



# Christian Conference of Asia

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17 December 2021

## CCA's Statement on International Migrants Day–2021 “Harnessing the Potential of Human Mobility”

On this International Migrants Day, we uphold the great contributions made by migrants in their respective communities across the world. The theme of this year's International Migrants Day, “Harnessing the Potential of Human Mobility”, reminds the world about the significance of global mobility and the role of people on the move with their knowledge, skills, and manifold contributions that enable the creation of stronger and resilient communities. In today's rapidly changing world, where national boundaries are becoming less consequential, international migration remains an important issue. Even though people have moved and settled beyond borders since time immemorial, migration has never reached the magnitude and extent seen in recent times. As per United Nations (UN) estimates, international migration comprises a little over 3 percent of the world's population. But its impact is far greater than this percentage seems to suggest. Contemporary migration manifests itself in all corners of the globe and transforms entire societies as a consequence of a constant stream of people leaving and/or entering. International migration touches the lives of both migrant and non-migrant populations, with intense economic, social, and cultural changes.

The annual theme of International Migrants Day–2021, “Harnessing the Potential of Human Mobility”, is reflective of a global optimism about the role and impact of migration, specifically international migration, in development. Migration is realised as a powerful driver of sustainable development for migrants and their communities in countries of origin, transit, and destination. The 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development recognises the positive contribution of migrants to sustainable development and expresses the need for international cooperation towards achieving safe, orderly, and regular migration (target 10.7). Several international organisations are keen to point out the huge potential of international migration for development. Optimism also colours the opinion on the role of transnational communities in development, which also receives attention from state and multilateral institutions. However, migration does not automatically lead to development. To truly “harness the potential of human mobility”, it is vital to reflect upon some key challenges that affect migrant populations or transnational populations and proactively engage with any vulnerabilities.

Migrants may be unable to fulfil their full potential due to constraints in countries and communities of origin, transit, and destination. When people are forced to move, whether due to natural or human-made crises, migration occurs irregularly and in a more insecure manner. In these situations, migrants often risk their lives and can be exposed to vulnerability, exploitation, and abuse. Individuals who migrate to escape crisis or fragile contexts are also far more likely to face destitution upon arrival or in transit. Migrants working in the informal sector are often without protection, which renders them easy targets for exploitation. Other limiting factors include mobility restrictions, lack of access to decent work and basic services, including health and education, and migration-intensified vulnerabilities, including social exclusion, xenophobia, racism, and discrimination. When migrants are unable to access basic services and social protection systems in destination countries, their potential to make a positive contribution to society is hampered.

On this International Migrants Day, the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) recognises and upholds the substantial contributions that migrants make. The CCA reiterates the importance of its accompaniment to protect the safety, dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms of all migrants. Migration, being a transboundary issue, must be understood as a continuum, spanning across countries and requiring policy interventions that cannot be adequately addressed by any single stakeholder.

While recognising the fact that the Church stands on the side of all who work to defend the right of people to live with dignity, the CCA encourages all member constituencies to commit to addressing the needs and capacities of migrants in sending, transit, and receiving countries through increased communication, cooperation, and collaboration between churches in Asia and the Asian diaspora. Churches must provide safe spaces for positive self-identification of migrants and offer a network of support and security in the face of other challenges. Asian churches must always be aware of the geopolitical situations which perpetuate disparities or inequalities causing forced departures. Migrants must also be recognised as the “moving body of Christ” in conjunction with the universality or catholicity of the Church, rather than being viewed through theological narratives that simply focus on the “recognition of the other”. The cardinal message of the Gospel enjoins us to be mindful of God's mercy, and that the acceptance of others is intertwined with encountering and accepting of God himself. Welcoming others means welcoming God in person. The Gospel of mercy inspires and encourages us to follow the ways of renewing and transforming God's divine plan for all of humanity. Together, let us stand on the side of all who work to defend each person's right to live with dignity, and overcome all barriers; let us journey towards the full realisation of the potential of migration and human mobility.

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