



Letter to South Asia Leaders
South Asia Leaders Meeting 29-30 June 2019, Male', Maldives

Dear South Asia National Societies

We, the members of Asia Pacific Migration Network (APMN) South Asia Working Group on Migration, would like to take this opportunity to express our solidarity and commitment made by the Movement on Migration and Displacement.

Migration is a global and complex phenomenon leaving few countries and regions unaffected. South Asia is one of the most dynamic and diverse lands in terms of climate, geography, culture, languages and people – and for this we celebrate as a region. We have countries of origin, transit, destination and return for migrants, and supporting the humanitarian needs of migrants along this journey must be a priority for South Asia National Societies.

Migration has many positive impacts on countries, communities and individuals - some people migrate to be with family, for employment, for education or quality of life, to learn a new skill or bring knowledge back to their community. However, many people leave in search of safety and security in times of trouble, are forcibly displaced across borders by disasters, violence, conflict or persecution. The nexus of climate change, disasters and migration is increasingly affecting those already vulnerable or in protracted situations of vulnerability, and displacing people from loved ones and livelihoods.

In South Asia, migration is a key humanitarian concern and the consequences on people can be multifaceted. In Afghanistan, increasing numbers of refugees are returning from Iran, whilst thousands of people are forcibly displaced across borders due to conflict and the impacts of climate change. The protection needs of possible large scale returns from Pakistan to Afghanistan also raise key protection concerns for those involved. Bangladesh is supporting one of the most complex and protracted refugees crisis in Cox' Bazaar. Labor migration, critical to the region, often increases instances of trafficking particularly through porous borders, or results in severe forms of labour exploitation.

Opportunities for safe and dignified migration can be challenging with many migrants facing difficult decisions to move without documentation and through irregular pathways, putting them at risk of trafficking or resulting in detention without the critical access to humanitarian services and support. Increasingly we see migrants unable to access basic health care and education, are excluded from society, or returned home without appropriate supports for reintegration. All of which impact the safety, dignity and wellbeing of migrants, host communities and families left behind.

Given these issues, our commitment as a Movement to reach to the most vulnerable, irrespective of status, must be the forefront of our actions. In 2017, all 191 National Societies adopted the 2017 IFRC Global Migration Strategy, which outlined the commitment to assistance, protection and social inclusion of migrants. In 2018, South Asia leaders signed the



Manila declaration which included a commitment of 75% of NS to assess the needs of migration and displacement, and include migrants and people who have been displaced into National Society strategic plans by 2022.

The humanitarian objectives of the Global Compact on Migration (GCM) and Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) are aligned with existing Movement resolutions and commitments and we are noted as a key implementing partner in both Compacts. There are important opportunities for us with Global Compacts, and South Asia National Societies are already contributing to the strategic aims and objectives of these global frameworks to support the humanitarian needs of migrants. Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh are planning strategic workshops or dialogues on migration and displacement with staff and volunteers, setting strategic priorities, developing actions plans or mainstreaming the migration in existing humanitarian activities and response. South Asia National Societies also undertake safe migration awareness raising activities, restoring family Links, attend trainings on understanding issues and indicators of trafficking, and are addressing the basic health needs of migrants.

We acknowledge the role of IFRC to provide technical and strategic guidance to South Asia National Societies on working with migrants and displaced populations in both emergency and non-emergency settings, including assistance, protection and advocacy initiatives, and their support in coordinating international migration and displacement activities. We also recognise the technical support ICRC provides to our work in RFL, detention and discovering the fate of the missing.

With this in mind, we ask leaders to reaffirm the commitments made in the Manila Call to action, to build on work with partners, CSOs and government, and to utilize our axillary role in the humanitarian space. This will ensure the safety, dignity and protection of migrants is upheld, it will strengthen our programming and partnerships on migration, it will enhance strategies on migration, and it will strengthen collaboration and partnerships between South Asia National Societies, IFRC, ICRC to support migrants at all stages of their journey.

We thank our leaders for showing initial commitment to this, for example, through engaging Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal and Afghanistan in the APMN peer to peer learning. We know that it takes our collective effort to prevent, mitigate and respond to current and future needs of migrant. South Asia National Societies are well placed to ensure migrants who are vulnerable are protected, have their basic needs met, and are included in society. Now is the time to strengthen action in a coordinated way, mobilize our learning and our resources to support those in need. Through your guidance and commitment, the members of the APMN South Asia working group stand ready to respond and ensure no one is left behind in our work to support the most vulnerable.

Yours faithfully,

Migration Focal Points of Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka, Maldives, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal