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Dear Friends,

Warm greetings from the GAATW International Secretariat.

As we step into the middle of the year, we present to you the second issue of our e-bulletin. The first quarter of 2024 has been a busy one. We have met with many of you to plan GAATW's 30th anniversary and the International Members Congress and Conference (IMCC) which will be held in Bangkok on 15-18 October 2024.

Thank you for your continued engagement with the Secretariat. Keep sharing your updates with us so we can share them with other Alliance members. We hope you find the updates in this bulletin informative and relevant as we continue our collective efforts to advocate for justice and dignity for all.

## News from the GAATW International Secretariat

### **Anti-Trafficking Review Issue 22 - Armed Conflicts: Migration, Trafficking, and Labour Markets**



anti trafficking review

Issue 22, April 2024  
ISSN: 2287-7511  
ISSN: 2287-0112

Special Issue - Armed Conflicts: Migration, Trafficking, and Labour Markets

Editorial: Beyond Terrorism and Sexual Slavery: Dynamics of armed conflicts, trafficking, and forced migration

Thematic Articles

Caught in the Crossfire: Unravelling the complex interplay of exploitation and agency in children associated with Boko Haram

Looking for Safe Haven in a City Torn Apart by War: Narratives of agency from internally displaced persons in the southern Philippines

Re-politicising Anti-Trafficking: Migration, labour, and the war in Ukraine

Armed Conflict-Induced Displacement and Human Trafficking in the Sahel: Organized crime, vulnerabilities, and the accountability of non-state armed groups

A Look at Human Trafficking and the Anti-Trafficking Apparatus in Mexico through the Experience of Victoria, a Trans Woman

Sex Trade and "Floating Migration" in the Colombian Armed Conflict

Short Articles

Human Rights Due Diligence: Risks of modern slavery for workers displaced by conflict

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**Anti-Trafficking Review Issue 22**

Special Issue - Armed Conflicts: Migration, Trafficking, and Labour Markets

Guest Editor: Mónica Hurtado

[www.antitraffickingreview.org](http://www.antitraffickingreview.org)

This [Special Issue](#) comes at a crucial time, with over 110 million people forcibly displaced and two billion residing in conflict-affected areas. Featuring seven articles, the issue explores empirical connections between highly militarised and violent contexts (HMVC) and the increased risks of trafficking, precarious migration, and labour exploitation in the Philippines, Ukraine, the Sahel, Nigeria, Mexico, and Colombia. Each article not only

deepens our understanding of these complex interactions but also provides crucial recommendations for governments, policymakers, and civil society aimed at protecting the rights and wellbeing of individuals who are either forced to flee or remain in such volatile environments.

## Events

### Planning for the International Members Congress and Conference

As GAATW celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, we are preparing for our upcoming IMCC. From February to March, we engaged in a series of consultations - one in-person and five online - with members from each region, learning about their current focus areas, gathering recommendations for the congress, and discussing the thematic areas they wish to explore.



These consultations have been instrumental in understanding the evolving needs and expectations of our network. The insights gathered will not only shape the agenda of the Congress but also ensure that the event is a catalyst for meaningful and actionable outcomes.

### Visit to Tenaganita, Malaysia

GAATW's Programme Officer - Voice and Participation, Srishty Anand, visited our partner, [Tenaganita](#), in Malaysia. Her learning visit was to learn more about the implementation of a rehabilitation programme for trafficking survivors in Tenaganita's two shelters, Penang and Selangor. The programme focuses on livelihood capabilities through skill-based training and workshops on the rights of survivors. During the visit, Srishty noted that although the 2015 amendment to Malaysia's Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants Act of 2007 grants trafficking survivors the right to work and freedom of movement, these provisions are still not widely implemented.

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## United Nations Engagement

### Concerns over the end of remote participation for Civil Society at the UN

The GAATW-IS joined more than 300 NGOs in [a letter](#) to the UN Secretary-General raising concerns about the decision to end online participation in UN events and procedures. We highlighted the significant negative impact that this will have on the inclusivity and universality of all UN human rights bodies and mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, UPR and Treaty Bodies. We explained that civil society organisations have long demanded effective means for remote participation, due to the obstacles faced by people from marginalised and vulnerable communities, in accessing multilateral spaces, including, but not limited to, denial of visas, resource challenges, travel costs, environmental considerations, security concerns, and accessibility for people with disabilities.

In April 2024 the Secretary-General responded to our letter expressing that he agreed with our concerns and will "make every effort to facilitate the decision-making of member states on this issue."

### **Seeking recommendations from the UN Special Rapporteurs on Poverty and Adequate Housing to decriminalise sex work**

Last year the GAATW-IS joined several NGOs in a joint submission to the UN Special Rapporteurs on Adequate Housing and on Poverty and Human Rights, to argue that the criminalisation of sex work, drug use and homelessness were all contributing to poverty, homelessness and rights violations for the affected populations. The current draft report prepared by the UN Special Rapporteurs was shared with us in early April 2024 and it fell short of recommending the decriminalisation of sex work. The GAATW-IS prepared additional submissions to make an evidence-based argument on the importance of decriminalising sex work in the context of efforts to combat homelessness and extreme poverty. We hope this will persuade the Rapporteurs to include a recommendation for decriminalisation in their final report.

### **Contributions to the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls upcoming report on "Prostitution and Violence against Women and Girls"**

At the end of last year, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) released a call for input to her upcoming report on "prostitution and violence against women and girls." It was very clear from the wording of the input that the Special Rapporteur has an abolitionist position on sex work, and that this report is designed to be a direct response to the very [positive report](#) that the Working Group on Discrimination against Women and Girls published in October 2023.

The GAATW-IS worked with members from every region to coordinate eleven different submissions in the hope that there we will have strength in numbers and be able to challenge the position taken by the Special Rapporteur. Maya Linstrum-Newman from the GAATW-IS also attended an online consultation with the Rapporteur about the report and emphasised the need for decriminalisation of sex work and the dangers of conflating sex work and human trafficking.

### **Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Protection of the Rights of Migrants and their Families**

In March, the GAATW-IS prepared a [submission](#) to the newly-appointed UN Special Rapporteur on the Protection of the Rights of Migrants for his first report on the theme of "the contributions migrants make to society." Our submission challenged attitudes that migrants must make some kind of "productive" contribution to the economy in order to be deserving of rights, and made the case for why feminist migration policies are needed.

### **Submission with JELI and WINS to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery**

In response to the UN SR on Contemporary Forms of Slavery's call for inputs on the role workers organisations can play in ending exploitation, the GAATW-IS worked with members WINS and JELI to prepare submissions on the role sex workers organisations and informal workers organisations have played in combating exploitation in India and Thailand respectively. The submissions were based on the direct testimony given to WINS and JELI through focus group discussions with workers.

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## **Alliance News**

Foundation for Women, GAATW's founding member organisation, celebrated 40 years of their work in an engaging event in early April. Entitled The Last Conversation, the event brought together many women and men who were part of the pioneering feminist organisation over the last four decades. Foundation for Women (FFW) may have closed operations, but everyone who is part of the feminist struggle and sisterhood knows that

the conversations will not stop, and the work will go on. GAATW is proud to share the legacy of FFW and will strive to uphold the values they inculcated in us.



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[WOREC](#), our member from Nepal, celebrated 33 years of their work this year. We are proud to have WOREC in the GAATW Alliance and wish them the very best for their future work. Here is a short film that celebrates their journey: <https://fb.watch/rQ5XfZQibJ/>



WOREC has a dream of equality, where equality resonates equally to everyone.



Earlier this year, [Aaina](#), our member from India, celebrated their **25th anniversary**, emphasising its pivotal role in disability, women's issues, child rights, action research, and disaster response.

Since their inception in **1998**, Aaina, consistent with its reflective name, has stood as a premier institution dedicated to addressing societal challenges. The motto, "**Realization being the Guiding Mantra, Creativity & Inclusion the Spirit**," underscores Aaina's commitment to inclusion, resilience, and transformation. We wish Aaina many more years of glorious journey.

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We would like to extend a warm welcome to [ACCEM](#) (Spain) and [Southeast and East Asian Centre-SEEAC](#) (United Kingdom), two organisations that joined the Alliance in April 2024.

**ACCEM** is an NGO that works to promote the defence of fundamental rights, and the support and accompaniment of persons at risk of social exclusion. They specialise in asylum and migration and foster the inclusion of persons into the reception society, as well as equal rights and duties for everyone, regardless of their origin, sex, race, religion, opinions, or social group.

The **Southeast and East Asian Centre (SEEAC)** is a migrant community-led organisation by and for migrants, refugees, and people seeking asylum from Southeast and East Asian countries. SEEAC provides essential community support services and delivers advocacy work on issues around four main areas: Community Wellbeing, Migrant Labour Rights, Identity-based discrimination, and Immigration & Asylum.

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## Resources from our members

## Asia

### Weaving Sustainability: Climate Justice Workshop for Bangladesh's Garment Sector

[Awaj Foundation](#) co-organised a [workshop](#) on 'Climate Justice in the Ready Made Garment Sector' in Bangladesh with federation & trade union leaders. The workshop explored the situation of current environmental degradation, how to resolve the issue by including workers' strong voices in it, and the role of trade unions.



### Navigating New Waters: LSCW's New Policy Brief

[Legal Support for Children and Women](#) (LSCW) has published a civil society [policy brief](#) on the "Recruitment and Employment of Cambodian Migrant Fishers in Thailand". The report includes discussions that have recently begun between the Cambodian and Thai governments on the development of a bilateral agreement for work in the fishery industry.

### Addressing the Shadows: Enhancing Justice and Support for Migrant Women Facing Gender-Based Violence

From January to April 2024, [LRC-KJHAM](#) carried out a series of activities to enhance Access to Justice for women migrant workers affected by Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Through interviews and Focus Group Discussions with stakeholders, including local government and law enforcement, they identified that 62% of migrant workers are women, yet their issues are often overshadowed by broader labour and immigration concerns.

LRC-KJHAM encountered substantial challenges in data integration, discovering that while there's gender-based data on migrant workers, it lacked specific information on those affected by GBV. This highlighted the need for increased cross-sectoral collaboration to better protect and support this vulnerable group. This initiative underlines LRC-KJHAM's commitment to improving justice and assistance for women migrant workers.

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## Europe

### Migrant Workers Face Exploitation in the UK

[Recent investigations](#) have uncovered alarming levels of exploitation among migrant care workers in the UK, with some earning less than £5 per hour, which is significantly less than the national legal minimum wage. Complementing these findings, new research from our members at the [SEEAC](#) and [Focus on Labour Exploitation](#) reveals the extreme precarity and exploitation that migrant care and agricultural workers endure, exacerbated by restrictive 'tied' visas and policies that contribute to a hostile environment. This report underscores the critical need for systemic changes to protect these workers.

### ASTRA Report Highlights Labour Exploitation at Serbian Tire Factory

[ASTRA – Anti-trafficking Action](#) has released a comprehensive [report](#) documenting the labour exploitation of Vietnamese workers at the Linglong tire factory in Zrenjanin, Serbia. This situation garnered national and international attention in November 2021 following a news article by VOICE. ASTRA's involvement began with an immediate field visit and the production of a joint initial report demanding accountability from all involved state actors. Over the subsequent seven months, ASTRA's efforts have included providing direct support to the affected workers, coordinating field visits, engaging with activists, and

maintaining communications with state institutions to enforce accountability.

## Flowers for Saiqa: Comitato's New Project to Support South Asian Migrants in Trieste

Our partner, [Comitato](#), is expanding its initiatives based on insights from the [Still I Rise](#) project. In November 2023, they launched 'Flowers for Saiqa', a project honouring Saiqa, a young Pakistani woman who was tragically murdered in Pakistan in 2022. Saiqa had previously interned at the Casa Internazionale delle Donne di Trieste from 2019 to 2021, where she played a vital role in assisting women from her community with various administrative tasks. During a visit by GAATW to Comitato in June 2023, discussions highlighted the potential for engaging more with South Asian migrant communities. Trieste, a northern Italian city near the Slovenian border, has seen an influx of undocumented migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. 'Flowers for Saiqa' aims to address the challenges faced by these groups.

The primary goal of this project is to facilitate meetings among women of diverse backgrounds living in Trieste, who might lack access to essential integration information, such as registering children for school, accessing family planning services, job orientation, and joining women's collectives. Since November 2023, the group has been meeting monthly to strengthen the network with an Asian-based community focus. The project is currently led by a Pakistani community leader at Comitato, in collaboration with the International Women's House and the Islamic Cultural Center of Trieste.

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## Latin America



### CHS Alternativo and Peruvian Ministry of the Interior signed an agreement to eradicate human trafficking

After an efficient advocacy effort with various authorities and media outlets in Peru, [CHS Alternativo](#) managed to halt the enactment of a bill that had been approved by the plenary of the Peruvian Congress, which would modify Law

29918, backtracking accountability for the crime of human trafficking and other forms of human exploitation.

CHS Alternativo advocated for the enforcement of the law and explained to various authorities the importance of reporting annually on progress in the fight against human trafficking to the Plenary of Congress.

Thanks to this work, the Executive branch vetoed the bill and returned it to Congress, who now have the opportunity to refine the legislation so that the authorities are required to explain to the national representation what they are doing to combat the crime.

Read more about this here in Spanish [here](#).

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## Global Perspectives: Updates on Migration, Sex Work, and Labour Rights

### New Survey Highlights the Plight of UK's Migrant Domestic Workers

A [survey](#) conducted by the London School of Economics and our project partner [Voice of Domestic Workers](#) shed light on the bad working conditions faced by migrant domestic workers in the UK. The findings reveal extended work hours, bad wages, and reports of abuse. These insights call for the UK Government to reform policies and enhance

protective measures for these workers.

## Ramadan in the GCC: The Overlooked Plight of Migrant Domestic Workers

During Ramadan in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, the festive season often overshadows the [harsh realities](#) faced by migrant domestic workers, who are integral to household operations. These workers are tasked with increased responsibilities such as meal preparation and extended household duties, often without adequate rest or legal days off. Research by Migrant-Rights.Org between 2015 and 2020 reveals that due to the intensification of their workloads, some domestic workers feel compelled to flee their employment, lacking any alternatives for better working conditions. Despite their important role, there is a noticeable absence of awareness campaigns focused on their rights within the GCC.

## Temporary Ban on Prostitution in Medellín Following Incident

In [response](#) to a sexual assault by an American tourist against two underage girls, the Mayor of Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city, has implemented a temporary prohibition on prostitution in the Provenza and El Poblado neighborhoods in a country where sex work is legal. This controversial six-month ban, while ostensibly aimed at curbing sex trafficking, could inadvertently harm sex workers by pushing their activities underground, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and reducing their access to essential health and social services.

## Exploitation and Deception

In Poland, a Filipino worker was detained by the police during a raid at a chicken factory due to his undocumented status, despite assurances from his recruitment agency of having the necessary work permit. This incident [highlights](#) a larger pattern of Filipinos being lured to Poland by deceptive recruitment promises of stable jobs, permanent residency, and European citizenship. Those who encounter these offers online pay significant fees for a chance at a better life, only to find that in reality these promises are unfulfilled.

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## Upcoming Spotlight

Mark your calendars for an important upcoming event: "25 Years of KOK - 25 Years of Civil Society Against Trafficking in Human Beings" organised by our member [KOK](#). This symposium, set to take place on 11 and 12 November 2024 in Berlin, will explore the current developments and innovative approaches in the fight against trafficking in individuals. The gathering comes at a crucial time, following the European Union's adoption of a reformed directive to combat trafficking, which member states are now tasked with implementing.



This symposium will look into practical and political challenges, discussing how migration, refugee movements, digitalisation, and other factors influence trafficking prevention, support for victims, and the enforcement of their rights in Germany. Key topics will include enhancing protections for trafficked persons, improving criminal prosecution, leveraging digitalization for anti-trafficking efforts, and learning from international experiences.

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Visit our  
website



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