

SOUTH ASIA

ASIAN FACES IN THE FIELD

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) employs close to 18,000 people in over 90 countries. These humanitarians face unprecedented challenges as they work in difficult circumstances and in conflict-hit places. But their passion to have a positive impact on people's lives makes them overcome obstacles while travelling thousands of miles away from their families to deliver much-needed help to beneficiaries.





FARHANA JAVID

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DELEGATE

Not all superheroes wear capes. Instead, some carry the most resilient heart, bringing comfort wherever they go. One such superhero is **Farhana Javid**, a mental health and psychosocial delegate with the ICRC. Having started her journey with the ICRC in 2011 as a field health officer in Kashmir, Farhana has come a long way – she is headed to Syria for her next mission soon.

In 2017, she went to Ukraine on her first-ever posting as a mobile staff. Surviving extreme weather conditions like minus 30 degrees Celsius, working with people whose language she didn't know, managing work and life (Farhana has two children), making five-hour commutes to work every day and numerous other struggles of working in conflict zones – Farhana has loved it all. She says her ability to adapt, be empathetic and view everybody humanely helped her through the tough days.

As she packs her bags for Syria, Farhana's children proudly tell their friends about how their mum is a superhero – a fact vouched for by many whose lives Farhana has touched during her numerous assignments.

As a mental health delegate, Farhana often supports people in their most vulnerable moments. Their stories and tragedies also affect her. But Farhana says these people have made her even more resilient, shaping her life in ways she never thought possible.



Being away from home is tough. You don't just miss the milestones like birthdays and weddings, but also feel the loneliness when something tragic happens back home. Even though you're constantly virtually connected with your loved ones, it's not the same. What keeps me going is the bond I have with my work and the people I work for. Work is certainly challenging, but what is life without challenges?

Today, we have become more diverse. There was a time when they did not hire anybody who wasn't Swiss. But now, there are people from over 150 nationalities working for the ICRC, for one cause – that is so inspiring!



The ICRC has given me a new identity. It is worth the sacrifice when my beneficiaries tell me that they eagerly await my visits, that life is a little less difficult because of our support, that they sleep better because of our counselling sessions and talks. For me, that is the ultimate motivation.



WILSON MONDAL

PROTECTION DELEGATE

Currently posted to Uganda, Wilson Mondal joined the ICRC in August 2012. Almost a decade on, and having worked in Nigeria, Sudan and Sri Lanka as head of subdelegation, he is as passionate about his job as he was when he started with the organization.

When Wilson moved from the Canadian Red Cross to the ICRC, he admits he didn't know much about the organization. His first assignment was in the Philippines in 2012, where the protection file was handed to him and he was asked to work in close coordination with the head of the department. A major part of his work involved meeting people affected by conflict.



According to Wilson, an ideal ICRC employee must be flexible, positive, proud to be part of an organization like the ICRC and must be neutral while on the job.

Even though he came from a background of humanitarian work, there were certain challenges that could only be overcome with experience. During their disaster response operations, there were days when Wilson had to sleep in an ICRC vehicle, survive on minimal food and water and stay in a tent for close to 20 days. None of this was easy. That is why he feels that an ideal ICRC employee must be flexible, positive and proud to be part of an organization like this. Most importantly, he says neutrality is a non-negotiable trait.

Wilson says working for an organization like the ICRC can also be incredibly humbling. "Once, a young man in a place of detention told me that both his mother and him always kept me in their prayers. The boy had gotten separated from his family for 12 years due to detention and we reunited them via Red Cross messages. For the old woman, it was like her son was born again!"

"If you really want to help and work for people affected by conflict and violence, then the ICRC is the place to be," Wilson says with a smile.





YUBARAJ ADHIKARI RESTORING FAMILY LINKS DELEGATE

Yubaraj Adhikari has been with the ICRC for over 12 years. After joining the Nepal delegation and handling various roles there, he became a mobile staff in 2016 and worked in Sri Lanka for two years, followed by six months in Myanmar. In his current role, Yubaraj is part of the team that helps trace missing family members separated by conflict, restoring contact between them and reuniting them when possible.

In a brief chat, he gives us a glimpse into what has changed at the ICRC over the years.

Q: During the amazing span of your 12 years with the ICRC, do you think that things have changed from then to now?

Yubaraj: Of course, there have been many changes! Look at our conversation right now – it's on Skype. You found me so easily. When I first joined the organization, there was only one computer in our delegation and we had so many levels of checks to get through to one person. Apart from technological advances, I've seen a huge change in the mindset of people.

Q: Was it challenging for you to get a mobile position, and how was the transition from being resident staff to mobile staff?

Yubaraj: The transition was simple but came with its own set of challenges. As is their wont, those not in the field, including our supervisors, would expect things without understanding the ground realities. It was difficult personally too – I was not allowed to bring my family with me for 24 months when I first became mobile. But now we're together and it's lovely to be able to see my children grow up.

Q: Did you think you'd work with the ICRC for over a decade?

Yubaraj: No. In fact, I had only expected to last the probation period! (Laughs) But here I am... it feels like I am married to the ICRC. I have never felt the need to leave.

I can't forget an overwhelming experience I had in Pokhara, Nepal. We were in a car when we saw a man run after the vehicle, waving at us to stop. As I got down, he enveloped me in a hug. He told us that they had waited for years to know about what happened to his grandfather who had served with the British Army in World War II. It's only through Red Cross messages that they finally found out that his grandfather had lost his life on the battlefield. He was extremely thankful to the ICRC and his outpouring brought tears to my eyes as well.



BHAVA POUDYAL

REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SPECIALIST

Currently based in
BANGKOK, THAILAND

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Programme evaluation
- Programme management
- Community mental health

5 ASSIGNMENTS

- Nepal
- Azerbaijan
- Sri Lanka
- Tajikistan
- Thailand

9 YEARS

5 LANGUAGES

9 PUBLICATIONS

“The ICRC is very inclusive and diverse. Moving to a new place is always an adventure. Interacting with people from different cultures and countries is exciting and a very big part of this job.”



BHAVA-SPEAK!

An ideal ICRC employee should be:

- Beneficiary-oriented
- Empathetic
- Open and good listener
- Pragmatic
- Result-focused

At the ICRC, we work closely with communities to understand and meet their needs, using our experience and expertise to respond quickly, effectively and without taking sides. We are looking for people who are committed, compassionate and pragmatic – committed enough to do what it takes to help the victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence; compassionate enough to listen to each person’s story as if it were for the first time; pragmatic enough to take a step back and still take hard decisions quickly under pressure.

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