

↑Monthly eNewsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs

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April 2020

1. APAY Executive Committee Meeting to be held through ZOOM
2. Mission of Asia and Pacific YMCAs after COVID-19
3. The YMCAs of our Region Challenges COVID-19
4. APAY e-Learning on Climate Change
5. Bertram Devadas appointed as the New NGS of Indian YMCA

APAY Executive Committee Meeting to be held through ZOOM - From 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm HK time, on 2nd and 3rd July

Keeping in view the worldwide COVID-19 crisis and travel restrictions enforced by different countries, the Board of APAY has now decided to hold the Executive Committee Meetings of APAY by online video conference on Thursday 2nd July and Friday 3rd July 2020 from 3.00 pm to 5.00 pm each day. All national movements will be notified with details of these meetings by APAY Secretariat as soon as they are finalized. We expect that all members of the board, national presidents, national general secretaries and the members of various standing committees will be participating at the Executive Committee Meetings online.

The APAY board also recommended the final list of members of the six Standing Committees of APAY, they are (i) Mission and Response Committee, (ii) Youth Participation and Leadership Development Committee (iii) Gender Equity Committee (iv) Finance and Administration Committee (v) Golden Anniversary Trust Fund Committee and (vi) Constitutional Matters.

The meetings of these Standing Committees will also be held by online video conference within 20th June 2020. The members of the committees will be notified about their respective meetings within 31st May 2020. The reports of these committees will be considered at the Executive Committee Meetings for adoption.

We hope that all our leaders will understand the reason for holding the Executive Committee Meetings in such a limited fashion, as we are committed to continue to work on fulfilling our mission, even during this time of troubled days.

The APAY have also decided not to hold any face-to-face meetings or conferences until the Covid-19 pandemic subsides fully in our region.

Mission of Asia and Pacific YMCAs after COVID-19

What's next? What is going to happen after COVID-19? How long will this pandemic last? Who is going to answer these questions, about the future of the world? When the pandemic is over, will we go back to business as usual? Or will we see entirely a new world order in politics, economy, religion, life style, etc?

Three Myths to be Broken

I have been agreeing with Professor Park No Ja of Oslo University, who uses Korean name, in his recent essay in Korean, “Three Myths to Disappear After Coronavirus19” in a Korean daily newspaper. The three myths which Professor Park was talking about are: 1. Myth about the “advanced countries” such as Euro-American countries; 2. USA, and 3. Free market economy.

Statistics as of May 2nd shows this claim quite clearly: the number of confirmed cases: USA 1,131,030 and death toll of 65,753(5.8%); while China 82,575 and 4,633(5.6%); Great Britain 177,454 and 27,510 (15.5%); while India 37,257 and 1,223(3.2%); Japan 15,283, 494 (3.2%) while Korea 10,780 and 250 (2.3%). The global pandemic figure is even more deadly: The confirmed cases are 3,400,767 and death toll is 239,588 (7.04%).

A question is: Who broke these myths? And how are these myths broken? The Korean government with their medical team isolated the coronavirus affected patients from the rest of the people after testing positive by the corona diagnostic kits. The so-called free market system did not and could not control the deadly epidemic to spread without control. A strong, democratic and effective central government and medical control agency took preemptive action against the spread of the epidemics.

On top of these government actions, government imposed the general public to act quarantine actions such as (1) washing hands, (2) wearing face masks, (3) 2 meters of social distancing in public places, (4) postponing all public gatherings and mass meetings such as theatres, sports events, (5) restrictions of international travels. It is Important to note that the Korean people followed the Government’s advices freely without complaint. We, in Korea, have been surprised to note that there was no people’s action of hoarding, namely buying up and storing up of food stuff, Kleenexes, and other essential goods for living. Furthermore, most of offices were closed down and the office workers stayed home to work doing the house care and playing and teaching the children as the schools were closed down.

Just a day before yesterday, that is, April 30, the Korean National Assembly passed the bill that all household of Korea will receive the “Emergency Financial Assistance” in cash. Within the month of May, a family of 4 would receive some US\$1,000 and a family of 2, US\$600.

During three months of pandemic suffering of the people around the world, governments and civil societies as well as religious communities came to realize that the most suffering people are the poor and marginalized as well as the old people who cannot afford the costly medical care under the free market medical care system. In the case of Italy, the medical teams let go of the old people to die even without care—priority was given to the rich and young, we heard. And dead bodies were thrown into trucks with no one to care for in New York City.

We have come to realize that we cannot leave everything to free market. First of all, medical services cannot be left for profit and to the private ownership. All medical service systems should be re-examined to become a public ownership and come under the government control. Medical service should become public and not for private business, and it should be open to all especially to the poor and disabled and the old which I believe is in line with Christian values.

Furthermore, we have come to realize more of the government action and intervention are needed in public sectors. For one thing, to alleviate the suffering of the poor, migrant workers and unemployed, a system of “basic pay” system is needed. And all levels of educational system, such as from kindergarten to university, should be nationalized with no tuition fees. Furthermore, all the religious workers, Buddhists, Catholics or Protestants, should be paid by the government.

People’s Creative and Critical Participation

The more the people demand the government responsible control over the life of the people,

the more of the people's creative and critical participation in self-governing politics will be needed. For example, at the height of coronavirus 19 spread all over the central cities of Korea, so many volunteer nurses and doctors joined the medical service to diagnose the patients and to care for them, even affected by the disease. And some medical doctors and local government officials gathered to talk about how quickly and effectively they could diagnose the coronavirus patients. And they have come to a creative idea of "drive thru" diagnosis. On line home office idea has created on-line lectures in the universities. And on-line classroom idea has created on-line "drive-in" assembly of a labor union meeting. Furthermore, food service and flower sales have been done on line and drive thru. When the government suggested the social distancing in big meetings such as religious gatherings, Korean Buddhist authorities closed down the regular Buddhist gatherings, Korean Catholic Churches decided to close down their Sunday mass, and most of Protestant churches have gone on-line their Sunday worship services.

The more people realize the government control and power are strongly needed, and the more the people respond to the government action for the people's needs, the more the people feel the need of creative and critical participation in politics. That is to say that people will watch critically the tendency of totalitarian, authoritarian, dictatorial politics of the government. Yes, we remember the famous dictum: "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." A system of democracy creates power, but at the same time, democracy revolts against the corruption of the power. This was shown in the April 15 National Assembly elections right in the middle of rampant coronavirus crisis in Korea, with a landslide victory to the ruling democratic party.

Mission of YMCA in the Post-Corona World

As we consider the mission of YMCA in the future world after the coronavirus crisis, we should go back to look at our mission statements. Our basic mission statement is the Paris Basis which affirms that our basis is none other than the Holy Scripture, that is, the Old and New Testaments. In the book of Genesis, the first book in the Old Testament, and in the first chapter of Genesis, where it is narrated that God created the heaven and earth and Sun and Moon and the sea and the land and plants and animals in 6 days, and that God created man and woman in God's own image, and give them responsibility to take care of the world. As a movement of the young, YMCA ought to check ourselves whether we put our efforts to "take care of" the natural world: our ecological world: air, water, our forests, jungle, and animals of all kinds.

Furthermore, our mission is based on Jesus Christ who came to the world as a "true human being", to feed the hungry, to heal the sick, and to empower the weak, women and children and disabled. We must remember that Jesus was always on the side of the poor, sick and marginalized. If we are to follow Jesus Christ, we should be on the side of the poor, marginalized, and powerless. This is politics of God and Jesus Christ on the earth for justice, peace and integrity of creation, and to bring about the Kingdom of God on the earth as it is in Heaven.

I hope we recite the Paris Basis, as the foundation of our mission and work in the past and in the coming future, after the coronavirus pandemic crisis around Asia and the world:

"The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those young men who regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Savior, according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of the Kingdom amongst young men." (1855. 8. 22.)

*** This article was contributed by Dr. David Kwang-sun SUH for the 3rd APAY NGSs Meeting

by Zoom held on 6th May 2020. Dr. SUH is Professor emeritus of Theology, Ewha Women's University, Seoul, Korea, and Former President of World Alliance of YMCAs (1994-98).

The YMCAs of our Region Challenges COVID-19

Korea YMCAs

Korea YMCAs have participated in Civil Society Response Committee against COVID-19 and issued the declaration of the initiation of the committee together. So far, 535 civil society organizations in Korea joined in this committee.

Korea YMCA will do our best to save people, especially the vulnerable, not only from the virus but from the social and economic crisis as a result of the virus. Also, we will gather all the wills and wisdom to prepare the post COVID-19 world which should be more green, equal, and peaceful.

YMCA of San Pablo City, Philippines

YMCA of San Pablo City distributed these goods to their Adopted Communities and frontliners. YMCA USA and Wells Fargo supported YMCA of San Pablo to procure these goods.

Pohang YMCA and Haenam YMCA, South Korea

PohangYMCA donated hand-sanitizers and food for medical workers at front and youth at risk. It is very important to protect medical workers to combat COVID-19.

Haenam YMCA organized over 30 local organizations and sent a truck of food to Daegu YMCA since Daegu was the city at high risk of COVID-19. Daegu YMCA distributed them to children, the disabled, and the vulnerable in the city.

Maubin YMCA, Myanmar

COVID-19 Awareness Program of Maubin YMCA in Ayeyarwaddy Region of Myanmar.

Muse YMCA, Myanmar

Muse YMCA of Myanmar are helping Quarantine center at Muse, Northern Shan State.

Chiang Rai YMCA, Thailand

750 cloth masks was produced and distributed by Chiang Rai YMCA, Thailand to 5 hospitals in Chiangrai and Phayao provinces.

Cambodia YMCA

Cambodia YMCA distributes 2 tons of rice to the needy people of the community.

Bombay YMCA India

Bombay YMCA in India Responds at the Time of COVID 19 Outbreak supporting about six thousand families with these bags of provisions. The distribution took place through the various branches of Bombay YMCA across Ghatkopar, Andheri , Mumbai Central , Bandra , Borivali and Belapur at Navi Mumbai.

YMCA Visakhapatnam, India

Volunteers of YMCA Visakhapatnam distributed clothes to the 230 homeless people being

housed at COVID-19 shelter at Subbalakshmi, Kalyanamandapam in Visakhapatnam, and also distributed packs of groceries like. rice, dal, oil and vegetables to 400 families living in the slums near Thatichetlapalem, Gnanapuram, Railway New Colony and Meghadri Colony.

Ranchi YMCA, India

YMCA Ranchi distributed One Month Food materials as CORONA relief material i.e. 25 kgs Rice bag, Pulses and Eatable oil to our Balwari (Kindergarten) children along with their family members in their 9 (nine) adopted slum centres where more than 15,000 people are living in these centres.

APAY e-Learning on Climate Change

We believe educating our younger generation on climate change is one of the best ways to combat global warming and natural disasters. We have been witnessing natural disasters, droughts, and tsunami more than ever before. Global warming is a real threat we are facing today and unless we do something about it. It will only get worse. APAY e-learning course aims to not only educate its learners but also empower and equip our learners to combat climate change.

This year (2020) we enrolled 15 participants from India. This group was initiated by Franklin from Velore YMCA. To make effective usage of the time during their lockdown period, they decided to conduct the e-learning on Climate Change course for those in their YMCA who are interested.

Franklin, who completed our previous e-learning course in 2019 and also participated in the Regional Conference on Climate Change in Mongolia in September 2019, will be mentoring the group and APAY will provide a certificate of completion to the participants.

We are also in the process of updating and re-developing our e-learning platform on Climate Change. We are working together with Makati YMCA staff and volunteers on this project. Hopefully the new e-learning modules and platform will be ready in a few months from now. Our GATN Managers will be requested to help test it when the the new elearning platform comes online.

During these months of restricted travel and gathering, all GATN physical activities have been stopped at the moment. However, GATN is using this “grounded” time to for the following online discussions with local GATN managers:

- * Compiling lessons and insights on “what GATN can learn from this pandemic”
- * Developing a “new normal” practice/guidelines for GATN
- * Researching on links/relationship between Travel/Tourism/Climate Change and Covid19
- * Developing a campaign on responsible and sustainable tourism --- “Traveling the YMCA Way”

Bertram Devadas appointed as the New NGS of Indian YMCA

Mr. Bertram Vedamoney Devadas has recently been appointed as the new National General Secretary of National Council of YMCAs of India.

Before being appointed as the National General Secretary, he had been serving as a staff of the New Delhi YMCA in various capacities since 1982 and later he was appointed as the Officiating National General Secretary of the NCY India in 2011.

He has been active in the fields of education, community development, youth work, rural development, Christian emphasis programmes, hospitality and empowerment issues. He is one of the senior YMCA professional secretaries in India and brings rich and varied experience to the position. He is associated with several NGOs and Christian institutions.

APAY takes this opportunity to congratulate Bertram on his appointment as NGS and hopes that he will be able to lead the Indian YMCAs to a new height with his dynamic leadership.

Not interested any more?