

ISSUE 9, MARCH 2023

OUR WORK, OUR LIVES

Celebrating Women Leaders



Our Work, Our Lives

Issue 9, March 2023

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Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women

Our Work, Our Lives

Many members and partners of the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW) work closely with women workers to support and strengthen their organising. The women earn their living from domestic work, sex work, agriculture, weaving, entertainment work, garment sector work, home-based work, and any available daily wage work. Except for those who are working away from home, all women also carry out much of the care work in their families. While some workers are affiliated with trade unions, others are part of informal collectives or community groups linked to local NGOs.

Since March 2021, some GAATW members and partners have been part of an online initiative called **Women Workers for Change**. The group has held discussions to understand what women workers who engage in unpaid and paid labour define as ‘change’ in their lives, how they want to participate in creating change, and what CSOs can do to improve their accountability towards women workers.

Our Work, Our Lives, a monthly E-Magazine, was born out of those discussions. We published it on the last day of every month from [August 2021](#) to [March 2022](#). Each issue took up a simple theme that resonated with the everyday lives of low-wage women workers, their joys, sorrows, struggles, and most importantly, their agendas for change. We are resuming publication of the e-magazine from March 2023 as a bi-monthly.

While this English language E-Magazine acts as a bridge among CSO colleagues (and the few workers who can communicate in English) in different countries, each group creates publications in their own language. Where the workers have no formal literacy, they use other innovative techniques. GAATW Secretariat does all it can to democratise digital technology and facilitate knowledge building and sharing from the ground up.

Contents

- Issue 9, Celebrating Women Leaders..... 6**
- A.S.: A Day Without Violence and Slavery..... 9
- DHARANI GROUP: Every Day is Women’s Day 11
- FLORA ENIFO & SARAH NWEKE: How to Mobilise People Against Trafficking when they are Fighting Homelessness and Unemployment? 14
- FLORENCE YILMAZ: Mental Health is one of our Priority Issues 17
- FRANCIA BALDERAMA: Recognise the Struggles of Women 21
- GABRIELA IKA: We Demand a Life of Respect, Equality, and Dignity 22
- GILDA BANUGAN: End All Discrimination against Women Migrant Workers 24
- HALIMA BEGUM: We Demand an End to Workplace Harassment..... 25
- JAZMIN SANTA: Not One More! No More Disappeared, Exploited, Violated, and Invisible Women..... 28
- KHIN MA CHO: Migrant Workers Should be Allowed to Form Labour Unions 30
- KUNTI DONGO: We will Continue to Fight for Water, Forest, and Land .. 33
- MERCY: Recognising Women’s Courage as a Leader and Worker 36
- MISNAWATI: We Need a Genuine Agrarian Reform 38
- OPSI: Recognising Women Sex Workers on IWD 40
- PONIRAH: A Campaign for the Recognition of Women Porters as Workers 42
- R PRATHIBHA: Reflections on International Women’s Day 44
- RUBY MAHATO: We Renew our Pledge to Change our Thinking 46
- SABNAM ARA: I Want to Be an Inspiration for Other Women 48

SANGITA MAHATARA: Women Migrant Workers Should be Respected ...	50
SARGINI, WINA, YUNI: Learn, Organise, and Look Back at History	53
SRIJANA PUN: We Will Continue our Struggle for the Protection of our Rights	55
SRI WAHYUNI: Use IWD Moments to Appreciate Women.....	57
SUTTHASINEE KAEWLEKLAI: A Day to Celebrate our Revolution	60
UMA SEDHAI: A Day to Love, Appreciate, Respect, and Honour Women ..	62
UMI: Breaking Taboos Through IWD Campaign	65
CORPORACIÓN ESPACIOS DE MUJER: ¡Las Calles Son Nuestras!	68

Issue 9, Celebrating Women Leaders

Dear friends,

We are back with the March 2023 issue of *Our Work, Our Lives* after a gap of one year. From now onwards, the e-magazine will be published bi-monthly. As before, it will bring the voices, concerns and priorities of women workers.

In preparation for this issue, we requested our members and partners from organised groups of women workers to respond to two simple questions. We wanted to know what significance, if any, 8 March has for them and what their priorities for 2023 are. Twenty-five contributions from twelve countries across Asia, Europe and Latin America reached us. It was heart-warming to note that 8 March is celebrated by all the groups to strengthen women's movements for social justice. For all our contributors, the day is also a celebration of womanhood, of friendship and solidarity. Priorities range from long-term visions for a life of dignity and equality to more specific ones of collective well-being, just wages, insurance benefits and freedom to organise. We hope you enjoy reading the magazine as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Do write to us with your comments, suggestions, or stories for upcoming issues at bandana@gaatw.org

Warmly,
GAATW-IS team



Celebrating Women Leaders

A Day Without Violence and Slavery

A.S.

A.S. is a 23-year-old Kosovan woman who fled her country six months ago and came to Italy to start her life anew after years of violence. A.S. is a woman who has learned that pain makes you stronger and that fear can be overcome.

“WE, WOMEN, NEVER GIVE UP. WE BOUNCE BACK, RISE FROM THE ASHES AND EMERGE STRONGER.”

In her country, she did not have the opportunity to publicly celebrate 8 March, but every year, she and her sister bought flowers and celebrated together with their



mother. For the first time, this year, in Italy, she had the opportunity to freely walk in the streets without fear and celebrate women's day unhindered and free.

8 March in the words of A.S.

“8 March is a very special day for me because I think it is a day for mothers, wives, and sisters. It is a day of friendship. It is a day when every man treats the women in his life with respect, kindness, and love. It is a day without violence and slavery. I have many things to say about women. It is a pity that violence is a reality in many women's lives around the world. I know that a woman is a source of strength and inexhaustible energy. We women never give up. We bounce back, rise from the ashes and emerge stronger. We bring new life to the world and nurture it. I have experienced pain and deep hurt but I have always got up and smiled. I know other women who do that.

Congratulations on March 8 to all women around the world. Let there be love, kindness, and happiness in the lives of all women.”



Courtesy: [Comitato per i diritti civili delle prostitute, Italy](#)

Every Day is Women's Day

MEMBERS OF THE DHARANI GROUP



8 March is a celebration of all women, including sex workers. Not just famous women like Indira Gandhi or Mother Teresa. This day is a recognition that all women serve their families and their countries. It is a celebration of all women.

It is a day to remind us of positive changes that have happened for women because of their collective struggle. In the past, girls used to marry much older men and when their husbands died, they used to burn themselves in the same funeral pyre or used to live a very sad and hard life. No nice clothes, no good food, and no comfort at all. But now women are freed from all these because of the women's rights movements.



But every day is women's day. Why only one day?

In India, many women work in the informal sector. Many are self-employed. They do not always get the dignity and respect that they deserve. Women's Day is a celebration for all women - big and small, rich and poor, able and disabled – it is for everyone. It is a reminder that all of us have equal rights. Same as men. Our constitution guarantees those rights. But nothing comes without a struggle. We get nothing without a fight. That is why we need a stronger movement.

If the state and private employers respect all workers and create decent working conditions, then all women workers will get equal pay for equal work. And if women are respected in their families and societies, every day will be a celebration.

Our Agenda for Change

Change begins with us. First, we need to change our attitude towards ourselves. Sex workers may have low self-esteem. Many of us hate ourselves. To hide that negative feeling many of us take to drugs. That harms our health. Drug addiction must stop.

Covid-19 taught us that sudden disasters may happen and our life and earnings can stop suddenly. We should be careful with money and save for unexpected calamities.

We should support each other and build a stronger movement. Our group is committed to doing that.



Courtesy: [Women's Initiatives \(WINS\), India](#)

How to Mobilise People Against Trafficking when they are Fighting Homelessness and Unemployment?

FLORA ENIFO AND SARAH NWEKE FROM MIST, FRANCE

Flora ENIFO

International Women's Day is an important day for all the women in the world. I believe that women are the reason why humanity keeps existing, women are superheroes, and this is why women should be treated equally without any judgment or prejudice.

“CELEBRATING WOMEN'S DAY TOGETHER IS A GOOD WAY TO SHARE OUR COLLECTIVE POWER, TO GET COURAGE FROM EACH OTHER TO CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHTS AND THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS.”

Discussions and celebrations around women's rights and gender equality need to happen every day, including Mother's Day.



Key issues that members of our group would like to address this year:

We would like to address the challenges faced by migrants in general, and especially by victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation. The way migrants and their families are treated in France is very problematic. So many people are looking for a place to stay, struggling with housing and documentation issues, but the government ignores them and offers very few options for them to work. All the shelters are full and many migrants with kids and teenagers are homeless.

This situation has been challenging for our group, in our effort to create a strong community of survivors of trafficking. It has been difficult to mobilise people to fight

against trafficking when homelessness and unemployment are affecting so many. Unfortunately, widespread precarity has increased the risk and rate of human trafficking. This has also become a vicious cycle.

Sarah NWEKE

My name is Sarah. I work as a mediator at the MIST association. I was a victim of human trafficking, and this is my greatest motivation to be part of this association today. I work to bring knowledge and help to those in similar situations as me several years ago.

For me, 8 March signifies equality for all, the right to a life free of violence for women, and the right to protect the girl child.

On this day, women all around the globe are celebrated as wives, mothers, and daughters. Violence against women seems to be on the rise, most women experience physical, emotional, and psychological violence even in their homes and often the perpetrators are their loved ones. Women's Day is a reminder for all of us to raise our voices against violence.

We also celebrate Children's Day because children can create a new world, they signify purity and hope for a better future. In Nigeria, children are given fun treats on 28 May, our National Day. We celebrate children and thank them for bringing joy and blessings to our lives.



Courtesy: [Mission d'intervention et de sensibilisation contre la traite des êtres humains \(Mist\), France](#)

Mental Health is one of our Priority Issues

FLORENCE YILMAZ

Indigenous Filipino (Igorot) Migrant Community Leader and Organiser in the UK
Co-founder of the Filipino Domestic Workers Association (FDWA)

8 March is important for me because this is the day we celebrate and remember the hard work and struggles of our fellow women who have overcome challenges before us. We also recognise those who are continuing the work at this moment.



I make it a point to keep in touch with women who inspired me to continue my advocacy work and with those whom I think I have inspired in my circle. I regularly talk to these women, our service users, when they are experiencing hardships and I involve them in our projects.

In my community, we celebrate International Women's Day by joining our fellow community members and organisations who are doing advocacy for migrant rights and

“I MAKE IT A POINT TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH WOMEN WHO INSPIRED ME TO CONTINUE MY ADVOCACY WORK, AND WITH THOSE WHOM I THINK I HAVE INSPIRED IN MY CIRCLE.”

domestic work. We usually do some wellness events, including mental health support, spa and salon days, yoga, dancing to One Billion Rising songs... and many more!

Another special day that is important to me is International Migrants' Day because of my personal experience as an indigenous Filipino migrant woman living in the UK, where I encountered several challenges and obstacles. Now, I have fully embraced my identity around the experiences which I share through my advocacy and leadership.

Key issues that members of our group would like to address this year

Mental health would be the top issue that we would like to address. The women we help in our community are mostly survivors of trafficking and other forms of violence. They are often afraid because they do not know what to do. When I meet with migrant women in my community, I help them by introducing them to our network and connecting them to the means of support they can get—whether it's looking for work, accessing healthcare, and so on. Once we welcome them into our community and inform them about possible ways to go about their situation, they slowly regain trust and feel empowered to make their own decisions for themselves.

It is also important to inform and educate our members about the context of the issues that they face. I believe that this step of advocacy training and capacity-building is crucial so that we can mobilise them to be the next leaders of the organisation.

About the author

Florence Yilmaz belongs to an indigenous tribe called Igorot in the Northern part of the Philippines. She grew up in a community that was taken over by a mining company. After her studies in accounting, she worked at her church's national finance office as a bookkeeper. She volunteered for the Episcopal Church in the Philippines for a programme called Women in Development and later, Gender and Development. It was through this journey that she was exposed to different aspects of women's issues and her knowledge grew from there.

When she arrived in the United Kingdom in 2002, Florence had to find a job for herself. She was able to find domestic work. In her journey, she met a group of Filipino women starting to organise a group to serve trafficked, abused, and irregular domestic workers. This group is now called the Filipino Domestic Workers Association UK. Her passion for women's community organising led her to volunteer and later become one of the officers, inspired by some of her fellow officers and advisers of the group. Witnessing domestic workers regain their mental health and well-being, return to work and support themselves and family after being rescued from their abusive employers are the most rewarding benefits she has gained from this experience.

At present, Florence is also a part-time bookkeeper of both Kanlungan Filipino Consortium UK and the Southeast and East Asian Centre (SEEAC) UK, charities that help East and Southeast Asians in the UK.

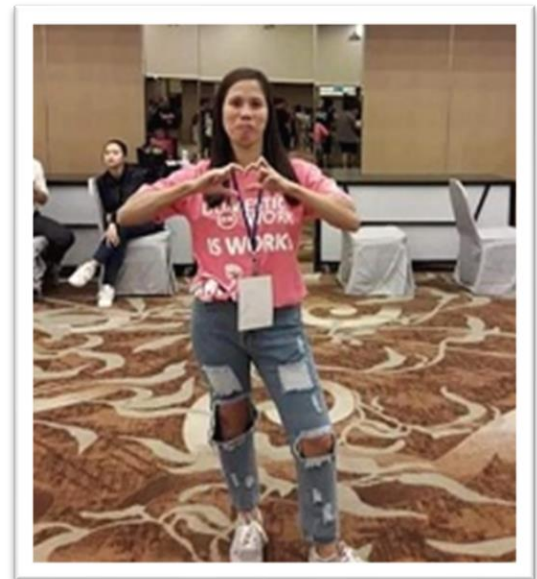


Courtesy: Southeast and East Asian Centre (SEEAC), United Kingdom

Recognise the Struggles of Women

FRANCIA BALDERAMA, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL DOMESTIC WORKER'S UNION, TAIWAN

8 March is an important day because this is the day to recognise the struggles of women all over the world. We celebrate the day to underscore women's fight against various kinds of abuse.



The key advocacy issues for our group this year are demanding insurance benefits and fighting violence against migrant workers.

Courtesy: National Domestic Workers Union, Taiwan



We Demand a Life of Respect, Equality, and Dignity

GABRIELA IKA



I am Gabriela Ika. I am a coordinator of the Sekartaji Support Group community in Semarang, Indonesia. I am a woman who cares about other women, especially women who face challenges – economic challenges, mental stress, and problems at workplaces. I admire women who can assert their power despite all the challenges.

International Women's Day is very important for me and my friends in the community. It is a reminder that we are free and brave, and we are together in the struggle. We celebrate IWD by organising many public events in our community to raise our awareness and demand our rights from the state.

Other important days are the 16 Days of Activism (HAKTP). On those days we organise many events to raise our voices against all forms of violence.

The important issues for Sekartaji Support Group this year are:

- Justice and rights at workplaces

- A personal life of respect, equality, and dignity, a life free from violence
- Legal justice for all women - fairness in accessing information and in obtaining legal protection without discrimination



Courtesy: Legal Resources Center- Untuk Keadilan Jender Dan Hak Asasi Manusia (LRC-KJHAM), Indonesia Translated by Leny (LRC-KJHAM).

End All Discrimination against Women Migrant Workers

GILDA BANUGAN, CHAIRPERSON, MIGRANTE -TAIWAN



8 March is an important date because this is when we commemorate the International Day for the social, economic, and political success of women.

Another important day for me is Mother's Day when we honour and pay tribute to all mothers who are always prepared to protect their families and children. We celebrate this day by giving them flowers or chocolates, or cards, and by going out for a picnic.

Top Priority Advocacy Issue for our Group

We will continue to advocate for putting an end to all kinds of discrimination against women migrant workers, especially pregnant workers. We urge the government of Taiwan to pay attention and create better policies to protect women migrant workers against all forms of abuse.



Courtesy: [Migrante-Taiwan](#)



We campaign for fisherfolk cards and present our demands to the local government. When other women see us marching on the streets, they feel inspired. They get curious about us. Some women who also depend on fishing for their livelihood, ask about our group and join us.

We fisherfolk women have always caught fish in the river like men and sold it in the market just like men do. That is our work. But whenever we applied for fisherfolk cards and asked the government for support, our applications were rejected because we are women. We were seen as dependents of fishermen.

But after a long collective struggle we finally succeeded in getting our cards and even the permission to form our Cooperatives last year. But so far it is just on paper. We still do not get any benefits. So this year on 8 March we continued our campaign. Women fisherfolks spend most of their time in the river catching fish. We are often accompanied by our teenage daughters. The young girls often face harassment from fishermen and other men. That is workplace harassment. We demand an end to this.



বাদাবন সংঘ
Badabon Sangho
(A Women's Rights Organisation)

Courtesy: [Badabon Sangho](#)

Not One More! No More Disappeared, Exploited, Violated, and Invisible Women

JAZMÍN SANTA



- Professor-researcher at the Pontifical Bolivarian University of Medellin.
- Member of the Technical Secretariat of the Intersectoral Table against CSEC.
- Defender of the rights of girls, boys, and adolescents.
- Social leader for women's rights.

8 March is important for me because on this day we, the women, unite and turn up the volume of our voices to demonstrate, speak up against the violation of our rights, and demand transformative change. As an activist, I see 8 March as an opportunity to shout, 'Not one more! No more disappeared, exploited, violated, and invisible women'.

I am shocked that even at this point, some people find it strange that women are demanding the realisation of their rights. This is 2023, we are in the 21st Century!

There are two other important dates for me as an activist: 23 September, the day on which we protest against the commercial sexual exploitation of girls, boys, and adolescents, and 30 July, the international day against human trafficking.

I celebrate those days by taking to the streets, visiting the places where exploitation alerts were issued, proclaiming the importance of defending the rights of girls, boys, and adolescents, and calling for both crimes to end. More and more activists are adding their voices to demand the eradication of exploitation in all its forms.

Focus Issues for Advocacy

- We demand to end the crimes of trafficking in persons and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). But we are also particular about the approach that state and non-state actors should take.
- We demand an approach based on rights and inclusivity.
- No harm to the victim should be done in the name of stopping trafficking. There should be no revictimisation.
- Different groups within civil society should work together for the rights of women, men, boys, girls, and adolescents.



Courtesy: [Corporación Espacios de Mujer, Colombia](#)

Migrant Workers Should be Allowed to Form Labour Unions

KHIN MA CHO

My name is Khin Ma Cho, also known as Nge Nge, and I'm 32 years old. I migrated to Thailand when I was 14 or 15 years old. I've been in Thailand for 17 years now.

My father passed away shortly after I arrived in Thailand. In Myanmar, I had only completed sixth grade. When I was living in the village, I did not know what life had in store for me in the future. Because my parents were poor, I had to work to earn a little money in addition to attending school.



“THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE CAN DO TO GATHER SUPPORT IS TO HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH EXPERTS AND EXCHANGE IDEAS.”

My first seven years in Thailand were devoted entirely to factory work. That was all I did. Work, work, and work. After meeting U Aung Kyaw and his wife, I developed an interest in studying. I started reading books. As a result, my



knowledge about many things around me has increased. I intend to keep learning for the rest of my life.

As a woman and as a leader, it is important to participate in the celebration of International Women’s Day on 8 March. We, women from Myanmar, should also join our Thai sisters and represent the migrant workers of this country. We can share our problems with Thai activists. Other special days that I participate in include May Day and International Migrants Day. We usually take part in the parade on those days. The most important thing we can do to gather support is to hold discussions with experts and exchange ideas.

The key issues we would like to address this year are:

- Ratification of the ILO Conventions 87 and 98 to allow migrant workers to form labour unions.
- Demand 180 days of paid maternity leave for female workers.
- Demand that appropriate mechanisms should be set up for continuing the documentation process of migrant workers in Thailand. And provide further clarity on the process.



Courtesy: [Migrant Workers Rights Network, Thailand](#)

We will Continue to Fight for Water, Forest, and Land

KUNTI DONGO

I am Kunti Dongo from Kharimati village in Jharkhand, India. I am 40 years old and from a tribal community. After the death of my husband, I held the position of Munda, the village head from 2008 to 2020. The position of Munda is a hereditary one. But I also contested and won the local government elections several times. As a young widow, it was difficult for me to



establish my rights but through sheer determination, I managed to get right to the land that he had. I took care of all our property. Now I am the president of Kharimati's women workers' forum. The local government has given me the responsibility of registering the people who migrate for work and encouraging them to apply for their labour cards before leaving. I am also a member of the school management committee and I try to address the problem of school dropout girls. I try to find out why they want to discontinue their studies and encourage them and their parents to complete their school education.



International Women's Day has inspired me to work for the realisation of the rights of all women in my community. I am determined to unite all women and fight against discrimination as a collective.

This year our group is going to focus on the following issues:

1. Strengthening women's rights at work and to their livelihood so that they can earn well without harassment and abuse.
2. Ending violence against women perpetrated by men. In our rural areas, practices such as husbands beating wives after drinking alcohol is a common practice. Some men marry another woman without divorcing the first wife. There is a very bad social practice of naming women as witches so that everyone can abuse them and blame them for all the bad things. This is usually done to disempower the woman and take control of her property. Young women also face sexual abuse. Our forum will raise its voices against these social practices.

3. As tribal women, we will also fight to protect Jharkhand's heritage, our water, forest, and land. Then people of our community will not be forced to migrate.



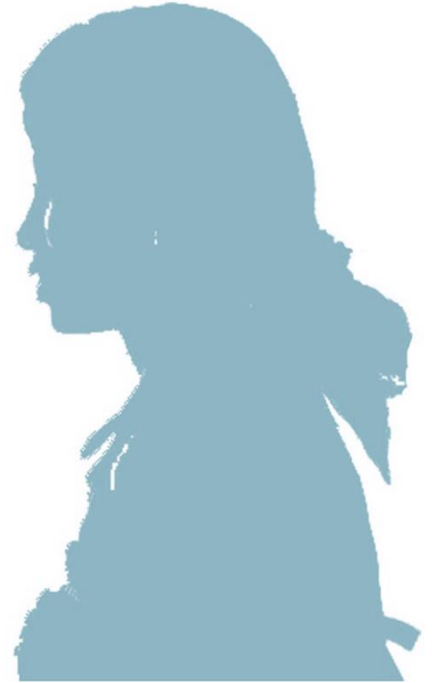
Courtesy: [Shramajivi Mahila Samity, India](#)

Recognising Women's Courage as a Leader and Worker

MERCY, A GROUP OF WOMEN MIGRANT WORKERS IN JORDAN

I'm Mercy from Kenya and I have been working in Jordan for 10 years. I am a committee member and Vice-president of a group of women migrant workers in Jordan.

“THIS KIND OF OCCASION ALLOWS US TO COME TOGETHER AND FIND SOLUTIONS TO OUR PROBLEMS.”



8 March is very important for me. It is a special day because women are being recognised for who they are, and for their courage as leaders and as workers. It is not an easy journey for us, domestic workers, especially in the Middle East. Being a woman, you take a lot of risks; and at the same time, you are also the backbone of society. She is a mother, she is a risk taker, she is kind, she is courageous... So being recognised on this special day makes us feel good for what we have achieved.

As a woman leader, I am ready to take more risks and be a mentor to my fellow workers.

We have other important days for us domestic workers, one is 18 December, International Migrants Day. It is also a special day for us migrants who have left our country to seek a better future for ourselves and our families. I migrated to Jordan many years and it has not been very easy. These kinds of celebrations are very important for us because it is when we all come together as a women migrant workers' group. During this occasion, we make our local food, we dance, we express the challenges that we go through, and we also try to solve them together. This kind of occasion allows us to come together and find solutions to our problems.

Priority Issues

There are many important issues that we are dealing with but I would like to highlight these three:

Access to Justice: In Jordan, we have many cases of injustice towards domestic workers. Some have been arrested and deported. This is a crucial issue as we are dealing with employers and a system that does not always favour the side of the migrant worker. This is why we need to intensify our advocacy for access to justice.

Freedom of Association and Movement: In the Middle East, this has been a challenge among migrant workers due to the restrictions under the Kafala system.

Social Protection and Workplace Safety: We need to organise workers to be able to advocate for job security and better working conditions for domestic workers.

Interview by Alfie Gordo, GAATW-IS.

We Need a Genuine Agrarian Reform

MISNAWATI, COMMUNITY LEADER OF SERUNI IN KANDIS



For me, International Women's Day is a moment to remember that gender equality in society, in all aspects of life, is important and we need to make it a reality.

As a community leader, the commemoration of international women's day is an opportunity to consolidate our membership and recruit new members so that together we can strengthen our organisation. International Women's Day is also a

good moment to campaign for the issues that we are currently fighting for. For example, the issue of expropriation of customary land by large oil palm plantations from the Sakai tribe. Overall, this day is for education and learning for all our members and the larger community.

Other days that are special for us include International Landless Day (29 March), Labor Day/May Day (1 May), National Peasant Day (24 September), International Rural Women's Day (15 October), World Hunger Day (16 October) and International Human Rights Day (10 December). We celebrate these days by conducting rallies, public discussions, and, webinars.

The key changes that women in our community would like to see this year

- Enhancement of women's control over land and natural resources: We need genuine agrarian reform.
- Adoption of agroecology as a community strategy for mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.
- Greater involvement of young women in the climate justice campaign.



Courtesy: [SERUNI](#) Translation by Triana Kurnia Wardani

Recognising Women Sex Workers on IWD

OPSI (INDONESIA SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANISATION)

International Women’s Day is an important day for women’s groups to voice our rights as women. For many years it was impossible for sex workers to be part of the IWD celebrations. Sex workers were not organised and many feminists were not open to including us in their IWD programmes. Things have



changed now. OPSI, the Indonesian social change organisation which works with sex workers, is running a joint campaign with the alliance of women’s human rights defenders and other feminist groups. Feminist groups have also been inclusive of women in all their diversities. Although most of OPSI’s members are women sex workers, we also have male and trans women members. Currently, the elected head of OPSI is Rito Hermawan, a man who believes in the strength and power of women.

At OPSI, we all celebrate IWD together.



Other important days for OPSI are May Day (1 May), International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November) and the 16 days that follow it, World Aids Day (1 December), and international day to end violence against sex workers (17 December).

We fight against stigma, discrimination, and violence every day. For us, violence can come from state policies or mainstream society. So building alliances with feminist groups is essential for us.

The three key changes we want to see in the future:

1. Sex workers recognised as workers.
2. End of discrimination against sex workers.
3. End of criminalisation of sex workers.

Courtesy: [OPSI \(Indonesia Social Change Organisation\)](#)

A Campaign for the Recognition of Women Porters as Workers

AN INTERVIEW WITH PONIRAH BY AMIN MUFTIYANAH, YASANTI

Ponirah is a woman porter who works at the Giwangan market, in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Giwangan Market is the largest fruit and vegetable market in Yogyakarta. Currently, Ponirah serves as Chairperson of the Sayuk Rukun Association of the



Giwangan Market Association, with a membership of 140 women porters. She is also a member of the Association of Women Porters at the provincial level of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, whose members work in 4 traditional markets in Yogyakarta. The paguyuban at the provincial level has approximately 450 women porters.

According to Ponirah, the commemoration of International Women’s Day on 8 March is an important day for herself and her group. On that day, she joins the campaign for the recognition of herself and other women porters as workers. Most people do not consider women porters as workers. Many still regard women as *konco wingking* (a friend behind a man’s back). Ponirah points out that many women porters are the backbones of their families. On Women’s Day, Ponirah and her group members join feminist activists and hold many public events.

Apart from International Women’s Day, Ponirah’s group celebrates May Day and Violence Against Women Day. On Labour Day, together with a network of other workers, such as domestic workers, homeworkers, and other trade unions, they jointly campaign and push for the protection of the rights of informal workers. The Association of Women Porters together with other supportive networks organises public events on Violence Against Women Day.

Key Priorities of 2023

Ponirah’s group will try to strengthen the structure of their association and consolidate their activities.

Ponirah also hopes to be involved in network activities at the local, national, and international levels, both in-person and virtually. She would like to join the GAATW zoom meetings so she can connect with women like her from other parts of the world.



Courtesy: Amin Muftiyannah from [Yasanti](#) Translation by Dewi Nova (GAATW-IS)

Reflections on International Women's Day

R PRATHIBHA

The Karnataka government celebrates Women's Day by offering free rides to all women in public buses.



Over the last 10-15 years, Women's Day has become popular among many people. Cosmetic companies give discounts on their products, entertainment places offer free or discounted entry to women and apartment associations organise special events for women. The private sector looks at women as consumers. What about the state? Now

that election is at its doorstep, is the state hoping that the one-day free ride in public buses will convince women to vote for the ruling party?

But are we just consumers? Women work in many sectors. Most of us are unorganised workers. Construction workers, agriculture workers, people who roll incense sticks, garment workers, and many others are not unionised. A free ride on buses for one day is not enough. All other days are ours, you can take back this one day. Let this one day be yours, enjoy it. Give us our rights on all days of the year.

Women's Day is a reminder of the struggle and victory of garment workers for 8-hour working days. But in this corporate era, people seem to have forgotten the history and significance of the day.

The working condition of many women has not changed for the better. With the weakening of the public sector, more workers are in temporary and contractual jobs now. Neither the private nor public sector are keen to create decent working conditions for the workers.

In a democracy, parliament is the place where legislation is discussed and formulated. There is no equal representation for women in our parliament. No political party wants to implement this. Instead, we are being offered free rides and discounted cosmetics!

R Prathibha is the President of the [Garment and Textiles Workers Union, Bangalore, India](#)

We Renew our Pledge to Change our Thinking

RUBY MAHATO



I am Ruby Mahato. I have been a community social worker at Shramajivi Mahila Samity for many years now. I work with women in many villages in the Sonua block of Jharkhand, India.

International Women's Day is important for me because I am a woman. It is a pity that even today women are not given equal status in society. They are denied opportunities by families and the state to realise their full potential. They cannot even make decisions about their own lives.

So International Women's Day is a reminder for us to continue our struggles to break all forms of violence and disempowering practices towards women in our society. This is the day when we renew our pledge to change our thinking that we are weak. We also renew our commitment to continue working in our communities to change people's attitudes toward women.



The women I work with do different kinds of paid work, in addition to doing care work in families. Sometimes the same woman does many different activities to earn a little money. They work in agriculture, collect forest produce, work in construction, or set up a small shop. When the earning in the village is not enough, they migrate to other states for work.

My goal for this year is make our village women's groups stronger so that we can stand up against oppressive social practices as well as demand our rights from the state.

Courtesy: [Shramajivi Mahila Samity, India](#)



I Want to Be an Inspiration for Other Women

SABNAM ARA

My name is Sabnam Ara. I am 20 years old. I am working in a textile studio. International Women's Day is important for me and for all women. The life stories of women, and our strength to face everyday challenges, can inspire other women. I hope that my work can encourage other young women to believe in themselves, stand on their own feet, and be self-reliant.

So far I have not participated in any social movements but I believe that taking a stand for oneself is very important. Sometimes, we don't have faith in ourselves, we think that as women we cannot do anything. So, we confine ourselves to our households and families. This thinking has to change. I want other young women to know what I am doing and how I have become self-reliant.





Finally, we don't always support each other. We need to be more supportive of other women.

I want to celebrate myself as a woman. I want all women, particularly those in difficult situations to believe in themselves. Change has to start within us. If we think that as a girl, we cannot do anything then we will never be able to face life.

As women, we always worry about other people's opinions. What will people think? If I do something how will people react? That stops us from moving on with life.

"I BELIEVE THAT TAKING A STAND FOR ONESELF IS VERY IMPORTANT. SOMETIMES, WE DON'T HAVE FAITH IN OURSELVES, WE THINK THAT AS WOMEN WE CANNOT DO ANYTHING. SO, WE CONFINE OURSELVES TO OUR HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES. THIS THINKING HAS TO CHANGE."

Women Migrant Workers Should be Respected

SANGITA MAHATARA, CHAIRPERSON, AMKAS BARDIYA



My name is Sangita Mahatara. I am a returnee migrant worker and the Chairperson of AMKAS Nepal in the Bardiya district. I have been working with returnee women migrant workers for several years now.

“WE ORGANISE OURSELVES
TO ADVOCATE FOR OUR
OWN RIGHTS.”

International Women’s Day is significant for me and my group. It is a day to celebrate being a woman and to remind ourselves that we are not less than men in any way.

I think that many people in our society are hypocrites. The same people who benefit from the woman migrant worker’s labour and money, look down on her and say many bad things about her. We celebrate International Women’s Day to show that women



migrant workers should be respected. By marching together in public places, we feel strong and get the courage to demand our rights.

We celebrate other special days such as Children’s Day and campaign to stop child marriage, which is still a practice in some parts of our country. On 16 June, we celebrate International Domestic Workers Day to support the demands and rights of domestic workers. On 18 December, we celebrate International Migrants Day to amplify migrants’ voices and reiterate that migrants’ rights are human rights. We demand that the state should take measures to make migration safe, dignified, and regular. We also organise many activities during the 16 days of activism to stop violence against women.

Almost a year ago, we have formed returnee women’s groups in Madhuwan and Bhadhaiya Taal, two rural Municipalities of the Bardiya district. We are planning to form returnee women’s groups in all 8 rural municipalities of Bardiya district in

coordination with the local government. We will organise skills development training for their economic reintegration. We will also organise awareness programmes on safe migration and human trafficking. The issue of human trafficking is one of the biggest problems that need to be addressed in our community.

Community Action



Courtesy: Aaprabasi Mahila Kamdar Samuha (AMKAS), Nepal



Learn, Organise, and Look Back at History

SARGINI, WINA, YUNI

JALA-PRT JARINGAN NASIONAL ADVOKASI PEKERJA RUMA TANGGA
(NATIONAL NETWORK OF DOMESTIC WORKERS ADVOCACY)

Happy International Women's Day!

Sargini Tunas Mulia, Yogyakarta PRT Union and Wina Ningsih Kuswadi



The history of International Women’s Day signifies the struggles for equality, including decent wages and working hours, and the efforts to eliminate various forms of discrimination, harassment, and violence that women continue to experience.

As a domestic workers union, we have been campaigning for the passage of the House Bill on the Protection of Domestic

Workers, which was initially introduced 19 years ago. We also urge the Indonesian Government to immediately ratify the ILO Convention 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers and the ILO Convention 190 concerning Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.



“AS A WOMAN AND A DOMESTIC WORKER, I FEEL THAT THERE ARE MANY IMPORTANT MESSAGES ON WOMEN’S STRUGGLES IN CELEBRATION OF IWD, AND WE NEED TO RECOGNISE THEM AND TAKE IT FORWARD.” - WINA NINGSIH KUSWADI

Yuni Sri Rahayu

I am Yuni Sri Rahayu, a domestic worker from the Sapulidi Domestic Workers Union affiliated with JALA PRT.

I am a domestic worker activist, inviting domestic worker friends to form domestic workers’ unions, to learn together, to mobilise, and advocate collectively towards social justice for all women in the domestic work sector.



Courtesy: [JALA-PRT, Indonesia](#)



We Will Continue our Struggle for the Protection of our Rights

SRIJANA PUN, WOFOWON

There have been long and hard struggles for women's rights in Nepal. Many women who are leaders of the feminist movement here have experienced violence and abuse in their lives. Regardless of their class, education, and caste. But we have not shied away from speaking up against injustice. I faced a lot of violence, exploitation, and discrimination when I worked in the entertainment sector for 10 years. But thanks to other feminist sisters, I was able to recognise my power and inner strength. For the past 13 years, I have been working with the women workers in this sector to realise their labour and human rights. We are working hard to create an environment where workers can raise their voices as a collective. In Nepali society, most women work but we face many challenges when we work outside our homes. Especially, if we are poor and do not have much education. Entertainment sector workers face more challenges than many others because people look down on us and our sector is not recognised as a labour sector.

8 March is an important day for women's movements around the world. In Nepal, we celebrate it along with our sisters. We demand an end to discriminatory systems in our society and at workplaces. This year in Nepal, our demands include the expansion of women's access to creative technologies. WOFOWON is reiterating its demand for recognition of our work, decent working conditions, and stronger social protection.

Our key goals for this year:

1. To strengthen our movement by uniting our worker members across the country.
2. To continue to demand decent working conditions.
3. To continue doing public advocacy to change people's negative attitudes towards us.



Courtesy: Srijana Pun, Executive Director, [Women Forum for Women in Nepal \(WOFOWON\)](#), Nepal

Use IWD Moments to Appreciate Women

AN INTERVIEW WITH SRI WAHYUNI BY AMIN MUFTIYANAH, YASANTI



Sri Wahyuni currently serves as the head of Bunda Berkarya Women Homebased Workers' Union in Wonolelo Village, Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. She is also a member of the Women Homebased Workers' Federation at the Bantul district level.

Sri sees the importance of International Women's Day (IWD) for herself and other women homeworkers because they can use the IWD moment to give

appreciation to women. The opinion of most people who see women only working in the household and taking care of the family is not true. Because of this, a campaign is needed for wider community engagement, especially in the Special Region of Yogyakarta, to respect women workers and to encourage recognition and protection



Photo: The campaign to encourage recognition and protection for informal workers as workers during the celebration of International Women's Day. The group held social services and collective action.

for women informal workers. This special day is commemorated by the women homeworkers' union, both organisationally and network allies, through joint actions, social services, distribution of necessities, information awareness about homeworkers as workers, and other related activities.

Apart from International Women's Day and Day to end violence against women, May Day is an important moment for Sri and her group. Sri has experienced domestic violence both economically and physically from her partner – she also married young at the age of 16. Because of that, Sri feels that the Day to end violence against Women is an important moment to invite the public to campaign against violence against women which so far, many women have experienced. "Don't let a bad experience befall her again", Sri said. On Anti-Violence Against Women Day, Sri and the women

homeworkers union carry out joint actions, public dialogues, and other supporting activities.

Within this year, unions and federations of women homeworkers will carry out, among other things, social services which were delayed during the Covid-19 period. With the strengthening of the economy, forming women's co-operatives is expected to accommodate women's economic interests, capacity building, strengthening good networks at local, national and international levels with Yasanti. We are also willing to be involved in meetings with other networks such as those facilitated by GAATW, both in person and online.

Yogyakarta, 22 February 2023



Courtesy: Amin Muftiyannah, [Yasanti](#) Translation by Dewi Nova (GAATW-IS)



A Day to Celebrate our Revolution

SUTTHASINEE KAEWLEKLAI

8 March is the commemoration of a day when women workers from a garment factory in the United States stood up together to demand fair working conditions. On 8 March 2002, after working for 14 years in a garment factory, I was dismissed from my job. Only because I, together with my

fellow workers, celebrated Women's Day by organising a protest in our factory to demand regular payment and fair wages. So for me, this is a day to celebrate our revolution, our collective struggle for justice.

May Day, the first day of May, is also a day when we celebrate the power of unity. Workers join the street parade and together, we voice our demand for fair work. Another remarkable day for workers is 7 October, marked as the World Day for Decent Work. We celebrate the day by participating in public events to demonstrate

our collective strength. All these 3 days are important days for women workers to feel and experience the power of joining hands in solidarity.

“...THIS IS A DAY TO CELEBRATE OUR REVOLUTION, OUR COLLECTIVE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE.”



Our priority advocacy issues this year:

- We demand fair wages for migrant workers.
- We demand non-discrimination in social welfare services for migrant workers.
- We demand rights to organise and negotiate for migrant workers.



Courtesy: Migrant Workers Rights Network, Thailand

A Day to Love, Appreciate, Respect, and Honour Women

UMA SEDHAI, CHAIRPERSON, AMKAS NEPAL, MORANG

I am a returnee migrant worker from Israel and working on the issue of labour migration since 2012. I am the Founder and Chairperson of AMKAS Nepal in Morang District.

“WOMEN’S DAY REMINDS ME OF MY OWN LIFE JOURNEY, AND THE JOURNEYS OF OTHER WOMEN I HAVE WORKED WITH. IT REMINDS ME OF THE POWER THAT WE HAVE.”



International Women’s Day is important to me. It is a day to love, appreciate, respect, and honour women for the important role they play in their families, societies, and countries. As daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, caregivers, workers in all kinds of small and big jobs, and leaders.



When I migrated to Israel, I took up new responsibilities for my family until I became financially independent. Women’s Day reminds me of my life journey, and the journeys of other women I have worked with. It reminds me of the power that we have.

Other special days we celebrate in AMKAS Nepal are:

- 25 November to 10 December: 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence
- 18 December: International Migrant Workers Day
- 16 June: International Domestic Workers Day

The key issues that our group would like to address and advocate for this year are:

Reintegration of women migrant workers: We will engage with the local government and other concerned stakeholders for sustainable reintegration of women migrant workers.

Safe foreign employment and reduction of human trafficking: We will continue to hold awareness programmes at the community level on the migration process and laws of Foreign Employment, and Trafficking.

Skills, Capacity, and Leadership Development of returnee women migrant workers and survivors of human trafficking.



Awareness raising in the community



Courtesy: Aaprabasi Mahila Kamdar Samuha (AMKAS), Nepal

Breaking Taboos Through IWD Campaign

UMI

My name is Umi. I am a coordinator of Dewi Sinta Women's Community. Dewi Sinta's Women's Community is a group that always helps and



fights for the rights of marginalised women. When women approach us regarding cases of violence, especially domestic violence, we make time to listen to her, talk to her with empathy, and support her to take the next steps to address the problem.

Our community consists of survivors of violence, women who care about gender equality, and women who are living in regions that have a history of social conflict or are prone to natural disasters.



8 March is an important day for our community because we celebrate our collective power on this day. Women's rights were taboo in the villages when we began working. Women felt ashamed to talk about their experiences of domestic violence even to their mothers, sisters, or close friends. Some of us had reached out to LRC-KJHAM, a women's rights organisation in Semarang, to seek support in extreme cases of domestic violence. In addition to legal support and counselling, we also got guidance from them to create our community-level group to address domestic violence. That was how the Dewi Sinta group was formed. We have been working in our community since 2014 to support women to recognise their strength and power.

For our community group, the 16 days of activism from 25 November to 10 December are also important. We have many community programmes on those days.

Our goal is to make our village Bandarharjo a village free from violence. We will continue to work hard until that becomes a reality.



LRC-KJHAM

Dampingi bukan Tauhi

Courtesy: [Legal Resources Center- Untuk Keadilan Jender Dan Hak Asasi Manusia \(LRC-KJHAM\), Indonesia](#)

¡Las Calles Son Nuestras!

CORPORACIÓN ESPACIOS DE MUJER



¡LAS CALLES SON NUESTRAS!



MARCHA 8M - 2023.



Photo montage in celebration of International Women’s Day on 8 March 2023.

Corporación Espacios de Mujer is a GAATW member based in Medellin, Colombia. They focus on human trafficking by providing care to victims and developing care methodologies and protocols as well as research. They support people (especially women) victims and survivors of human trafficking, returnee migrants, and women in prostitution. Using a gender and human rights perspective, they work towards empowering people to recover and claim their rights.



Courtesy: [Corporación Espacios de Mujer, Colombia](#)



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