

# CATHII INFO



BULLETIN PUBLIÉ PAR LE COMITÉ D'ACTION  
CONTRE LA TRAITE HUMAINE  
INTERNE ET INTERNATIONALE

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## Inspirational Encounter with RATTMAQ

On January 18, the regular meeting of CATHII members took place. As part of our main advocacy aimed at challenging elected officials and provincial decision-makers on the implementation of a Quebec action plan against human trafficking, we wanted to know a little more about the situation of migrant agricultural workers, a population at risk of exploitation and forced labor.

The CATHII invited Michel Pilon, director of the “Réseau d’aide aux travailleuses et travailleurs migrants agricoles du Québec” (RATTMAQ), to take part in a conversation with our action network. An interview with Michel Pilon allowed us not only to discover a passionate and fascinating activist, but also an organization that intervenes in many ways to protect and support migrant agricultural workers in Quebec:

- reception of agricultural workers as soon as they arrive at the international airport to create contact and distribute to workers explanatory leaflets, in Spanish, on their rights and recourses;
- when a worker suffers from serious exploitation, the RATTMAQ can ensure that the person leaves the work place quickly, benefiting from emergency accommodation and support in order to obtain a work permit allowing him to start another job with a new employer;
- legal support is offered when the worker wants to file a complaint against an abusive situation. Most often, the worker prefers to remain silent, fearing to find himself without a job and to lose the possibility, in many cases, of providing financial support to his relatives.

Fortunately, as Michel Pilon reminded us, most employers treat their workers well, considering themselves lucky to be able to benefit from a competent workforce, certainly valuable in this period of staff shortage.

## Inspirational Encounter with RATTMAQ (continued)

For the Migrant Agricultural Workers Assistance Network of Quebec, the most effective measure to put an end to situations of exploitation suffered by some agricultural workers would be the abolition of the closed work permit and its replacement by an open work permit. The closed permit being nominal, therefore limited to a single employer, the worker does not have the freedom to leave the job in the event of abuse or mistreatment.



The members of CATHII were impressed by all the work done by RATTMAQ to ensure the protection and defense of migrant agricultural workers. CATHII considers, like several organizations, that a closed work permit places the employer in a position of strength and the migrant worker in a situation of greater vulnerability. An open work permit granted to temporary migrant workers could prove to be an effective measure for the protection of their fundamental rights.

To learn more about the rights of migrant agricultural workers, you can watch the video clips produced by RATTMAQ on the rights of migrant agricultural workers, by visiting: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=rattmaq> (post tab)

France Laforge, organizer

### **SOME INDICATIONS OF FORCED LABOR:**

- Unpaid and/or minimum wages
- Abnormally long work days
- Failure to comply with statutory holidays
- Working conditions as defined in contract not respected
- Unsanitary and/or overpopulated lodging
- Holding back identity documents;
- No access to health care
- Restriction on movement;
- Ban on speaking to others;
- Deportation threats or other psychological abuses.

## It's off to a Good Start!

The CATHII-University project at the UN, which aims to train students on the issues of human trafficking, is continuing for a second year. The promotion made it possible to reach more than twenty students from three different universities, namely the Université de Montréal, the Université de Laval and McGill University, and from very varied field of learning: psychology, criminology, public affairs and international relations, social work and political science.

This year again, it is a question of transmitting to students the learning and knowledge of CATHII, both internationally and locally. Through the training sessions that began on January 27, the formators discussed and exchanged with the students on the structures and systemic effects of trafficking, as well as on the actions and allies of CATHII. This passing on of knowledge is designed to prepare the cohort to participate in the workshops on human trafficking offered by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which will take place from March 14 to 25, 2022.

More training sessions are planned in the coming weeks. Stay tuned for the next CATHII-Info for the continuation of the project

Kavitha Culasingam Project Manager

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## Insights from Survivors of Human Trafficking in Latin America



The participation of the intercongregational members of CATHII in a webinar in Spanish against human trafficking, last December 2, was lived as a great experience of interculturality. This event, offering Spanish-French interpretation, allowed 13 French-speaking participants from Quebec to get in touch with the reality of trafficking in Latin America.

During this webinar, three "survivors" from Mexico, Colombia and Argentina testified they experienced going through hell, either in sexual exploitation or in forced labor. They acknowledged with gratitude the help received from a religious congregation and support groups, precious resources that paved their way to taking charge of their own lives.

So, after going back to school, each of these courageous women now holds the position of president or facilitator of a group of survivors of human trafficking in their respective countries. This webinar also confirmed the importance of maintaining a relationship of equals with survivors by welcoming them as workers, and not as victims. This event gave us momentum and fueled our solidarity among the 15 countries of the three Americas. On behalf of CATHII, Thank you! ¡Gracias! Long live the performers!

Lise Gagnon, delegate for CATHII at Talitha Kum, Western Hemisphere

## Research on Empowerment of Women Survivors is ongoing



Over the past few months, CATHII members have been kept informed of advances in research on the empowerment of survivors of trafficking. Remember that this research aims to document the best practices of the community sector, and therefore of civil society organizations intervening in this perspective so that survivors can regain power over their lives and their future. Often, the media covers the release of victims of sexual exploitation and/or forced labor but do we know, from the mouth of those who receive services, what types of intervention allow them to regain control of their lives?

During the last regular meetings of the CATHII, the delegated members were able to hear testimonies from survivors on post-trafficking and their journey.

For more than a year, Renaude Grégoire has gone through more than 200 different articles and reports to take stock of the state of the literature on empowerment. In order to seek out the best post trafficking interventions, including those promoting empowerment, a questionnaire was developed and submitted for discussion to the research supervision committee and other CATHII allies. It has been translated into English, Spanish and Portuguese. The list of organizations from various countries likely to want to participate in the research having been drawn up, the coming months promise to be rich in discoveries of initiatives, programs and actions supporting the journey of those who have been able to stand up!

Renaude Grégoire, lead researcher and member of CATHII

## Members en route to February 8

In preparation for the feast of Saint Josephine Bakhita celebrated on February 8, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary conducted a campaign of 500 actions in order to renew the collective stand of the Congregation against human trafficking. Even in the infirmary, we acted through education by watching videos presented on the CATHII website, by signing the petition, by praying... Each sister and associate person had a calendar of daily intentions against trafficking.

To learn more about the campaign, visit the SNJM newsletter from [this link](https://snjm.org/wp-content/uploads/SNJM-Jan2022-infolettre-JPIC-FR-FINAL-2.pdf).

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Lise Gagnon s.n.j.m., member of CATHII



### CATHII 2020-2021, ANNUAL REPORT

The English annual report is now available on our web site. Please feel free to distribute.

[www.cathii.org/sites/www.cathii.org/files/Annual%20Report%20of%20CATHII%202020-21.pdf](http://www.cathii.org/sites/www.cathii.org/files/Annual%20Report%20of%20CATHII%202020-21.pdf)

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