Dear friends,

Greetings from Bangkok!

In the past few months we at the small GAATW Secretariat were busy as usual. We completed four different pieces of research on the experiences of migrant women with violence, harassment and exploitation in the workplace. Geographically, they covered Southeast Asia (internal and intra-regional migration as well as to East and West Asia), South Asia (internal and to West Asia), Africa (to West Asia) and Latin America (intra-regional). The sectors of work explored were domestic work and garment, and, to a lesser extent, entertainment and hospitality.

Across these locations and highly feminised and exploitative sectors, migrant women are subjected to poverty wages and poor working conditions, as well as physical, psychological and sexual violence that intersects with and is exacerbated by discrimination on the basis of race and nationality. Bangladeshi garment workers in Jordan told us that their employers would say "Bangladeshis are cheap! If I send back one, I can get back ten!" A domestic worker in Colombia recalled: "The lady would always say 'negra [black], come here', 'negra do this'... that was very annoying for me because I am black, but I know when I am called negra affectionately and when not. I am Maria and that's what I like to be called". Kenyan domestic workers in West Asia said they were given separate utensils for their meals and allowed to eat only after the rest of the family had eaten.

It also became clear that violence shapes women's lives not only at the workplace, but also before migration (indeed, many women migrate to escape family violence) and upon return. The violence and exploitation are perpetrated by individual (mostly, but not only, male) employers, brokers or family members, or by actors of the State (some Bangladeshi women said that embassy staff beat or insulted them when they complained about their employment). However, they are enabled and sustained by patriarchal, sexist and xenophobic social attitudes, unjust labour migration regimes that seek to control women's labour, and neoliberal economic policies that disempower workers and empower employers and corporations.

Clearly, while individual perpetrators of violence must be punished, we need to direct our energy at addressing structural violence by working towards living wages, rights at work, and the reduction, redistribution and valuing of women's unpaid work. The availability of decent work and social protections at home can ensure that migration is a meaningful choice, and where that choice is made, that migrant women's rights are protected. (Read more about the findings in the ten-page publication Demanding Justice: Women Migrant Workers Fighting Gender-Based Violence).

A small step in this direction was taken in June, when we and our comrades celebrated the adoption of ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work. Although the final version fell short of what we and our allies had initially hoped for regarding the inclusion of structural violence, it is a victory to be celebrated. We called on states to ratify the Convention and, as much as time and capacity permit, we'll be working with our members and partners towards this goal in the coming
months and years. We also organised five webinars on gender-based violence in the world of work to discuss how it can be addressed and what it looks like in different sectors and in different parts of the world. In the coming months, we will be working closely with Public Services International in the Latin America region to coordinate and support national campaigns for the ratification of Convention 190.

An instrument that aims to prevent violence and harassment in the world of work, and provide remedies for those who experience it, might be more relevant to the majority of women (migrant) workers than the anti-trafficking framework. The women interviewed for our research may or may not have been "technically" trafficked - we didn't ask because it was not the aim of our research to focus on the narrow and restrictive definition of trafficking or to explore hierarchies of suffering. To our knowledge, most of them were not identified/labelled as trafficked. And this may have been to their advantage: as we know all too well, a lengthy, unwanted detention in a shelter, and a return to the country of origin, is sometimes all that the label "trafficked" can offer migrant women.

Looking holistically at trafficking as an issue at the intersections of gender, labour and migration demands that we expand our horizons, deepen our analyses, and forge new partnerships. To this end, we organised two inter-movement dialogues: one in Amman, with representatives of trade unions and NGOs working on women's rights, migration, labour and anti-racism from South Asia and MENA (see more under News from the GAATW-IS); and one in India, with representatives of trade unions, and migrant rights, women's rights, worker rights and Dalit and Adivasi rights groups (see a short piece about this meeting here). Both we and our partners find these exchanges insightful and important and this work will continue.

We also need to understand how environmental factors affect migration and how the climate crisis is affecting people's livelihoods and forcing them out of their homes. The climate crisis saw an escalation in the past few months: July was the hottest month ever on record. In Europe the summer was unusually hot, with temperatures pushing up to mid-40s in a number of northern countries. Much of India experienced drought and people were left without water (or forced to buy it from private business operators!) due to the late arrival of the monsoon; many people were forced to migrate to cities in search of work after their livelihoods were destroyed. Rain shortage was severely felt in Southeast Asia too - the Mekong river, which more than 60 million people depend on for their food and livelihoods, was at its lowest level in 100 years due to a combination of climate change and rapacious capitalism. These factors were also blamed for the incineration of the Amazon, which is endangering not only the flora, fauna and human beings residing in the region, but humanity itself.

The climate crisis demands action towards systemic change and we were delighted to see some positive developments. Young people took to the streets in unprecedented numbers, calling on their governments to respond to the climate emergency. They have joined the fight of environmentalists, women's organisations, indigenous peoples, and trade unions. Even business leaders are realising that income inequality is bad for humanity and are trying to redefine capitalism (although we won't be over-ecstatic yet!). At the local level, women's collectives have developed models of self-sufficiency to reject disastrous corporate monoculture. We must all support these efforts of resistance, as well as re-examine how we as civil society organisations do our work and how we are connected to grassroots social justice movements. We must call into question whether advocacy within multilateral institutions and mainstream 'development' spaces really creates change on the scale necessary to avoid climate breakdown and increasing societal inequalities, and redirect our energies where they are most likely to have an impact.

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

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**News from the GAATW International Secretariat**

**Two new publications on the experiences of women migrant workers**

In mid-2019, GAATW published the results of two pieces of research that aimed to document the experiences of women migrant workers. "Reclaiming Migrant Women's Narratives: A Feminist Participatory Action Research project on 'Safe and Fair' Migration in Asia", covering nine...
countries in West, South and Southeast Asia, documents migrant women’s own perspectives of “safe and fair” migration. A recurring theme across the nine countries, and the three studied sectors - domestic, garment and entertainment work - is that “safe and fair” migration cannot happen in a silo; the factors that produce gender segregated labour markets and industries dependent on flexible, underpaid and overworked migrant labour require a systemic change. This change can happen at the grassroots level, through self-organised groups of women (migrant) workers. The increasing reliance on migrants in certain labour sectors risks further dividing societies and fostering xenophobia, racism and anti-migrant sentiments and causing governments to place more restrictions on migration. The safety and fairness of migration risk being even more constrained under such pressures.

"Learning from the Lived Experiences of Women Migrant Workers" is based on research in nine countries of origin and destination in West and South Asia and Africa, with a total of 214 women migrant workers. This research looked at the entire migration trajectory - the migration process (under the heading of "safe and fair migration"), the work experience (under the heading of "violence in the world of work"), and after return (under the heading of "access to justice"). Read on...

Inter-regional and inter-sectoral learning

In July GAATW held a collaborative meeting with the Arab Network for Migrant Rights in Amman, Jordan, in what we hope will be a continued deepening of our relationship with the network and our partners in West Asia.

Thirty activists, CSO representatives and trade unions from Jordan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, India, Bangladesh and Nepal met over three days to share knowledge and explore opportunities for collaboration and support on the protection of the rights of migrant workers between the two regions.

Looking into current social justice movements in South and West Asia, a number of common themes emerged: In South Asia, there is a re-emergence of protectionist policies towards women migrants as a response to narratives of female victimhood in the media. In West Asia, there is a multi-layered fight for women’s rights - both for local women, who are not equal under the law, and also for migrant women workers. Racism against black and brown migrant workers in the Arab region was noted by a number of speakers, though it was said that public awareness on racism, at least in Lebanon has increased. Many noted serious challenges in access to healthcare for migrant workers… Read on...

New issue of Anti-Trafficking Review: Public Perceptions and Responses to Human Trafficking

The new issue of Anti-Trafficking Review examines the current state of public awareness of human trafficking: how and by whom it is produced and manipulated, whom it is targeting, and whether it leads, or can lead, to any meaningful anti-trafficking action. The six thematic articles and one book review focus on different actors (governments, NGOs, media and corporations) and different mediums (newspaper articles, campaigns, outreach and apps) that claim to inform the public about trafficking and related exploitation and their potential solutions. However, the authors’ analyses show that, overall, this information remains incomplete and, often, misleading regarding the nature of trafficking, its root causes and its prevention. Despite their diversity, most awareness-raising messages fail to highlight these root causes and to call for structural reforms to the socio-economic and political systems that drive human trafficking and exploitation.

Migrant women against violence in the world of work: A research in Latin America

In July, GAATW-IS and our members from Peru, Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, and
Argentina held a three-day meeting to review the information collected during the research on Migrant Women against Violence in the World of Work and set common guidelines for its analysis.

The research is rooted in the importance of listening to the voices of women migrant workers. It explores their experiences of gender-based violence in the world of work in sectors such as hospitality, domestic work, sex work, and garment factories and will be published in the coming month.

Among the challenges in conducting the research, members highlighted the difficulty of meeting and bringing together women migrant workers. The main reason was the women's job insecurity and the lack of appropriate working conditions and schedules. In order to make the process easier, our colleagues had to be very flexible not only when agreeing on the time for meetings but also on the places...

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**News from our Member Organisations**

**Exhibition: Nit in Transit - Cecile in Exile - Dora in Diaspora**

In September, Ban Ying celebrated its 30th anniversary. Founded in 1989, the organisation runs two main services: a counselling centre for migrant women and a safe house for women victims of violence, exploitation and trafficking, with or without a legal status. The women assisted by Ban Ying come from more than 70 countries but the organisation places special focus on women from Thailand and the Philippines who were their initial service users thirty years ago (ban ying means "women's house" in Thai).

To mark this anniversary, Ban Ying organised the exhibition Nit in Transit - Cecile in Exile - Dora in Diaspora, which was shown in the Haus der Demokratie und Menschenrechte in Berlin throughout September. The artwork was provided by two of Ban Ying’s linguistic and cultural mediators - Krisanta Caguioa-Mönich from the Philippines and Bussaraporn Thongchai from Thailand - who, in their daily work, are in close contact with the clients of the organisation.

Against the background of their own migration stories, the two artists interpret and transform the ways in which the organisation’s clients interact with their migration experiences in paintings and collages. The clients were partly involved in the creative process. The migration stories of Nit, Cecile and Dora stand for the many routes, experiences and lives that flow together in Ban Ying, which the artists hold in their works and process - and their own artistic approaches...

**Detaining Victims: Human Trafficking and the UK Immigration System**

In July FLEX published a new report *Detaining Victims: Human Trafficking and the UK Immigration System*. The report, based on interviews with members of the Labour Exploitation Advisory Group (LEAG), literature review, and Freedom of Information requests, describes the issues experienced by victims of human trafficking while in immigration detention in the UK. It explores the main barriers to identification of victims prior to and while in detention, as well as the impact of detention on National Referral Mechanism (NRM) decision-making and on victims' physical and mental well-being. It sets out recommendations on how to make improvements in all four of these areas.

LEAG members have identified at least 143 detained victims of trafficking, including ones who have been detained after receiving positive reasonable grounds decisions under the NRM. This demonstrates that the UK is in breach of various international responsibilities, including the responsibility to support victims in their physical, psychological and social recovery. LEAG is deeply concerned that victims of human trafficking are being treated first as immigration offenders and secondly as victims, which is leading to long-term and severe consequences to their health and the outcomes of their victim status under the NRM...

**Recognition, respect and valuation of women’s work: A foundation of prosperous Nepal**

The Government of Nepal has adopted a socialist economic model, committed to abide by Sustainable Development Goals, introduced social security policy and has amended the Labor
Act 2074 (2017) to formalise informal work. These are commendable steps. However, there is no clarity on how women’s care work can be recognised and valued, which means that women who are working at home or involved in care work cannot be covered by the social security scheme.

With this in mind, in August, the Nepali National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders (NAWHRD) in collaboration with WOREC, WOFOWON, Mahila Ekta Samaj, NDWA, Tarangini Foundation, and Pourakhi organised a national workshop Recognition, respect and valuation of women’s work: A foundation of prosperous Nepal. The aim of the workshop was to bring a change in the perceptions towards the work done by women and to establish women’s work as decent work. It involved 90 representatives from civil society organisations, trade unions, ILO Nepal and women workers from different sectors such as domestic work, entertainment and tourism.

Dr Renu Adhikari, chair of NAWHRD and former Board member of GAATW stated that all work done by women, including domestic and care work, has economic value and needs to be considered as work because one could hire a person to perform it. The definition of work should be broadened as “Any activity that human being performs to sustain their life”; however, that is not happening. Patriarchy has created different structures whereby women’s work is restricted and devalued. These same structures have control over women’s work, body and mobility. Thus it is important for women to come together and challenge patriarchal structures of power and have their work recognised and valued... Read on...

Campaign #Nevremezazene (Bad weather for women) in Serbia

ASTRA - Anti-Trafficking Action, the Autonomous Women’s Center and Women in Black, in cooperation with Feminist Cultural Center BeFem, launched a campaign to promote the CEDAW Concluding Observations for Serbia. The aim of this campaign is to point out the inadequate approach of the state toward women’s rights, and particularly toward the CEDAW Committee’s concluding observations concerning the elimination of all forms of discrimination of women and ensuring their enjoyment of rights. In the campaign, a series of informative videos and visuals present common stereotypes about women, violence against women, human trafficking, education, women’s health and the national gender equality mechanism.

Another campaign launched by ASTRA - “Labour exploitation is real” - aims to improve the protection of Serbian youth going for temporary work abroad, suppress illegal work and promote the responsibility of employment intermediaries for the truthfulness of the advertised working conditions and the implementation of supervision in the recruitment process. The campaign is based on an analysis of the conditions enabling labour exploitation of young people. Other issues the recommendations touch upon are a reduction of abuse in youth cooperatives, changes in the way of performing temporary and occasional jobs, as well as the changes in criminal legislation.

Read all news from GAATW members.

Resources

Against the Grain: Fighting Corporate Agriculture through Women’s Solidarity
Leah Sullivan

In this blog, Leah Sullivan from GAATW describes a recent visit to the village of Pastapur in India, where Dalit and Adivasi woman have transformed their lives and farming practices with the support of the Deccan Development Society. In particular, women are challenging the stereotypes of farmers and increasingly owning the land under their own names, and not their husbands’. Women are forming collectives to discuss common problems, make decisions about farming and finance, share seeds, information about farming methods, ask for and offer help with weeding and other tasks. Importantly, they are engaging in sustainable farming practices and resisting the destructive monoculture imposed by agricultural giants like Monsanto. Leah shows that there is a similarity in the challenges that rural agricultural communities face, and those faced by the women workers who migrate for work in the garment, domestic and sex work sectors - that of a marginalised group under the pressures of patriarchy, corporate greed...
What we talk about when we talk about Menschenhandel (in German)

Livia Valensise

"Trafficking in human beings is a serious offense against a person's self-determination. No one is for human trafficking - everyone is against human trafficking. However, the practical consequences that should follow from this statement are far less clear. And often, as a feminist NGO, you find yourself in questionable company..." In this piece for Missy Magazine, Livia Valensise from Ban Ying reflects on two discomforts of anti-trafficking work for a feminist NGO: an anti-migration position exemplified by former Italian Interior Minister Salvini, and the anti-sex work position by some Christian evangelical organisations and self-proclaimed feminist organisations. Livia also outlines Ban Ying's main principles as a feminist anti-trafficking NGO, such as advocating for safe migration pathways, respecting the choices of migrant women, and seeing women's vulnerability in a broader socio-economic and political context.

Stricter Prosecution and Convictions Alone May Not Curb Human Trafficking in India, Says Expert

Rakhi Bose, News18

This article, based on an interview with GAATW's Communications and Advocacy Officer Borislav Gerasimov, argues that India must do more to ensure decent work and social protections, as well as safe migration opportunities for its citizens in order to prevent trafficking, rather than only enact stricter laws and harsher punishments for traffickers. It also highlights the negative impact of anti-trafficking raids on the lives of sex workers and how sex workers can often be charged with trafficking.

This foundation is challenging Thailand’s prostitution laws

Choltanutkun Tun-arihuj, BK Magazine

The recent shunting of Pattaya's highest-ranking police officers is forcing Thailand to confront its look-the-other-way attitude to prostitution. BK Magazine Online talks to to Thanta Laowilawanyakul (Ping Pong), the coordinator of Empower Foundation, a sex worker rights NGO founded in 1985, about why Thailand needs to drop the stigma around sex work and decriminalise the industry. "Sex work should be legal in the same way as sewing clothes, cutting hair or cooking noodles is. There are laws against rape, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, child abuse, and labor protection laws that can be used to protect children, adults and society", says Thanta...

Migrants and their Vulnerability to Human Trafficking, Modern Slavery and Forced Labour

International Organization for Migration and Minderoo Foundation

This new study examines the connection between migration and modern slavery, and focuses on which migrants are most vulnerable, and in what circumstances, to modern slavery. The report explores various sites of vulnerability where migrants are particularly susceptible to human trafficking, forced labour and modern slavery. These include private dwellings, border crossings, irregular migration routes and conflict zones. The report illustrates that migrants are most vulnerable to exploitation in situations where the authority of the State and society are unable to protect them. It also analyses the characteristics of victims that are thought to contribute to their vulnerability. In addition, the study explains some characteristics of offenders, including worldviews that allow them to rationalise the exploitation of others. Lastly, the study looks at examples of enabling environments or contexts, such as restrictive immigration policies, that engender or exacerbate vulnerability.

Rights, rescues and resistance in the global movement for sex workers’ rights - introducing the series

Annelee Lepp and Borislav Gerasimov

In this article, GAATW Board Member and staff member reflect on some of the successes - and challenges - of the global sex worker rights movement over the past two decades. These include the strengthening of the movement and the increasing support for decriminalisation of sex work by scholars and international organisations, but also the growth of repressive policy regimes, such as the 'Swedish model', which they show has all the hallmarks of 'post-truth politics'. The authors draw their analysis from the April issue of the Anti-Trafficking Review themed 'Sex Work'.

Fig Leaf for Fashion. How social auditing protects brands and fails workers

Clean Clothes Campaign

This report offers an extensive analysis of the corporate controlled audit industry, connecting the dots between the most well-known business-driven social compliance initiatives, such as Social Accountability International, WRAP, the FLA, and amfori BSCI, and the largest corporate-controlled auditing firms, including Bureau Veritas, TÜV Rheinland, UL, RINA, and
ELEVATE, as well as the brand interests that they serve. Evidence presented throughout the report clearly shows how the social audit industry has failed spectacularly in its proffered mission of protecting workers' safety and improving working conditions. Instead, it has protected the image and reputation of brands and their business models, while standing in the way of more effective models that include mandatory transparency and binding commitments to remediation.