex workers into the hands of potentially exploitative third parties and there are reports that this is already happening. Thus while the legislation "might" deter some trafficking activities in the future, it has very real consequences in the present, and we are yet to see the full extent of the 'collateral damage' it will cause.

At the beginning of April we organised a three-day knowledge-sharing forum on Women, Work and Migration. Focusing on South Asia, the Forum gathered over 60 civil society activists, community workers, worker representatives, migrants groups, trade unionists, and academics to discuss the key issues surrounding women's work across both formal and informal sectors, including agriculture, sex work, entertainment, domestic work, garment and manufacturing. The discussions centred on decent work, migration, gender based violence in the workplace, and the need to build cross-sectoral solidarity between all women workers (read more below). We were inspired to be among so many like-minded individuals from different fields and sectors that share a common concern for the rights and working conditions of women. Yet less than two weeks after we came back from the Forum in Colombo, the media reported that the draft ‘World Development Report’ of the World Bank calls for lower minimum wages and greater hiring and firing power for employers, especially in developing countries, so that workers can ‘compete with robot labour’. The Washington representative for the International Trade Union Confederation wrote that the draft ‘almost completely ignores workers’ rights, asymmetric power in the labour market and phenomena such as declining labour share in national income’. In a world of staggering inequality, where exploitative and precarious work is practically the norm, especially for women in the Global South, it is inexcusable for the World Bank to make such recommendations! We hope that the report will undergo substantial revisions before its
At the end of April we published the new issue of our flagship publication, the open access, peer reviewed journal Anti-Trafficking Review. This issue, themed ‘Life after Trafficking’, documents the challenges that people face after exiting situations labelled as trafficking, as well as those whose exploitation garnered no legal protections or service provision. Contributions from a diverse range of countries - India, Thailand, Azerbaijan, the United States, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Denmark, United Kingdom and Switzerland - highlight the lack of appropriate and comprehensive support for survivors after trafficking, as they struggle with family reunification, legal recognition and compensation, and long-term economic opportunities (see more below). While finalising the issue in mid-April, we were painfully reminded about the meaning of ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘rehabilitation homes’ for some (trafficked) women, when news broke out that a 26-year-old Uzbek woman had committed suicide in one such institution in Hyderabad, India. Although the media reported that she was ‘lured and forced’ into sex work and received only a small portion of what she was earning, it was also reported that she was collecting money for her mother’s treatment and ‘yearned to get out of the rescue home’. GAATW has always spoken out against the detention of trafficked persons, even the name of their ‘rehabilitation’, yet this flawed model is likely to continue after the adoption of the new Indian anti-trafficking bill. You can also read the paper by Diya Bose in the Anti-Trafficking Review, which describes an anti-trafficking shelter in Dhaka, Bangladesh as a ‘total institution’ and how the organisation’s actual practices undermine its stated empowerment objectives.

But the world news is not all gloomy. On International Women's Day, more than five million women in Spain joined different marches, pickets and blockades and an estimated 5.2 million took part in a two-hour ‘feminist strike’ throughout the country to counter widespread inequality and a growing wave of violence against women. In Armenia, thousands protested for democracy and transparency and against the corrupt elite, and succeeded in forcing the prime minister to resign. In Trinidad and Tobago, the High Court of Justice ruled that the country's laws criminalising same-sex relations between consenting adults are unconstitutional, after a gay activist challenged these laws in 2017. After a similar ruling in Belize in 2016, the LGBT community in the Caribbean now hopes that other countries will soon follow suit. Importantly, British Prime Minister Theresa May expressed regret over the UK’s role in imposing anti-sodomy laws on its former colonies, after campaigning by LGBT activists around the world. In the US, hundreds of domestic workers and farmworkers met with members of Congress to demand policies against sexual harassment against all workers. And in Bogotá, sex workers are publishing their own newspaper, which is a ray of light in an otherwise depressing and violent neighbourhood. Such little pockets of resistance and the collective power of women, of workers, of citizens and activists, give us hope for the world and inspire us to continue our work.

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

International Advocacy Update

MIGRATION

Global Compact for Migration: The third round of negotiations on the Global Compact for Migration was held in April. Governments discussed Rev.1 (available here). GAATW-IS did not attend but is grateful to Kate Sheill who was able to share her notes. States did not finish a first reading of this text but got through objective 16 (covering paras. 1 to 31). They'll continue this first full reading at the May round of negotiations (14-18 May) - starting from objective 17 - which means we won't see a new text before then (the co-facilitators had originally planned to issue a revised text between each round of negotiations). Also at the next round of negotiations the co-facilitators will present their proposal for a capacity building mechanism - they will share a draft on that before the May session.

Some reflections and selected points from the April negotiations:

States positions and groupings:
The EU27, Hungary, Norway, Australia, Russian Federation, Singapore, China, India and to some extent South Africa are hostile. These states want to delete references to regularisation, firewalls, deny that all migrants enjoy the same human rights, and want to reiterate throughout the text that the Compact is non-binding, among others. These positions will do nothing to address the protection gaps for migrants in vulnerable situations that the GCM processes were designed to address. Hungary is likely to be a big problem - they’re entirely opposed to migration so it’s difficult to see how states can negotiate anything if they decide to get involved.

Brazil, Paraguay, El Salvador, Mexico, Bangladesh, Philippines, Switzerland Holy See are our main ‘champions’ so far (on issues such as regularisation, labour rights protections) though as we have not yet discussed the section on returns yet, this list could get shorter. There is grouping of “likeminded states” that is worth watching, supporting, pushing - this is a loose grouping of (so far) 21 states: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Nepal, New Zealand, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Uruguay. They function really only to give general statements, they are not negotiating as a block but it’s good to see some of the more progressive states collaborating and hope they get more active as we continue. ...

Continue reading about the Global Compact, the ILO Instrument on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work and the UNTOC Review Mechanism...

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**Employment opportunity**

**Communications and Networks Advisor at Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX)**

This is an exciting opportunity to shape FLEX's communications strategy and to contribute to a growing and dynamic organisation. You will work to generate interest in FLEX's message and work, and to ensure that our research gains media traction and reaches new audiences. You will help build FLEX's communications network and work closely with key journalists, acting as the main media contact for FLEX. You will use your excellent storytelling skills to share the stories of those affected by forced labour and exploitation and to foster change in this field.

For more information and how to apply, [click here](#). Deadline for applications is 25 May 2018.

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**News from the GAATW International Secretariat**

**Knowledge-sharing forum Women, Work and Migration**

On 7-9 April, GAATW, with the support of the ILO, organised a three-day regional Knowledge-Sharing Forum on Women, Work and Migration in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Focusing on South Asia, the Forum gathered over 60 civil society activists, community workers, worker representatives, migrants groups, trade unionists, and academics to discuss the key issues surrounding women’s work across both formal and informal sectors of work, including agriculture, sex work, entertainment, domestic work, garment and manufacturing. The discussions centred on decent work, migration, gender-based violence in the workplace, and the need to build cross-sectoral solidarity between all women workers. ...

**Sex Workers Organising for Change**

In February we published our new report *Sex Workers Organising for Change: Self-representation, community mobilisation, and working conditions* based on research conducted with sex worker organisations in seven countries: Canada, Mexico, Spain, South Africa, India, Thailand and New Zealand. The report highlights the transformative effect that organising has on the lives of sex workers and their ability to protect themselves from violence, abuse and exploitation, and the creative ways in which sex worker organisations respond to the challenges
that people in the industry experience. It describes cases where sex workers, or sex worker organisations, learnt of situations where a woman was experiencing violence, working under unacceptable conditions, or was brought to the industry through force or deception, for the purpose of exploitation. In these instances, sex workers resolved the issue as a collective, by providing advice and referral to other organisations, negotiating with the brothel owner/madam, chasing the pimp out of their area, or gathering money to help the woman return home.

Ultimately, the report demonstrates that sex worker rights organisations are human rights organisations whose primary mandate is to ensure that the human, economic, social, political, and labour rights of the people they work with are recognised and respected by state and non-state actors. ...

**Anti-Trafficking Review, issue 10 'Life after Trafficking’**

Media, policymakers and NGOs typically focus on the horrors of life in trafficking and ‘rescuing’ trafficked persons, but much less attention is paid to life after trafficking. The new issue of the Anti-Trafficking Review documents the challenges that people face after exiting situations labelled as trafficking, as well as those whose exploitation garnered no legal protections or service provision. ...

Read all news from the GAATW International Secretariat.

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**From our Member Organisations...**

**Tackling the exploitation of women workers in the UK**

In March, Focus on Labour Exploitation (FLEX) brought together leading experts to share ideas on how to end exploitation of women workers in the UK. Key UK labour inspection authorities, the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority, the Health and Safety Executive, Revenue and Customs, and the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate were represented, as well as officials from the Home Office, the Office of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and the office of the Director of Labour Market Enforcement. A wide-ranging discussion took place about the abuses women are facing in the workplace and the gaps in the existing labour market enforcement framework to stop these abuses before they develop into labour exploitation.

The Latin American Women’s Rights Service (LAWRS) shared cases of sexual harassment and assault in the cleaning sector. When the women LAWRS supports have tried to complain about abuses, they have faced disbelief and have been threatened or fired as a result of speaking out. Sexual harassment at work often goes hand in hand with other forms of abuse, which never get reported because survivors are afraid of repercussions if they speak out. When these abuses are ignored, they can open the door to exploitation. ...

**La Strada-Ukraine celebrates 20th anniversary!**

On 31 March, La Strada Ukraine celebrated 20 years of work in the areas of prevention of human trafficking and domestic violence, protection of children’s rights and promotion of gender equality.

La Strada was the first organisation to address the problem of human trafficking in Ukraine. During these twenty years a lot was achieved in the country: the ratification of international
treaties and inclusion of human trafficking in the Ukrainian Criminal Code, the development of state anti-trafficking programmes, the establishment of a department on combating human trafficking, the adoption of an anti-trafficking law, and numerous information and awareness-raising campaigns at the national level. La Strada Ukraine has worked together with other CSOs to contribute to these developments/achievements. ... 

2018: Same old, same old?

The Intervention Centre for Trafficked Women and Girls of LEFÖ (LEFÖ-IBF) is also celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. On this occasion, LFEÖ-IBF is organising a conference titled “Trafficking in Women. From 1998 to 2018: same old, same old?” on 5-6 June in Vienna. The conference will bring together national and international experts in the areas of human trafficking and migrant women’s rights. 

Since 1998 LEFÖ-IBF has provided direct assistance to more than 2600 women and girls. LEFÖ-IBF now has four shelters and apart from accommodation, offers psycho-social counselling in the women’s native languages, legal assistance, accompaniment to public authorities and assistance in claiming and obtaining compensation. ...

Ban Ying in the press

On international women’s day, our German member Ban Ying gave an interview on the blog of the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, discussing how the new so-called Prostitute Protection Act offers protection to sex workers only in its title: new regulations allegedly allow for the identification of victims of human trafficking through initial interviews with women planning to engage in sex work, although it is still not clear who will conduct these interviews, where, and in what language. The new law, with its mandatory registration and a special ID-card for all sex workers, puts them at risk of repression or blackmail, offers dubious protections of personal data and further marginalises undocumented sex workers. ...

Read all news from GAATW members.

Resources

Shaky Foundations: Labour Exploitation in London’s Construction Sector

This study draws on interviews and surveys with migrant construction workers in London to shine a spotlight on the labour abuses present that can lead to exploitation. It a range of labour abuses and risk of exploitation in the sector, including workers not being paid, being physically and verbally abused, and being forced to work in dangerous conditions. The report calls for urgent action by the Government, the Director of Labour Market Enforcement, the Mayor of London and the construction industry to put an end to abuse of London’s construction workers.

Risks and rewards: Outcomes of labour migration in South-East Asia

Based on interviews with 1800 migrant workers, this report challenges some of the commonly held assumptions about the end result of labour migration in South-East Asia and how best to ensure a safe and rewarding experience for migrant workers. Positive outcomes can be achieved if migrant workers are able to avoid burdensome debts, benefit from labour rights protection, enhance their job skills and find gainful employment upon return. Lack of assurance of obtaining these conditions contributes to a situation where labour migration is often a considerable gamble for migrant workers and their family members.

If you control movement, you control sex workers

Prabha Kotiswaran and Rebecca Angelini

In this interview, Rebecca Angelini from the GAATW Swiss member FIZ reflects on the organisation’s thirty years of experience in the anti-trafficking field. She acknowledges the
progress that Switzerland has made in protecting the rights of women identified as trafficked and providing them with assistance and justice. At the same time, she recognises that the anti-trafficking framework has had multiple negative effects on the lives and working conditions of other migrant women in the country, especially sex workers.

**The false promise of the Nordic model of sex work**

*Sam Okyere and Essi Thesslund*

In this interview, Essi Thesslund from the GAATW member Pro Tukipiste describes the Finnish legislation on sex work, which criminalises clients who knowingly use the services of women who are victims of trafficking or working for someone else. Although this legislation is not used very often anymore, because of the difficulty to prove knowledge, it has created an environment in which the police harass sex workers in order to get to clients. Essi also points out that, unlike in other countries, sex worker rights and abolitionist organisations in Finland find ways to work together to support victims and advocate for policies that they agree on.

**RAINED: How Anti-trafficking Strategies Increase Sex Workers’ Vulnerability to Exploitative Practices**

*SANGRAM*

This report is the result of research carried out by VAMP and SANGRAM in cooperation with sex worker collectives in Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Jharkhand. The research examines the impact of The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act (ITPA) on the protection of the human rights of sex workers. It discusses the relevant national and international legal frameworks and analyses the case law on sex work. Above all, it gives voice to sex workers themselves. A theme that runs through the sex workers’ stories is the daily exposure to arbitrary arrest and detention, and police abuse. Rather than combating trafficking, the ITPA creates the conditions under which sex workers can be arrested without due process under the flag of rescue operations, detained in 'rehabilitation' or 'correction homes' that are in fact prisons, sometimes for up to five years, subjected to forced medical tests, humiliated and abused, coerced into sex and extorted with impunity in the process.