

Christian Conference of Asia

**Asia Regional Consultation on
'Migration, Trafficking in Persons, and the Asian Diaspora'
November 11-15, 2018, Bangkok, Thailand**

Communiqué

'Migration, Trafficking in Persons, and the Asian Diaspora'

The participants of the Asia Regional Consultation on 'Migration, Trafficking in Persons and the Asian Diaspora, held at the headquarters of the Church of Christ in Thailand from 11 to 15 November 2018 and organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) with the participation of representatives from churches, national ecumenical councils, ecumenical organisations, theological institutions, and grassroots level migrant-serving organizations adopt and disseminate this communiqué for further follow-up. More than fifty participants attended the Regional Consultation include representatives of the Asian diaspora churches and ecumenical organizations from the Arabian Gulf states, such as Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dubai, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, Ras Al Khaimah, Saudi Arabia, and Sharjah. This consultation was a follow-up of earlier initiatives and dialogues of CCA about migrant workers and the contemporary challenges.

The deliberations of the Consultation focussed on a wide array of issues related to labour migration and trafficking in persons within and beyond Asia. Special emphasis was given to labour migration in the Arabian Gulf states and the Asian diaspora as well as churches' mission to the Asian diaspora in the Gulf region. The thematic presentations and panel discussions reminded us of the pastoral and social commitments and Christian witness to accompany the migrant workers and the trafficked persons in their struggle as well as to advocate for upholding the dignity and human rights of them. As Paul urges believers to welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed us (Rom. 15:7), we are then further compelled that, being a faith community in various parts of the world, we need to revisit the theme "hospitality towards stranger" as it is a command of God from God's community. Jesus who lived both as an international and internal migrant teaches the importance of hospitality.

Our Concerns

Human history replete with a saga of migration has now entered the "Global Nomadic Age." About 258 million people all over the world are migrants, which are expected to be 405 million by 2050. There are documented and undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and victims of human trafficking. Of these millions of migrants, women outnumber men except in Asia and Africa forming 48.4%. A majority go as domestic workers, which is a sector that is very difficult to regulate, as the provisions of international labour laws do not govern this sector in many countries where they work. This exodus increasingly becomes the cause of abuse and exploitation. In many countries, the domestic workers do not come under the purview of the labour laws,

leaving them vulnerable. The flow of migration within a developing nation has thrown up a whole plethora of challenges. The sending countries and the receiving countries both profit from this. Many a time in the current scenario, a clear demarcation between these categories has merged. Many of the former sending countries themselves have become receivers or are now transit points of migration.

It is our firm convictions that Asian governments must uphold their national laws pertaining to the protection of the rights of migrant workers, and also for prevention of and combating human trafficking practice, for which reason, we affirm our commitment to campaign for the inclusion of provisions that would protect and uphold the dignity and rights of all migrant workers, especially the domestic workers.

We recognize the immediate need for all governments in the Asia region to ratify and uphold the spirit of the international legal frameworks especially the International Conventions adopted by the United Nations (UN), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) such as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, as well as the International Labour Organization (ILO) C-189 Domestic Workers Convention. It is with great dismay we note that most Asian countries have not ratified these Conventions thus binding these important international treaties.

After having carefully listened and analysed the plight of the migrant workers and the trafficked persons in different situations the participants of the Asia Regional Consultation express their concern at the increased cases of exploitation of job seekers by unscrupulous recruiting agencies, urging the governments of both labour exporting and receiving countries to take more drastic actions to stop this menace. The increasing number of suicide cases involving migrant workers, particularly in the Gulf countries, which underlines the need for extending counselling services to migrant workers. Sexual abuse of women, especially domestic workers, for which reason women seeking domestic and low paid jobs should attend pre-departure orientation programmes that provide guidance for safeguarding, promoting, and protecting their dignity and rights.

Proposed Actions

The participants of the Asia Regional Consultation request CCA to facilitate, and strengthen the Asian ecumenical network to protect the rights of migrant workers at all levels starting from the period of recruitment in the country of origin and in the receiving country as well as returning to the country of origin.

It is important that CCA take initiatives to sensitize member churches about the need to join in solidarity with the global struggle to protect the rights and dignity of migrant workers and to combat human trafficking. The participants appeal member churches to cooperate closely with stakeholders in the receiving countries to gain access to information, health care, and protect the rights of migrant workers. It is also crucial that the churches and national ecumenical councils in Asia to recognize, affirm, and uphold all International Conventions and national legislation pertaining to the protection

of the rights of migrant workers including the domestic workers, and combat human trafficking. The civil society organizations and faith-based groups in Asia should come forward to urge governments in migrant worker sending countries to designate special staff in respective diplomatic missions with a mandate to address the concerns of the migrant workers. A network of collaboration between the churches in Asia and migrant worker service centres in order to learn about models of best practices be initiated.

The need for a renewal and resourcing of healing ministries to serve the needs of traumatized migrant workers and trafficked persons must be considered as a priority. Churches in Asia should not forget their commitment to articulate a "Theology of the Human Family" and remember the ecumenical affirmation that "the Church is a sign of the coming unity of the whole human family".

The migrant workers in the Arabian Gulf must be encouraged to initiate 'Save and Invest' schemes that will help them build a more secure future for themselves and their loved ones upon return after their overseas work.

As the representatives of Asian diaspora, we urge CCA to help provide an umbrella organization or an ecumenical platform for the Asian diaspora churches in the Arabian Gulf region initiate a 'Asian Diaspora Church Arabian Gulf Regional Council,' to help integrate and unify the work of the different Asian diaspora churches.