

International Conference on “Migration and the Human Trafficking Crisis in
Asia” – 21-23 August 2019, Phnom Penh, Cambodia -
Concluding Statement

We lament the exploitation and suffering of millions of people around the world who are victims of forced and unsafe migration and human trafficking. As people from Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and the United States, engaged in addressing the variety of challenges posed by human trafficking in many parts of Asia and gathered at the International Conference on “Migration and the Human Trafficking Crisis in Asia”, convened by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (USA) and Life With Dignity (Cambodia) we strongly appeal to all people of faith or belief and all others of good will as well as governments around the world to respond to the forces which perpetrate this crisis.

Human trafficking is not a problem experienced by some nameless and faceless people but one that indicts all of us as it thrives by commodifying some who are made and considered inferior and vulnerable by our prevailing structures and cultures. As such, the rampant practice of human trafficking poses serious challenges to the moral integrity of our generation. As faith communities, some of us have already taken stock and are addressing this shameful reality of human trafficking while others are seeking to understand and analyze these issues with a view to discern the distinct role that churches and faith-based organizations alone can and must play.

We together affirm that all our faith traditions uphold the values of justice, equity and dignity as crucial for the sanctity and integrity of life of all people and the earth. As such, we commit our churches and faith-based organizations to a partnership through courageous and committed actions of confronting and resisting the forces that cause human trafficking, preventing its occurrence, protecting the vulnerable, and healing and restoring broken lives and relationships. Human beings are not for sale. We further commit to accompany one another through the values of mutuality, respect and trust, holding each other accountable.

A rights-based approach, built upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related internationally recognized human rights standards, is essential to address the challenges of forced and unsafe migration as well as the scourge of human trafficking. While governments have legal obligations to protect these rights, we noted a distinct role for faith-based communities in offering protection as well -- even sanctuary from the principalities and powers as needed. Churches must be safe places and provide comfort, counseling, and compassion. Faith-based organizations are often uniquely placed to rebuild the self-esteem of trafficked survivors.

Faith communities which seek the common good are especially equipped to take up these issues, being rooted at the local level and globally connected. As spiritually motivated people of conscience and connected beyond national boundaries, we must call out the injustices associated with forced and unsafe migration, the conditions of refugees, and human trafficking. We should contribute to the transformation required – emotionally, morally, politically, economically, socially and legally -- to identify the complexities and challenges before us with these concerns, strengthen capacities to address them and take concrete action to rectify structural injustices within systems in our institutions, our communities, our nations and our world. In

doing so, we must amplify the voices of victims of human trafficking as well as adopt a gender-sensitive approach -- for both women and men -- in calling upon our faith communities, governments and the international community to respond constructively to forced and unsafe migration and the horrors of human trafficking.

The conference took stock of our work and discussed how we could build upon the internationally recognized “4 Ps” approach to human trafficking -- Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnerships. We also strongly affirm the importance of partnerships as a cross-cutting methodology.

We discussed and mutually pledge to:

- Analyze together strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and engage in strategic planning and mutual capacity building, where possible;
- Pursue an integrated approach to forced and unsafe migration and human trafficking that also promotes understanding of their intersection;
- Encourage greater participation by our faith communities, working with many like-minded actors, including multi-faith efforts, to improve coordination and collaboration, leverage resources and do together what we each do best;
- Engage in rights-based advocacy at all possible levels (national, regional and international), including awareness and engagement campaigns, the utilization of multilateral and bilateral agreements, model legislation, stronger national laws and response mechanisms, increasingly effective efforts to prosecute offenders and improvement of criminal justice systems, prevention of online exploitation and abuse and efforts to eliminate them;
- Care for the wounds – physical, psychological and spiritual -- of victims of trafficking and forced and unsafe migration and their families through social services, shelters, vocational training and livelihood opportunities, and legal accompaniment;
- Affirm the diversity of implementing partners and actors taking up the issues in countries of origin, transit, destination and return; and
- Enhance communication and information sharing by identifying and joining existing information databases (intergovernmental and non-governmental) and networks for maximum effectiveness or create those where none may exist but are necessary.

The conference took note and expressed its sincere appreciation for the in-depth research, prepared for this conference, which mapped the current situation on migration and human trafficking in Asia and acknowledges its recommendations.

The conference calls for churches, inter-faith and ecumenical agencies, ELCA companion churches and organizations to:

- Create informational materials linking religious teachings/doctrines and response to trafficking in persons (TIP), and mobilize resources to develop and conduct training modules and workshops about TIP (including rights and legal aspects) for religious institutions and emerging leaders (ELCA to take the lead responsibility); and
- Establish a network involving the participants in the conference and the research study and an online platform to share information, including best practices about protection services, a directory of faith-based and civil society organizations (FBOs/CSOs) working on these issues, as well as deepening and

extending the mapping already undertaken by the research study, and related activities (ELCA to take the lead responsibility).

The conference also stressed the need for faith-based and other organizations as well as governments to:

- Strongly promote awareness of forced and unsafe migration and human trafficking issues;
- Recognize and ensure the sexual and reproductive health of the victims of forced migrations, refugees and human trafficking at local, national and international levels;
- Identify specific instances of human trafficking and respond with appropriate actions, including safeguarding of children; and
- Take steps to prevent forced and unsafe migration and human trafficking, especially in situations of statelessness and displacement.

Our commitment

On the way forward, we affirm our commitment to:

- Discern further the distinct role of faith communities in addressing these challenges;
- Build our own capacities to address these issues, utilizing different approaches where appropriate and required; and
- Recognize and build awareness that a number of the root causes of forced and unsafe migration and human trafficking are political and economic in nature -- often poverty-related -- calling upon governments to address them while holding governments and ourselves accountable for meeting the challenges.

Participants:

Australian Lutheran World Service	International Lutheran Seafarers' Mission (Singapore)
Cambodia National Council for Children	Japan Evangelical Lutheran Association
Cambodian Women's Crisis Center	Life With Dignity (Cambodia)
Center for Disaster Risk Management & Community Development Studies (Indonesia)	Lutheran Church in Cambodia
Chab Dai (Cambodia)	Lutheran Church in Malaysia
ChildFund Cambodia	Lutheran Church in the Philippines
Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh	Lutheran World Federation – Laos
Diakonia Czech	Lutheran World Federation – Myanmar
DanChurchAid – Cambodia	Lutheran World Federation – Nepal
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (USA)	Lutheran World Federation National Committee (Indonesia)
Farmer and Nature Net (FNN)	Mission Alliance
Federation of the Lutheran Churches in Myanmar	Nepal Evangelical Lutheran Church
Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in USA	New Life Center Foundation (Thailand)
Hagar International (Cambodia)	RDRS Bangladesh
HEKE Cambodia	UN Women
Inter-Church Service Association (India)	Winrock International – Cambodia
	World Renew - Cambodia
	World Vision International - Cambodia