

MAY 2020

From the **Chairman's Heart**

Guard Hearts of the Children from Fear



Due to the Covid-19, we had to postpone AEA General Assembly. I would like to express our cordial thanks to the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Malaysia for their willingness to host our GA and for all they did to prepare for it. I also express our appreciation to AEA staff members for their work.

In this time of Covid-19 pandemic, we are afraid of getting infected with the Corona virus. We pray every day for the patients and medical practitioners. However, WHO reports almost 300,000 deaths in the world. TV news reports the number of confirmed cases and deaths every day. TV talk shows tell us about danger of the disease, economic difficulties, sad stories of those who lost their work, and many other things caused by this pandemic. At our homes and in our communities, we talk a lot about the disease. Now we should remember that our children are exposed to what we talk at home and what the mass media tells about.

In Japan, many schools have suspended since the middle of February. Children cannot play nor talk with their friends. One of our church members told me about her 13-year-old daughter. One night she heard the daughter sobbed in her bed. The daughter spoke of her fear of death. She also said that she got sick and tired of hearing 'Corona.' We should remember that our children are exposed to our talks and the anxieties we have, and they become very anxious and stressful. The mother is not a careless person. Rather she is a very wise mother. During the suspension of children's classes, she and her three children practice a children's song every week and send me a movie of their performance on Sunday. In the performance I can see how they enjoy playing instruments and singing. I feel they had good time



Newsletter

ADVANCING GOD'S KINGDOM FOR ASIA

COVID-19 Special Edition

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together for practices. However, her daughter still became so stressful and fearful. In this time of difficulties, we ought to pay attention to the children. They feel how their parents face this pandemic, and they need comfort and protection from their parents. We have to take more time in talking and praying with our children.

Because we cannot worship together, I send a printed sermon, a weekly bulletin, and a pastoral letter to our members or member's family. Since I heard about this teenage girl, I added quizzes or riddles at the end of my pastoral letters so that children and parents may share the questions and find answers together. Children need more joyful time as well as prayer time together with their parents. Let us spend more time with our children and make the time pleasant. Pleasant talks and laughter may ease their pain and dispel their fear.

"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.... Surely he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence." (Psalms 91:1, 3)

Rev. Paul H. Ueki Chairman



READING THE SIGNS WHERE IS COVID-19 TAKING US?



Bambang Budijanto, Ph.D.

(Indonesia)

General Secretary of the Asia Evangelical Alliance

e are living in an unprecedented time; we have never seen a response to a global crisis like we have experienced these days. As of today, 4.5 millions people have been infected by the virus, over 300,000 deaths, millions of people lost their jobs, income, livelihoods and more.

While the danger is still immanent and the suffering continues, death toll keeps rising, families are still struggling to provide rice on the table, I have seen unprecedented responses from the churches in Asia amidst the challenging situation that they themselves



are trying to make sense of what's going on and to cope with the challenges as a religious entity and organization.

To stop the spread of the virus, most churches have moved from physical weekly worship to online worship or no worship at all (for churches without internet access). Smaller and less resourced churches in urban poor and rural area, with no technology and internet access, are struggling to find ways to provide spiritual nourishment to their members. They are also struggling with significant drop of income.

Through the reports and updates from the National Evangelical Alliances and other digital sources, I discovered that there are at least 11 significant (positive) trends of the Asian churches, as they are responding to the pandemic:

1. Technological Engagement There has been a significant increase on church's engagement with technology in



the past few months. Many churches that had not invested much in creating digital assets, have learned and produced a lot of media assets as the main tools to serve their congregation.

2. Relief and Generosity

There has been a significant increase in Church's relief efforts to help those in need. I do not remember, when in church history, where churches all over Asia and around the world engaged in helping the community in needs around them with relief packages like today. While the churches themselves are impacted by the pandemic, they have increased their generosity and care for the community around them.

3. Partnership with Government

While it is true that in some Asian countries, where churches and Christians were experiencing discrimination by the government's response to COVID-19, in many countries, coronavirus pandemic provides added venues for churches to collaborate with the government. There has been an increase in strategic and effective collaboration between churches and government in many countries in Asia.

4. Social Institutions

In a number of Asian countries, churches up their social responsibility by supporting social institutions, such as hospitals, first responders, schools and others with PPE (personal protective equipment), masks, ventilators, sanitizers and other related items.

5. Interfaith

There has been noted increase in interfaith collaboration between Christians and other faith in responding to the pandemic.

6. Prayers and Repentance

Significant increase in corporate digital (virtual) prayers. I do not remember when in the history of the church, we see so many organized and unorganized prayers being conducted around the world on a single issue. This looks like the beginning of a prayer movement.

7. Church Helping Church

Another encouraging sign is the way larger and more resourced churches and church networks support smaller and less resourced churches, both urban and rural. In many countries in Asia, this act of kindness between churches crossed denominational lines. There are new initiatives, such as pastors' sponsorship, pastors' income generation projects, and sharing media and technology equipment for the smaller churches to be able to do online services.

8. Back to the Core

The church also has learned in a big way, the essentials of worship, of serving and following Christ. The church learned very fast on how to operate without having to have building and other facilities. Bringing back the importance of family discipleship and worship at home.

9. South-south Economy

In the past, churches in some countries in Asia always look to the Western churches and governments to help them to respond to disaster or any other tragedies. Today, where economic downturn hits almost every country in the world, we have seen a new and healthier model, where almost all of the significant increase in churches' generosity and relief projects were funded locally. The beginning of a new church economic model. The south-south model.

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10. Salvation

There have been several testimonies from several countries in Asia, where leaders and people from other faith and or secular background begin to sincerely seek God for an answer in the midst of this challenging time. Many have found salvation in Christ Jesus.

11. Opportunities

Some of the National Evangelical Alliances in Asia has embraced a new perspective, and begin to see this pandemic as an opportunity, an open door to be the light and salt on earth, to advance the Kingdom of God. This new perspective is spreading rapidly among the churches in Asia.

The Asia Evangelical Alliance committed on two things. First, to find ways to learn and leverage all these "signs" to reach their maximum impacts in shaping the church in Asia. Second, to find ways to increase collaboration among the Evangelical Alliances and churches in Asia as a whole, to consider what we can do together to contribute toward supporting the church in Asia in responding to the pandemic and beyond. The National Evangelical Alliances in Asia are currently in the process of forming 10 Task Forces in response to the second commitment above, they are:

1. Biblical Conversation and Theological Reflection

Biblical Conversation and Theological Reflection on how to read and give meaning to this incident (to collect, compile & publish on AEA Website).

2. Collecting Best Practices

3. The Challenge of Technology

How to overcome the challenge – the lacks of capacity and access to technology.

4. Supporting Pastors

Support pastors of less resourced churches among urban poor and in rural area.

- 5. Support for Community Beyond Immediate Relief (Jobs Creation)
- 6. Anticipate Long-term Impact on Children & Youth

7. Preparing the Church for:

- a. future disruption;
- b. a church structure that is more agile;
- c. a solution beyond digital.

8. Financial Sustainability within Asia

How NEAs will work collaboratively to help ministries in Asia identify and introduce income generating avenues.

9. Environmental Justice

Prepare the church to be good stewards of the environment.

10. Support Women in Response to Increased Domestic Violence

Church's response to support and protect women because of the increased domestic violence in the context of Lockdown.

Please pray for these Task Forces and let us know if you would like to be part of or contribute toward any of these Task Forces.

SUMMARY REPORT FROM EACH COUNTRY ON COVID-19 RESPONSE AND PRAYER NEEDS

(COVID-19 Figures taken from Worldometers as of May 15th, 2020)

BANGLADESH	
TOTAL CASES 20,065	ACTIVE CASES 15,885

RECOVERED 3,882

3,882 298
24-hours Chain Prayer on March 26th throughout the country under the United Forum of Churches Bangladesh-UBFC

DEATHS

- (Evangelicals, Catholics and Ecumenicals).
- NCFB initiated 18-hour chain prayer 18 hours with all Church Denominations.
- Koininia (relief arm of NCFB) distributed relief goods to 1,000 poor families.
- NCFB has distributed relief goods to 300+ families through 13 different church denominations.
- In the process of finding resources to provide financial support to 100 Pastors' families who serve in rural areas.

From now until end of June:

- Seeking support for pastors and evangelist in rural areas through income generation (poultry firm, goat rearing, small business).
- Seeking for support on long-term impact on Women, children & youth.
- Planning to educate leaders and pastors with devotional resources with Theological Reflection prepared by Churches, AEA/ FBOs in this challenging time.

Koinonia will carry out 2nd phase relief.

Pray for:

- Government leaders for wisdom from God to tackle this situation.
- The Leadership team of NCFB for wisdom and ability to address the need of Christians in this crisis.
- Financial resources to help needier people and continue run our program.
- Unity and revival among Churches in Bangladesh.

BHUTAN	
TOTAL CASES	ACTIVE CASES
RECOVERED 5	DEATHS O

In addition to prayers, Bhutan Evangelical Alliance came up together with other Christian community to raise the fund for people who need to be quarantined for 2 weeks. Within 2 weeks of time (March 24th – April 5th), 1.3 million rupees was raised.

The fund was handed to the Prime Minister on April 6. This also marked the first contribution accepted by the Government from Christian community.

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CAMBODIA

TOTAL CASES **122** RECOVERED

121

ACTIVE CASES

DEATHS

- Encouraging Christians to stay strong and courageous through top denominational meeting sharing their experiences in dealing with COVID-19 in their denominations. Denominations created their video calling and made it public to serve national word of encouragement.
- EFC has worked and donated USD1,000 to Ministry of Cults and Religions (MoC&R) to fight COVID-19 together with the Government of Cambodia. EFC members also made donations to government of Cambodia for support in different ways.
- Bringing awareness of prevention in the communities in some provinces (Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham and Kandal).
- Provided hand sanitizers, soaps, masks and temperature measurement guns,

rice, noodles and other kind of food to the church networks to share to their communities. Provided soaps to 2,500 families/households.

 EFC has spent about USD10,000 for COV-ID-19 response.

From now until end of June:

- Will carry out response in May 13th -22th for provinces (Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Kandal and Kam Pot) according to the assessment of needs conducted before.
- Continue to work with provincial networks to understand the situation and identify the most vulnerable areas.
- Will work with members, partners and donors to help people in need and study how to support for COVID-19 recovery with different partners.

- Our work with church networks and local authority in the communities.
- Practical strategy to reach out to people providing food assistance and counselling during lockdown period.
- God's protection for all staff and people from COVID-19 infection.



INDIA

TOTAL CASES 82,264	ACTIVE CASE 51,529
RECOVERED 28,086	DEATHS 2,649

- EFI started COVID-19 Relief in mid-April, reached out to 2,265 families (of 4-5 people) in 16 states with dry ration for 2-3 weeks and direct cash support.
- Nationwide prayers for COVID-19 on March 29th with Christians and Catholics in the country united together.

Will continue raise funds to support another 1,000 families.

Pray for:

- Wisdom for government leaders to make the right decisions on whether to extend the lockdown.
- Church leadership to think on how to do mission in the post-COVID-19 scenario.

INDONESIA	
TOTAL CASES 16,496	ACTIVE CASES 11,617
RECOVERED 3,803	DEATHS 1,076

- Mobilized prayer movements in each Christian house every day, prayer and fasting.
- Encouraged local churches to let government use unused church building spaces

or school classrooms to provide temporary care for suspect COVID-19 patients.

- Formed National Compassionate Action Team for Charity which provided thousands of masks, thousands of litres of liquid hand sanitizer, hundreds of packages of basic food needs, and one thousand ready meals for the poor for one month. Recipients not limited to church communities but pesantren (Islamic boarding school) and the public also.
- Carried out voluntary actions setting up aid posts for the public to provide humanitarian assistance and distribute basic needs to the poor.
- Donated hundreds of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to hospitals consisting of Hazmat Suit, masks, and face shields.

Will continue the above from now until end of June.

Pray for:

- PGLII member churches will continue be able to serve the members of their church, even more through virtual meetings.
- Church leaders to focus on directing their church members to prioritize the preaching of the gospel in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic situation.
- Local churches with self-supporting finances so they can continue to stay active in serving and supporting the needs of God's servants.
- PGLII to continue play an active role in collaboration with the Government to contribute tangible assistance to the community.

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SUMMARY REPORT

JAPAN

TOTAL CASES



RECOVERED **9,868**

DEATHS 697

- Encouraged evangelical churches in the country to pray in unity for Japan.
- Theological Committee doing research to provide encouragement to churches, pastors, and believers.
- Relief Committee conducting survey on financial impact to local churches.

From now until end of June:

- Theological Committee will produce a booklet "COVID-19 and Japanese Church" in June.
- Relief Committee will plan for financial help to local churches and pastors.

Pray for:

- Churches to stand firm in strong faith.
- God's protection over Japan and Asian countries affected by the pandemic.
- Christian community that is going through a challenging situation as never before (scheduled events and conferences in Feb-Jun are cancelled, Sunday services go online).
- God's protection for all staff and people from COVID-19 infection.

KOREA

TOTAL CASES 11,018	ACTIVE CASES
RECOVERED 9,821	DEATHS 260

- Evangelical church communities actively prayed for the prevention of COVID-19 virus infections in each church.
- Korean churches have prayed in repentance of their sins before God. Based on the words of Romans 13:1.
- Each church delivered relief offerings and supplies for victims of COVID-19 pandemic.

Will continue following Government's policy to actively prevent COVID-19 virus infections.

- Infected patients.
- Recovery of COVID-19 pandemic damage and economic difficulties.
- Repentance and renewal of individual believer, church and the country. (Christians in Korea have repented their sins with grief before God during the COV-ID-19 period. Our believers admitted that COVID-19 Pandemic is the discipline of God's love).

SUMMARY REPORT

MALAYSIA

TOTAL CASES 6,855

ACTIVE CASES

recovered **5,439**

DEATHS





- Issued advisory to churches regarding handling the situation of COVID-19 and technical advice on how to conduct services on live stream.
- Provided daily devotionals for more than 50 days.
- Handed out food aids to indigenous people, Myanmar people and local.
- Look at ways to support churches who are impacted financially.
- Drafted SOPs for officers, church assemblies and children ministry.

Pray for:

- Spread of COVID-19 to be come down.
- The economy will revive that poor families will be able to find jobs and support the family.

NEPAL	
TOTAL CASES	ACTIVE CASES
RECOVERED 36	DEATHS O

- In partnership with local government and Christian society, NCF distributed food items to people in need.
- Formed relief effort to help people in different parts of the country.

Pray for:

 Churches under uncertainty during lockdown period as most of them gather in rented facilities.

PAKISTAN	
TOTAL CASES 37,218	ACTIVE CASES 26,260
RECOVERED 10,155	DEATHS 803

Provide encouragement to local churches through forums on social media, through recorded talks and articles on magazines.



- General Secretary is writing a book on "Suffering Church in the Context of Pakistan" to provide believers with solid biblical teaching in the midst of false teachings. The book will be ready by end of this year.
- Relief work providing ration to people in need. As minority in the country, Christians are being discriminated and not getting support from most relief organizations.

From now until end of June:

- Raise support to help more people in need, especially those are on daily wages and have no way of surviving.
- Continue provide more teachings through different forums.

Pray that:

 Faith will grow in this pandemic, the church will be revived and ready to help people in need.

- God would open more ways to help our Christian and Hindus communities as most of them are getting support and rations from M Organization because they are Christians. May God eliminate discriminations.
- Our government make wise decisions protecting and helping the people in the country.
- National Alliance able to help people and meet their needs both spiritually and physically.



- Assisted more than 3,000 families through food packs.
- Created Adopt-A-Pastors' Family Program (April 15th to 30th) which assisted 1,050 pastors in most needy places in NCR and 29 provinces.
- Called for and led 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting (March 1st to April 9th).
- The National Bible Day Foundation conducted evangelistic Bible study and fellowship for government leaders. 6 Senators, Special Assistant for the President and Spokesman of the President attended the last 11 meetings.

- The adverse economic impact.
- Churches to adapt to the new normal.

SUMMARY REPORT

SINGAPORE

TOTAL CASES	
26,891	



RECOVERED 5,973

DEATHS

- Worked with the Government Ministry Community Culture and Youth – to get direct information about COVID-19 and issue advisory to Churches working with the Government.
- Helped Churches to buy surgical masks and hand sanitizers.
- Helped to issue materials of outreach before the lockdown.
- Alliance of Guest Workers Outreach (AGWO), which EFOS is a core component partner of distributed 407,259 Care Meals across 262 Factory-Converted Dormitories since April 10th. Over a hundred of churches are involved in the community outreach.
- On May 7th, reached 12,000 guest workers with additional Care Packs across 260 dormitories in addition to the Care Meals. The Care Packs included the most essential items they need.
- During Ramadan period, "Fast-breaking meals" such as dates were distributed to 4,000 Muslim guest workers.

SRI LANKA

TOTAL CASES 925 RECOVERED

477

439

DEATHS

9

ACTIVE CASES

Emergency relief for vulnerable communities

- Through the relief & development arm (ADT), provided dry ration packs to 1,800 families.
- Through Mission Commission and Youth Wing, supported over 200 pastors and Christian families in immediate needs with assistance and dry rations.
- ADT is currently is carrying out its work in 3 phases: a) Emergency b) Recovery c) Sustainable Development.

Engaging the Church and community

- Provided churches with a COVID-19 Response Guidelines Toolkit.
- Provided guidance to Regional Pastors' Fellowship on response to the pandemic through webinars.
- Provided scholarships to pastors' children.









 Created a booklet on laws governing the COVID-19 situation that is shared on social media platforms to raise public awareness.

Engaging youth during COVID-19 and promoting digital citizenship

 Launched a Digital Citizenship Toolkit for youth in lockdown to promote responsible online behaviour.

https://www.minormatters. org/storage/app/uploads/public/5e9/837/496/5e9837496f-1cb686056029.pdf

 Social media campaigns promoting awareness and correct understanding of COVID-19.



- The NCEASL is currently documenting online hate against vulnerable communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Collaborated with professional counselling groups providing support on mental health to vulnerable communities across the country.
- Conducted webinars and digital discussion forums are being conducted with youth leaders in the districts.
- Youth wing reached over 25,000 people via its social media platforms providing encouragements and carrying out campaign on mental health.

Engaging interfaith leaders

- The NCEASL mobilised interfaith leaders on a health campaign, to dispel fake news, myths and educate their respective faith communities on how to respond to COVID-19.
- A booklet is to be launched on the role of faith leaders in combating COVID-19.

Prayer mobilization

Mobilised prayer for the nation and worldwide situation of the pandemic through national church networks and prayer groups.

From now until end of June:

- Continue relief work for vulnerable communities affected and assist those impacted through recovery stage interventions and engaging in sustainable development initiatives to affected communities.
- Providing 5,000 Christian families with seeds and seedlings to equip the Christian families, churches in the recovery stage.

- Webinars and digital forums for youth on digital citizenship.
- Surveying the impact of COVID-19 on youth in Sri Lanka.
- Launch a policy document detailing the outdated quarantine laws in use during this pandemic period in our country and provide recommendations to policy makers for a positive change.

- The church in Sri Lanka to be resilient and know how to respond to this pandemic as we look for a period of recovery.
- Leaders in the government that they will be granted wisdom to take the right decisions leading the country move past the economic hurdles coming our way.
- The democratic situation in the country. Most of the decisions being taken by the current administration do not have a legal basis. We pray that we will be able to navigate this period of uncertainty as we look towards the elections that are planned next month.





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"We do hope that this website and other AEA media help AEA community grow much stronger and be more effective in fulfilling our call in Asia and beyond." **Dr. Bambang Budijanto -** AEA, General Secretary





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Beneficiary

Asia Evangelical Alliance by The Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand

Account No. 497-6-06411-0