

Communique: 'Diakonal ministry of the Church in developing effective responses to combat trafficking in Asia'

28–30 September 2022 | Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

We, the 30 participants from member churches, national ecumenical councils, and other organisations gathered at the Ecumenical Centre of the Council of Churches in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 28 September to 30 September 2022 for the Asia Regional Programme on 'Diakonal ministry of the Church in developing effective responses to combat human trafficking in Asia' organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).

Throughout the three days of dialogue, common worship, prayer, study, sharing and reflection on the gospel mandate and the reality of the world, especially on the situation of trafficking in persons, we heard the cry of humanity, the reason for the cry, discussed ways of responding to it and ways of becoming channels of restoration to all who experience one or many forms of dispossession and exploitation. The church has a role to play. In order to do this, we need to come together as one community of faith to combat human trafficking.

CALL TO ACTION

We call on the churches and leaders around the world to repent for contributing to 'othering', and to the conversation on 'non-persons'; for othering non-believers and non-Christians; for claiming that salvation is exclusive for those who believe in the resurrection; and for a lack of concern for those discriminated against while covering it up with mere tokenism. We pray for forgiveness and seek to be reconciled to God and from those 'othered'.

The church as one community of faith must work together to welcome, safeguard, enhance, integrate and also re-integrate migrants in both sending and receiving countries using social media and other means to strengthen collaboration, communication and sharing of resources among the body of Christ.

To have stronger voices, we need to come together as one church. Hence, as the participants of this programme, we would like to propose a few actions to be carried out in order for us to be in solidarity with the little, the last, the least and the lost through developing effective responses to combat human trafficking in Asia.

These include:

1. *Promote* contextual reading and teaching of the scriptures so that church members are biblically nurtured and oriented towards inclusivity, respect, love and concern for the 'others' and act to protect and restore every person's dignity as an image of God in their own contexts.
2. *Turn theology into action* by welcoming, protecting and integrating and providing safe spaces for migrants, the marginalised and the vulnerable in our midst as concrete affirmation of our intentional discipleship.
3. *Immerse, connect and integrate* with the 'othered'. Leaders of churches must understand the lives of the 'othered' not with pens or letters but with their own hands and feet. Churches must facilitate immersive experiences so that members get out of church buildings and go to the field where non-persons live and work, by adopting a mission strategy of Jesus and having a heart to reach out instead of waiting to be approached.
4. *Strengthen* partnerships and cooperation among councils and churches in Asia to ensure safe migration and re-integration of migrants especially survivors of human trafficking.

5. *Create* a good networking system with various churches and leaders including NGOs, government bodies, FBOs, CSOs, UN agencies, and embassies through lobbying, advocacy, education, and awareness-building using social media and all available means.
6. *Have open conversations* on perpetrators or those who contribute, whether directly or indirectly, to trafficking, such as households who employ trafficked workers and indulge in human rights violations (in receiving countries) or people from the victim's community that have sold them to traffickers or agents for monetary commissions (in sending countries). This must be supplemented with strategies for holding perpetrators accountable as part of the repentance and reconciliation process.
7. In sending countries: *Organise and provide* accurate and up-to-date information for members who wish to migrate for work, ensure safe migration and strengthen networking and communication among churches from receiving countries to prevent members from being trafficked.
8. In receiving countries: *Conscientize* members on the biblical call to be a hospitable and welcoming church towards migrants regardless of race, religion, gender, age, presence or absence of disability, documentation status, and to create a place of solace for migrants especially victims of trafficking.