

Building a Home, Building Solidarity

Anti-Racism Movement
Annual Report: 2023



حركة مناهضة
العنصرية



Anti-Racism
Movement



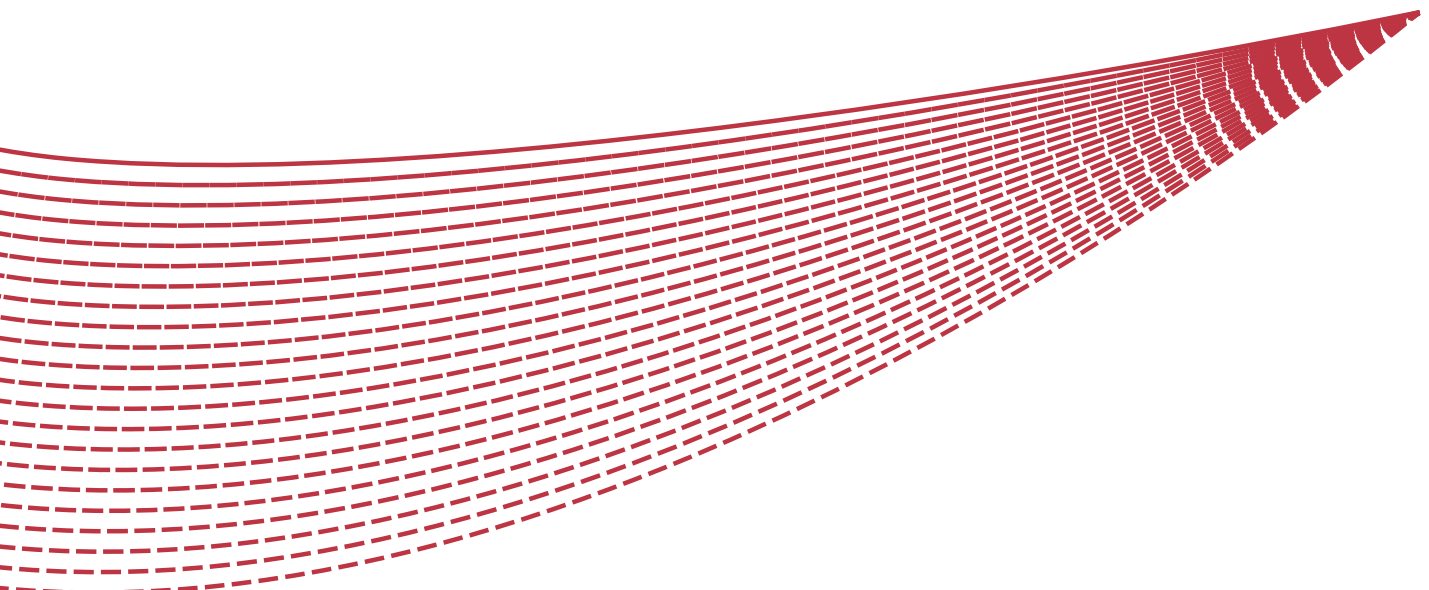
MCC member original theater production, "What If?" December 2023

MCC media training session on street photography, spring 2023



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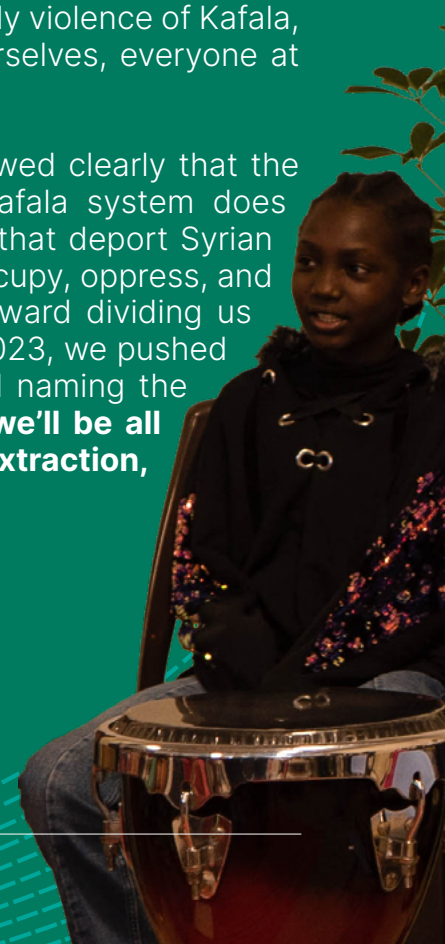
Opening Letter

The Anti-Racism Movement and our Migrant Community Center have always been a home for women migrant domestic workers—and so many others who experience the harms of the Kafala (sponsorship) system. This includes Syrian and Sudanese refugees, asylum seekers, migrant workers of many nationalities, and their families. Together, we fight not only for the abolition of Kafala, but for long-term alternatives to structural violence, grounded in our grassroots feminist values of economic, racial, and gender justice. Through this work, we have learned how deeply our many struggles for liberation are connected, including those for a free Palestine and for queer liberation.

For our many communities, 2023 was unbelievably painful, terrifying, and deadly. In Lebanon, we experienced extreme manifestations of xenophobia, racism, homophobia, and transphobia, with relentless attacks on migrant activists, Syrian communities, and LGBTIQ people. The most vulnerable groups continue to be falsely blamed for the ongoing political and economic crisis, targeted by increasingly hostile political rhetoric and physical violence from both state and non-state actors. We also witnessed the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza and experienced the escalating war on South Lebanon. These crises forced us into emergency response mode, but also re-emphasized the importance of our core work.

In that spirit, we finally opened our new MCC space, in hopes that it will serve as a long-term home for our members and our movements. Beyond the violence of this year, we have survived thirteen years of instability, leaving six previous community center locations due to racism and harassment. We have now built a new foundation, with the space we need for our growing membership, ambitions, and connected political fights. It is thus with renewed energy and purpose that we move into 2024 and rededicate ourselves to our ever-intersecting struggles. We recommit ourselves to solidarity with all people living under Kafala and the many regimes that enable it. With our new center, we grow our capacity not only to respond to the daily violence of Kafala, but to also look toward the long-term change that we owe to ourselves, everyone at MCC, and beyond.

This year was filled with so much loss and violence, but this showed clearly that the liberation of our communities is inextricably connected. The Kafala system does not exist in a silo, but is interwoven with the forces and systems that deport Syrian refugees, that displace Sudanese communities fleeing war, that occupy, oppress, and commit genocide of Palestinians. There is so much effort put toward dividing us and compartmentalizing our experiences as different “issues.” In 2023, we pushed back on this false separation, re-connecting our movements, and naming the common root causes that we resist. **When we abolish Kafala, we’ll be all the more able to end the other interconnected systems of extraction, exploitation, and violence.**



“ We cannot change the kafala system [today] but we can change ourselves. We might be able to change it eventually and it might take a lot of time, but for now we should support and empower each other. ”

2023 oral interview with an MCC member*

**We are not including the names of individual MCC members, due to security risks and the state's crackdown on migrant worker activism.*

Jam session with MCC youth, fall 2023



About ARM

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Launched in 2010, the Anti-Racism Movement (ARM) began as a grassroots collective of Lebanese feminist activists and migrant domestic workers living in Lebanon, and has been a registered non-profit organization for over thirteen years. As migrant workers are unable to register their own organizations and are ignored by many actors, ARM was created as one of few organizations in Lebanon focusing specifically on migrant workers, and one of even fewer working with migrant workers on long-term and sustainable change with an anti-racism approach.

We work to abolish the Kafala system and build an alternative future for all migrant workers and racialized groups in Lebanon, with a specific focus on migrant domestic workers. Our theory of change shifts the positionality of migrant workers from “beneficiaries” to leaders and agents of change, taking a migrant-centered and feminist approach throughout our programming.

Our Values



Migrant Voices First
We privilege the voices of migrant workers in every aspect of our work.



Care at the Core
We adopt feminist ethics of care in our work, where we value attentiveness, responsibility, responsiveness, compassion.



Justice
We employ a social justice framework as the basis towards upholding fundamental human rights for everyone in our communities.



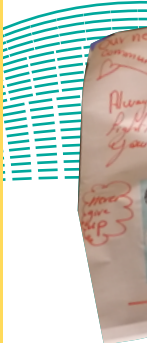
Solidarity
We value the expression and practice of solidarity among all marginalized communities as a necessary alliance against oppressive and unjust systems.



Political Engagement
We view our everyday work as political and seek to always address the larger social, cultural, and economic structures that enable discrimination, abuse, and rights violations.



Community
We value the importance of building safe and strong communities that sustain activism and offer supportive social networks for migrants and their allies.



Our Vision

A just society where all migrants enjoy decent living and working conditions.

Our Mission

We work to achieve social, economic, and gender justice for all migrant workers and racialized groups in Lebanon.

Our Objectives

1. Advance structural change against racism in Lebanon
2. Strengthen and support migrant communities to self-advocate and take collective action
3. Benefit from a healthy, well-functioning, sustainable organization

Our Beliefs

- Migrant-centered solutions are the strongest and most genuine challenge to all forms of racism in Lebanon.
- Strong communities are more able to support and represent themselves politically.
- Influencing narratives and increasing understanding is a vital step in changing attitudes and beliefs.
- A shift in attitudes and beliefs results in less resistance to change and increased action to support if barriers to change are removed.
- Structural change will improve the situation of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon and the region.
- Only by working on individual behavior and structures simultaneously will we be able to achieve our mission.
- Improving internal processes, investing in staff wellbeing and finding as many ways as possible to become self-sustainable will better protect us from the crisis context in Lebanon.



Interactive workshop, ARM stakeholder consultation workshops, January 2023



International Domestic Workers Day demo, June 2023

Our Context in 2023

2023 was ARM’s year of working to build stability in the instability, in the face of multi-year economic and political crises, homophobic and xenophobic attacks, deportations of dear migrant activists, and the gruesome war on Gaza and South Lebanon. Migrant worker and refugee communities in Lebanon continue to live under the structural and interpersonal violence of the Kafala system, which underlies all their other struggles. At the same time, 2023 finally brought a small measure of stabilization in the (extremely high) cost of living, as the economic crisis entered its fourth year. This created the opportunity for a renewed energy to organize and strengthen migrant communities after years of rising violence, evacuations, and deportations.

What is Kafala? The Kafala (“sponsorship” in Arabic) system is a set of policies and practices used primarily in the Gulf States, Jordan, and Lebanon to hire migrant workers. There are currently 35 million people living under Kafala in the region, a huge number of whom are hired for low-paid and devalued labor. Kafala is the main legal framework enabling the rampant oppression of migrant workers in Lebanon. The large majority are migrant domestic workers who live in their employers’ homes, and are often completely dependent on their employers for mobility, immigration status, income, and access to basic resources. As a result of the intersection of gendered and racialized global inequity, domestic workers in Lebanon are mainly women from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

How does Kafala work in Lebanon? Kafala ties migrant workers to a specific employer, or kafeel, as the basis for their residency in Lebanon. Even in situations of abuse or withheld wages, workers cannot legally leave or change employers without their permission, forcing them to stay in abusive conditions or leave and become undocumented. The Lebanese state systematically denies workers under Kafala the rights guaranteed to all other categories of labor: they are excluded from labor law, cannot create their own union, and the few rights they have lack any real enforcement mechanism.

Who benefits? The Lebanese government and recruitment agencies earn approximately \$100 million per year from fees paid by employers and workers themselves. Many employers benefit from the low pay and long, unregulated hours of labor performed by migrant workers under Kafala. Employers of domestic workers, for example, no longer need to perform the bulk of the care work in their homes, and can thus work more outside the home and increase their income.

International Domestic Workers’ Day demo, June 2023



What's different about 2023?

Over these past four years, the situation in Lebanon has been steadily deteriorating due to the worsening economic crisis. Migrant workers were already marginalized and under-resourced—but Lebanon's bankruptcy, the ongoing [economic, financial, and political crises](#), collapse of the public sector, and global COVID pandemic put migrant domestic workers in an even more precarious situation. Migrant community needs have increased as the most basic of support systems have weakened. These years saw workers spend increasing hours in the homes of their employers in [pandemic lockdowns](#), [discarded onto the street](#) as employers lost income, [ignored by support systems](#), scapegoated, and [persecuted for speaking out](#).

In 2023, these intertwining crises were compounded by additional destabilizing events, such as:

- **The February 2023 earthquakes** shook an already traumatized Lebanon. Several ARM staff lost family members in Turkey and Syria.
- **Overall political tensions, homophobia, and xenophobic hostility** were extremely palpable throughout the year. We witnessed a rise in homophobic speech, violent attacks by [Jnoud el Rab](#) (a far-right Christian militia) on queer spaces, and the introduction of laws further criminalizing homosexuality. Some staff expressed fears of staying in Lebanon and we faced a real risk of the center being targeted, as has happened with other spaces known to be supportive of queer communities.
- **Neighborhood roundups of Syrian refugees and forced deportations by the Lebanese Army** became horribly commonplace in Beirut, starting in the spring. Members of MCC reported being harassed at checkpoints around the city, and we observed an increase in surveillance of migrant workers and refugees. At checkpoints, the army regularly demanded proof of people's legal status, detained them (sometimes even when they had legal status), and other times confiscated scooters, many people's only means of transport for their livelihoods.



In October 2023, we witnessed the start of the Israeli war and genocide in Gaza and attacks on the South of Lebanon, which as of December 2023 had [displaced over 74,000 people from South Lebanon](#). With the potential for a broader war on Lebanon and regional escalation, the pressure on ARM to prepare contingency plans while managing the impacts on MCC members and staff remains incredibly challenging. Some migrant communities in the South have been displaced, and migrant workers have widely different levels of access to information about the security situation and few resources in case of further escalation. The team has been deeply impacted, some with family and friends murdered in Palestine and others reliving traumas from previous Israeli invasions and attacks on Lebanon.

Learn more about the impact of the war and our emergency response [on page 16](#).



MCC's opening event, October 2023

Our response in 2023: Finding and Building Stability in the Instability

After the extreme economic and COVID crisis years of 2020 and 2021, and after phasing out of our short-term emergency relief work in 2022, we refocused our efforts on our core mandate, returning to long-term grassroots work for systemic change and strengthening and formalizing our internal systems. We managed to do this thanks to a sharper strategy, a deeper understanding of the community's needs, and a larger and more experienced team. While the many current crises have shaken us and diverted some of our resources, our stabilizing work earlier in the year allowed us to sharpen our lens and continue our long-term efforts.

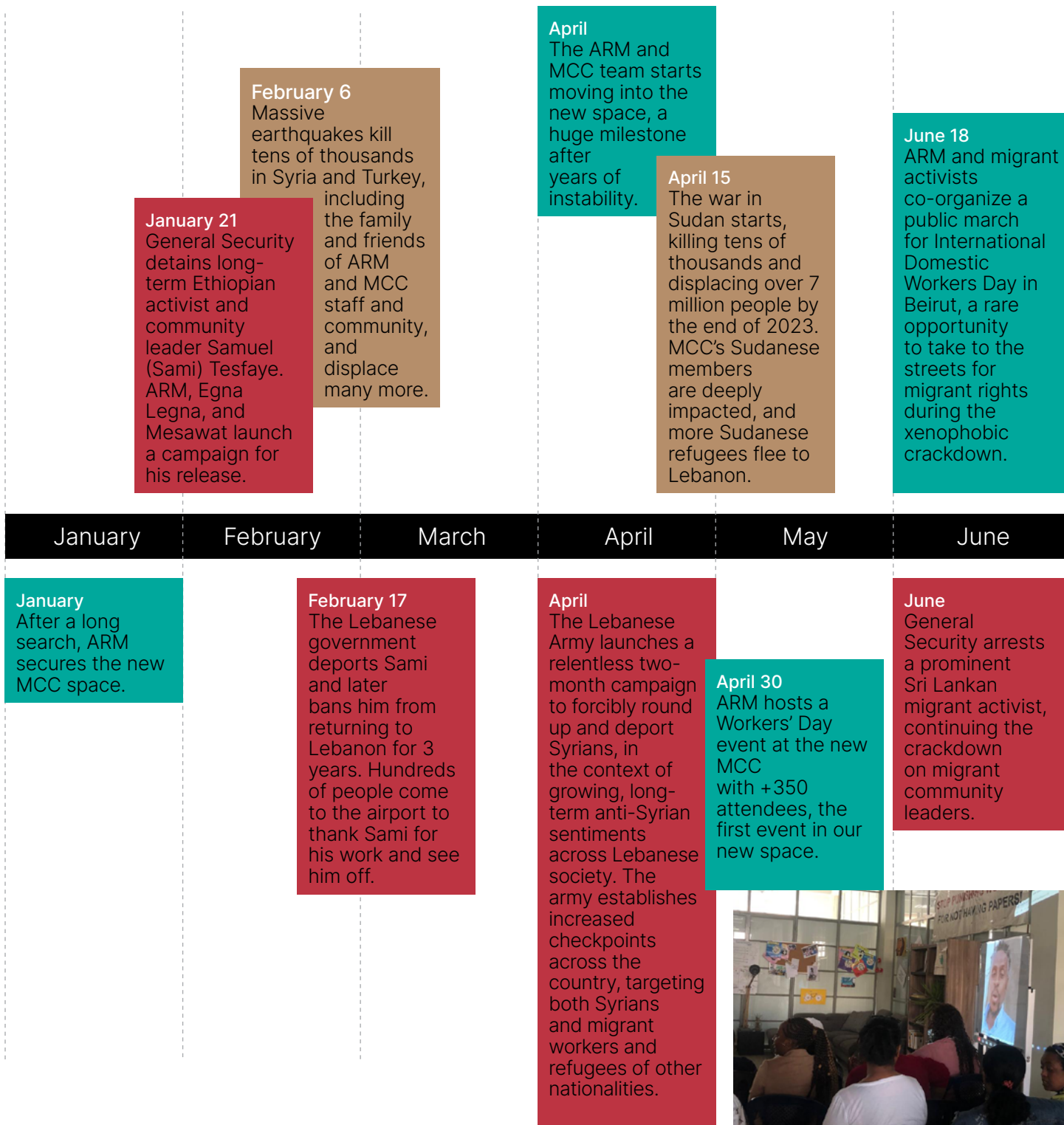
The highlight of the year was **the opening of our new Migrant Community Center**. After years of instability, racism and harassment from neighbors, a long search, and months of repairs, we began working from the space and holding activities there in April. We officially welcomed MCC members into the new center in October 2023. The new space is more than triple the size of previous centers and in a non-residential area, which exponentially increases our capacity to organize, mobilize, and hold safer space for and with migrant communities.



Timeline of 2023

These were the key events of the year—from internal celebrations, to attacks by the Lebanese state, to the broader political and economic situation—that shaped our day-to-day work, the lives of MCC members, and our wider communities.

■ Regional ■ Lebanon ■ ARM events



Regional Lebanon ARM events



October
After October 7, Israel starts its latest war and genocide on Palestinians in Gaza, and ongoing attacks on the West Bank. ARM begins emergency preparation for the potential and imminent war on Lebanon.

October-Present
Israel launches continuous attacks and airstrikes throughout various regions of Lebanon killing 123, wounding 447, and displacing approximately 76,000 people as of the end of 2023 (according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), also affecting migrant workers and Syrian refugees.

July August September October November December

July-September
Conservative Lebanese authorities, religious leaders, and media lead a crackdown and rising hate speech targeting LGBTIQ communities in Lebanon, even introducing laws further criminalizing homosexuality. Jnoud el-Rab, a far-right Christian militia, attacks a queer bar in August. State targeting of Syrians and migrant workers continues.

October 14
We officially open our new MCC, with a public event welcoming over 300 community members.



Key Facts and Figures

ARM continued to run three main implementing teams in 2023—the Migrant Community Center, Advocacy, and Casework—and a Programs Team which includes Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) and organizational planning and resourcing. This section breaks down the key numbers from each team. Learn more about each team’s activities in the following sections.

In 2023, we worked with 1,811 people.



1,611 women and girls
200 men and boys

This encompasses the data for all teams below, including people who accessed MCC, took part in our advocacy, and got support from the casework team.

Migrant Community Center

Supporting Strong Migrant Worker Communities

Membership

840 registered migrant worker members of MCC

15% increase in membership from 2022 to 2023

400 migrant worker visits to MCC each month on average, for activities, programs, and spending time with friends

Community Building

98 social events and activities held by MCC

5 MCC community meetings conducted

Movement Memory

1 archive of migrant worker organizing established, with 66 posters, photos, and objects

Community Support

49 psychosocial support sessions for MCC members

46 media-related capacity building sessions

2 large public events held on the Kafala system

Casework

Improving Access to Support

Direct Support

159 migrant workers and refugees (144 women and 15 men) accessed direct support, including:

69 accessed ARM’s legal aid services

68 directly and actively referred to other organizations

73 received ARM’s casework counseling services

Capacity Building

3 legal awareness sessions held with migrant worker participants

3 internal casework guides produced for ARM staff

Strengthening Referral Networks

20+ local and international organizations met with to improve referrals and coordination

Advocacy

Building Power and Self Organizing

Community Participation

702 migrant workers engaged in ARM's community empowerment and self-organizing activities

3 active ongoing advocacy campaigns

83 advocacy strategy and planning meetings held with migrant community members

Traditional and Social Media

33 media interviews by ARM staff with journalists and researchers

6 media interviews with migrant workers facilitated by ARM

~40,000 people influenced by ARM's advocacy through social media

Capacity Building

1 hands-on guide developed to support migrant domestic workers experiencing poor working conditions and low pay

47 capacity building sessions conducted with migrant workers to equip them to better self-advocate, including 4 train-the-trainer sessions

18 coaching and mentoring sessions for migrant-led groups

6 political organizing sessions provided to MCC members

Knowledge Building

1 public brief on the situation of migrant workers in case of escalation of war

50+ public advocacy materials produced or contributed to, including statements, news reports, podcasts, and articles

3 public panel discussions participated in by ARM staff on migrant worker rights

6 political organizing sessions provided to MCC members

Programmatic and Organizational Development

Building Internal Capacity, Learning, and Accountability

Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)

3 day-long stakeholder consultation workshops conducted with 21 participants to inform organizational strategy

1 MCC social network survey analysis report produced

1 strategic planning process implemented

Internal Capacity Building

9 political learning sessions held with ARM staff

2 digital security and first aid trainings delivered to all staff

12 internal and external training sessions attended by ARM staff

Emergency Preparedness and the Escalating War on Lebanon

Since October 7, in addition to the war on Palestine, Israel has repeatedly bombed villages in Lebanon, starting with the Southern border on to most regions across the country. This raised the imminent threat of wider attacks across Lebanon and caused massive displacement, including of migrant workers and refugees. The impact of the war cut across all teams, forcing us into emergency preparedness mode as we anticipated a potentially broader attack on Lebanon. It also continues to deeply impact MCC members and our broader communities.

As we have seen in previous Israeli wars on Lebanon and national crises including the [2020 Beirut port explosion](#), migrant workers and refugees are often the “[forgotten victims](#),” left out of emergency planning. There is an assumption that migrant workers can simply “return home,” which ignores the realities in people’s countries of origin, the lives and families they build in Lebanon, the challenges to leaving, and their almost defacto exclusion from essential services.

Within this context, ARM began immediately preparing for the inclusion of migrant workers in any sector-wide emergency response. This required us to pause or slow many of our non-essential activities, to reallocate time and resources to the increasing security concerns. We continued our long-term activities and essential casework services, and kept MCC open with only slight reductions in hours.

What are the specific concerns for migrant workers, in the case of all-out war on Lebanon?

- ~12% of migrant workers in Lebanon live in districts directly impacted by the war, according to the IOM. Many migrant workers outside these areas have lost work and been displaced by rising rents and evictions.
- In past crises, many Lebanese employers have [abandoned](#), [threatened](#), and [denied](#) basic rights to migrant domestic workers.
- There is no comprehensive infrastructure for mass evacuations, shelters, or displacement.
- Most migrant workers do not have functional, accessible or dependable embassies in Lebanon.

Our emergency preparation work cut across all teams and included:

- Regular monitoring, action planning, and development of detailed emergency plans
- Community consultations with MCC members.
- First aid training for all staff.
- Publishing a [situation brief](#) on the needs of migrant workers across Lebanon in case of a broader war, with input from migrant organizers from 16 countries.
- Increased coordination with organizations across Lebanon, including the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and in the UN Migrant Sector Meetings, to advocate for the inclusion of migrant workers in their services.
- Outreach to groups across the South, to understand what resources are available for migrant workers.



1. Migrant Community Center

Building and Sustaining Strong Communities for Migrant Domestic Workers

We believe that a strong community is at the core of any successful political movement. This is why we support migrant-led change through community building and then organizing, leading to collective action for systemic change.

MCC is an alternative, feminist, anti-racist, social and political space built around the needs, interests, and initiatives of migrant domestic workers, who live under the oppressive Kafala system in Lebanon. Through transformative approaches, MCC's purpose is to support, strengthen, and facilitate community building and political activism within migrant communities. Since 2011, MCC has served as a safe and free space for migrant community members to meet, make friends, foster stronger relationships, access resources, learn languages, build skills, produce knowledge, self-organize, and advocate for their rights.

Space is crucial for any political movement—but especially for women migrant domestic workers and other racialized groups in Lebanon. The employers of live-in migrant domestic workers often prevent them from leaving the home, or severely limit their mobility. More broadly, migrant workers and refugees are routinely denied access to the little public space that exists in Lebanon. This only worsened with the Lebanese Army's increased targeting of Syrians for detention and deportation this year, with checkpoints and a culture of fear further limiting people's movements and access.

Another factor: **As the Kafala system gets older, so do the people living under it.** MCC members have children, some of whom are now teenagers, and their need for safe, supportive space is even greater.

Making Space: Opening Our New MCC

Our community center has moved many times since its launch in 2011, partially due to ongoing racism and harassment faced by migrant workers and staff. As a result of violent threats made by neighbors and increasing hostility, we left our previous space in late 2022. After an intensive search for a safer, accessible, and affordable space in a less residential area, we signed our new lease in January 2023. We spent the spring preparing, repairing, and equipping the center, held a soft launch in April, and officially opened in October. Prior to the opening, we held MCC activities and advocacy sessions at partners' spaces or on a small scale during the renovations.

The new center represents a deep investment in long-term infrastructure for community building. With space for an MCC membership that has doubled post-crisis and staff offices, it exponentially increases our capacity to organize, share that space with migrant worker collectives, and counter the social segregation that deprives migrant workers of their rights to gather and exist beyond their labor. We have invested in physical infrastructure to ensure we can operate independent of the state electricity grid and unreliable private generator providers, aiming to build stability however possible. In April 2023, we welcomed the community back to our new space, with 350+ people attending our Workers' Day event.

In October, we held our planned official opening of the center, days after October 7 and the start of the Israeli genocide in Gaza. While we were in a period of deep mourning, and early stages of emergency planning, we kept the opening for the MCC community—and as an active step towards building increased solidarity between the struggles for worker and Palestinian liberation.



[MCC] gives me the freedom and liberty to express myself. I also feel confident and feel like myself. That was suppressed when I arrived to Lebanon; because of racism we were forbidden from expressing ourselves.

MCC Member Survey response



MCC's opening event, October 2023





Circus performance, MCC's opening event, October 2023

Capacity Building

In addition to creating space for relationship building, rest, and community, MCC is a hub of capacity building for migrant workers as individuals and collectives. We offer political and technical learning sessions, which this year included legal information sessions with the Casework team, 46 media training sessions, and the establishment of a migrant-led media collective. Media training included street and portrait photography, video editing, documentary scriptwriting, and speech writing in preparation for our April Workers Day event.

Formation of Migrant-Led Media Collective

MCC members have long voiced discontent with the false and distorted narratives of traditional media organizations about migrant workers. In response in 2021, MCC members and staff developed a [media monitoring report](#) with the Institute of Media Research and Training at the Lebanese American University, analyzing the bias and false representations of migrant workers during the political, economic, and health crises in Lebanon.

Building on this project in 2023, 17 migrant workers joined MCC's new, migrant-led media collective, which aims to counter those depictions, reclaim the narrative, and offer truthful multimedia reporting based on their lived experience. The collective challenges the profit-driven approach of traditional media, and instead implements a participatory, transparent, and democratic model. This year, collective members began their own media analysis, defined their values and decision-making structures, and held a panel discussion with three progressive media outlets (Al Raseef, Daraj, and Megaphone).



Community Building

Despite MCC's limited capacity during repairs and preparation for the launch of the new center, we organized ongoing social, cultural, and recreational activities for MCC members and their children. Our 98 gatherings this year included winter snow trips and summer pool trips, wellbeing activities, and workshops.

Highlights include:

- **Athletics programming** including the Beirut women's 5-kilometer race and biking trips.
- **Children's programming** including a Robotics STEM education program and acrobatics sessions.
- **Holiday celebrations** including Ramadan iftars and Ethiopian New Year events.
- **Arts programming** including guitar lessons, drumming sessions, theater workshops, and film screenings with discussions.
- **Political organizing activities** including discussions for International Migrants Day.



MCC Robotics STEM education program

Our central community-led event of the year was **International Migrants Day** on December 18, co-organized by an MCC member planning committee. The day included children's activities, a jam session with [Jazz Kabeez](#) collective, and a performance of "What If?" (see more on the next page). The committee also screened Charlie Chaplin's silent film, "The Immigrant," and led a discussion about the film's themes of dehumanization of immigrants and classism.



Jamming by Jazz Kabeez, International Migrants Day, December 2023

MCC Member Original Theater Productions

A collective of 13 migrant workers developed “Lahon w Lahonik” (“Not Here Nor There”) with support of director Rania Marwa, performing in October. The show explores loss and abuse under the Kafala system and the complex politics of migrant organizing. The collective then developed “What If?” which tells the story of a migrant worker who is falsely accused of stealing from her employer, and revolves around trust, suspicion, and the consequences of accusations without evidence under the Kafala system. Using a Theatre of the Oppressed approach, “What If?” allowed audience members to join performers on stage, suggesting what characters should do and engaging in discussion about the themes in the play. “What If?” was performed at MCC during our International Migrants Day event, and later at Zoukak Theater in December, for a full house of 80 audience members, the majority with no previous connection to MCC or ARM.



I want to travel to see my family. If this doesn't work out and they don't let me leave...I miss them so much. It's been 5 years that I haven't seen them.

excerpt from “Lahon w Lahonik”

Psychosocial Support

MCC members live with the ongoing physical and emotional violence of the Kafala system. Our psychosocial support programs aim not to erase this reality, but to promote a sense of belonging to the MCC community, provide space to share experiences of life under Kafala, and facilitate the formation of self-organized migrant groups.

Our **49 sessions** this year included:

- **Somatic expression sessions** that used bodily sensations, movements, and experiences to facilitate emotional processing, healing, and overall well-being.
- **Creative art activities** for two groups of participants that explored various modes of self-expression including drawing, painting, movement, drama, music, and poetry, allowing them to share stories, build self-confidence, and learn from each other.
- **A Rhythm Intervention program** with partner organization “Zayzafoun,” which led four percussion music programs with MCC teenage and adult members.

In April 2023, war started in Sudan, killing tens of thousands and displacing over 7 million people by the end of the year. MCC has many Sudanese members, whose family and friends in Sudan were deeply impacted by the war. Some MCC members lost loved ones, some were trying to evacuate their families, and new refugees from Sudan arrived at Lebanon and MCC, all increasing the need for community and support.

ARM held a focus group with Sudanese community members to understand their needs and how to better engage them in the center, as many are not domestic workers. This highlighted the need for spaces to come together, discuss the war, and build solidarity with other groups, deepening our thinking around Global South solidarity. In January 2024, we screened a panel from the Regional Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders in South West Asia and North Africa that brought together Sudanese and Palestinian feminists to discuss the work of solidarity, as a next step in this effort.

Archiving and Oral History

As so many migrant organizers have traveled or been deported in these crisis years, we are at urgent risk of losing critical lessons from the history of migrant-led movement building against racism and Kafala in Lebanon. Started in 2022, our **documentation and archiving program** records and preserves memories of MCC and migrant worker collective action more broadly, archiving physical objects and conducting oral histories with MCC members.



This year, we established our archive, with 66 posters, photos, and objects, and organized a display of photos from previous years' protests at our Workers' Day event. MCC staff also participated in a 3-day workshop with Switch Perspective on oral history interview techniques, allowing us to then complete 6 oral history interviews around the theme of different forms of organizing and direct action.



When we, migrant workers, stand in one voice, we are strong together. We learn the skills and put them into practice so we won't be in need of anyone.

2023 oral history interview with an MCC member





2. Advocacy

Mobilizing for Racial Justice in Lebanon and Supporting Migrant Domestic Worker Self-Organizing

ARM believes that a just society can only be achieved through long-term, structural, and sustainable change. For years, our advocacy team has worked alongside migrant communities to challenge racism and the Kafala system in Lebanon, with a focus on the rights of women domestic workers, balancing rapid response campaigning with long-term power building. Our advocacy is shaped by MCC members and partnerships with migrant activists, our participatory research, and patterns from our casework. Our advocacy for structural change includes support for migrant domestic worker political organizing, campaigning, knowledge production and dissemination, and movement building through political education and awareness raising.

In 2023, we successfully created more space for long-term, in-depth research and knowledge production, in service of campaigns and direct action. This allowed us to deepen our understanding of racism in Lebanon, migrant worker community organizing, and the structural institutions that uphold Kafala, as well as to document and celebrate the work of our movements. At the same time, our advocacy responded to many crises—from the deportation and detention of dear migrant activists, to xenophobic rhetoric and deportations of Syrians, to the impact of the genocide in Gaza and attacks on Lebanon. Throughout these struggles, we continued to support multiple self-organized migrant domestic worker groups to work more independently of ARM, after years of partnership to equip them with the resources, tools, and capacities needed to lead their campaigns and interventions.

Support for Migrant Domestic Worker Political Organizing

Our advocacy team regularly supports migrant worker political organizing through coaching that focuses on organizing, fundraising, social media, and other needs, political learning sessions, and direct support for migrant-led initiatives. This year, we held 18 coaching and mentoring sessions for migrant-led organizing groups and partnered with three groups to build their capacity through coaching and guidance:



International Domestic Workers Day demo, June 2023

- [REMAN](#) (Regroupement des Migrant.e.s de l’Afrique Noire), founded in 2022 by two Cameroonian activists, raises awareness about the abuses and exploitation faced by migrant domestic workers in Lebanon on an international level, with members from various African countries.
- [TSENAT](#), co-founded by five Ethiopian working mothers, supports migrant mothers who are also domestic workers in navigating their struggles.
- [VONWAIL](#), founded in 2022 as a collective of Nigerian women in Lebanon with a mission to support and empower each other, was started after one of the group leaders attended MCC’s training programs and collaborated with Egna Legna.

In addition, our support for migrant worker political organizing included:

- We conducted six political learning sessions for a group of 15 Arabic-speaking MCC members, collaboratively deciding on topics including the emergence of the Kafala system during the discovery of oil in the Gulf, the history of feminized domestic work in Lebanon, and a timeline of major events affecting the struggle of migrant workers.
- We conducted 47 capacity building sessions to equip migrant workers to self-organize and advocate, Arabic, English, French, and Sinhala. Of these, four were train-the-trainers sessions for migrant community members who then led two sessions aimed at improving migrant workers’ living and working conditions. We also developed a hands-on guide to support migrant domestic workers facing poor working conditions and pay.
- We produced two seasons of our podcast, [“Women of the Blame.”](#) which explores migrant activists’ personal experiences of migration, often left out of mainstream media.



When I was 12 years old, migrant workers had a rally for their rights..I went with them. I had no idea what’s going on because I was very young, but at some point my community leader said, “It’s nice to learn from a young age what’s your right and to fight for your rights and not to keep silent.” Those words, what she said to me, are engraved in my heart...so I continue to help my communities and to fight for my rights.

Tanya, the child of a Sri Lankan migrant domestic worker, born in Lebanon ([Women of the Blame](#), Season 1, Episode 2)



- We supported the release of [“Reclaiming Public Space in Lebanon” \[Fashion Music Video\]](#), which showcased the clothing line of [Vianny de Marceau](#), a migrant activist, writer, and designer who uses fashion to reclaim her Cameroonian heritage. This video aimed to reinforce the power of migrant domestic workers in their work to build communities and access social justice.



Campaign Highlights

Campaigning is a critical part of our efforts to challenge the Kafala system and the forces that maintain it, and generate support for migrant workers facing racism and exploitation. Our work is co-led or heavily influenced by migrant worker participation, ensuring that our campaigns are aligned with migrant activist visions. This year, our advocacy team worked on both public and private campaigns and held **83 meet-ups, strategizing sessions, and planning workshops** with **702 migrant workers and MCC community members** in preparation for this advocacy.

#BringBackSami: In January 2023, General Security arrested our friend and colleague Samuel Tesfaye (Sami) on his way back from a family visit to Ethiopia, detaining him under the premise of violating the arbitrary conditions of his residency. A few days later, General Security announced they would be deporting Sami, and our efforts to appeal were blocked. In response, we launched an online campaign [“Bring Sami Back”](#) to mobilize public support, in collaboration with [Egna Legna](#) and [Mesewat](#), the migrant-led grassroots organization that Sami co-founded. Despite these efforts, General Security unlawfully deported Sami in February and banned him from reentering Lebanon for the next three years. Hundreds of people came to the airport to thank Sami on the night of his deportation, as a testament to his work, to the [alternative media coverage](#), and to public outcry from the campaign. Our caseworkers, advocacy team, and partners continue to work on appealing his ban.

A Tribute to Sami from Friends and Supporters

“My brother Samuel Tesfaye... he is an important person for the Ethiopian community in Lebanon, we need him for our community!”

“Kafala rules are like a crime against humanity.”

“Sami has been a comfort to the Ethiopian community in Lebanon. He has a blessed heart.”

“Sami is a person who deserves to live in dignity.”

“My exiled brother...You are strong, we need you”

“My hero”



International Domestic Workers Day:

In response to MCC members' requests to "take back the streets," we co-organized a march with migrant activists for International Domestic Workers Day, covering 1.5 kilometers in Beirut. MCC members formed a protest committee to prepare the route, logistics, chants, banners, and speeches. The march came during a rising anti-migrant crackdown, but we still turned out migrant workers and allies, making a clear statement that Kafala must be abolished and returning IDWD to public visibility. Our team produced posters in five languages, a [statement](#) in three languages, and three [videos](#) to promote the march and the rights of migrant domestic workers.

Movement Building

Alongside our rapid response and structural campaigns, we work to build a movement connecting migrant communities and people across Lebanon working in solidarity with their struggles. We facilitate political education sessions and processes for various audiences, particularly young activists, media representatives, social justice organizations, and local and international organizations. We focus on the situation of migrant workers in Lebanon and what is needed to create change, build opportunities for dialogue and collaboration, and strengthen networks working against racism and Kafala. This year:

- For **Workers' Day**, we held a Day of Remembrance on April 30, welcoming MCC members and communities to our new center for the first time. For weeks before that event, MCC members prepared speeches and stories honoring past movements, friends, and struggles, and preparing for the future.
- We joined three **public political discussions about racism and other issues related to migrant workers**. This included a panel organized by the Issam Fares' Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs on mobilizations for migrant rights, a Medecin Sans Frontiers' (MSF) webinar "[Out of Sight, Out of Mind](#)" on the situation of migrant workers amidst Lebanon's socio-economic crisis, and a [closing plenary](#) of the Global South Women's Forum 2023 exploring the themes of documentation, carceral violence, and the exclusionary nature of citizenship.
- We are an active part of the **EuroMed network**, an advocacy group working on migration issues in the region, and worked with them to oppose the deportations of Syrian refugees.



Building Solidarities Between Migrant Struggles and Palestine

As a feminist, anti-racist organization, we firmly believe in the intersection of our struggles. We see that the current Israeli aggression and genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza and beyond is not isolated, but must be understood in the context of more than 75 years of settler colonialism, stolen land, racial discrimination, and ethnic cleansing. **Since October, we have worked to explicitly name the connections between the systems that oppress Palestine and those that create the need for exploited migrant labor in Lebanon and globally.**

In addition to our emergency response to the Israeli attacks on the South and across Lebanon, we released a series of statements to build solidarity between our struggles. This includes our statement and post on the genocide, our joining in the Global Strike in solidarity with Palestine, and intentionally naming the intersectionality of these issues.

أمنيّتي في عيد الميلاد

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS
TOUT CE QUE JE VEUX POUR NOËL EST

إلغاء نظام الكفالة وتحرير فلسطين
ABOLISHING KAFALA AND A FREE PALESTINE
LA FIN DE KAFALA ET UNE PALESTINE LIBRE

Knowledge Production

The advocacy team aims to create and share knowledge in direct support of our campaigns, migrant-led organizing, and deep systems change. Our tools include participatory research, strategic communications, traditional and social media engagement to raise attention to the situation of migrant workers, and public events around the Kafala system. This year:

- We conducted foundational research for four reports to be published in 2024, on the [history of migrant domestic worker community organizing](#), the legalities and practices of honorary consulates, a perception survey of the [Kafala system in Lebanon](#) in light of the economic crisis, and the political economy of Syrian workers in Lebanon.
- Our advocacy team did 33 interviews with journalists and researchers, contributing to content on Kafala and aiming to shift the narratives on migrant workers. We also facilitated 6 media interviews with MCC migrant worker members.
- We produced or contributed to over 50 public advocacy materials, including statements to mobilize people for direct actions, articles, news reports, and an opinion piece on Kafala in [TIMEP](#). To counter the biased reporting in the traditional media, we released three of our own news round-ups in [July](#), [August](#) and [September](#), exposing the realities of Kafala.

“

The Lebanese government has used hate speech to incite the Lebanese society against marginalized groups: the LGBTQ+ community, migrant workers, and Syrian refugees, smearing their image in the media to position them as the main cause of the economic collapse. This is how the Lebanese government absolved itself and covered its own failure to manage the crisis, by placing the blame on Syrian refugees.

ARM advocacy staff, Helem documentary

”

Countering Racist, Xenophobic, and Anti-Refugee Narratives

This year, we saw increased xenophobic, homophobic, and racist rhetoric across Lebanese traditional media and state authorities, particularly targeting Syrians and LGBTIQ communities. In April, the Lebanese Army started a campaign of checkpoints, neighborhood roundups of Syrian refugees, and forced deportations. In response, we worked with an informal coalition of civil society groups and advocates focused on stopping the deportations, and together:



- Endorsed and published a joint [open letter](#) with other civil society groups, calling on UNHCR to increase cooperation and transparency with local organizations to stop these alarming deportations.
- Endorsed and published Legal Agenda's [public guide](#) on legal pathways to prevent these mass deportations.

Increased Online Engagement on Anti-Racist and Anti-Kafala Content

We developed our communications strategy in 2023 to expand our online reach, and as a result have seen increased interest across our social media platforms. This includes growing public engagement (likes, shares, comments) on content campaigning against racism and the Kafala system, with the highest engagement for an interview conducted with Helem and our #BringSamiBack campaign. We see this as a sign of positive progress towards shifting public opinion around Kafala and migrant workers.



3. Casework

Improving Access to Social, Legal, and Medical Support for Migrant Workers in Lebanon

Through our casework in the past years, we bear witness to the direct impact of the Kafala system on every aspect of migrant workers' lives, including their basic rights, work, family life, mobility, and health. As we work for structural change, our casework team also aims to mitigate the violence of Kafala in people's daily lives, partnering with workers facing labor violations (unpaid wages, exploitative working conditions, violence from employers, sponsors, and agencies), forced labor, trafficking by recruitment agencies, legal status issues, and asylum claims.

Our Approach: The casework team applies a migrant-centered approach with all migrant workers who reach out to us, who we refer to as "caseleaders." This ensures that workers have agency in the decision-making over all action plans implemented as part of their case. Our primary goal is to support caseleaders by making information and resources as accessible as possible. We also aim to strengthen and support migrant worker networks by providing them with the tools necessary to self-advocate. This involves counseling them on legal issues and supporting them in managing their legal cases with government entities.

In situations where the casework team lacks the necessary resources or expertise to assist, we have a robust referral system in place. This system connects migrant workers with organizations that can provide essential services such as basic needs, medical assistance, and legal interventions that go beyond our capacity.

This work is incredibly hard, as our legal interventions cannot undo the structural harms of the Kafala system, nor adequately cover people's basic needs (food, medicine, money) when the few social supports and service providers fail. So this year, we focused on strengthening our internal casework systems, updating our database, consent forms, and processes—in order to improve what we can do, fill the gaps of other networks, and expand our referrals. This allowed us to better track our interventions and more effectively advocate for caseleaders' needs.

Direct Support

People seek casework support through helplines, in person at our center, and through partner referrals from migrant worker collectives and local and international organizations. In 2023, the majority of migrant workers reached out for assistance with detention, deportation, labor violations from their employers, confiscation of their passports, complaints by employers, documentation, repatriation, UNHCR asylum claims and appeals, clearance, resettlement, sheltering, and emergency medical cases. In response:

- We supported 159 migrant workers and refugees.
- Of these, we provided 69 with legal aid services directly, including filing paperwork with General Security, agency complaints with the Ministry of Labor, UNHCR asylum claim appeals, negotiation with employers, and other legal administrative assistance, and 73 people with casework counseling services.
- We referred another 68 to partner organizations, including Amel Association, CARITAS, Doctors without Borders (MSF), the Consulate of Ghana, Housing Monitor, Insaaf, IOM, KAFA, the Lebanese Centre for Human Rights (CLDH), Legal Frontiers, Mesewat, Tabitha, Queer Mutual Aid Group, and the UNHCR.

Emergency, High-Risk, and Intensive Cases

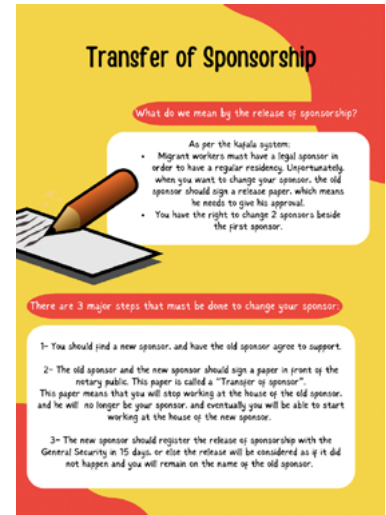
No two cases are alike. Some are more direct—legal help to change sponsors or reclaim a withheld passport, or referrals to a medical organization—and some take months or years to address. Emergency and intensive cases can be all-consuming, with ARM's casework team also activating partner organizations, media, the UN, or the public. Here are examples from 2023 that illustrate the challenge of complex cases, and the growing crackdown on migrant activists.

- When Ethiopian community leader Sami Tesfaye was unjustly detained by General Security, the casework team provided him with legal support to fight his detention, then his deportation, then the ban on his return, and mobilized a public campaign with Eгна Legna and Mesewat. General Security deported Sami, but the show of support for a migrant community member was unprecedented, hopefully contributing to long-term change.
- General Security arrested a Sri Lankan community leader when she went to renew her residency permit, and imprisoned her for two months. The casework team helped her legally change her employer-sponsor and argue for her release. She was ultimately freed and able to return to her work and community.
- A freelance migrant domestic worker from Ethiopia suffered third-degree burns after a fire in her apartment. She was misdiagnosed at the first hospital, and only received proper care at the second—but still died from her injuries. The casework team visited her in the hospital, advocated with the administration, reached out to partners to cover the cost of her care, and liaised with the Ethiopian consulate for the repatriation of her body.

Community Capacity Building

Our model of systemic change includes actively sharing access to information and resources with migrant-led collectives and MCC members. As the few available interventions for abuses under Kafala are often complex and obscured, we held three legal information sessions for MCC members and community members. These included:

- Two legal sessions in Baabda with 30 participants on sponsorship transfer, on the request of a community leader in the area
- One Arabic session with a CLDH lawyer on the general rights of migrant domestic workers, with 11 participants



Casework-Specific Capacity Building

In response to the incredible challenge of the past few crisis years, the casework team invested significant time this year in improving its internal mechanisms and expanding outreach. This included the development of three core guides:

- An **emergency guide** for staff, community organizations, and allies, with step-by-step processes for the many emergencies migrant workers experience under Kafala, including violence from employers, domestic violence, medical or mental health crises, abandonment on the street or at the airport, detention, and forced repatriation.
- A **legal FAQ guide** for staff, which answers common questions on legal practices related to Kafala and the situation of migrant workers.
- An internal **case management cycle**, focused on action planning and streamlining our processes.



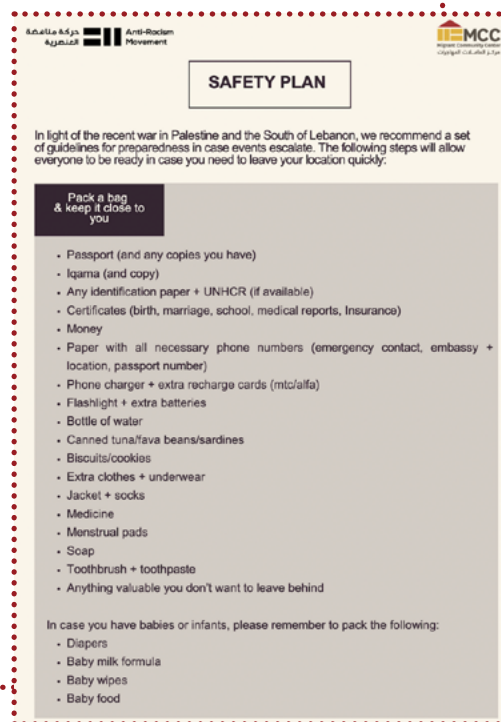
Expanding Partnerships and Referrals

Our service mapping and outreach both aim to expand access to resources for migrant workers seeking casework support, and advocate for partner organizations and others to prioritize migrant workers and other racialized groups in their work. This year, our work included:

- Conducting outreach to 20+ organizations and meeting with 14.
- Building new partnerships with shelters and organizations offering support with sexual and reproductive rights and mental health.
- Conducting outreach to consulates that migrant communities report had supported them in the past, to strengthen collaboration.
- As part of our emergency preparedness, participating in UN Migrant Sector Meetings to enhance our service mapping and advocate for better coordination, wider service provision, and the inclusion of migrant workers in these initiatives.

War on the South: Safety Plans and Networks

As part of our emergency preparedness after the intensification of Israeli attacks on South Lebanon in October, the casework team began planning for mass displacement and resulting needs of migrant workers from the South, and potentially across the country. This included advocating with a wide range of local and international organizations to include migrant workers and refugees in their assessments and service provision, and reaching out to migrant community members in the South to understand their structures and needs. We found a huge gap in available services, as well as lack of information about emergency resources across MCC and other migrant community members. To counter this, we published safety plans and guides in Amharic, Arabic, English, and French, and continue to consult with migrant community members and groups as the situation continues.



We aim to continue strengthening our casework, with in-house psychosocial services for migrant workers seeking our team’s support, expanding our legal interventions’ scope as well as criteria to take on cases, and integrating group sessions as a consistent activity within the team.



ARM stakeholder consultation workshops, January 2023



Am glad to have met once through spend back in 2019. I think goal for all the activities that are rendered to all migrants unconditionally. A safe space - bringing communities together Food Relief during pandemic Education - computers and languages legal justice through arm Birthdays - Bills taken care off

4. Programmatic Development

Building Internal Capacity, Learning, and Accountability

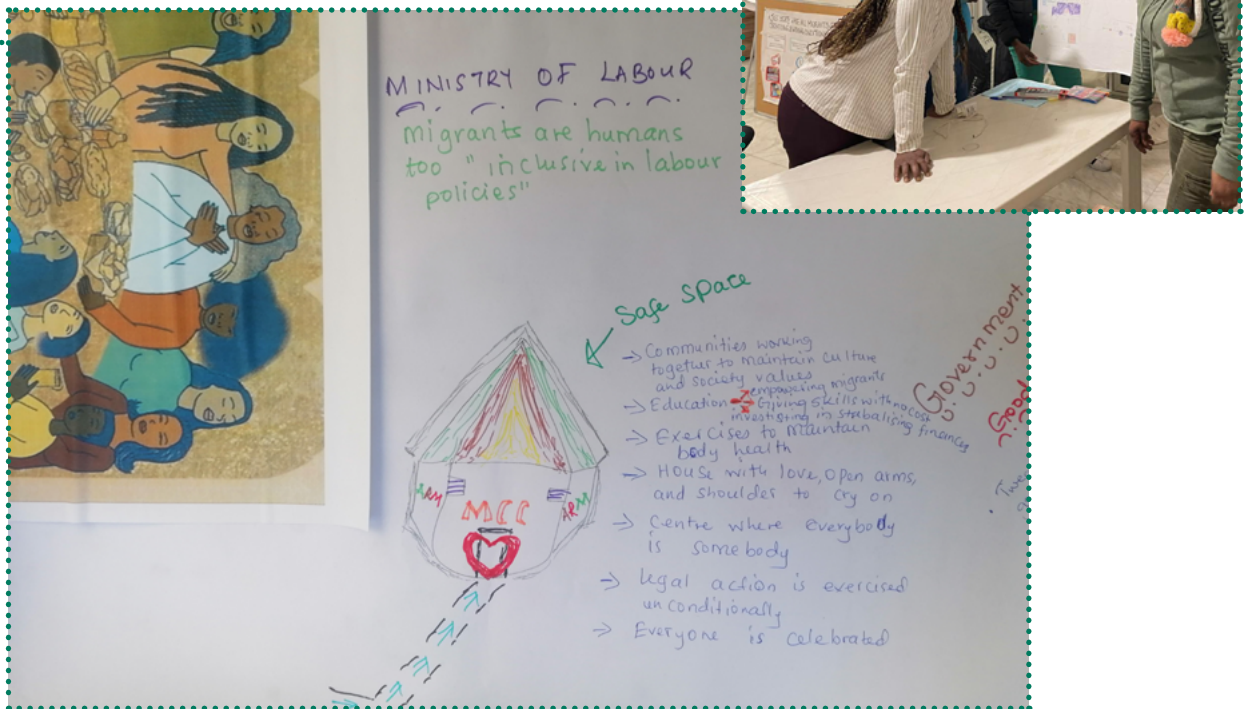
We created the Programs Team in 2021, with the goal of streamlining planning, resourcing, and support for ARM's implementing teams. The team, which includes Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) and organizational resourcing, creates spaces and strengthens staff capacities to creatively strategize, implement, collect data, report, fundraise, and learn. In 2023, we continued to build the capacity of the implementing teams, embed MEAL systems into our daily work, and stabilize our internal systems and feminist culture overall.

Organizational Planning

We are committed to organizational and strategic planning, as our foundation to navigate the many external challenges. This year, we held **seven days of internal strategic workshops** to analyze changes in our context, set organizational development plans, and address common challenges. We also made significant **improvements to our monthly internal reporting** processes, including adding an all-team day each month to share updates and plan ahead.

Community Participation and Stakeholder Consultations

As in all our work, ARM's strategic planning and learning systems come directly from the needs and visions of migrant communities, and our processes center and include migrant workers from inception to implementation. This year, we held **three days of stakeholder consultations** in January to inform our organizational strategy, understand different communities' needs, and identify trends and emerging challenges. Held in Arabic, English, and French, these interactive sessions brought together 21 participants from migrant activist collectives representing communities from Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, and Sudan, along with civil society and media. In addition to the workshops, we separately interviewed 5 stakeholders one-on-one. These consultations formed the basis for our annual strategic retreat and year's activities.



Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL)

Our core beliefs as an organization extend to our newly-formed MEAL team, which integrates feminist ethics of care into a typical MEAL approach, extending from our datasets to interactions between team members and migrant communities. Our MEAL team creates and implements systems and processes that align with ARM's principles, support ARM's mission, and improve accountability towards the migrant communities we work with. This year, we focused on:

- Embedding MEAL systems across teams and reorganizing our annual programmatic cycles to better facilitate collection of MEAL data, based on three years of pilots.
- Continued leading bi-annual strategic analysis meetings with key community stakeholders, centering migrant domestic worker organizers, to guide our annual planning and learning.
- Hiring a new Learning Officer to further strengthen our systems and implementation.



We also analyzed findings and determined next steps from our 2022 MCC social network survey, which helped us measure our impact in strengthening migrant workers' social network. This year, we revised the survey to better reflect their needs and create a more in-depth understanding of these social networks. We paused implementation of the updated survey due to the genocide in Gaza, and will continue in 2024.

Internal Capacity Building

As ARM's team bears increasing responsibility due to the absent state and the violence of Kafala, we have invested deeply in ongoing capacity building for staff. This includes sharing learnings between teams, as well as external opportunities for professional and political development. In 2023, this included:

- The advocacy team organized **9 political learning sessions** with ARM staff on the legal and social structures, history, and daily realities of the Kafala system, labor law, and migrant domestic worker collective organizing.
- **Responding to the war on Lebanon**, we held two sessions on lessons learned from the 2006 Israeli invasion and the Beirut port explosion, to better understand the possible realities of escalation. Staff also attended basic first aid and digital security training.
- Key staff attended a **three-day feminist facilitation training** in October 2023, to support our moderation of large community meetings.
- Our casework team participated in external technical training sessions with UNHCR, IOM, the United Nations Development Program, and UN Women, covering statelessness, case management, and gender-based violence.

Building Culture

As ARM navigates these years of crisis, it is essential to us to continue strengthening our workplace and community culture, in line with our grassroots origins and feminist values. This year focused on assessment, strengthening systems, and community care:

- We conducted a **feminist culture audit** with the support of an external consultant, to explore feminist labor conditions and needs of our team. We began taking action on our findings, including re-working our meeting structures and all-team information sharing, collaboratively writing a Code of Conduct, and management team training sessions.
- We drafted and implemented our **Finance and Procurement Manual**, along with forms and procedures, to streamline our purchasing, hiring, and payment processes.
- With the attacks on Lebanon and genocide in Gaza, we prioritized **space and resources for team well-being** and support for individuals surviving these forms of violence. We offered individual counseling to all staff and held a full-team grounding session focused on team bonding and collective mental health support.

In 2024, we aim to continue strengthening our MEAL processes and build cohesion between each team's outputs and our overall strategy.

Voices from the Community

Workers' Day Speeches

On April 30, we held our first event in our new Migrant Community Center for Workers' Day, as a Day of Remembrance. After months of separation following our previous center's closure, we gathered to honor the past and look toward the future. MCC members and staff prepared for weeks, including writing speeches to share stories of deportation, imprisonment, death, and community organizing. Below are excerpts from three different MCC members' speeches at the event.

We are still struggling to hold on tight to this fight.
The adventures we shared found a home within us.
Pain of losing you has taken us to a different universe.
A world where we have to wake up strong and fearless.
Keep on living even if we don't know how to.

Push away the waves rolling in every day and carry on the fight.

Here's my message and advice to all migrant workers.
Here's something I learned out of Mala's sickness:
Take a break. Take time for yourself. Don't let the day-to-day work make you forget to eat, to sleep, and to rest.

I tell you all we are humans. We should treat our bodies and souls as such.

Therefore this gap has remained since and we feel the loss and grief needed to unite all migrant workers and especially those left out. Last but not least, we have closely observed this gap growing daily to greater lengths from all the various events and it's a pity migrants have been rendered or have become voiceless, and that is why **I urge all migrants, legends, and advocates to come together to continue the work of those before us...of those we lost.**



International Domestic Workers Day Statement

In June, after years of limited opportunities to take to the streets, ARM and MCC members held a public march for International Domestic Workers Day, calling for migrant domestic worker rights. Below is an excerpt of our joint statement, created by the MCC organizing committee with ARM support. Read the full version [here](#).

We gather today to celebrate our own International day as domestic workers.

To appreciate and honor the value of our work, which goes undervalued everywhere in the world. To take the chance and stand up to the hardships we face to defend our dignities and rights.

Behind closed doors, our bodies and spirits are drained, but we still carry our responsibilities with diligence and care, with no systems to organize us, compensate us, care for us, or to give us what is ours.

Today we say:

It is time for the world to recognize our contributions to it and to value the irreplaceable role we play behind those doors.

Today we say:

It is time for comprehensive laws and systems to protect and bring justice to domestic workers.

We deserve fair treatment.

We deserve fair wages.

We deserve safe working conditions.

Enough exploitation, discrimination, and unfair treatment.

Today we unite to form a forceful labor movement, to raise our voices together:

For our rights and dignities,
Against bias, negligence, and discrimination that stand against us becoming part of society,
To have equal opportunities,
To have the importance of our work recognized.

The 16th of June, the international day for domestic work, is not a celebration for us as workers, it is another day for us to say that we are not ok, and that we are done being silenced.



Mya Allawi giving a speech at the IDWD demo, June 2023

Key Challenges and Highlights

Below is a brief summary of the structural challenges we faced in 2023, our responses, and our successes. See more information in the [ARM in 2023](#) section.

Challenges

Government crackdowns on migrant worker activism, Syrians, and LGBTIQ communities:

The increasing xenophobic rhetoric, deportations of Syrians, and Lebanese Army checkpoints created real risks for MCC members. General Security continued arrests of migrant activists, including Ethiopian community leader Samuel Tesfaye and a Sri Lankan activist, adding to ongoing threats to organizing. In response, we increased security measures at our center and public events.

Wars on Lebanon and Palestine: Facing increasing Israeli attacks, we had to balance urgent emergency response to the war with our planned work to open the new MCC. The war also impacted the funding and resources available for migrant worker organizing, as so much of the region is in flux. As we prepared for the worst, we stood actively in solidarity with Palestinians, while staying strong in our fight against Kafala.

Lack of Space in a Critical Organizing Moment:

During MCC's closure from late 2022, we had to adapt and limit activities as we changed locations, worked from various short-term spaces, and prepared our new center. The moving process was also extremely costly. In this transition, we held events at partner spaces and continued core activities with MCC members.

Highlights

Growing MCC's Space, Membership, and Movements:

After years of moving our MCC spaces, we have a new center and stability. With this came a rapid growth in membership: By the end of 2023, we had 840 members, a 15% increase from 2022. We hope this can be a long-term "home away from home" that migrant worker communities can rely on, build community, and anchor structural change.

Growth and Depth of Migrant-Led Political Organizing:

Our new space not only increased our ability to host members, but to build up migrant-led organizing. We expanded our capacity building sessions, resulting in strong migrant-led campaigning and the growing independence of three migrant organizing collectives. This work was deepened by four year-long research processes on migrant worker organizing and Kafala, to be published in 2024 and support structural change.

Strengthened Casework Processes:

The casework team invested in improving systems and our casework cycle. This strengthened our capacity for effective interventions, caseleader expectations, and relationships with partners. In our most recent analysis, migrant workers reported a clearer understanding of how casework functions and the possible interventions.

Organizational Stabilization:

After transitioning from relief work in 2022, we refocused on grassroots-led systemic change. We stabilized our internal systems, ways of working, and feminist culture, growing our capacity to continue our critical work into 2024 and beyond.

Our Financial Records

We are grateful for the deep relationships, collaborative spirit, and essential support from our funding partners, which makes this work possible.

Below is a breakdown of our total income by donor and our expenditures. All amounts are in USD and are rounded figures.

Total Income 1,394,400 USD

Donor (Amount in USD)

Porticus	553,000
African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)	313,000
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)	300,000
Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)	63,000
Kvinna Till Kvinna (KTK)	49,000
Medico International	33,000
Global Fund For Women (GFW)	30,000
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)	21,000
Fund for Global Human Rights UK (FGHR)	10,000
Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)	8,000
Individual Contributions	14,400

Total Expenditures 1,600,000 USD

Please note the difference between expenditures and income is due to varying spending and grant timelines, as some funds for 2022 activities were received in 2023, and some funds for 2023 were received in 2024.

Expenditure (Amount in USD)

Programmatic Activities (MCC, Advocacy, Casework)

Advocacy and Casework Operations	65,000
Consultancies and Legal Services	295,000
Evaluation and Learning Meetings and Staff Trainings	13,000
In-house Counseling and Clinical Supervision	5,000
MCC Operations	102,000
Rent, Utilities, and Maintenance	67,000
Translation, Design, and Printing	21,000
Transportation and Communication	15,000

Equipment and Supplies

Groceries, Food, and Cleaning Supplies	25,000
Furniture, Equipment, and Computers	140,000

Staffing and Consultancies

Staff Social Security	70,000
Staff Salaries	668,000

Accounting

Accounting and Auditing	86,000
Government Taxes and Bank Charges	28,000

Our Partners and Collaborators

In addition to our funding partners on the previous page, we are deeply grateful to our local and regional partners for their expertise, collaboration, and work for systemic change. These include:

Organizations and groups that we collaborated with in 2023:

- Access Centre for Human Rights
- Beirut Art Center
- Cirque en Ciel
- Eгна Legna
- Haven for Artists
- Knowledge Workshop
- Legal Agenda
- Mesewat
- Switch Perspective
- The A Project
- Tota
- Zayzafoun

Alliances and networks that we participate in:

- EuroMed Rights Network
- Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)
- My Work, My Rights local network
- Regional Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders in MENA (WHRD)
- UNOCHA Migrant Sector
- UN Gender Working Group
- UN Protection Working Group

Our casework partners:

- Amel Association International
- Domestic Workers United
- Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia (for the Italian Humanitarian Corridors)
- Frontiers Ruwad Association
- Housing Monitor
- Insaaf
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Kafa (enough) Violence & Exploitation
- Lebanese Center for Human Rights (CLDH)
- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)
- Mesewat
- SIDC (Society, Inclusive, Development, Communities)
- Tabitha
- The A Project

We are thankful for the support and guidance our team members continually receive from:

- Nermine Sibai, human rights lawyer, ARM’s legal advisor
- ARM 2023 Advisory Board members:
 - Sawsan Abdulrahim
 - Dina Baslan
 - Sumayya Kassamali
 - Haitham Khoury
 - Samira Koujok
 - Nadine Moawad

Last but not least, **we are deeply grateful to the ARM and MCC team, MCC members, and broader migrant communities**, without which we would not exist.



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MCC pool trip, summer 2023

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Contributors ----- ARM 2023 Team



حركة مناهضة
العنصرية



Anti-Racism
Movement