The Red Cross Red Crescent Labour Migration Conference will be held from 20-21 June in Bangkok, Thailand.

This Conference will be co-facilitated by IFRC Asia Pacific and IFRC Middle East North Africa in partnership with the Australian Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent Society and the ICRC.

The Conference will provide a platform for Red Cross and Red Crescent 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 Conference will bring together leadership and technical focal points from Asia Pacific and Middle East North Africa National Societies. The Conference will also bring together senior UN officials, academia, civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and Government representatives.

The Conference is a follow-up from the Doha Dialogue Initiative, hosted from 2014-2015 with events held across Qatar, Myanmar and the Philippines.

2018 provides an opportune moment for this Conference. There is almost unprecedented global attention to the issue of migration - including the needs of those affected by labour migration. There is almost unprecedented global opportunity - with negotiations towards the first-ever Global Compact on Migration due to conclude by the end of 2018. At the same time, the RCRC Movement has taken a number of decisive, collective steps to enhance our work to protect the most vulnerable in the context of migration, including labour migration. Recent Red Cross Red Crescent initiatives include endorsement by all National Societies of the IFRC Global Migration Strategy, and endorsement of the Movement Call for Action on the Humanitarian Needs of Vulnerable Migrants.

2018 provides a vital, historic opportunity to highlight humanitarian needs in the context of labour migration, to demonstrate the collective strength of the RCRC Movement and to commit to further enhancing our assistance, protection and advocacy for those most in need.
Continued flows of migrant workers – particularly in low-paid and highly gendered sectors – continue within the Asia Pacific region and particularly from the Asia Pacific region to the Middle East and North Africa region.

Although many of these migrant workers bring great benefits to their new communities, and to their communities at home, many also face considerable humanitarian difficulties – including anti-migrant sentiments, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance. Many migrant workers also face abuse, violence, exploitation, the risk of human trafficking, challenges to accessing basic services, the fear and reality of arrest, detention and deportation and an inability to access protection and justice. These risks are often particularly pronounced where migrants are in an irregular status.

These humanitarian concerns also extend to the families of migrant workers, including those who stay behind. There is also the need to address concerns related to labour migration for host communities and those receiving and support migrant workers.

Background
Humanitarian Consequences of Labour Migration

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Initiatives of the RCRC Movement to address the Humanitarian Consequences of Labour Migration

The RCRC Movement has a long tradition of supporting migrants, including migrant workers. Our collective approach is based on humanity, and our commitment to work with and for all migrants, irrespective of their status. Recently a series of key steps have been taken to further enhance assistance, protection and advocacy initiatives for those affected in the context of labour migration.

In 2014-2015, the Red Cross Red Crescent Doha Dialogue on Migration hosted a series of events throughout the Asia Pacific and Middle East North Africa regions focused on the humanitarian consequences of labour migration. The events were held in Qatar, Myanmar and the Philippines with the aims of: i) Identifying good practices and examples of national, regional and cross-regional collaboration; ii) Evaluating ways to strengthen relevant labour laws, policies and programmes to protect the rights and interests of migrant workers. One of the key outcomes was the endorsement of the Manila Declaration on Women Household Service Workers, recognising the needs of migrant workers and in particular, female domestic workers and committing to collective RCRC action to address those needs.

In 2016, the first Asia Pacific Movement-wide migration event was held in Malaysia. The event was entitled Mobilising the Movement: Humanitarian Response to Migration in the Asia Pacific and was co-organised by IFRC, ICRC and the Asia Pacific Migration Network (APMN). The event provided an opportunity for dialogue and knowledge sharing on the humanitarian consequences of migration, including labour migration.

The Asia Pacific Migration Network (APMN) was established in 2012 and continues to be strengthened, with increasing participation from National Societies across the region. The Network provides a vital platform for discussion, knowledge sharing and opportunities for peer to peer support. Recently, the APMN has established a dedicated working group focused on addressing humanitarian needs in the context of Labour Migration and Trafficking.

The IFRC in Asia Pacific has continued to reinforce support to National Societies - in both emergency and non-emergency contexts - including through the development of an IFRC Asia Pacific Framework on Migration and Displacement. One of the key areas of support from IFRC to National Societies is in addressing humanitarian needs in the context of labour migration and trafficking.

The global Rights of Migrants in Action Project was undertaken in partnership between IFRC, National Societies and civil society organisations in 15 countries across the globe. The Rights of Migrants in Action Project had a specific focus on assistance and protection to migrant workers and victims of human trafficking.

In 2017, the Virtual Volunteer, a web-based online application to provide information to migrant workers, was launched in the Philippines demonstrating the ongoing commitment by the IFRC and National Societies to ensure that the needs of migrant workers in the Asia Pacific and Middle East North Africa regions are met.

In the Middle East and North Africa region, a conference was held in late 2017 which brought together National Societies and partners to discuss the challenges associated with the integration and protection of migrant workers. National Societies across the Middle East North Africa region committed to increase their efforts to protect and assist migrants utilising their auxiliary role, as well as to support the integration of migrants in local communities.

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At the end of 2017, these developments culminated in the endorsement by all 191 National Societies during the IFRC General Assembly of the Global Migration Strategy (2018-2022) and its accompanying Road Map. Migration has been reaffirmed by the RCRC as one of the most important issues of our time, and benchmarks have been set for the Movement’s humanitarian approach to migration. During the Statutory Meetings in 2017, the Movement also called upon States to guarantee the safety and dignity of all migrants, along with their unrestrained access to humanitarian assistance through a Call for Action on the Humanitarian Needs of Vulnerable Migrants.

Further initiatives to assist and protect migrant workers continue, including the development of a new Restoring Family Links (RFL) Strategy, which recognises that migration, including labour migration, is a key challenge and one that is likely to increase in significance in years to come. Technological progress and the use of online tools have opened new means of tracing people, for which common approaches need to be found. This is all the more pertinent in the face of increasingly restrictive data protection legislation. Consequently, the Strategy recognises that the RCRC Movement must adapt and respond in this regard. Other initiatives include, work with the families of missing migrants, and efforts to prevent disappearances and clarify the fate of the missing.

Daniel Chia / American Red Cross
Conference Format and Outcomes

The Conference will be held over two days, on Wednesday 20th and Thursday 21st June in Bangkok, Thailand. The language of the Conference will be English - we regret that no interpretation will be available. Therefore, participants should have a good command of English in order to fully contribute to and benefit from discussions during the Conference.

Day One will involve International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Partners and international colleagues from migrant communities, academia, governments, the private sector, civil society and UN agencies, and will focus on enhancing knowledge of labour migration trends and dynamics, including humanitarian needs. Day One will also focus on deepening an understanding of the strengths of Red Cross and Red Crescent action to assist, protect and advocate for the needs of those affected in the context of labour migration.

Day Two will be reserved for Red Cross Red Crescent Movement Partners to collectively identify local, national, regional and cross-regional priorities and commitments to strengthen assistance, protection and humanitarian diplomacy in the context of labour migration. This will include the endorsement of a collective Road Map on Translating Migration Principles and Commitments into Action.

Participation

Expected involvement of approximately 70-80 participants, which includes leadership and technical colleagues from Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies from across the Asia Pacific and Middle East and North Africa regions, as well as representatives from Partner National Societies, the ICRC and the IFRC.

Invited external participants will include senior UN officials, representatives from academia, civil society and migrant communities, employers, recruiters and the private sector.

Objectives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Labour Migration

The objectives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Labour Migration are to:

1. Enhance understanding of Asia Pacific and Middle East North Africa trends, dynamics and contemporary humanitarian challenges associated with labour migration.
2. Enhance understanding of current opportunities and initiatives related to addressing the humanitarian consequences of labour migration at the national, regional and global levels.
3. Enhance understanding of the collective strengths of the RCR Movement, and the respective mandates of its components, to assist, protect and advocate for those affected by labour migration - both migrants and their relatives.
4. Enhance 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 Conference will also provide an opportunity to discuss recent initiatives of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, related to labour migration, including the newly endorsed Global Migration Strategy, 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.