**16th ANNUAL SOUTH EAST ASIA**

**RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT LEADERSHIP MEETING**

*24-25 October 2019*

*Manila, The Philippines*

**Background Note**

**Session 6: Migrant Workers**

There is currently an almost unprecedented level of global attention to the issue of migration, including the needs of those affected by labour migration. In the last five years, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has taken a number of decisive, collective commitments to enhance our assistance and protection to those most at risk in the context of migration, including migrant workers.[[1]](#footnote-1)

These commitments, and the adoption in 2018 of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration – the first inter-governmentally negotiated agreement, prepared under the auspices of the United Nations, covering all dimensions of international migration in a holistic and comprehensive manner - provide context for the Session on Migrant Workers at the 2019 South East Asia Leaders’ Meeting in Manila.

**Background**

From 2014 to 2015, the[*Red Cross Red Crescent Doha Dialogue on Migration*](https://www.ifrc.org/dohadialogue) was hosted in Qatar, Myanmar and the Philippines. A series of events brought together a range of stakeholders involved in labour migration including International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement partners, humanitarian organisations, non-governmental organisations, governments, civil society representatives, academics and research institutions, with the aims of i) identifying good practices and examples of national, regional and cross-regional collaboration, and ii) evaluating ways to strengthen relevant labour laws, policies and programmes to protect the rights and interests of migrant workers.

Building on the Doha Dialogue, in 2018 the IFRC Regional Offices for the Asia Pacific and for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), in partnership with the Australian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent and ICRC, co-facilitated the [*Red Cross Red Crescent Conference on Labour Migration*](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/red-cross-red-crescent-labour-migration-conference-2018/) in Bangkok, Thailand.

This 2-day cross-regional Conference brought together more than 80 participants from 29 National Societies along with external migration experts from civil society, UN agencies and governments. It provided a platform for National Societies and external partners to discuss recent developments and exchange views, knowledge and experience under the theme of humanitarian assistance, protection and advocacy for those affected by labour migration, particularly those most at risk, including women and children.

**The objectives of the Conference were to:**

1. Enhance understanding of trends, dynamics and contemporary humanitarian challenges associated with labour migration in the Asia Pacific and Middle East and North Africa regions

2. Enhance understanding of current opportunities and initiatives related to addressing the humanitarian consequences of labour migration at national, regional and global levels

3. Enhance understanding of the collective strengths of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and the respective mandates to assist, protect and advocate for those affected by labour migration

4. Strengthen commitments and cooperation between National Societies across borders and across regions to assist, protect and advocate for those affected in the context of labour migration.

The main outcome of the Conference was the [*Bangkok Call for Action on Labour Migration*](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/06/Bangkok-Call-for-Action-on-Labour-Migration_final_for-web.pdf), endorsed by all participants, which includes the agreement to create an informal cross-regional Labour Migration Steering Group, comprised of National Societies from the Asia Pacific and MENA regions, supported by the IFRC and ICRC, and hosted by the Qatar Red Crescent Society, in order to:

* continue to review progress against the actions called for in the Bangkok Call for Action
* coordinate with relevant RCRC working groups and initiatives, including the APMN Working Group on Labour Migration and Trafficking
* consider resource mobilisation opportunities to support the work of the IFRC and National Societies
* share information on relevant contextual, legal and policy changes, and to
* periodically produce informal reports and make recommendations on how to strengthen our collective initiatives to ensure safety, dignity and respect for migrant workers, and those affected by labour migration, including through links with the Asia Pacific Regional Conference in 2018, the International Conference in 2019 and the development of Strategy 2030.

**2019 South East Asia Leaders’ Meeting**

The South East Asia Leaders’ Meeting in 2019 provides a platform to discuss opportunities and challenges to take forward the commitments expressed in the *Bangkok Call for Action on Labour Migration*. It also presents an occasion for sharing experiences and learning, analysis and cooperation between Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies in South East Asia in the context of labour migration.

**Suggested content for the Session:**

* Overview of regional dynamics related to labour migration (IFRC)
* Review of commitments articulated in the *Bangkok Call for Action on Labour Migration,* and the [*Manila Call for Action in a Fast-Changing World*](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2018/11/20181214-Manila-Declaration.pdf), in particular the commitment to “increase advocacy and address the needs of migrants, refugees, displaced people and host communities, including in the context of climate change and throughout the migratory journey, and by strengthening our capacities to take urgent and forward-looking action.”
* Sharing of experiences and learning, and analysis of current context for labour migration in South East Asia, including in countries of origin, of transit, of destination and with consideration for the needs of migrant workers upon return.
* Presentation by Singapore Red Cross of the [*Last Mile Assistance Support Initiative*](http://cde.org.sg/wps/portal/cde/home/news/newsdetails?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/content_library/cde/home/news/2d1f71e6-9d46-4de4-b55e-7731c6a9ec66) to respond to the humanitarian needs of migrant workers in Singapore.
* Presentation by Philippines Red Cross on the [Virtual Volunteer Initiative](http://virtualvolunteer.org/) to provide migrant workers and their families with information to keep safe and connected while working abroad
* Discussion: How can the network of RCRC National Societies in South East Asia and more widely be leveraged to enhance protection and assistance for migrant workers in and from the region?
* Discussion: Opportunities and challenges for cross-border cooperation and peer to peer learning between National Societies

1. Recent initiatives of the Movement related to labour migration include the commitments made by the leaders of the Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies of the Asia Pacific region gathered in Manila for the 10th Asia Pacific Regional Conference and contained in the *Manila Call for Action in a Fast-changing World*; the IFRC Global Strategy on Migration, 2018-2022; the Movement Call for Action on the Humanitarian Needs of Vulnerable Migrants; the Protection within the Movement initiative; the Restoring Family Links (RFL) Strategy and developments in RFL (including missing and deceased migrants, and their families); and other cross-cutting initiatives across the Movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)