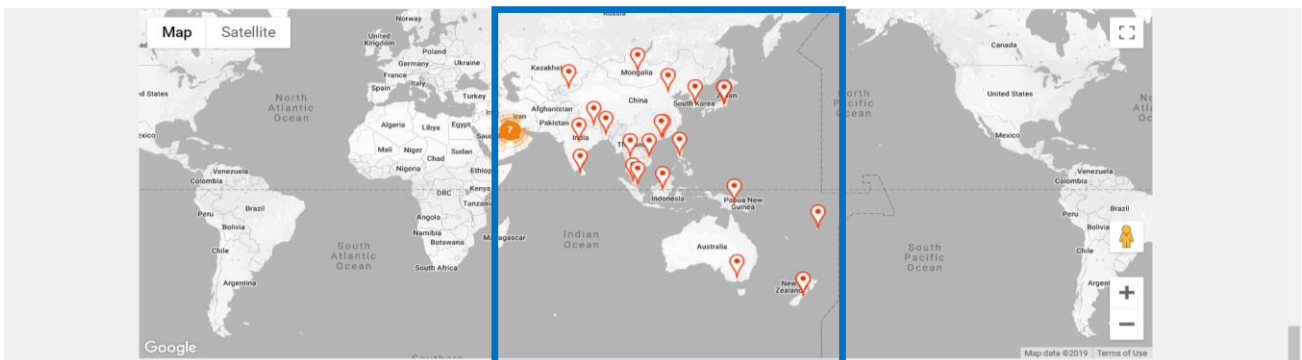


# IFSW Asia Pacific Region Newsletter

July 2020





# IFSWAP Newsletter

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Welcome to the IFSWAP Newsletter. In this edition:

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## *Message from IFSW Asia Pacific President*

As we prepare for our participation in the IFSW 2020 General Meeting and Conference, I am mindful of how much things have changed for us all in a few short months and am in awe as to how the profession of social work has responded to the challenges we have all faced. The world we knew at the time of our last IFSW gathering in Dublin and our Asia Pacific gathering in Bengaluru has forever changed. Social work has shown itself to be truly innovative and flexible by adapting the way we work with the people in our communities, adapting the way we have used teaching modalities with our students or adapting the way social service providers have enabled social services to continue being delivered. I acknowledge all of the work social workers have and continue to do in the response to Covid 19 and I especially thank all of you who have generously shared ideas and resources across the globe to help each other in this work. The support and solidarity that has been shown around the world across the profession of social work has been inspirational and hugely valued.

The General Meeting 2020 will be a very different experience for us all and whilst this may provide some challenges as we adjust to using the technology and grapple with differing time zones, at the same time it provides us with unique opportunities for greater inclusiveness of our members who have been unable in the past to participate in these events. I look forward to embracing these opportunities and to 'meeting' you all virtually during July. Thank you for your continued support locally, regionally and globally.

Warm wishes, Rose Henderson, IFSW AP President.

## *Message from the Editor*

As we cannot stop the time to enter 2020, we have witnessed that the COVID-19 outbreak becomes a truly global pandemic, touching every corner of the world. In our Asia Pacific Region, the spread continues and adversely affects many of our member countries. From the direct health impact to economic, social, and political consequences, the pandemic has the potential to reshape our countries. But while the problems are similar, the impacts on and responses from each country are unique.

To continue celebrating the World Social Work Day 2020 together with fighting against COVID-19, many countries, such as Indonesia, Palestine, Singapore and New Zealand, organised and developed a wide range of activities and programs to support local community to cope with the pandemic and its impacts. These activities and programs united most social work academics and practitioners to build strong and resilient local communities. Here, we would like to share their stories, experiences and reflections to support IFSWAP member countries to develop most appropriate coping strategies for their own people during this special period.

## **IFSW Annual Conference 2020 Online - Co-Building Social Transformation**

The 2020 Conference, 15 – 19 July follows on from the General Meeting will also be online and will have as its primary focus the development of the Global Agenda 2020 – 2030. All our member countries are encouraged to participate in this event ranging from listening to and discussing the presentations to hearing addresses and participating in online forums for discussion and debate. An

Asia Pacific regional panel on the global agenda will be a part of the Conference. More details are available on <https://www.ifsw.org/2020-conference/>.

Another good news is the Regional Executive Committee meetings are held regularly online from April 2020. Therefore, feel free to contact the AP office via [asia.pacific@ifsw.org](mailto:asia.pacific@ifsw.org) or any committee member if you would like to raise a topic or issue to be discussed for the region. Have a safe and calm 2020 to you all.

Best regards, Gary Xia, Chief News Editor IFSWAP

## *APSWC 2019 Report - India*

*M V Sriganesh-- Secretary General, INPSWA*

India Network of Professional Social Workers' Associations (INPSWA) in collaboration with Dept. of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS and Dept. of Sociology & Social Work, CHRIST ( Deemed to be University ), Bengaluru, India jointly hosted the 25<sup>th</sup> Asia-Pacific Joint Regional Social Work Conference of International Federation of Social Workers – Asia-Pacific ( IFAP ) and Asian and Pacific Association for Social Work Education ( APASWE ) from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2019 at Bengaluru. This was the FIRST ever biennial IFSW Regional Conference to be organized in India.

The Pre-Conference was held at CHRIST (Deemed to be University) and the main Conference was held at the Convention Centre of NIMHANS, Bengaluru. The theme of the Conference was `Social Work Partnerships towards an Equal Society-Asia Pacific Perspective'. The Conference sub themes were formulated based on current global and local social scenarios of concern and which needed to be visualised within the framework of `Inclusive Partnerships and Equality'. The 10 sub themes were : Social Work Partnerships, Social Development, Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, Green Social Work, Cultural Diversity and Social Work, Social Policy – Programmes for Public Reach ; Children, Youth, Women and Elderly, Correctional Social Work, Health & Wellbeing, and Corporate Social Responsibility & Industrial Social Work.

The conference attended by 531 delegates (165 foreign delegates from 31 countries & 366 delegates from India) witnessed 213 oral presentations, 68 e-presentations and 57 poster presentations on the various sub themes.

The Conference commenced on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2019 with Pre-Conference seminars hosted by CHRIST (Deemed to be University) and was formally inaugurated by Ms. Rose Henderson, President of IFSW - Asia Pacific Region. The seminars were held on two themes namely, 'Indigeneity in Asia and Pacific Social Work' and 'The Role of Social Workers working with Female Domestic Workers Crossing National Borders'. In addition to the seminars, in association with Japanese Federation of Social Workers, Japan a workshop on `Change in Social Work relationship through Cultural Heritage and Creative Expressions' was also organized. The workshop was moderated by Prof. Mariko Kimura, Past President, IFSW-AP. This was followed by delegates spending time networking with fellow participants and later the students from CHRIST (Deemed to be University) energized & enlivened the participants through a very scintillating cultural programme and the eventful day ended with a welcome dinner at the venue.

The main Conference was inaugurated on 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at NIMHANS Convention Centre. The chief guest at the inaugural, Prof. K B Akhilesh, a trained social worker and Dean of Engineering & Senior Professor of Management, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru and President, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Petroleum Technology encouraged social workers to stand for equality and social harmony through dialogues.

Subsequent to the inaugural programme, keynote address was delivered by Prof. R. R. Singh, Former Head, Delhi School of Social Work, New Delhi and Former Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, India. This was followed by first plenary session on the theme 'Social Work Partnerships towards an Equal Society – SDG Perspective' followed by two parallel sessions. On day two, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the day's program began with a panel discussion on 'Impact of Social Work Education and Practice in Asia-Pacific' followed by two parallel sessions, open forum of professional bodies and time to network. The third important scientific deliberation was the second plenary session on 'Building Inclusive Societies', which was held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019 followed by two parallel sessions. Various symposiums held on these three days focussed on the following themes: Skill building for Livelihood ; Enhancing Institutional and Community Resilience to Disaster and Climate Change ; Empowerment of Married Adolescent Girls - Challenges and Solutions: Karnataka (India) A Case Study ; Psychosocial Rehabilitation of Children in Conflict with the Law: Kerala Model, India and Police Well-Being - Tamil Nadu Model, India.

The four days event formally ended with a Valedictory function held on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at NIMHANS Convention Centre. The chief guest, Prof. Y S Siddegowda, a trained social worker and currently Vice-Chancellor of Tumkur University, Karnataka and former Professor of Social Work, Mysore University urged all social workers to strive to establish the identity through professionalization and indigenisation. He also pointed out that 21<sup>st</sup> century is the Century of Social Sciences. The hosts and the invited dignitaries from IFSW, IFSW-AP, APASWE & IASSW honouring the dais thanked the invitees, delegates and organizers for making APSWC 2019 an enriching, inspiring, effective and memorable event for the social work fraternity. On the occasion Dr. Jioji Jovesa Ravulo from Australia, shared his feedback in one word, '**WOW**', where he explained the acronym, **W** stands for wonderful presentations, **O** for opportunity for connecting each other and last letter **W** stands where to next. Mr. Kzuyoshi Kotake, a delegate from Japan gave feedback on stage that "the time spent in Bengaluru was highly fruitful" and thanked the organizers for warm hospitality. Similarly, representatives from Africa, Philippines and India too shared their encouraging feedback about of the Conference. Dr. Rory G Truell, Secretary General, IFSW motivated the audience through en masse hailing of social work slogans "Social Work - Human Rights" and "Social Work - Social Justice" and facilitated a 'group selfie' to capture the memorable moment of togetherness and express solidarity with all social workers from across the world.

The APSWC 2019 undoubtedly served the objective of enabling exchange and sharing of experiences, ideas, challenges, methods, and successful innovative social work interventions in addition to providing an ideal platform to network with peer professionals, experience the local culture & cuisine and hospitality, discern & live through glimpse of '**Incredible India**' from close quarters.

The local organisers of APSWC 2019 heartily thank the dignitaries from global partners namely, Ms. Rose Henderson, President, IFSW-AP, Prof. Dr. Zulkarnain A Hatta, President, APASWE, Prof. Annamaria Campanini, President, IASSW, Dr. Rory G Truell, Secretary General, IFSW, Dr. Viktor Virag,

Board Member, APASWE, Prof. Mariko Kimura, Past President, IFSW-AP, Ms. Irene Leung, Vice President, IFSW-AP for their august presence and for their active, insightful and thought provoking contributions throughout the Conference proceedings. Special thanks is also extended to Ms. Silvana Martinez, President – IFSW for her inspiring message & remotely keeping connected with Conference deliberations.

And last but not the least is the sincere acknowledgement for the whole hearted support and cooperation rendered by the Conference Patrons, Prof. B N Gangadhar, Director & Vice Chancellor, NIMHANS, Dr. Fr. Abraham V Mani, Vice Chancellor, CHRIST ( Deemed to be University ) & Prof. Y S Siddegowda, Vice Chancellor, Tumkur University. The success of any event is evidenced by exemplary team work, commitment & devotion which was optimally demonstrated by the key organising committee members namely, Prof. L S Ghandi Doss, Prof. K Sekar, Prof. Victor Paul, Prof. Sanjai Bhatt, Fr. Dr. Prasant Palakkappillil, Prof. D Muralidhar, Prof. A Thirumoorthy, Mr. N V Vasudeva Sharma, Dr. Shobhana R Thakrar, Dr. K Hemalatha, Prof. R Dhanasekara Pandian, other prominent committee members of INPSWA & the Faculty members of Dept. of Psychiatric Social Work, NIMHANS & Dept. of Sociology & Social Work, CHRIST ( Deemed to be University ).

#### **Message from IFSW AP President on the Regional Conference and Meetings, Bengaluru, India**

It was great to see those of you able to attend our regional conference in Bengaluru, India. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of the event be that through presenting a paper or poster, contributing to our Global Agenda Workshop or participating in our Regional meeting. I am sure you will agree with me that the event offered a wide range of opportunities to engage in our continuing professional development formally as well as many informal opportunities to strengthen our connections across the region. I thank each of you who personally made yourselves known to me and trust that you have been able to take back into your professional workplaces some new ideas and learnings from this event.

A huge thanks to our hosts for all the work that was done leading up to the Conference and the ongoing behind the scenes work they did every day. The very warm hospitality, positive energy and great learning ensured our bodies, minds and spirits were all well-nourished.

As we each return to the 'busy-ness' of our usual lives let us renew our commitment to maintain and strengthen our connections between these important gatherings. If you have any feedback, suggestions or ideas of what would be helpful with the planning for our next event in Brisbane please let me know so that we can take this into consideration.



Attendees at IFSW Asia Pacific Regional Meeting, Bengaluru, India 20 September 2019

## Covid-19 Member Country Reports

### *Celebration of World Social Work Day and Response to the COVID-19 2020 Jakarta, Indonesia*

Contact Persons: Widodo Suhartoyo (President) email: [wsuhartoyo12@gmail.com](mailto:wsuhartoyo12@gmail.com); Nurul Eka Hidayati (Vice II- head of cross-institutional collaboration and collaboration) email: [nurul\\_eh@yahoo.com](mailto:nurul_eh@yahoo.com)

For the sake of our safety, the anniversary of World's Social Work Day, which we had prepared, must eventually be cancelled due to the spread of COVID-19 in Indonesia. Since then, IPSP as the Social Workers Organization has to turn its attention and programs into emergencies because Indonesia has indeed declared COVID 19 as a national disaster. For this reason, IPSP is starting to explore cooperation with the government by conducting various activities, among others:

1. In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs to join forces with psychosocial support services cluster team, which compose of various sub-clusters such as social, education, sanitation, religion, gender, health and mental health, facilitated by UNICEF Indonesia. This has been a vessel for coordinating various efforts of handling COVID-19 and identifying the needs as well as the discrepancy of public services.
2. IPSP has also joined with the cluster teams of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (DKJPS) under the coordination of the Director of Prevention and Control of Mental Health Issues, Ministry of Health and facilitated by WHO, Indonesia. This team assembles guidance of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support from various professional perspectives, among them are psychiatrists, psychologists, nursing psychiatrists, social workers and public health. These comprehensive guides have needed several revisions as a reminder of the rapid ongoing change amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Members of IPSPI have joined in psychoeducation efforts with the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Network of Indonesia, promoting mental health and psychosocial topics through radio broadcasts, podcast and webinar.

With the coordinated acts listed above ongoing, IPSPI quickly assembled the Social Work Practical Guide Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This guide is then spread throughout stakeholders and state representatives involved in the practice of Indonesia's social work.

IPSPI has also assembled a strategic set of steps to form service programs titled Psychosocial Support Services Program in Response to COVID-19. These services come in the form of 1) Psychosocial Education services, 2) Hotline services; 3) Online counselling services 4) Referral services. IPSPI has done recruitment, selection, refreshing training and simulation alongside accompaniment and surveillance for social workers volunteering in this program. This program performs with daily work schedules as long as weekly webinars on a national scale as well as international.

This program serves to minimize the psychological and social impacts as the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore it is expected that the public undergoes acceptance and able to adapt to the situations caused by COVID-19; helping them identify negative emotions and the potential they experience/have; facilitate the public in terms of the support services needed as well as help society find the power within it to commit to their actions in the future.

The targets of this program consist of two large groups, the first being an internal group consisting of social working colleagues, volunteer workers and the second being an external group consisting of various medical staff.

While this program is ongoing, appreciation from the Ministry of Social Affairs through the Centre for the Professional Development of Social Workers and Social Counsellors, offering IPSPI to collaborate duplicates the service programs as to reach a wider demographic as well as increasing the capacity of all civil servant social workers. Now this in the planning stage towards implementation.

Now we are aware of the gap between the services available and those who cannot access long-distance services or online services. This is partly due to Indonesia's large population (4th largest in the world) and very widespread geographic positioning with many remote areas that are difficult to reach, not considering subgroups undergoing different stages of poverty.

This COVID-19 pandemic is an incredibly recent event for the world at large, bolstered and us by how fast information spreads regarding COVID-19, pushing us to move forward and adapt with our surroundings to fit smoothly within that dynamic.

With our large commitment to the wellbeing of humanity, fairness and human rights, IPSPI will work alongside all parties involved with the fight against COVID-19 in order to prioritize those who are vulnerable and marginalized.

Further information regarding IPSPI can be accessed through our website: [www.ipspi-indonesia.com](http://www.ipspi-indonesia.com); Instagram @ipspi.official and Facebook Homepage @IPSPI-Ikatan Pekerja Sosial Profesional Indonesia.



## *In the International day of Social Work: Social Workers Fighting Covid-19 Virus in Palestine and in the word*

*Mohammad AL Qaisy. Social Worker, Palestine*

Every year in the 17th of March; social workers are celebrating the “International day of Social Workers”. In many countries, social workers try to promote the importance of their profession among their communities in such occasion. This time of the year 2020, social workers are working hard side by side with other professionals to fight against COVID 19 virus in all over the world. As this virus is rapidly spread around the world; all professionals, doctors, nurses, activists, volunteers and social workers are in emergency situation to help their community in all possible ways.

In Palestine, people are still living under Israeli occupation for more than 70 years by now. The reality of life here is very similar to “living in big prison” because of occupation. The apartheid segregation wall is surrounding west bank and isolating all Palestinian cities from each other and isolating the Gaza strip completely from the whole world. Palestinians used to live under restrictions on movements, curfews and discrimination since 1948. Being at house for long time and dealing with movement restrictions is a familiar situation to Palestinian people, but this time the restrictions are because of the Corona Virus. It is a new situation for everyone and new experience with new challenges for many.

Social workers have been working under such circumstances since 1948, they tried hardly to reach people who are not able to move due to Israeli collective punishments such as curfews and checkpoints that handicap the movement of people around all Palestine.

Relating to the crisis of the Corona virus; the situation in Palestine is a little bit fortunate comparing with other “red zone areas” such as Italy, USA, UK and other countries. But specialists here in Palestine are expecting that the situation will be worst if people did not commit to regulations and rules that related to emergency situation such as staying at the house, social isolation and using sterilizers.

Today, the number of infected persons in Palestine raise up to 239 persons (1), and more than 14,000 people are under quarantine. Most cases are quarantined in Bethlehem governorate, and the rest are from other places around west bank and Gaza. The government spokesman, Mr. Ibrahim Melhem confirmed recently that the health of infected people is stable. (Maan news, 2020).

Bethlehem was the first city in Palestine to experience the corona virus outbreak. This happened because we welcomed and hosted a group of tourists from Greece who were carrying the virus. Despite the fear of the virus, Bethlehem continued to welcome all visitors until the last moment in an attempt to keep the pride of the city and because tourism accounts for 70% of the local economy (Rimawi & Butcher, 2015)

Due to the emergency situation in Palestine; all schools are closed, universities, banks, theatres, gyms, bars and restaurants are all closed. Only hospitals and healthcare centres are functioning in addition to shops that provide food and grocery in addition to vegetables markets. all gatherings and no public events are forbidden in addition to cancel all public events and celebrations.

COVID 19 has generated serious human crisis. The number of mortalities is very high in various countries. In Palestine, many people face stress, poverty, trauma, physical and psychical suffering. Many of them are experiencing fear and uncertainty of the future. They are afraid about their children and elderly who are the most vulnerable to affect by the various. Many social workers and psychosocial consultants expressed their concern about families under quarantine. Parents are worry about their children and afraid of being infected. Therefore, many social workers try to approach these families and try to offer their help through networks and collations that formed to help in the crisis.

As soon as Bethlehem was the first infected area by the virus; all the pressure was allocated in this town to prevent the spread of the virus among citizens. Therefore, plenty of specific procedures were taken to help the formal bodies to control the situation. Since day one, the government in collaboration with local and national bodies have established a supportive committee led by the civil defence forces to help people not to freak out and to control the situation. Social workers who work in various local organizations in addition to the Palestinian Union of Social Workers and Psychologists were part of this body in addition to other counselling and family support groups who involved in this process.

By the end of the day there was an emergency plan for facing the Corona virus in Bethlehem area and the social workers were essential part of this plan. Social workers worked hard to help people of Bethlehem focusing on the counselling and promoting health care procedures and spread out many advices, online sources, posters, guidelines, manuals, information, short videos and articles that everyone can easily read in order to learn about the virus and to be able to understand how to protect themselves and their families. Moreover, many social work groups provided 24/24 hotline services with numbers of consultants to provide advices and counselling for those who in need. Which the PUSWP in Bethlehem took the lead to organize this process and facilitate the orientation and control for all social workers and psychologists who involved in this effort.

Social workers did not only provide consultations for people, but they also worked side by side with decision makers to fill the gaps with information, and make sure that all people are aware of the protection rules, hygiene information and making sure that sanitizers are available and from where to get it, how to use it, how to deal with children and other issues during the quarantine.

Also, they contact the infected persons to make sure that they are alright, and they are able to continue the isolation in good and healthy wellbeing. Moreover, the social workers try to reach the families of infected patients, and help them to overcome this hard time, in addition to consult them on how to deal with this situation on the social and psychosocial levels.

The nature of Palestinian families is based on strong ties. Anyone who visit Palestine will notice the structure of the families here. The relations between family members is very strong and they have daily contact and daily activities even with the extended family. They visit each other on daily bases and have common activities related to social events and social gatherings which related to traditions and local habits. Sons should visit parents almost everyday if they live in same town or in the weekend if they live faraway. In some families there are many sub-families are living together such as married sons and their children. This situation needs more efforts from social workers to help families commit to the medical rules that related to quarantine. From other hand, living together in

very crowded environment will cost the family social and psychological pressure. Which might result stress and anxiety and other psychosocial problems.

This emergency situation affecting the Palestinians in many ways; economically, socially and psychologically. Therefore, the role of social workers in facing these obstacles is very hard. Many Palestinians are living under the poverty line, and not able to offer their basic needs, and due to the fact that they are not able to work and has no income due to closure and house quarantine especially in Bethlehem area. In spite of the fact that many people and organizations tried to support Bethlehem area with basic needs such as health tools, food, water and other medical needs and hygiene sanitizers, but not all people are able to reach or receive these services, which added a lot to the burden of Palestinian social workers. That's why social workers played mutable roles in contacting groups and individuals on various levels to make sure that all people are able to receive services equally.

If we are talking about the slogan of this year's Social Work Day "Promoting the importance of human relationships" then we can see this happening/promoted in facing the crisis of Corona virus. I saw this in Palestine; I so solidarity, voluntary, trust and strength of community members in the past 2 weeks. People are helping each other and everyone is concern about the health of each other. People call each other and offer their readiness for any help. Myself and many other people around received phone calls from professional, old friends, old neighbours proposing their readiness for any help. This reflects the human relationships in times of crises. Corona virus united people, and promoted the Chinese saying: "we are all waves in the same sea" which is very true indeed.

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#### *Palestine and the Corona pandemic COVID 19*

*Raed Amira, Main representative for Human Rights Commission for the Asia Pacific Region*

Corona Virus: It is an epidemic that appeared and spread suddenly in the countries of the world that knows no borders and does not have considerations or considerations related to sex or skin colour ... etc. Media outlets publish information on prevention, caution, advice, advice, etc. In addition to anxiety and fear of the economic crisis, especially the food crisis and the crisis of providing access to treatment in light of the increasing number of patients.

In Palestine, there was no different from the rest of the world, but the beginning of the emergence of the virus on 5/3/2020 in Bethlehem, the Palestinian government took a number of measures, including the closure of the city and the neighbouring cities.

This procedure had a set of repercussions, the most important of which are

- The deteriorating economic situation of Palestinian families.
- Weak medical capabilities in Palestine.
- Increased unemployment.
- Fear, anxiety and stress by children, families and the elderly.
- Occupation practices in spreading the virus.
- The situation of Palestinian prisoners in the occupation prisons

During this pandemic and with the beginning of the month of March, And on the initiative of the PUSWP - Palestine and group of social workers from various places of their work, whether from international or trade union organizations or volunteers, worked in the context and framework of social and psychological protection as much as possible and it was a starting point for work within the concept of social development and sustainability as a right for all people in appropriate, decent and decent work And within professional and global standards, and taking into account the noble moral and humanitarian values of the social worker.

Dozens of social workers accelerated their volunteering and work despite the difficult health conditions and the risk of transmission to them, taking into account all health and preventive instructions in various parts of the country, to provide social, psychological and in-kind services as well.

An old and new vision of working with families was practiced by social workers, but from a different perspective. Throughout the 72 years of occupation, and since the early 1970s, social workers have communicated with many families that have suffered from the ravages of the occupation and through social organizations including secret and public in providing assistance and raising the morale of the Palestinians through publications to mobilize and enhance resilience to the occupation, where This role formed a formula and social concepts that strengthened the Palestinian struggle for freedom and independence.

The new: Social media, internet technologies and wireless phones are new mechanisms that social workers have not used to before the techniques, so social media pages via the Internet or the phone as a kind of new intervention and within a new mechanism and concepts have a commitment from them ethically, professionally and nationally in the Endeavor to limit the increase in the state of tension And anxiety for families, children and the elderly.

With the support of all, the exchange of experiences and information, and the formation of emergency committees, the social workers had a tangible role in social and psychological intervention according to great data in the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, despite the difficulty of work and its gravity, not only from Corona's gravity, but also from the occupation's oppression of them.

Economically Palestine is not a producing country, Palestine is a state under the Israeli occupation, and therefore imports and exports under the control of the occupation, as well as the labour present in the 48 lands is authorized by him.

The economic situation in Palestine is also different in terms of wages and in terms of unemployment, which have worsened and increased in the last three months due to the disruption and suspension of factories and companies, as well as small projects for some of the families benefiting from them, and a lot of individual businesses this exacerbated the situation economically and these families became in need of food because they depend on their daily strength. There is no insurance or social welfare program, and here the government, institutions, unions, and emergency committees, part of which were social workers, sought to develop plans and programs to help the Palestinian family in terms of food security and mental health and as support for them to stay in their homes, despite the bitterness of living here in Palestine because of what it practiced. Occupation of repression, demolition, arrest, displacement and killing, in addition to the epidemic crisis, Palestine has not experienced a state of confusion.

Intervention approach:

The models varied in intervention with the Palestinian family and individuals who were infected with the Corona virus directly and through communication through many electronic systems such as individual and group sessions over the phone or Zoom or Microsoft Team etc. in addition to awareness leaflets and televised programs for social workers. There was and is an ongoing process to exchange experiences and ensure the success of a new mechanism in the intervention.

There is also another model, which is interfering with the families of the prisoners through multiple means due to the state of anxiety and tension that Palestinian prisoners suffer from intentional neglect by the occupation and the failure to provide them with means of protection and sterilizers in addition to the continued detention of Palestinians and the method of incursions that continued in Jerusalem and the West Bank and its villages and cities its camps. For example, 357 Palestinian citizens, including 48 children and 4 women, were arrested in March 2020. Knowing that since the beginning of 2020, the occupation forces have arrested 324 Palestinians, including 210 children, 31 women. It should also be noted that the occupation forces, with a simple summary:

\*On March 26/2020, 12 Jerusalemites were detained for performing voluntary work in sterilizing neighbourhood facilities in the city of Jerusalem and confiscating sterilization materials.

\*The occupation also practiced these measures in the city of Hebron on 24/3/2020, forcing the volunteer forces to leave the site by force of arms.

\* Raiding the headquarters of the Palestinian emergency committees in many villages and cities in the West Bank and Jerusalem, including social workers, as happened in Jerusalem in the village of Tire Baher, where 3 volunteers were arrested and 300 food parcels were confiscated on 3/31/2020.

\* The occupation authorities and the prison administration withdrew 40 items of food for the prisoners, which are vital materials, including hygiene materials, especially sterilization tools, which led to an increase in tension and gravity of the situation for all Palestinian prisoners.

\* The occupation authorities refused, despite all international calls and human rights, to release the Palestinian prisoners, especially the sick prisoners, the elderly, children and women, or those whose sentences were nearing completion, while refusing to do all the protection measures for the Palestinian detainees, despite the urgent call by the United Nations for the release of the Palestinian prisoners, the most recent of which was the UN envoy in the Middle East in their statement issued on 11/4/2020, they demanded attention to detainees, humanitarian release, freedom of access to organizations, and medical care for prisoners, whether in Palestine or abroad.

Here it was necessary to deal with the families of the prisoners with all seriousness and energy, this is the least that should be done by social workers, volunteers, forces and civil institutions in Palestine.

The efforts exerted to confront the Corona virus in light of great data, the most important of which is the crippling occupation of the Palestinian people, extreme poverty among the Palestinians, whether in the villages, camps, or Palestinian cities, and protecting the poor and needy and the socially marginalized from slipping into the poverty gap. Emergencies, whether in camps, villages or cities, face all dangers. The relief, social, psychological and service role of following up all of these Palestinian families, whether in the West Bank, Jerusalem or Gaza, protecting them for fear of slipping into the poverty line, hunger, or outbreak of the virus.

Social workers have had a prominent role in this matter, their participation with these committees and reaching out to Palestinian families suffering from food insecurity in particular.

## *Reports from Singapore*

### **April report**

COVID-19 has caught the world by a mighty storm. As on 18 April, the number of confirmed COVID-19 infections worldwide is more than 2 million with nearly 150,000 deaths in more than 200 countries, while Singapore has nearly 6000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 11 fatalities. With the healthcare system under strain worldwide, many countries implement lockdowns to contain the transmission – shutting borders, closing schools and business, quarantining millions, this is taking a toll on economies and lives.

### **The Fight Against COVID-19**

Singapore has her first confirmed patient, an imported COVID-19 on 23 January 2020. For a period until 8 March, the daily increase was single digit, reaching a total of 138 then. In this early period, when the cases were imported from overseas travellers, Singapore used the very rigorous method of detecting, testing, contact tracing, isolating and was able to contain infection rate and the spread to the community. The returns of many Singapore residents from Europe, USA and other affected countries, having responded to the calls of Singapore leaders to come home as the cases in these countries start to increase phenomenally, brought double digits increase in local transmission. In less than a month, in 5 April 2020, the number of confirmed cases had reached to 1189. Singapore is currently experiencing a wave of alarming exponential rise at 3 digits of confirmed cases in the migrant worker population where hundreds of thousands of men from poorer countries are employed in construction, shipping, and maintenance and in community transmission. This has

necessitated a partial lockdown - “circuit breaker” - from 7 April to 4 May 2020 (further extended to 1 June) with high safe distancing measures to reduce the risk of further local transmission. All non-essential activities (including businesses) have been suspended during this period. Establishments providing essential services to support the living needs of the population for example eateries, supermarkets, markets, healthcare, government services, transport, utilities and key banking services can continue.

What is characteristically Singapore is the whole of government approach, having the multi-Ministry Task Force right from the start to tackle comprehensively the impact of COVID-19. Right from the start the two co-chairs, 2nd Minister of Finance who is also Minister of National Development and Minister for Health provide daily updates and advisories to the general public through the mainstream media. A Gov.sg WhatsApp pushes out daily updates on the situation in the four official languages. The subscribership to this media has reached 900,000. To ensure a greater reach, the government also launches a Gov.sg Telegram channel and Gov.sg Twitter. This ensures transparency, timely dissemination of information and provision of education to engage the public to fight COVID-19 jointly. For example, in early February, surgical masks are quickly snapped up whenever put on the shelves in pharmacies and supermarkets. The Government uses these various communication platforms to advise the use of masks only when one is not well and encourage other personal hygiene such as handwashing and safe distancing. A mass distribution of four surgical masks to each household through collection points across the country manned by grassroots volunteers also helped to prevent panic buying of surgical masks. The recipients are advised to use when they are not well. In early April, reusable masks were issued through the same grassroots channels to every resident when it became mandatory during the circuit breaker period to wear masks once one steps out of one’s home to buy food for example. This helps to ensure appropriate use of surgical masks and adequate supplies to all front liners in the COVID-19 battle.

These front liners include the health care workers (including hospital social workers), police officers to enforce isolation orders, border control officers to screen potential COVID-19 patients, military personnel to augment the law and order officers, Ministry of Manpower officers, safe distancing ambassadors, food delivery personnel, sanitation workers and many others are working round the clock, having their leave suspended to detect, contain and treat COVID-19 cases.

### The Impact on the People & the Government Response

Worldwide the economies are badly hit. Productions have stopped, businesses close down, supply chains curtail, regional and international trade falls and reports of high job losses. The aviation, tourism and land transport industries are most hit.

### The local residents

Given the scale at which COVID-19 is impacting individuals, families, corporations and societies, the Singapore government has been quick to respond and eschew the long held “moral hazards” of entitlement in social safety nets. The scale of welfarism and income transfers is unprecedented. Comprehensive fiscal rescue packages amounting to US\$42 billion (12 per cent of GDP) are rolled out to help workers, families and businesses. For the workers, help is given to employers to stay in business to protect jobs so that the workers stay employed; cash top ups for lower-income workers and the self-employed; grants to workers who lose their jobs; traineeships and creation of new jobs

for job seekers. The most recent casualty is McDonald which closes all 130 outlets from 19 April to 4 May 2020 after seven employees tested positive for COVID-19. It assured its 10,000 staff who has to stay at home for this period that their jobs are secure and that they will continue to receive their salaries.

Direct cash handouts, temporary relief funds, additional financial assistance, grocery vouchers, conservancy and goods and services tax rebates are given to individuals and families as well increased grants to self-help groups, social service agencies and local councils that support families in the community. The 24 government run Social Service Offices island wide remain open and accessible for any needy individuals and families throughout the circuit breaker period. Social Service Agencies that provide the social and personal services can apply through the National Council of Social Service to whitelist their organizations so that they can stay open during the circuit breaker period to serve the community. Many Social Service Agencies are also operating through on-line and video conferencing platform as most of the staff work from home. Schools are closed and children are receiving their education through home-based learning. Children with special arrangement can return to schools to access the school computers for limited period with the home-based learning.

Businesses are helped with property tax waivers, loans, rent waivers, support for their employee wages. They are to tap on government support, trim other costs and avoid pay cuts and retrenchment. The banks have also stepped in to help individuals and small medium enterprises with liquidity, lines of credit to protect jobs and markets. The government is also promoting tele-commuting to encourage corporations to make work from home arrangements and continue to place employees on full pay throughout the pandemic.

#### The foreign residents

Singapore's migrant worker population where hundreds of thousands of men from poorer countries are employed in construction, shipping, maintenance, sanitation has seen the alarming exponential rise in infection rate since early April. Singapore is utterly dependent on these workers to keep its economy operating, but their jobs are such that make safe distancing impossible. In addition, they are accommodated in crowded purpose built workers' hostels /dormitories, in factory-converted dormitories, temporary quarters on construction sites and private residential premises such as shop houses. It is no wonder that they take a bigger hit in the infection rate in view of the living arrangements and their communal living lifestyle, including recreation and cooking in a shared space.

Over the past two weeks, the authorities have started to identify the emerging clusters of infection in the workers' dormitories; ring fence their vulnerable or over crowded communities in the dormitories; minimise the interaction between anyone who has contact of the disease and other communities; provide onsite medical teams to test, isolate and send them to either newly set up community isolation facilities and hospitals if tested positive for COVID19 and move the healthy workers to alternative living areas such as military camps, floating hotels, sports halls and vacated public housing. Other pre-fabricated dormitories are being built to be ready soon. It is a multi-sectorial approach involving government bodies from public housing, health, military, police; the employers from the private sector as well as the community partners to address the mental health and religious concerns of these workers. For example, apart from addressing the COVID-19 infection, through this collaboration, the workers are assured of their salaries to remit home, how they can



continue to exercise their faith during the Muslim Ramadan period and access to counselling services.

This is the pledge that the Prime Minister made over national television in the four official languages.

“We are paying close attention to the welfare of the foreign workers. They came to Singapore to work hard for a living and provide for their families back home. They have played an important part building our HDB flats, Changi Airport, MRT lines. We have worked with their employers to make sure they will be paid their salaries and can remit money home. We will provide them with the medical care and treatment that they need. If any of their family members watch my video, let me say this to them : We appreciate the work and contributions of your sons, fathers, husbands in Singapore.

We feel responsible for their well-being. We will do our best to take care of their health , livelihood and welfare here, and to let them go home, safe and sound, to you”( Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong in The Straits Times, 3rd April 2020). In another televised address on 21 April, PM Lee assured the workers “We will care for you, just like we care for Singaporeans” .

#### The Community and Social Work Profession

The community has been very responsive. Existing grassroots organizations mobilise volunteers at centres for masks and sanitizers for collection by residents. There is surge of volunteer activities to raise funds, packing and distribution of masks, sanitizers and food to migrant workers, low income families, elderly and disabled. Social entrepreneurs develop communication materials and tools to communicate with the dialect speaking elderly and migrant workers from the various countries. Social Service Agencies are using technology to work from home and provide services to the needy.

Social workers in hospitals are continuing in their work to ensure safe discharge and coordination of safe continuity of caré in the community; support to the COVID 19 patients and their families; peer support to fellow health caré workers (HCWs) and as volunteers for the 24/7 national mental health hotline. Many of the legislations arising from COVID-19 to contain transmission create a lot of challenging issues for patients with families living overseas or foreign paid help returning to Singapore; or when their regular centre-based services are stopped. Hospital social workers help to appeal to the relevant authorities if needed or seek out alternative forms of support to ensure safety and care for the vulnerable in the community. They are also exploring alternative forms such as phone and video conferencing to engage and support their patients and their families. Some social workers and their support staff are redeployed to help augment the screening teams in the hospitals. A few of them are collaborating in interdisciplinary and international research on COVID-19 related issues.

#### Looking to the Future

In Chinese language, the character “crisis” contains another word “opportunity”. Indeed, the rise of tele-commuting creates new manpower supply of a group who otherwise are homemakers to enter into the job market. Working from home allows for a new form of work life balance, improved quality of life and human relationships at home and shared parenthood. The innovation and the use of technology in the personal and social services to adapt to the COVID-19 environment may be the

engine of change in the service delivery models in this sector. The attention that is currently given to workers' accommodation will lead to long term improvement in the infrastructure to enhance their welfare and wellbeing. The rich community spirit that is evidenced in this crisis will help Singapore bounces back quickly.

This crisis also surfaces some vulnerability, one, our dependence on foreign produces for our essentials and when our supplies chains are cut, our basic existence threatened. In fact, there was panic buying at the supermarkets when our overseas suppliers lock downed their countries. Singapore will need to look at increasing production in its farming industries and supplier networks. Secondly it is our dependence of foreign workers who form 1.4 million or 25% of the resident population. Do we need so many of them as some critics point out? Given unemployment post COVID-19 is expected to rise, estimated at around 200000, can jobs be redesigned, wages improved and / or creation of nobility of blue-collar work as some suggested to make these jobs attractive to Singaporeans.

When you are in the mighty storm, you hope as the saying goes this too shall pass.

### **June report**

#### **Singapore Social Workers Stepped Up to Man the 24-Hour National CARE Helpline**

The Covid-19 pandemic is not just a health crisis but also economic and social upheavals. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted daily routines, causing stress and anxiety in people worldwide. To contain the spread of the virus and save lives, governments around the world implemented safe distancing measures such as restricting movements and economic activities, as well as mandating to stay at home. While these measures are needed to protect the health of everyone, it can lead to mental health concerns, as people experience social isolation and worry for the health of their loved ones. There is a real danger of an upcoming global mental health crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Singapore Government is watching over carefully the psychological well-being and resilience of Singaporeans at this time of crisis, especially among the more vulnerable in the community. As such, a National CARE Hotline was launched on 10 April 2020. The National CARE Hotline offers 24-hour emotional support to anyone who faces stress and anxiety arising from the COVID-19 crisis. These may include fears about the pandemic, marital and family tensions, or worries over finances.

Standing in solidarity with all frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic, the President of the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW) activated the SASW Crisis Response Team (CRT) to support the National CARE Hotline.

The SASW Crisis Response Team is a group of experienced and highly competent social workers from various social service organisations across Singapore, set up in 2018 in preparation to respond to national crisis. With the official activation by President of SASW, social workers took up duties to man the 24-hours helpline, support the distressed with psychological first aid and link callers up with social service agencies and specialised services. To date, 150 social workers, including 23 from SASW CRT have responded to the call to man the hotline. Singapore social workers' contribution to the National CARE Hotline in taking care of mental and emotional health, together with other helping professionals, greatly enhances the multi prong approach in overcoming COVID-19 in Singapore!

## *ANZASW – Response to COVID-19 and June Report*

Lucy Sandford-Reed. [lucysandford-reed@anzasw.nz](mailto:lucysandford-reed@anzasw.nz); Sharyn Roberts. [president@anzasw.nz](mailto:president@anzasw.nz)

Firstly, we wish to extend our warmest thoughts to you and your whānau during this challenging and unprecedented time. ANZASW would like to acknowledge the work of social workers during the global COVID-19 health crisis, both in Aotearoa and globally. Social workers are doing an excellent job as part of the global response to this crisis.

Social workers, like many other health services, play a vital role in society, especially in times of health crisis and national emergency. It is therefore critical that these services remain available and adaptable to the rapidly changing circumstances. Our social workers have indicated that families that are already supported are doing well. They are planning and solving problems as they arise.

Central functions of social work during this time, include:

- Remaining as the person that sits at the centre of networks linking whānau to services and other professionals and linking organisations to the people requiring their services.
- Holding and protecting information about families, children, services, organisations, professionals connected or useful to the case, as well as sharing this information with the people they are working with.
- Continuing to find solutions, both to the challenges arising from COVID-19, but also for those most vulnerable in our society.
- Embracing the use of technology in connecting with clients and colleagues, this includes assisting those that may not have access to this technology as well as providing education of technology use where needed.
- Possessing the skills needed to build relationships with people they have never met face to face.
- Fostering and maintaining relationships as the foundation for the growth and development of individuals, whānau, iwi, communities, towns and cities, and eventually society – especially under these new conditions.

ANZASW is committed to providing ongoing support and information to social workers so they can continue to provide care for those in our society that need it the most. We will be updating our website with useful information, links, webinars and ways that social workers can remain connected.

It is important as we face great uncertainty, change and physical isolation, that we remember that we are not alone, but together. It is at times like these, that we need to put into practice ideas and theories of self-care, remain connected, healthy and rested. ANZASW strongly encourages everyone to continue to care for themselves and their whānau and to reach out if you find yourself in need of extra support during these challenging times.

### **June report**

*Anne MacAulay-ANZASW*

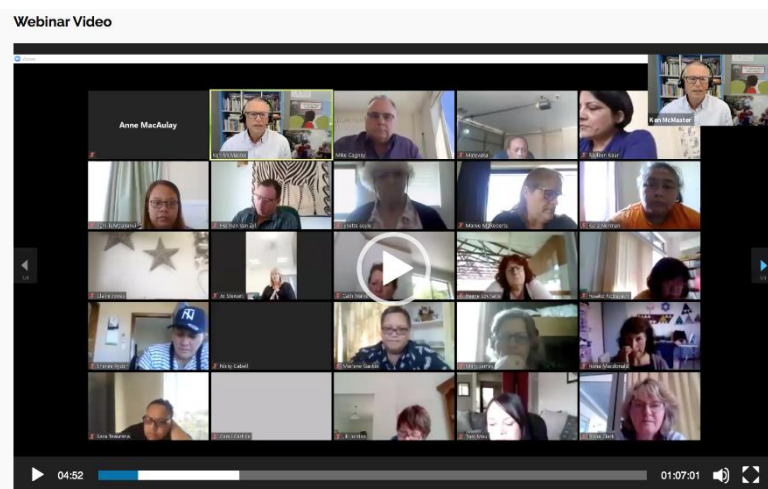
On the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, after 11 weeks of lockdown New Zealand became COVID-19 free. Together as a nation as a team of 5 million, we have joined together to avoid the worst possible effects of COVID-

19. We now begin the long road of recovery and discussion around what the new ‘normal’ may look like for the future of social work in New Zealand.

ANZASW would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank our social workers for the continued professionalism and strength they have shown throughout this time. The below account is written by registered social worker and ANZASW’s CPD Coordinator Anne MacAulay. Anne has carried out incredible work for our social work community during the lockdown in New Zealand.

On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2020 Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced a 4-level alert system around the rise of COVID-19 in Aotearoa New Zealand. At that time there were 52 confirmed cases in New Zealand. On Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, Ardern announced New Zealand would move to Level 4 and full

lockdown at midnight on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March. Full lockdown in New Zealand meant exactly that. Everyone working from home unless they were deemed essential workers. Retail outlets all closed. No travel unless essential. No interactions with people outside of your household – your “bubble”. We were immediately contacted by social workers throughout the country: “How do we work under Level 4?”; “What are the rules for social workers when



working from home?” How did we advise social workers when we did not have any precedent?

As an association we connect with social workers regularly by way of webinars. I decided to set up a video conference for social workers to talk about what was happening in their workplaces, what their colleagues are talking about, how they are adapting their work.

The link to the session was posted on Tuesday late afternoon. By the time the session was held on Thursday midday, 340 people were registered. We were limited to 100 people in any one session. I quickly decided that I would run another the next day. Over 100 people registered for that session too. So, I decided that I needed to run daily sessions. Some days we had two sessions. Every day there was a space for social workers from all over the country to come together and talk in a social work space.

I began to start each session with a quick rundown on how to use video conferencing when connecting with people: Look at the camera, here are the controls, here is chat, use it like this.

I was often asked “what are we allowed to do?”. I emphasised that no matter the circumstances we are still social workers. Our Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct still apply. At times like this we may be working on the edges of our skills and knowledge, and so supervision becomes really important. And I recommended that social workers ensure that documentation included the information that this intervention occurred during the COVID-19 lockdown. This might be important information in 20 years’ time when someone is wondering why a particular course of action was taken.

Each session was different. Some had huge numbers, some were smaller and we could just chat. Social workers shared information about services, contact details, who to talk to, and how to help clients in need. They shared contact details and then helped each other with Zoom or specific issues outside of the session. Social workers working in the same field but for different (or the same) organisations and at different ends of the country connected with each other.

We shared our stories – the frustrations and the heartbreaks and the joys of growth and empowerment, the pleasure of learning new skills and making new connections, building new relationships. As time went on, we began to share our ideas of a brave new world for social work. How can social work shine? How can we shape a more equitable world, that treats all citizens with respect and dignity, helping each member achieve their potential?

Each day I was buoyed by the stories of hundreds of social workers, their great ideas, their huge plans and by the diverse thinking that is needed to create this new world. Alongside this work with social workers, we were connecting with government ministries and political parties. Hearing stories and information from both sides has driven the development of a number of projects that are designed to make social work stand out. We may have stayed in our homes for weeks, but we have put that time to good use, growing our connections with each other, expanding on our ideas, and growing our profession. We are coming out of this with a strong, clear voice, articulating the needs of our clients, our communities, and our profession. We are part of the change, the “building back better”.



## *IFSW Asia Pacific Executive Committee and Regional Commissions*

### *IFSW Asia Pacific Regional Executive Committee (as of June 2020)*

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Immediate Past President (active): Mariko Kimura (Japan)  
Vice President: Irene Leung (Hong Kong)  
Secretary: Teoh Ai Hua (Malaysia)  
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**Regional representatives of the Interim Education Commission**

Karen Healy, Mariko Kimura.

**Regional representatives of the Human Right Commission**

Raed Amira, Luis Arevalo

**Regional representatives of the Ethics Commission**

Teoh Ai Hua, Hassan Mousavi Chelak

**Regional representatives of the United Nations Commission**

Kae (Wilaiporn) Kotbunkair, Regional Commissioner, Yolanda (Zhe) Wang, Sup Pyo Kim, Sebastian Cordoba, Jude Douglas, Suresh Pathare, Hamed Olamee.