### STAND UP FOR THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS. EVERYWHERE.



## 2023-2024 Impact Report

## AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN

## **Tackling a Global Crisis**

As climate disasters, conflicts, and displacement converge, their consequences cascade, vulnerabilities are growing. [...] Human trafficking continues to target the vulnerable, and we see this in persistent as well as emerging trends. Women and girls remain the biggest share of detected victims worldwide, accounting for 61% of the total in 2022, and most of them continue to be trafficked for sexual exploitation, a pattern that has carried on for many years now.

Women and girls account for 92% of detected victims trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Since 2019, there has been an increase of in recorded child victims of trafficking. The detection of girl victims of trafficking has increased by 38% from 2019 to 2022.

Young girls are mainly being trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation as well as forced marriage.

-UNODC 2024 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons

## A Message from our Executive Director

When the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) was established in 1988, there was little understanding about the phenomenon of human trafficking and sexual exploitation - and no specific laws to combat it. CATW was instrumental in drafting key legislation to define, prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons, and advocated for their enactment and implementation at the national and international levels. Nevertheless, today human trafficking is the fastest growing global criminal enterprise and the most profitable after drug trafficking. The call to address these human rights violations is more urgent than ever.

Our 2023-2024 Impact Report reflects the scope of CATW's committed efforts to tackle this scourge amid an ever-evolving landscape of political tensions, climate crises, conflicts and war, all rendering women and girls more vulnerable to violence, sexual exploitation, and femicide. Yet instead of despair, we organize and take action. From Argentina to South Africa, from Sweden to the United States, we invest in grassroots efforts and survivor leadership to dismantle patriarchal institutions and socio-cultural patterns that allow such suffering with impunity.

We also remain dedicated to ensuring that governments, policymakers, and the public understand the inextricable links between sex trafficking and the system of prostitution. We are honored, every day, to stand with a thriving worldwide movement of sex trade survivors who are leading the charge in helping us all recognize prostitution for what it is: male violence against women and girls that must end.

As this report outlines, the core of CATW's mission remains unchanged: we fight for women's and girls' fundamental right to health, bodily integrity, security, and freedom. Together, we continue the march toward justice and equality for women and girls - in law, in practice, and in culture - with determination and joy.

Thank you and in solidarity,

Taina Bien-Aimé Executive Director





## Who We Are

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) is a leading and one of the oldest international organizations dedicated to preventing and ending the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls worldwide as forms of gender-based violence and discrimination.

Through an approach rooted in women's rights and human rights principles, we advocate for strong laws and policies, raise public awareness, and support survivor leadership.

We advocate on behalf of women and girls from marginalized populations who are at risk or have been victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, and who are disproportionately women and girls of color - Black, Brown, Asian, and Indigenous - with intersectional vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit.

CATW believes that systemic change is fundamental to changing social norms and eradicating centuries-old harmful cultural practices that hinder efforts to secure equality for women and girls in our communities and around the world.

## What We Do

### **Advocate for Strong Laws and Policies**

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At local, national, and international levels CATW calls on governments and policymakers to provide services and exit strategies for victims of sexual exploitation and to hold accountable those who harm and exploit them in the sex trade.

#### **Raise Public Awareness**

We engage in high-level campaigns to educate policymakers, legislators, and the United Nations to ensure that laws protect the rights, safety, and lives of women and girls. We also partner with survivor leaders to increase the public's understanding of human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Support Survivor Leadership Globally

We support the leadership of sex trade survivors in every aspect of campaigns, outreach, and participation as policy experts on panel discussions, official visits with decision makers, including within the United Nations system, and with media.



## Advocating for Strong Laws and Policies: **The Equality Model**

We call on governments to enact legislation that protects and enshrines the principles of equality for women and girls.

The Equality Model is a legal framework that recognizes the system of prostitution as a form of male violence against women (99% of sex buyers are men) and genderbased discrimination. An effective tool to prevent sex trafficking, the Equality Model (also known as the Swedish, Nordic, Abolitionist, or Survivor Model) was first enacted in Sweden in 1999, and does the following:

- Solely decriminalizes individuals, who are overwhelmingly women and girls, bought and sold for sexual acts
- Holds sex buyers, pimps, brothel owners, and other exploiters accountable for the harm they cause and the crimes they perpetrate
- Provides prostituted persons with comprehensive services, and offers exit strategies

To date, eight jurisdictions have followed Sweden in enacting the Equality Model: Iceland (2008), Norway (2009), Canada (2014), Northern Ireland (2014), France (2016), Republic of Ireland (2017) Israel (2018), and the U.S. state of Maine (2023).

• Commits to educating the public about the devastating impact of prostitution, including on society, and how the sex trade is a barrier to equality



## Groundbreaking Legislative Victory in the U.S.

In July 2023, Maine made history as the first jurisdiction in the U.S. to pass the Equality Model, codifying its commitment to recognizing prostitution as a form of violence and discrimination that the state must address from a human rights perspective.

Governor Janet Mills signed An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation and An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation, which together solely decriminalize prostituted people and offer them the services they need, while maintaining penalties against sex buyers and other exploiters for the grievous harm and violence they inflict. The law also seals records of prostitution convictions so survivors can rebuild their lives without fear of discrimination in housing, employment, and in other sectors.

The passage of Maine's Equality Model was the culmination of years of tireless dedication and courage from sex trade survivors, and the vision of the law's sponsor, Rep. Lois Galgay Reckitt, who passed away three months after its enactment. CATW is proud to have also invested in efforts leading to this groundbreaking success.



















## New Yorkers for the Equality Model

In 2019, CATW co-founded and co-convened New Yorkers for the Equality Model (NYFEM) with Sanctuary for Families, the National Organization for Women (NOW-NYC) and others partners around New York State. NYFEM is a survivor-led network comprising advocates, frontline service providers, and sex trade survivors, working together for the passage of the Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act (sponsored by Senator Liz Krueger and Assembly Member Pamela Hunter).

#### **Centering Survivor Voices**

In July 2023, *The New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof sat down with CATW's Melanie Thompson, and NYFEM member, for a conversation about her experiences as a sex trafficked child and her work today as a survivor leader. Kristof's piece "When Children Are Bought and Sold" highlights Melanie's journey from being sold into and then trapped in the system of prostitution to becoming a determined and influential voice in the fight for equality and justice for sex trade survivors.



#### Educating Policymakers and the Public

In August 2023, NYFEM held a press conference calling on New York City's leadership to take urgent action to address the city's sex trafficking crisis. The extensive media coverage, including in *The New York Times*, led to consequential meetings with the New York City Mayor's office and other top stakeholders.

## New Yorkers for the Equality Mod

#### **Calling for Justice**

In January 2024, members of NYFEM and the Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, Jr., provided testimony and called on the New York State Legislature to eliminate the five-year statute of limitations for sex trafficking survivors to file claims against their perpetrators.

#### **Collaborating with Local Leaders**

In the winter of 2024, members of NYFEM joined a team of law enforcement - including the NYPD, the FBI, and the District Attorney's Office, to directly tackle New York City's sex trafficking crisis. The team's approach - apprehending pimps, traffickers, and sex buyers, and offering trauma-informed services to the individuals being sold - is an encouraging step towards bringing the Equality Model to New York.

#### **Engaging Policymakers**

In May 2024, NYFEM members traveled to Albany, New York's state capital, to support the Sex Trade Survivors Justice and Equality Act. Alongside Assembly Member Pamela Hunter and several other legislators, a powerful coalition of survivors and advocates organized a press conference and called for the passage of this groundbreaking bill.

## Strengthening a Global Coalition ASSOCIAT Nigeria OKO ONLUS

In January 2023, CATW joined The Gloria Steinem Equality Fund to End Sex Trafficking - including colleagues from Associazione Iroko Onlus, CAP International, the Sisterhood Is Global Institute, and SPACE International - for film screenings in Abuja and Benin City of Kenneth Gyang's *Òlòturé*, a movie about sex trafficking and prostitution in Nigeria.

The press conference, film screenings, and accompanying panel discussions were designed to both raise awareness about Nigeria's sex trafficking crisis and to advocate for the Equality Model, which African sex trade survivors call the Sankara Equality Model, as a way to prevent and combat the rampant commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls.

## **Strengthening a Global Coalition** South Africa

In January 2023, in collaboration with survivor networks in South Africa, CATW launched a global campaign to oppose the Ministry of Justice's proposed bill to decriminalize the sex trade. We submitted official comments to the Constitutional Review Board setting forth arguments that the bill contravened international law and the South African Constitution. In June 2023, the Ministry of Justice withdrew the decriminalization proposal, stating concerns that it may indeed violate constitutional law.

CATW also worked with survivor leaders across South Africa to launch a video campaign speaking out against the government's efforts to decriminalize sex buyers, brothels, and sex tourism. "We are the Descendants of Saartjie Baartman" honors the legacy of Sarah Baartman, a South African woman sold to European men and sex trafficked to England and France. The survivors directly appealed to South African policymakers to recognize prostitution as male violence against women and pass the Sankara Equality Model.



In 2024, CATW began its engagement with South African attorneys to draft an *amicus* curiae brief in the case SWEAT vs. Ministry of Justice et. al., which is before the High Court of South Africa Western Cape Division, Cape Town. The *amicus*, whose lead is our South African partner, Embrace Dignity, will challenge the arguments presented by the plaintiff to decriminalize and legalize the sex trade in South Africa.



### NORWAY

In August 2023, CATW's executive director met, both in Oslo and Arendal, with top leaders of FOKUS (Norway's international development agency), the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions/Labor Organization, and Kvinnefronten Norge (the Women's Front) to ensure that Norway duly implements its 2009 Sex Purchase Act. CATW also encouraged the Norwegian government to appoint a Trafficking in Persons Ambassador-at-large to help promote the law globally.

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### **SWEDEN**

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CATW continued its collaborations with the Swedish women's rights movement and Sweden's Ambassador-at-large for Combating Trafficking in Persons to advance its Sex Purchase Ban Act, originally known as the Swedish Model, worldwide.

## Strengthening a Global Coalition Canada

In May 2024, CATW was thrilled to participate in the 4th World Congress against the prostitution of women and girls in Montreal, Canada. The historic event was organized by CAP International and four North American organizations, La CLES -Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (Montreal), Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter (Vancouver), EVA Center (Boston), and Breaking Free (Minneapolis).

For three days, survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution, direct service providers, grassroots organizations, academics, parliamentarians, and other officials convened to advocate for the abolition of prostitution and to highlight the sex trade as a system of oppression, one that targets the most marginalized women and girls. The Congress opened with a World Survivors' March, presumed the largest of its kind to date worldwide, and continued with days of workshops and panel discussions led by over 40 speakers from around the globe.

## **Supporting Survivor Leadership**

Our Survivor Leadership Fund enables us to amplify the leadership and advocacy of sex trade survivors around the globe.

We denounce any attempt to categorize prostitution as 'work,' knowing that prostitution is violence and one of the deepest and oldest forms of inequality [...] We call on OAS members to recognize that the sex trade is a form of femicidal violence and to enact laws to end the demand for prostitution."

> -Sonia Sánchez Survivor leader & CATW Board Member

### Latin America and the Caribbean

In June 2024, CATW sponsored the participation of survivor leaders from Argentina and Colombia - members of CATW-Latin America and the Caribbean and from AMADH, a survivor-led network based in Argentina to attend the Organization of American States (OAS) General Assembly, which was held in Asunción, Paraguay.

This marked the first time that abolitionist sex trade survivors joined the civil society forum of the OAS. Following the meeting, survivor leaders circulated a petition rejecting the concept of prostitution as a form of labor and calling on OAS member states to offer services and hold perpetrators accountable, including sex buyers.



## **Supporting Survivor Leadership**

#### South Africa

In May 2023, CATW sponsored Section 10, a survivor-led organization that offers training and education to sex trade survivors so they can rebuild their lives and support their families. Section 10 offers classes in computer skills, nail care, sewing, and fashion design to students across five districts of Gauteng, South Africa.

Section 10 also educates participants about the survivorled abolitionist movement in South Africa and beyond, sharing the advocacy skills needed to ensure that their government enacts laws that prevent sex trafficking by combatting the demand for prostitution and offering comprehensive services to women exploited in the sex trade.

### USA

In March 2024, CATW launched its first podcast series, *Exit Wound: The Journey of Exploitation and Beyond*, hosted by survivor leader and CATW's Outreach and Advocacy Coordinator Melanie Thompson.

Each of the 12 episodes featured insightful and candid conversations between sex trade survivors as they examine what it means to survive sexual exploitation, from navigating systems and services to drawing professional and personal boundaries in advocacy work. The series was distributed on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and YouTube, garnering thousands of listens, and is currently being integrated into direct services curricula.

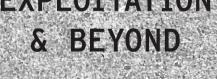


### host & survivor leader MELANIE THOMPSON

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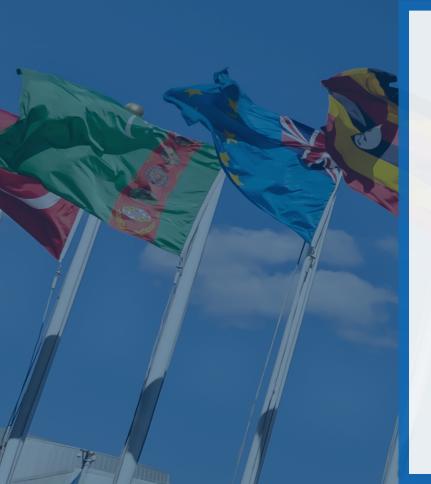




## **CATW** at the United Nations

In early 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls issued a call for input for her report on prostitution, upon which CATW joined over 300 stakeholders in submitting testimony.

In June 2024, the Special Rapporteur published her groundbreaking report, "Prostitution and violence against women and girls" which - for the first in the history of the UN system - highlighted the links between the system of prostitution, violence against women, and sex trafficking. It defines prostitution as "a system of exploitation and an aggregated form of male violence against women and girls that intersects with other forms of structural discrimination."



Like other harmful cultural practices, the system of prostitution exerts control and abuse of power over women, which Member States must not deny or ignore, irrespective of their national laws and whether the sex trade falls under legal or illegal commercially profitable enterprises. The effect of the myriad forms of violence inherent to prostitution 'deprives women of the equal enjoyment, exercise and knowledge of human rights and fundamental freedoms.' While the sex trade, its supporters and consumers have successfully marketed prostitution as inevitable, it was in fact invented, and therefore can be undone.

> -CATW submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls

## CATW at the United Nations

#### CSW67 AND CSW68

Each March, CATW joins Member States, human rights experts, and other NGOs at the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), analyzing our collective progress and reaffirming our commitment to achieving equality for women and girls.

At CSW67, CATW partnered with Equality Now, UN Women, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/ODIHR, and UN Office on Drugs and Crime to host Technological challenges and solutions in combatting trafficking of women and girls in overlapping emergencies, with keynote speaker Theresa May, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. In another CSW67 forum, survivor leaders Vednita Carter, Alika Kinan, Ally-Marie Diamond, and Shandra Woworuntu joined moderator Marta Torres, who represents CATW in the European Union Civil Society Platform against Human Trafficking, for a key panel Sexual exploitation of rural women: from victims to leaders.

At CSW68, a coalition from Sweden, including the Swedish Minister for Gender Equality, Paulina Brandberg, joined the Swedish Consul General of New York, Camilla Mellander, and CATW's Executive Director Taina Bien-Aimé in meeting with the Brooklyn District Attorney's office to discuss the two jurisdictions' approaches in addressing sex trafficking and prostitution.

### **UNAIDS**

Throughout 2023-2024, CATW and its partner, Frontline Women's Fund, continued conversations with UNAIDS Executive Director, Winnie Byanyima, and her staff, urging UNAIDS to include "women and girls" in its definition of key populations at high risk of HIV/AIDS, as well as to end UNAIDS's calls on governments to decriminalize the sex trade, and instead align its policies with international law and human rights principles related to the exploitation of prostitution.

## CATW-Asia Pacific and CATW-Latin America and the Caribbean



CATW-LAC sponsored Sonia Sánchez's film tour throughout Mexico "Our Revenge is to Be Happy" August 2024

CATW-Asia Pacific and CATW-Latin America and the Caribbean each work to promote awareness about the human rights of women and girls and initiate action against global sexual exploitation and violence against women, particularly prostitution and trafficking; advocate before appropriate UN bodies and other international and regional systems; link climate change to increased vulnerabilities of sex trafficking; help promote international cooperation to combat sexual exploitation; support survivors of prostitution; and work with men and boys to prevent all forms of sexual violence.



World March of Women International Committee Tagaytay City, Philippines October 2024

## **CATW** in the News

### The New Hork Times

"When Children Are Bought and Sold," Nicholas Kristof, link. "What it Means to Call Prostitution 'Sex Work'," Pamela Paul, <u>link</u>.

## Gothamist

"Trafficking Survivors call on Mayor Adams to crack down on 'johns' who pay for sex," Caroline Lewis, link.

"Why Some Advocates are Pushing Back on Decriminalization of the Sex Trade," link.



"NYC crime: NYPD ride along exposes illicit sex trafficking, what officers are doing to stop it," link.



"Decriminalizing Sex Work Will Create Free for All for Exploitation," link.



## **CATW** in the News



"Poor Things and Misogynistic Dreams: How Abusers Sexually Mistreat Disabled Women," Taina Bien-Aimé, link.

Get Stuff Done-Cast NYC Mayor's Office

"Get Stuff Done-Cast"," Mayor Eric Adams podcast with Taina Bien-Aimé, link.

**PassBlue** 

"UN Rights Experts Make False Promises About Prostitution," Taina Bien-Aimé, link.



"NY Bill to End Statute of Limitations on Sex Crimes Could Help Survivors Seek Justice," Ally Dickson, link.



"The Digital War on Women: The Link Between Online Misogyny and Human Trafficking," Taina Bien-Aimé, <u>link</u>.

















WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT SUMMIT COLLEGE OF MENOMINEE NATION, WISCONSIN, USA







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## AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN



