

MIGRANTS WORKSHOP "THE SITUATION OF MIGRANTS IN ASIA AND OUR RESPONSE"

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A SHARED BEGINNING AND A COMMON CALL

This report reflects our time together in a sacred space where we gathered as one family of faith. It was a workshop not just of ideas, but of hearts. Through the process of *'Conversation in the Spirit'*, we opened ourselves to the stories, struggles, and hopes of our migrant brothers and sisters.

We came to see that their journey is our journey, and their suffering is a wound in the Body of Christ. This report shares what we discovered, the challenges we faced, and the promises we made to one another. It is a guide for our shared journey forward, calling us to be a *'welcoming tent'* for all who are on the move.

DAY 1: REALITIES OF MIGRATION

THE REALITIES OF MIGRATION IN ASIA

The inaugural session began with a keynote address by **Christine Nathan**, President of ICMC, followed by **Mungreiphy Shimray**, Regional Coordinator in Caritas Asia, who presented on the current situation of migrants across the continent.



NEW FORMS OF SLAVERY

Forced and bonded labour strips individuals of God-given dignity



LEGAL SYSTEM FAILURE

Laws often failed to protect migrants, leaving them without recourse to justice



EXTREME EXPLOITATION

Exploitation can reach horrific extremes, including deaths and organ trafficking



FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION

Women on the move face unique vulnerabilities and heightened risks of trafficking

We are called to recognise and transform our protection measures by using the Pareto Principle – investing and embedding in the right protective actions to produce amplified impact that will ensure the rights and dignity of migrants.



Photo from top to bottom:
Christine Nathan, Mungreiphy Shimray

BIBLICAL MIGRATION JOURNEYS

Sr. Dr. Rekha Chennattu, Professor of Biblical Studies and Superior General-Religious of the Assumption, guided us through God's biblical and theological vision of migration.

Migration is not a strange concept as God's people are always on the move, from Abraham's journey, the Exodus of the Israelites and the fleeing Joseph and Mary in search of safe haven for an infant Jesus.

In response to the challenging realities of migration and statelessness, we are called to be a "welcoming tent" to all, stand with the poor and the marginalized, creating a culture of inclusive hospitality that reveals God's loving presence in the world today.

PAPAL MESSAGES ON MIGRATION

Bishop Allwyn D'Silva of FABC-OHD/CCD shared his reflections on the teachings of Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV on migrants.

The messages spanned decades, reminding us of the Church's long-standing tradition of welcoming strangers, emphasizing that our response to migrants and refugees is an essential part of our Christian faith.

These reflections served as a reminder that the Church's stance is rooted not just in compassion, but in a rich history of papal teaching that calls for solidarity with our brothers and sisters on the move.

“Israel was entrusted with the mission of building up a society where all can enjoy the fullness of life, where no one is forced to leave his/her homeland, and where strangers – migrants and refugees – are welcomed with love and respect.”



In photo:
Sr. Dr. Rekha Chennattu



CONVERSATION IN THE SPIRIT

The first facilitation session produced the following reflections:

BE A GUIDING LIGHT

To be a guiding light, we are called to equip ourselves with knowledge and skills to be a trusted source of information - improving flow of information to migrants, act to dispel myths and stereotypes, and learn relevant labor laws.

REACH OUT AND WALK TOGETHER

While the universal church takes lead in the mission, we become the bridge between migrants and existing stakeholders from other faith communities, government agencies and other NGOs to strengthen our collective work.

EMPOWERMENT IS OUR MISSION

Embracing a 'conversion of the heart' to shift from temporary assistance to empowering migrants to be their own advocates allowing us to express full solidarity with the poor and suffering.

INVEST IN A JUST WORLD

View migration challenges with a spiritual lens. Support efforts that address the root causes of forced migration, advocate for fairer economic policies to create a just world where dignity is non-negotiable and everyone can thrive.



Photo from left to right:
Fr. Jaison Vadessery, Fr. Roger Manalo , Ranmit Singh

LEGAL LAWS AND CHALLENGES FOR MIGRANTS

MALAYSIA

- Malaysia signed a number of UN Human Rights Charters yet does not display migrant-friendly treatment in reality.
- Recent law reforms have raised minimum wages for all workers, though it does not cover foreign domestic workers.
- Though judicial courts clearly extends protection to all migrants including undocumented, the enforcement is not the same.
- Mistreatment comes in various forms - labour exploitation, passport withholding, poor recourse to justice, workplace hazard.

PHILIPPINES

- The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) is responsible for the protection of rights and welfare of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW).
- At the same time, multiple departments oversee affairs for migrants and refugees.
- Filipino overseas migration is deeply historical, also accelerated by labour export programmes. Diversity and disasters also shape internal migration.
- Migration drives remittance, support for housing, education but is also linked to social issues of family breakdown, abuse etc.

INDIA

- 93% of India's population work in unorganised sectors, with little legal protection leading to exploitation.
- Migrants and refugees are amongst the most vulnerable in this workforce, and with little or no trade representation, though collective resistance exists.
- India's labour law reforms weakened protection for workers, especially migrants and refugees, often leaving them at the mercy of the employer.



DAY 2: WITNESSING GOD'S SERVANTS IN MIGRANT WORK

The first half of the day consisted of separate visits to three local and refugee-led organisations - Myanmar Ethnic Organization (MEO), Tenaganita and North South Initiative (NSI) which provided first-hand exposure and witness to the scope of community mobilisation, advocacy, and direct support extended to vulnerable communities.

Each group were received by the leaders of each organization - **Paupi Kai Sian Pau** of MEO, **Glorene Dass** of Tenaganita, and **Adrian Pereira** of NSI.

During the second half of the day, we heard from representatives of the local Church and Catholic-based organisations sharing their

inspirational experiences of serving migrants and refugees in pastoral, medical, gender, and humanitarian dimensions, each contributing their unique strengths to the protection and service of migrants and refugees.

The panel consisted of **Britticia Arulanthu** from Global Shepherds Berhad (GSB), **Sarah Ann Chou** from A Call to Serve (ACTS), **Josephine Tey** from the Archdiocese of Human Development (AOHD) and **Pohleen Tan** from ICMC. We further witnessed the testimonies of **Doris Ciego** and **Desiderius Dhare**, which moved us with their personal struggles and courage.



Top photo from left to right:
Paupi Kai Sian Pau, Adrian Pereira, Tenaganita representative

Left photo:
Sarah Ann Chou, Britticia Arulanthu, Pohleen Tan, Davide Bernocchi, Josephine Tey, Desiderius Dhare

CONVERSATION IN THE SPIRIT

Guided by the Synodal reflections on migration and the challenge of building intercultural communities, the following themes emerged from the group discussions:

HOPE AMIDST CHALLENGES

Migrants embody resilience in the face of risk, obstacles and limited resources. Their persistence is a source of hope for the Church's mission.

COMPASSION AS THE HEART OF MISSION

Compassion extends beyond a 'listening heart' and calls for accompanying, engaging, and accepting migrants.

COURAGE AND PERSISTENCE OF MIGRANTS AND ADVOCATES

Recognise the inspirational qualities of migrants and the persistence of advocates in confronting oppressive systems.

VALUE OF MIGRANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Shift away from the narrative of vulnerability by appreciating the gifts that migrants contribute from faith, talent, skills, time and cultural richness

SYNODALITY AND NETWORKING

Journeying together in solidarity, and expanding networks within the Church and across organisations.

COLLABORATION AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

Building stronger partnerships across NGOs, ecclesial institutions, and grassroots communities is essential.

FORMATION AND CONSCIENTIZATION

Migrant realities should be integrated into Catholic formation, including seminarian and religious training, thus embedding migrant pastoral care in our mission.

ADVOCACY AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Harness the Church's institutional influence for advocacy, particularly in addressing root causes and systemic injustices.

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*Where there is
crisis, there is
growth. Where
there is a need,
there is a
solution.*



Photo: Reading of a prayer at the end of Day 2

DAY 3: CONVERGING KNOWLEDGE FOR FUTURE

The last day of the workshop began with sharings from various Catholic organisations on best practices to inform and inspire future work.

FABC

FR. JOSEPH GONSALVES

Hosted regional seminars and conducted exposure visit to Rohingya refugee camps, and exchanges on renewable energy and migration as intersecting issues. Led webinars and proposed for a Solidarity Network for strengthening regional practices

ICMC

DAVIDE BERNOCCHI

Named as one of the Associated Institution alongside Caritas Internationalis by the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. Coordinates Catholic engagement in global migration forums and support episcopal conferences.

JPIC

FR. ROY THOMAS

Supported various migrant ministry and anti-trafficking activities across Asia. Produced collaborative publications, hosted webinars on migration and trafficking, collaborate with other Catholic organisations

CARITAS

ARI NUGROHO

Utilises the Human Mobility Network and collaborates with the Greater Mekong Sub-Region Anti-Trafficking Task Force in addressing various migration and trafficking challenges, raising awareness and advocate at national and regional levels.

TALITHA KUM

SR. PAULA KWANDAO

Operates through a network model emphasising bottom-up, inter-congregational structure rooted in local context but globally connected. Focuses on strength-based presence, survivor-centred approaches and youth leadership

FORGING A WAY FORWARD

In a final facilitation of Conversation in the Spirit, participants were invited to engage in a forward-looking discernment reflecting on the experiences and sharings from the past three days answering four pertinent questions.

VULNERABILITY AND EXPLOITATION

Fear of authorities,
wage theft, labour
exploitation, and
human trafficking

LEGAL PROTECTION AND JUSTICE

Weak legal frameworks, corruption
and exploitation, lack of
recognition, documentation and
access to justice
lack of recognition,
documentation,

DISCRIMINATION AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Stigma, lack of social
cohesion and limited
integration

LACK OF PRE- DEPARTURE PREPARATION

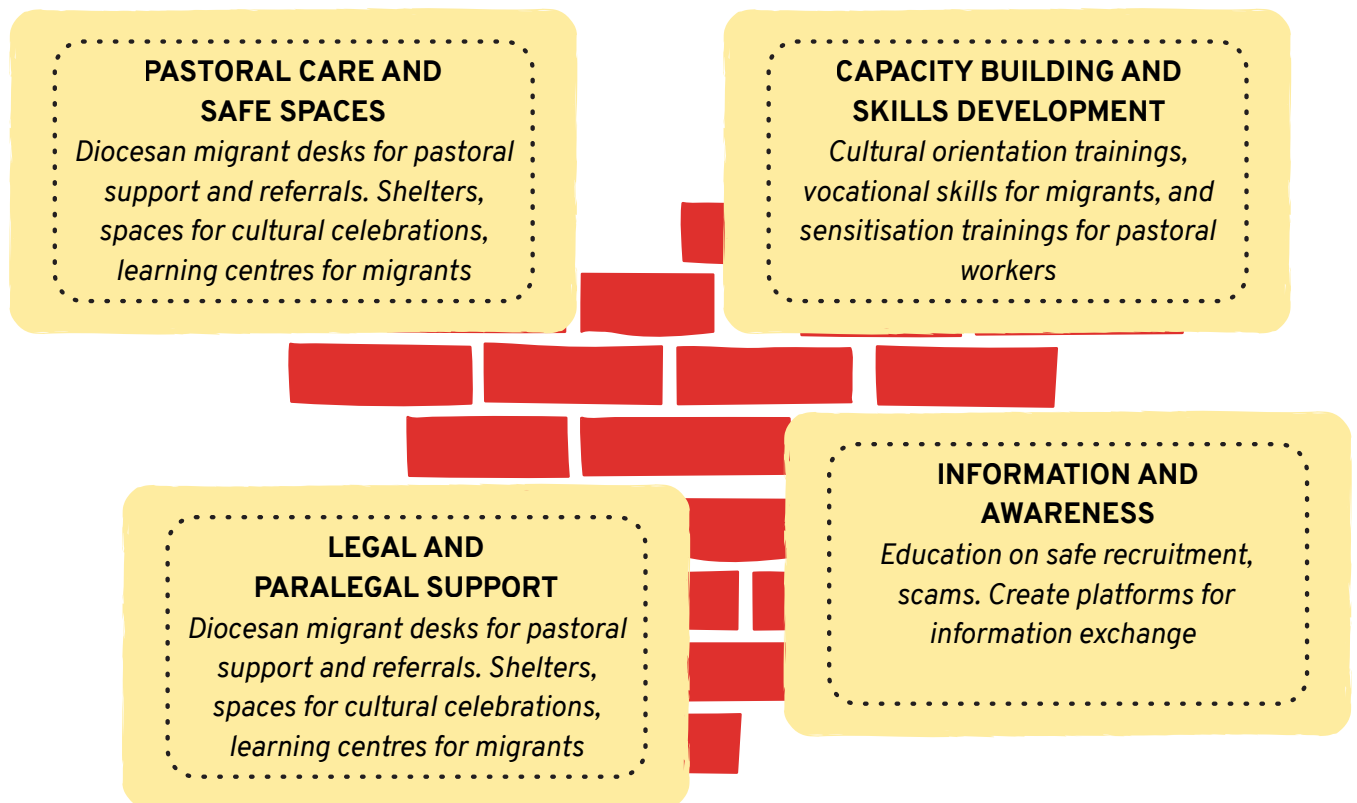
Migrants leave their
country without
adequate vocational or
language skills

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Mental health
struggles, poor access
to healthcare

**WHAT ARE THE
MOST URGENT
NEEDS OR
CHALLENGES
FACING MIGRANTS
IN OUR CONTEXT?**

OUTLINING CONCRETE STEPS



COLLABORATING AT ALL LEVELS

Partnerships with international Catholic bodies, NGOs, and interfaith groups to strengthen advocacy

GLOBAL

Regional strategic planning and resource pooling across Asia-Pacific, FABC coordinate regional efforts

REGIONAL

Local level collaboration with government and other bodies on migrant protection

NATIONAL

OUR COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

**SUSTAINED
ADVOCACY** at
national and
international levels to
influence migration
policies

CAPACITY BUILDING
to train pastoral
ministers, lay leaders
and migrants

**RESOURCE
SHARING** of time,
expertise, and
finances for
collaborative
initiatives

**SYNODAL
SOLIDARITY** through
standing with
migrations side by side
and upholding their
resilience

**BUILDING
NETWORKS** that
strengthen case
management, with
occasional
congregations

A CALL TO ACTION

By the end of the workshop, we recognised that our response to migration must be both pastoral and prophetic. We are called to accompany migrants with compassion, advocate for their rights with courage, and collaborate with hope across boundaries.

Together, we commit to transform best practices into lived realities, and to be a welcoming tent for all who are on the move.



Photo: Group wrap-up the end of Day 3

**“IN THEIR FACES, WE ENCOUNTER CHRIST; IN THEIR
STRUGGLES, WE HEAR THE CALL TO JUSTICE.”**