



Christian Conference of Asia

# **BEING THE CHURCH IN ACCOMPANIMENT WITH OUR CO-PILGRIMS IN ASIA**

**2020**

**PROGRAMME  
REPORT**



# FOREWORD BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY

## CCA Programmes and Activities amidst the “New Normal” in Asia

The COVID-19 pandemic has been changing the world and turning it upside down ever since it was first identified in late 2019 and early 2020 in Asia. It has brought revolutionary changes in almost every aspect of life and ravaged countries across the world. A tiny virus chastened the human race, and the entire inhabited world was gripped by fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. Though the intensity of its impacts has been varied, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a common experience for this generation. The COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented trauma it created in all walks of life are posing huge challenges; the impacts are deep in almost every Asian country.

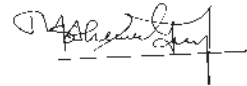
The year 2020 brought great disappointments for the churches and the ecumenical movement in Asia too as the COVID-19 pandemic has had major and multiple impacts both direct and indirect, including in the mental and spiritual realms. The new situation compelled humankind to re-evaluate how we live and work, and how society operates. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated crises have also made a tremendous impact on religious life. It became an opportunity for a new realisation for many that God is the source of our life and hope amidst crisis as God is in control of everything. The catastrophic situation also became an opportunity for us to realise the human vulnerability as well as the shallowness of our sense of pride and self-sufficiency.

It became more and more clear that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ecumenical movement and its witness will be long-lasting and complex. We can no longer consider returning to the Church's and the ecumenical movement's prior and so-called “normal” functioning in most contexts. The new situation has warranted us to realise and accept the “new normal.” This “new normal” applies not only to companies or secular frameworks but also to Church and the ecumenical movement.

Starting from the end of March to June 2020, the CCA office in Chiang Mai was under lockdown. We followed the Thai government's instructions and guidelines, and staff members had to work from home. The office was functional only on a part-time basis most of the time during the year, and the programmes and activities were rescheduled several times during the year, but could not fully return to normal nor resume work in normal ways until the end of 2020. However, during the lockdown period and in the subsequent periods, we were involved in organising and facilitating several programmes through the online mode, despite all adversities caused by the global spread of COVID-19.

The thematic focus of the programmes originally planned and scheduled for the year was ‘God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation’. The reports featured in the pages that follow capture how, throughout 2020, CCA kept alive its activities despite innumerable problems, including the frequent shutdowns of the CCA office necessitated by the pervasiveness of the pandemic in most Asian countries. The crisis was also an

opportunity for us to hold in place the thread that linked the micro and the macro in terms of church and ecumenical relations as well as for addressing emerging concerns throughout the year. The reports narrated and intertwined in this annual report summarise the programmes and activities implemented by CCA during 2020, which was a difficult year for nearly everyone. We encourage you to take a look at our work, which was made possible by the support and generosity of CCA's member churches, ecumenical partners, and other well-wishers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mathews George Chunakara', written over a horizontal line.

Mathews George Chunakara  
*General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia*

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## GENERAL SECRETARIAT

### Coordination of Administration and Programmes

The General Secretary, who is responsible for the overall coordination and supervision of the implementation and monitoring of all programme areas, provided leadership in the coordination of planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes and activities of CCA in 2020.

The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic forced the CCA to postpone most of its planned programmes and activities in 2020. However, several programmes had been organised and facilitated online. Although the pandemic caused most of CCA's planned programmes and activities to be cancelled or postponed, the various programme units of CCA made every effort to communicate with its constituencies through various platforms like the CCA website, and social media pages and channels. Focused on the rising concerns and issues related to the pandemic, the CCA organised the special prayer for Asia Sunday, online

discussions, online meetings, and seven special webinars that focused exclusively on the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the responsibilities of the General Secretary include strengthening relationships with member churches and councils, liaising with the governing board and advisory bodies, and building relationships with governments and intergovernmental organisations, the General Secretary continued all regular tasks of maintaining and strengthening relations even during the difficult situation of the pandemic. For most of the year, the CCA headquarters were shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic and staff were working from homes. However, a majority of the programmes originally scheduled for the year 2020 as part of the annual plan were implemented online. The General Secretary provided leadership in the implementation of the programmes.

### Governing Board and Advisory Committees

The General Secretary carried out the main responsibility of liaising with the governing boards and advisory committees of the CCA during 2020.

#### Finance Committee Meeting

*25 November 2020*

The Finance Committee of the CCA met online on 25 November 2020. The Committee recommended that the plan to develop 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the CCA's land must be launched as soon as the COVID-19 situation

improved. It was felt that the downturn in the construction industry caused by the pandemic could be advantageous in terms of reduced construction costs. The Finance Committee reviewed the report received from the Hong Kong-based Investment Committee about the status of the CCA's investment portfolio in Hong Kong. It was noted that there was a net 10 percent depreciation in the value of the assets given market fluctuations and the global economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Since

markets were picking up and the value would rise again.

## 27–28 November 2020



movement in the context of the emerging “new normal” and in the post-COVID-19 situation in Asia.

The Executive Committee decided to shift the venue of the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly from India to another convenient country in Asia with prospective options to consider either Indonesia or Thailand. The members of the Executive Committee observed that the current situation of the growing pandemic in most Asian countries and its long-term impacts, in the long run, would necessitate finding a suitable venue in a country where the impact of COVID-19 was well controlled. It has been tentatively agreed to hold the Assembly in May or June 2022.



The Executive Committee also received a report and recommendation from the Finance Committee pertaining to the development of the CCA office block, preferably on one of the four plots of land owned by the CCA. The Committee further authorised the

General Secretary to develop plans for the office building in consultation with the Property Development sub-Committee, Finance Committee, and Officers, and bring the plan directly to the Executive Committee for further action.

## 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Preparations



### General Assembly Worship Preparation Team

#### General Assembly Worship Preparation Team Meeting

2–4 February 2020 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

A salient feature of the CCA's General Assembly is its worship, during which the richness and diversity of Asia's spiritual essence are embodied throughout the liturgical celebrations.

To prepare and facilitate the worship and liturgical services of the 15<sup>th</sup> CCA General Assembly, an Assembly Worship

Preparation Team was formed.

The first meeting of the worship preparation team was held in February at the CCA Headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Drawing from the abundance and vibrancy of Asia's ecclesiastical, spiritual, and cultural traditions, the Assembly Worship Preparation Team initiated the preparation of the worship resources and identified relevant biblical texts and passages for meditation and reflection for the daily worship sessions of the week-long Assembly. Three liturgists and church musicians

who attended the Assembly Worship Preparation meeting were Rev. Dr Ester Pudjo Widiasih (Jakarta Theological Seminary, Indonesia), Dr. Rommel Linatoc (National Christian Council in the Philippines), and Rev. Anilal M. Jose (Church of South India).

### Theological Consultation on General Assembly Theme

4–7 February 2020 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

The CCA Executive Committee in 2019 determined the theme of the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly as *‘God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation’*. The sub-themes developed were *‘Towards Affirming the*

*Will of God’*, *‘Towards Dwelling in Harmony with Creation’*, and *‘Towards Attaining Life in Its Fullness’*.

The Assembly theme was proposed by the Assembly Planning Committee after deliberations on the role of the churches and the ecumenical community amidst several emerging and challenging issues within current Asian realities, in relation to socio-political, religious, economic, and ecological issues.

One of the most important aspects of the preparations for the Assembly is involving all stakeholders of the CCA to participate and relevantly reflect upon the theme of the Assembly. In keeping with this, the CCA



### Participants of Theological Consultation on General Assembly Theme

brought together a ‘core group’ of Asian theologians to reflect on the proposed theme and sub-themes of the CCA’s 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly and to develop the framework for the Assembly’s theological/Bible study resources.

During the meeting, plans for different thematic plenaries and deliberative sessions were suggested. Certain emerging issues deemed necessary to be addressed

from Asian perspectives within the larger context of the theme and sub-themes were also identified.

It was proposed that well in advance of the CCA Assembly, a study document on the Assembly theme be produced as an outcome of the consultation to equip CCA constituencies for their deliberations on the Assembly theme.

Asian theologians who were specially invited from theological institutions and churches to attend the consultation were: Prof. Hanna Kim (Sungkonghoe University in Korea), Rev. Dr Joseph Komar (Seminari Theoloji Malaysia), Rev. Dr Mothy Varkey (Mar Thoma Theological Seminary in India), Dr Qaiser Julius (Open Theological Seminary in Pakistan), Rev. Dr Robert Setio (Duta Wacana Christian University in Indonesia), Rev. Stephen Arulampalam (Theological College of Lanka in Sri Lanka), and Dr Swarup Bar (Bishop's College in India).

### **Meeting with the Local Arrangement Committee of the General Assembly**

*20 February 2020 | Trivandrum, India*

A meeting with the local arrangement committee of the CCA General Assembly was held at the Bishop's House of the South Kerala Diocese, Church of South India, at the LMS Compound, Trivandrum, India. Around twenty delegates from CCA member churches in South India and the representatives of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) including the General Secretary of NCCI attended the meeting and discussed logistics and general preparations of the 15<sup>th</sup> CCA General Assembly.

## **Church and Ecumenical Relations**

The General Secretary and other staff members visited and participated in several programmes and activities as part of the efforts to nurture and strengthen the relationship of the CCA and its constituencies, member churches, councils, related ecumenical organisations, regional and global ecumenical organisations, and world confessional bodies in 2020. The initiatives to build stronger networks and to promote the involvement and participation of all CCA constituencies contribute significantly towards better cooperation and unity, and a greater sense of ownership.

The General Secretary's visits to CCA constituencies along with programmes and ecumenical activities attended by the General Secretary or represented by CCA staff are listed below:

- Mission 21's workshop on Good Governance in Makassar, Indonesia, 6–10 January 2020 (attended by Rosiana Purnomo)



**Rosiana Purnomo at Mission21's Good Governance Workshop in Makassar, Indonesia, from 6–10 January 2020**



**CCA General Secretary Dr Mathews George Chunakara at Consultation on 'Towards A More Responsive and Inclusive Ecumenical Vision' in Antelias, Lebanon, from 31 January-2 February 2020**

- World Council of Churches' Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace International Reference Group Meeting in Fiji, 19–22 January 2020 (attended by General Secretary)
- Consultation hosted by His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Holy See of Cilicia on 'Towards A More Responsive and Inclusive Ecumenical Vision' in Antelias, Lebanon, 31 January–2 February 2020 (attended by General Secretary)
- Online meeting of World Council of Churches (WCC) and Regional Ecumenical Organisations (REOs), on 26 March 2020 (attended by General Secretary)
- World Council of Churches' Consultative Meeting of Ecumenical Global Health Providers and Networks on COVID-19, on 11 May, 19 June, 28 July, 12 October 2020, and 30 November 2020 (virtually attended by Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia)
- Greetings at the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI)'s 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on 25 May 2020 (presented by General Secretary)
- Joint meeting of the WCC-EHAIA International Reference Group and WCC- EAA HIV Strategy Group, 25–29 May 2020 (attended by Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia)
- Panel address at the webinar hosted by Arigatou International on 'How Faith-Inspired Organisations in Asia are Supporting, Protecting, and Empowering Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic', on 15 June 2020 (presented by Rosiana Purnomo)
- Greetings at the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)'s General Assembly, 16 June 2020 (presented by General Secretary)
- Webinar on 'Human Rights, Ethics, and Climate Change', 17 June 2020 (attended by Rev. Grace Moon)
- Virtual meeting of WCC Pre-Assembly Planning Meeting on 'Just Community of Women and Men', 29 June 2020 (attended by Rev. Grace Moon and Sunila Ammar)
- Greetings at the Gereja Kristen Protestan di Bali (GKPB)'s General Assembly, 4 August 2020 in Bali, Indonesia (pre-recorded message presented by the General Secretary)
- International Ecumenical Convocation on the Defence of Human Rights in the Philippines organised by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 17 September 2020 (attended by General Secretary)
- Greetings at the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)'s 105<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, 22–23 September 2020 (pre-recorded message presented by the General Secretary)
- HIV Interfaith Conference 2020 on 'Resilience and Renewal: Faith in the HIV Response',



**Rev. Grace Moon at Webinar on 'Introducing Asian Women's Theological Network', hosted by PANAATWM on 24 October 2020**



23–24 September 2020  
(virtually attended by Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia)

- The 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the International Committee of the Fellowship of the Least Coin, 9–16 October 2020 (attended by Rev. Grace Moon)
- Webinar on ‘Introducing Asian Women’s Theological Network’ hosted by PANAAWTM (Pacific, Asia, North America Asian Women in Theology and Ministry) on 24 October 2020 (attended by Rev. Grace Moon)
- Greetings at the 8<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the Igreja Protestante Iha Timor Lorosa’e (IPTL) on 28 October 2020 (pre-recorded message presented by the General Secretary)
- Greetings at the United Church of Christ of the Philippines (UCCP)’s international virtual solidarity forum ‘Cry Out! Rescue Us, O God!’ on 17 November 2020
- World AIDS Day Prayer Service of World Council of Churches on 1

December 2020 (attended by Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia)

- World AIDS Day Webinar of School of Divinity, Siliman University and National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) on 2 December 2020 (virtual session presented by Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia)
- General Secretary’s panel address at the webinar on ‘Pastoral Care for Children in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic’ organised by the Indonesian Pastoral Association on 4 December 2020
- The General Secretary attended various meetings as part of the WCC-REO discussions organised by the World Council of Churches.
- The General Secretary also provided leadership in various webinars and online programmes organised by the WCC and CCA member churches throughout the year.

## In Memoriam

The CCA received news about the sad demises of its close associates and prominent leaders in Asia.



**Salahuddin Wahid**

*Salahuddin Wahid*, a prominent Muslim cleric and defender of democracy in Indonesia, passed away on 2 February 2020 in Jakarta, Indonesia. Salahuddin Wahid was the head of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association and the Deputy Chairman of the National Commission of Human Rights in Indonesia. As a leader of Indonesia’s largest Muslim organisation, Nahdlatul Ulama, he committed himself to promoting religious tolerance and harmony as well as interreligious cooperation and played an important role in establishing

interfaith relations and peacebuilding in the conflict-affected regions of Indonesia. Wahid played an especially critical role in initiating peacebuilding in West Papua in collaboration with the council of Papuan bishops. He was instrumental in settling religious conflicts in the violence-affected Maluku and Central Sulawesi regions, and also investigated human rights violations in Timor Leste.

*Dr Saramma Varghese*, the former President of the All India Council of Christian Women passed away on 22 March 2020 in Thumpamon, Kerala, India. She was the Principal of the Catholicate College under the Mahatma Gandhi University in Kerala, India. Her active contributions to the Church and ecumenical movement in India was a testament to her deep commitment.



**Dr Saramma Varghese**

Dr Saramma Varghese was an active leader in the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church's women's wing. She was also a member of the Executive Committee of NCCI and its other sub-committees. She participated in various international women's conferences in Asia, Europe, and Latin America, as well as the

10<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the WCC in South Korea (2013) and the 14<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of CCA in Indonesia (2015).

*Thomas Baroi*, a committed Christian and ecumenical leader in Bangladesh passed away on 22 March 2020 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He was the Chairman of the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), the largest Christian diakonal mission organisation of Bangladesh churches. He also served as the Director of the Ecumenical Charitable Trust for many years. Starting his career as a civil servant of the undivided Pakistan government in erstwhile East Pakistan and West Pakistan, Baroi served the Church and society in Bangladesh ever since the country became independent. He was closely associated with the diakonal ministry of the Bangladesh Baptist Church



**Thomas Baroi**

Sangha as well as the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB). He participated in various programmes of the CCA and the WCC, including a series of regional consultations organised by CCA in the 1990s on 'Freedom of Religion and Religious Minorities in Asia', study projects initiated by the WCC Asia

Desk on Christian Marriage Laws and Discrimination of Religious Minorities in South Asia (2003–2006), the CCA's General Assembly in Malaysia (2010), and the CCA's Asia Mission Conference (2017) in Myanmar.

*Rev. Dr Christian Izaac Tamaela*, one of Asia's prominent ethnomusicologists, passed away on 19 April 2020 in Maluku, Indonesia. Rev. Dr Tamaela was



**Rev. Dr Christian Izaac Tamaela**

an ecclesiastical music lecturer of the Christian University in the Moluccas and a member of the Protestant Church of Maluku. He composed and arranged several songs of CCA's Sound the Bamboo, an admirable collection of Asian hymns. He participated in many ecumenical gatherings and events as a liturgical and spiritual life organiser of the National Council of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), CCA, and WCC.

*Rev. Shoji Tsutomu*, a veteran Japanese ecumenist and peace activist, former General Secretary of the National Christian Council in Japan, passed away on 25 August 2020. As the General Secretary of the NCCJ, Rev. Shoji was instrumental in bringing the Japanese churches and

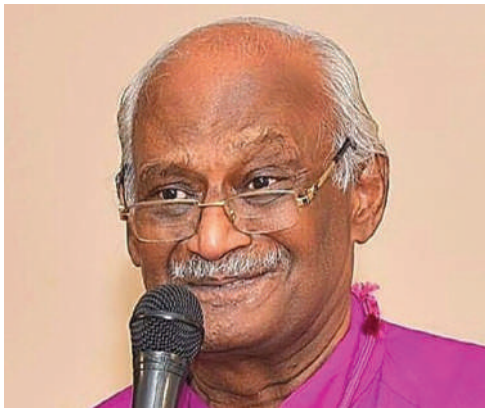
the civil society organisations together on a common platform for advocacy on human rights, democratisation, and peacebuilding. Rev. Shoji also played an active role in facilitating and hosting the historic Tozanso international ecumenical conference, organised by the World Council of Churches. Rev. Shoji was also known for his long-time activism on the issue of denuclearisation. As a member of the Interreligious Coalition on Nuclear Power Administration, he was deeply



**Rev. Shoji Tsutomu**

involved in the network of anti-nuclear powerplant activists in Japan. He was a member of the WCC delegation to the 3rd Conference of the Parties (COP-3) of the UN Framework Convention (1997) on Climate Change in Kyoto. He served as a Director of the Tomisaka Christian Centre, an ecumenical theological research institute, for many years. Rev. Shoji Tsutomu dedicated the last part of his life to building up the Korea Museum in Tokyo, established by a citizens' group that included Koreans, Japanese Zainichi Koreans, and Japanese, in order to learn together the history of Japan and Korea. He was the first director of the Korea Museum. A memorial service was held at Kyodan Ohizumi Church in Tokyo, on 31 August 2020.

*Rt. Rev. David Gnaniah Pothirajulu*, a prominent Indian Church leader and a committed ecumenist and missiologist, passed away on Saturday, 5 September 2020 in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. Serving as a pastor, preacher, and theological educator, Pothirajulu was consecrated as the third bishop of the Madurai-Ramnad Diocese of the Church of South India (CSI) in 1978 and continued until he voluntarily relinquished the bishopric in 1994. He was Deputy Moderator of the CSI from 1988 to 1990. An alumnus of the first batch of the Course for Leadership in Lay Training (CLLT) of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in the 1960s, Bishop Pothirajulu passionately promoted



**Rt. Rev. David Gnaniah Pothirajulu**

ecumenism and lay leadership. He was instrumental in motivating young faculty members of the Lady Doak College in Madurai to seriously involve themselves in the Asian ecumenical movement through CCA. Upon relinquishing the bishopric in 1994, he concentrated on providing ecumenical formation training through the Community College and Lay Training Centre (COLT) he established in Madurai. He collaborated with the network of ecumenical formation

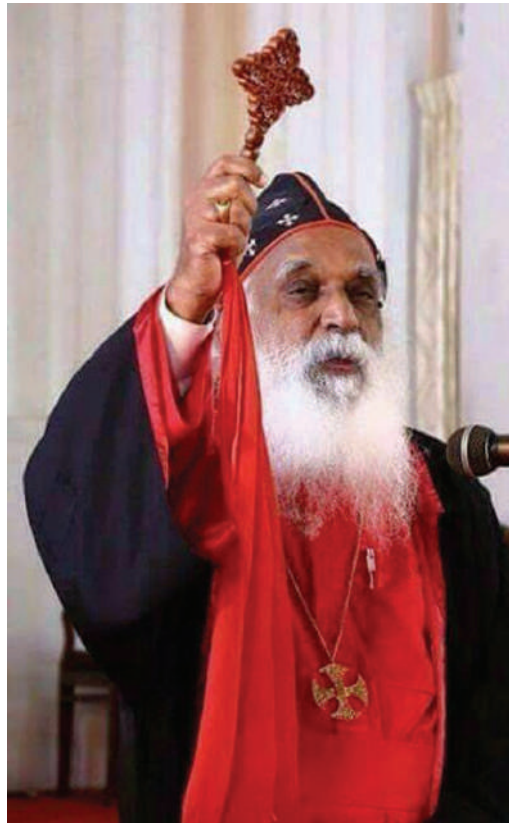
training centres in Asia Association of the Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia (ACISCA), as well as with the global network of academy movements for lay training initiated by the WCC. Bishop Pothirajulu took a keen interest in enhancing the leadership of women in church and society as well as the lay leadership in the Church. He was closely associated with the CCA's Mission and Evangelism as well as Ecumenical Education programmes in the 1980s. He also advocated for developing political consciousness among Indians to develop empathy for the plight of the Rohingya Muslim refugees living in India and impress upon the Indian Government not to deport the Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.

*Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan*, a former President of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), and one of Asia's most eminent ecclesiastical and ecumenical leaders, passed away on 18 October 2020 at Tiruvalla, Kerala, in India, at the age of eighty-nine. Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan made valuable contributions to the Asian and global ecumenical movement in manifold ways. He was the President of the Christian Conference of Asia from 2000 to 2005 and greatly contributed as a member of different committees of CCA at various times. He participated and provided leadership at the CCA's General Assemblies held in Seoul in South Korea (1985), Manila in the Philippines (1990), Colombo in Sri Lanka (1995), Tomohon in Indonesia (2000), Chiang Mai in Thailand (2005), and Jakarta in Indonesia (2015). Joseph Mar Thoma's most recent contribution to the CCA was evinced during his participation at the week-long Asia Mission Conference and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the CCA held in Myanmar in 2017, and also



at the online prayer service organised by CCA as part of the observance of the Asia Sunday-2020 in May 2020. In a condolence message addressed by Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, he expressed deep sorrow over the passing away of Dr Joseph

Mar Thoma Metropolitan and stated that many ecclesiastical and ecumenical leaders across Asia had the privilege of working closely with him throughout the many years of his close association and involvement in the Asian and global ecumenical movement.



**Dr Joseph Mar Thoma Metropolitan**



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## **MISSION IN UNITY AND CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY**

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### **Objectives**

- To accompany churches in Asia to strengthen the Church's mission and witness in multi-religious contexts;
- To assist member churches and councils of the CCA in revitalising and nurturing the unity of churches and the ecumenical movement in Asia;
- To develop contextual theological undergirding for mission and witness, while addressing emerging issues in Asia;
- To strengthen collaboration and cooperation among churches and various ecumenical actors in Asia and from other parts of the world who are engaged in mission and witness in Asia; and,
- To initiate, facilitate, and strengthen ecumenical theological initiatives in Asia.

## Consultation on Contextual Theology and Sustainability of Creation

24–26 February 2020 | Tahan-Kalaymyo, Myanmar

A Consultation on ‘Contextual Theology and Sustainability of Creation’ was held from 24–26 February 2020 at Tahan-Kalaymyo in Myanmar. It was attended by forty-five participants representing the

members of the Kalay Council of Churches and representatives from Evangelical and Pentecostal Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in the Kalay Diocese of Myanmar.

The consultation was conducted by the CCA in collaboration with the Kalay Council of Churches to seek a way to respond to God’s call to be part of



### Consultation on Contextual Theology and Sustainability of Creation, Myanmar

renewing and restoring God’s creation. Various Christian communities in northern Myanmar came together to reflect on ‘Contextual Theology and Sustainability of Creation’ and to discuss the churches’ role in relevant ecumenical actions and advocacy for ecological justice and peace.

In the last few decades, Myanmar has witnessed significant changes in climate-related hazards and their consequences, most of which resulted from human-made environmental abuses that have now led to massive environmental destruction, threatening the sustainability of God’s creation.

Rev. Dr Van Lal Renga, the President of the Kalay Council of Churches, in his inaugural address stated, “The emerging environmental issues have been one of the most important concerns of contemporary theology, but is still neglected in the Tahan-Kalay area. It is vital to now include in our theological discourse the linkages between theology and the sustainability of creation.”

Rev. Dr Joel Za Hlei Kap, the Principal of Chin Christian Institute of Theology, presented the biblical reflection on the sustainability of creation, saying, “God asked us to live in God’s land in harmony and peace.

This land is not a tool for our ends but is instead the place in which we experience God's presence. It is important to re-conceptualise our stewardship of God's creation to engage in the sustainability and sustenance of creation."

Rev. Lal Piang Thang, the General Secretary of the Kalay Council of Churches, opined, "Inadequate awareness about the sustainability of creation is one of the root causes of the environmental concerns we face nowadays. As a part of our awareness programmes, we must include 'ecological justice and peace' issues in the Sunday School curriculum to educate our younger generations."

The participants affirmed the churches' responsibility and their stewardship in God's creation and the necessity of sustaining ecological justice and peace.

They agreed upon initiating more concrete actions in the form of eco-justice awareness campaigns in their local communities.

### Webinar on 'Churches in Asia Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis' 7 May 2020

Amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, Asian churches have been actively engaged in mitigating the spread of the virus through a variety of actions such as sharing resources, offering medical equipment and assistance, accommodation, and shelter to those affected, food provisions under lockdown, medical care, counselling, and spiritual care for communities.

Creating a platform for churches and related diaconal organisations to share experiences from their respective contexts

**Christian Conference of Asia**

**Virtual Conference**

**'Churches in Asia Responding to COVID-19 Crisis'**

Thursday, 7 May 2020 | 12:00 to 14:00 (Bangkok Time)

**Bishop Dr. Yakob Mar Irenaios**  
India

**Bishop Dr. T.P. Simarmata**  
CCA Moderator

**Dr. Mathews George Chunakara**  
CCA General Secretary

**Bishop Sebouh Sarkissian**  
Iran

**Fr. William LaRousse**  
FABC/Hong Kong

**Bishop Reuel Marigza**  
Philippines

**Prof. Dr. Sawako Fujiwara**  
Japan

**Bishop Leo Paul**  
Pakistan

**Rev. Jacky Manuputty**  
Indonesia

**Panellists of Webinar on 'Churches in Asia Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis'**

on how churches in Asia have responded to this pandemic, the CCA organised a webinar discussion focusing on 'Churches in Asia Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis' on 7 May 2020. About 100 participants joined the discussion directly via Zoom, while heavy engagement was observed through the CCA's social media channels, with over 5,000 views of the webinar's live-streaming.

The discussion was structured into five segments, namely: Asian churches' inter-church cooperation and response to COVID-19 in specific Asian situations; the diaconal mission of Asian churches in the specific contexts and responses to alleviate the suffering of people in Asia; faith communities in Asian countries working together with governments; helping the churches in Asia to nurture spiritual, biblical, and contextual theological emphases to dispel misleading biblical and theological interpretations in the context of the pandemic; and, encouraging and motivating the churches in Asia to share the message of hope, solidarity, and accompaniment in context of COVID-19 pandemic in local communities.

CCA invited prominent Asian church and ecumenical leaders, including from the Roman Catholic Church, to share their profound insights and response towards the impact of this pandemic in their local context. The specially invited ecumenical and ecclesiastical leaders were Archbishop Dr Willem T.P. Simarmata (the Moderator of the CCA), Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian (Prelate of

the Armenian Apostolic Church in Iran), Metropolitan Dr Yakob Mar Irenaios (Chairperson of Churches' Auxiliary for Social Action, India), Fr. William LaRousse (Deputy General Secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences from Hong Kong), Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza (General Secretary of National Council of Churches in the Philippines), Bishop Leo Paul (Church of Pakistan), Rev. Jacky Manuputty (General Secretary of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia), and Dr Sawako Fujiwara (a Japanese theologian from the Lutheran Theological Seminary and Rikkyo University in Tokyo). Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of CCA, moderated the session.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of CCA, pointed out, "The pandemic has exposed the unsustainability of development and inadequacies in catering to the most vulnerable and has challenged the churches to re-examine their role in the new world structure. This is the context in which churches and all faith communities are called to reflect."

Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian encouraged the churches to be hopeful—even though difficulties would be faced, especially in the COVID-19 situation, they could be overcome by the power of the resurrected Christ.

Metropolitan Dr Yakob Mar Irenaios warned against permitting the virus to enter one's mind. He shared how churches in India had been at the forefront of relief work for the migrants and daily labourers. Churches in India mutually cooperated with NGOs and the government to distribute food



and medicine to the poor; even the National Council of Churches in India and other churches in the states opened their church spaces as shelters to help people infected with COVID-19.

Bishop Leo Paul spoke of the challenges faced by minorities in Pakistan, an Islamic majority country. Churches and other social organisations were limited in doing relief work. They were confined to large cities and were unable to concentrate their efforts on people in rural areas where help was needed the most. At the grassroots level, their needs were mostly deprioritised and ignored. Expressing great concern, he said that the people in Pakistan were about to face a severe food security crisis, an economic crisis, a social crisis, and a mass psychological crisis in rapid succession, unless serious and concrete measures were taken to ameliorate the conditions of the general populace.

Rev. Jacky Manuputty shared how the member churches of PGI had responded to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Indonesia. As soon as the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced the classification of COVID-19 as a global pandemic, PGI had immediately sent out letters to its members detailing practical suggestions to mitigate the spread of the virus, recommendations for family-based worship, and tips for maintaining general health and cleanliness. He specified that the responsibilities of carrying out diaconal tasks fell not only upon the 'church-as-institutional' but also upon the 'church-as-communal', in the form of the family or its local congregations.

Fr. William LaRousse from the FABC stated that the pandemic had brought everyone to common humanity because it affected all human beings regardless of their language,



Partial view of participants of Webinar on 'Churches in Asia Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis'

nationality, religion, or other differences. The Roman Catholic Church had cooperatively worked with national and local government agencies in the form of its Bishop's Conferences in different countries. He spoke of CARITAS, the Roman Catholic Church's charitable organisation, that focused on a coordinated response to the pandemic. Schools and other institutions run by the churches were utilised as shelters for the homeless or were converted into temporary quarantine facilities.

Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza shared the collaborative efforts of the Catholic Church, Evangelical councils, and faith-based organisations in the Philippines for providing relief to the affected people. He said that although the lockdown challenged the mobility of volunteers for distributing aid in every part of the country, churches were able to cater to the needs of people in their respective areas regardless of their class and creed. Furthermore, churches in some parts were able to reach out to isolated indigenous communities. He emphasised that people worked together in solidarity, regardless of denominations and other differences.

Dr Sawako Fujiwara drew attention to the new setup of online worship services and pointed to its challenges because not all people had access to the internet, especially the elderly congregations in Japan. The churches in Japan began

sending out the liturgy or worship resources by post to their congregation members. Although the online ministry was the only effective alternative solution for the continuance of church life under the pandemic, it was not a perfect solution as it led to a 'digital divide', she stated.

Archbishop Dr Willem Simarmata alerted the participants to the impending food crisis that the pandemic would bring in Asian countries. He encouraged churches to make food supplies fully available to marginalised people in their local congregations and other faiths as well.

The most relevant question and concern raised by the panellists was about what the Church would look like in the post-COVID-19 scenario. All the experienced panellists reminded participants of the need to share the message of hope and encouraged churches to jointly work for the future.

The webinar concluded with the affirmation and acknowledgement that the crisis marked a critical point wherein all were called upon to contemplate the inherent fragility of life and the vulnerability of the cosmos. It was crucial to reorient the priorities of the Church as a community of care and compassion which was called to provide love and support to people who struggled with life's challenges and to pray for the world, caught in the grip of the COVID-19 crisis, to be cured and healed.



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# **ECUMENICAL LEADERSHIP FORMATION AND ECUMENICAL SPIRITUALITY**

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## **Objectives**

- To assist the ecumenical formation of a new generation of leadership in churches and ecumenical councils in Asia;
- To develop human resources committed to the renewal of ecumenical spirituality and understanding Christian tradition; and,
- To provide ecumenical space for sharing spiritual life among member churches and national councils in Asia.



## Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)–2020

2–30 November 2020

The Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI), a month-long ecumenical formation training programme organised by the CCA to train young prospective Asian church and ecumenical leaders, was conducted through a virtual platform (online) in 2020.

Focusing on the theme '*We are Called to be Stewards of Renewal and Restoration for God's Creation*', the AEI-2020 had two major components: 1) ecumenical leadership formation of prospective ecumenists and Asian ecumenical leaders while deepening the participants' knowledge of ecumenism and the ecumenical movement grounded in biblical and theological bases, in the contexts of emerging Asian



### Resource Persons of Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)-2020

socioeconomic and geopolitical realities; and 2) attainment of deep insights on the specific thematic thrust.

The main objective of the AEI-2020 was to build the capacities of the participants by enabling them to learn about wider ecumenism so that they will be able to effectively and contextually respond to the call to be stewards of renewal and restoration of God's creation. Thirty-six

students from across Asia and beyond sat together in a spirit of learning until they were equipped with greater clarity and commitment to ecumenism, human community and wholeness of all God's creation.

AEI-2020's renowned faculty comprised Dr Wesley Ariarajah (Emeritus Professor of Drew University, USA), Dr Mathews George Chunakara (General Secretary,

Christian Conference of Asia), Dr Yoon-Jae Chang (Professor at Ewha University, South Korea), Dr Eh Tar Gay (Vice-president of the Myanmar Institute of Theology, Myanmar), Basil Fernando (Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong), Dr Sawako Fujiwara (Professor of Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tokyo), Ms Jennifer Jag Jivan (Director of Christian Study Centre in Rawalpindi, Pakistan), Rev. Dr Binsar Pakpahan (Associate Professor at Jakarta Theological Seminary, Indonesia), Rev. Dr Raj Bharat Patta (Methodist Church in the United Kingdom), Dr Reynaldo Racaza Ty (human rights trainer and educator), Rev. Dr Mothy Varkey (Professor at Mar Thoma Theological Seminary, India), Rev. Dr Dietrich Werner (Senior Theological Adviser, ecumenical education and research of Bread for the World), and Rev. Dr Ester P. Widiastih (Professor at Jakarta Theological Seminary, Indonesia).

The lectures in the first week of the AEI-2020 were focused on ecumenism and the ecumenical movement.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara led the first two days' sessions on 'Introduction to Ecumenism and Ecumenical Movements: Biblical-Theological Perspectives' and 'Ecumenism: Ecclesial Unity or Restoration of the Oikoumene'. The CCA General Secretary delivered a detailed presentation on the history of the ecumenical movement and the shift in the perception of ecumenism over time. He explained the significance of the term 'oikoumene' and its wider applications.

"Diversity is not a setback, it is richness," explained Dr Chunakara. Dr Chunakara also went on to clarify what the goal of ecumenism was, that is, whether it was related to organic unity, the 'merger' of different church traditions, or the unity of all God's creation. He explained

the biblical basis for ecclesial unity and correlated it with the history of the modern ecumenical movement and the unity of the oikoumene. He also described the 'theology of the oikoumene'.

Dr Wesley Ariarajah led three sessions: 'Towards Wider Ecumenism' (on 5 November), 'Religious Pluralism and Interfaith Dialogue: Challenges to Christian Witness' and 'Witnessing Christ in a Multi-religious Asia: Challenges to Asian Ecclesia' (on 6 November). Dr Ariarajah emphasised the Christian self-understanding in the midst of other religions and called for the redefining of mission, evangelism, and witness. He stressed the importance of plurality, saying that Christians were to consider people of other faiths not as strangers, but as co-pilgrims. He proposed four paradigm shifts in Christian missions: moving from exclusion to inclusion, from conversion to mission as a healing process, from majority to minority mentality, and from a doctrinal to a spiritual understanding of mission. "Our mission should be the expression of our commitment to Christ, to be faithful to the witness of what God has done. This must not include the homogenisation of identities, but lead to harmony despite differences," explained Dr Ariarajah.

Dr Dietrich Werner took two sessions on 'Ecumenism, Ecology, and Economics', and 'Diakonia and Development in Restoring the Creation', which focused on eco-theology and ecumenical action. Dr Werner explained the ramifications of climate change and its impacts on Asia. He stated that Asian people would suffer the greatest impacts of climate-related disasters as well as the brunt of total global economic losses if steps were not immediately taken to mitigate carbon

emissions. He also initiated conversations on the relationship between earth-system sciences and theology, offering a unique interpretation of the understanding of the oikos. Dr Werner also affirmed the importance of bringing together modern scientific research and the insights from scripture and Church tradition to develop new planetary ethics—one that was cognizant of the boundaries of our environment rather than advocating for “unlimited” growth—and move towards a circular economy model, which was restorative and regenerative by design.

The students were brought to discussions and reflection on the thematic thrust in the second week of the AEI.

Rev. Dr Mothy Varkey led two sessions focusing on the biblical-theological perspectives of the AEI-2020's theme: 'Renewal and Restoration of God's Creation', and 'Stewardship'. Rev. Dr Varkey captured the imagination of the AEI students by providing radical and fresh perspectives on the concept of stewardship and care of creation. Explaining the spiritual impetus to do so, Rev. Dr Varkey spoke of the interconnectedness of life, shared the image of God as a potter/farmer, and God as a gardener. In his lectures, he also proposed three models of eco-stewardship, reiterating the stories of Naboth, Moses, and Abraham. “The COVID-19 epidemic is an epiphany,” concluded Rev. Dr Mothy Varkey. “We must recognise that we are not autonomous and we do not have dominion over creation; rather, we have been responsible for all ecological crises in the modern world,” he said, exhorting the participants to look at sin as ‘enmity with creation’ (ecocide, and not fratricide), and faith as the ‘practice

of friendliness and neighbourliness with nature’.

A deeper insight on eco-theology and eco-justice was given by Prof. Dr Yoon-Jae Chang. He facilitated two sessions on ‘Ecclesiological and Ethical Challenges to Restoration of God's Creation’, and ‘Eco-theology and Environmental Justice’. He started his lecture with a refreshing interpretation of the story of Noah's Ark and the Great Flood in Genesis 9. Dr Chang explained the transition in the meaning of the cultural commandment in Genesis 1:28 and in Genesis 9:1 where humans were no longer instructed to “subdue” the Earth or “have dominion over it”. Dr Chang also noted that God “repeats, restates, and re-emphasises” the new covenant with not just humankind, but all living creatures. The imperative then was to re-interpret the meaning of stewardship in the context of caring for creation. Dr Chang also shared theoretical understandings of creation as the “body of God” and shattered the prevailing hierarchical worldviews. He affirmed the need for community-based understanding which perceived humans as those who belonged to the earth.

More engaging discussions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic took place during Dr Binsar J. Pakpahan's session on ‘Redefining Ecclesiology in Global Pandemic Context’. He challenged the very foundations of the students' understanding of the “Church”. Given that worship had moved online, many communities were facing a pivotal moment, where they were being forced to reconsider what defined them and their faith traditions. Dr Pakpahan spoke of how the current disruptions to normative community worship were shaping the church. With the separation

of ecclesia and koinonia, there was an increasing divergence in the perception of the importance of the physical church. The presentation led the students to question and establish for themselves the basis of the formation of the physical church itself. “The church must cater to the needs of the people, rather than focus on what the church itself wants,” concluded Dr Pakpahan, in the context of the migration of worship from the physical space to the virtual space.

A session on ‘Worship and Liturgy in a Digitalised World’ was led by Rev. Dr Ester Pudjo Widiasih. Dr Widiasih raised a thought-provoking question: “Is God present in cyberspace?” She then went on to say that God was spirit, intangible, and needed to be experienced. “New forms of worship challenge our intentionality and our engagement,” she said, emphasising the necessity of authentic involvement rather than a tokenistic online presence. She also stated that the absence of one’s own physical body in online forms of worship served as a reminder of those who were absent from the church community, who were not included, and who needed reaching out to during and after the pandemic.

The AEI-2020 students were brought to a wider experience of the struggle towards peace and justice in the Asian context in the third week of the training course.

Basil Fernando took two sessions on ‘Sustainable Development Goals and Upholding Human Dignity and Human Rights’ and ‘Democratic Governance and Human Rights Challenges in Asia’.

Fernando drew the attention of the students to the current reality in the implementation of human rights in the region and explained the origins and motivation behind constituting human rights in the first place. He identified different systemic and historical inequalities that have existed in Asia and highlighted the measures that have been put in place in the last few decades to ameliorate such discriminatory situations. He also enabled the students to draw up linkages between participation, dialogue, and opinion-making roles. Fernando encouraged the students to rationalise why justice systems needed to be strengthened, in light of the shrinking of space for civil society organisations that defended the human rights of vulnerable people. He also demonstrated the significant threats to democratic governance by increasingly authoritarian regimes.

Rev. Dr Raj Bharat Patta delivered a presentation on ‘Prophetic Witness of the Church in Restoring Vulnerable Communities’. Dr Patta explained the use of language as a tool of the powerful and pointed out certain problematic terms in daily discourse. “Knowledge is power—but the knowledge of the powerful is the knowledge that is powerful,” he said, while also deconstructing the term “vulnerable”, how its meaning was defined only in terms of power dynamics, and how it was tied in with domination, discrimination, and division. He also said that love was to be at the core of any and all restorative action for vulnerable communities. This could be done by re-reading the scriptures through the perspective of those who are oppressed in society. Reflecting on the events during Pentecost, he said that the early church was born through the “rediscovery of inclusion, of the margins, and of

resistance”, and said that these three facets were to be key in the prophetic witness of the church.

Dr Reynaldo Racaza Ty delivered two lectures on ‘Global Issues that will shape the post-COVID-19 World: Geopolitical Trends and Policy Recommendations’ and ‘Militarism and Authoritarianism: Emerging Trends in Asia’. Dr Ty explained the prevailing political systems and the effects they had on their countries. He looked at the pre-pandemic “normal” with the rise of authoritarian, right-wing, nationalist regimes, the neoliberal corporate globalisation, the ongoing intrusion of excessive surveillance as a permanent feature of the pandemic, the rejection of “disaster-capitalism”, and projected what a fair, green, and peaceful future would look like. Dr Ty focused on the rise of authoritarianism and militarism as well. He exposed the “perpetual war economy” that was sustained by the continual efforts of the military-industrial complex. He also explained how certain groups profit from war, and how globally, more funds were spent on military and defence rather than on health, education, development, and environmental protection.

Dr Sawako Fujiwara took a session on ‘Restoring the Creation and Advancing Justice’. She highlighted the efforts of Pope Francis who called for “environmental conversion” or eco-conversion to inspire action for climate justice. Although the encyclical, *Laudato Si*, was well-received by the mainstream, Dr Fujiwara asked whether the opinions of Catholic women were considered in the responses, thus explaining eco-feminist theology in context. “The impact of climate injustice on people is not equal and not fair—it

is environmental sexism. Eco-feminism, in the feminist theological movement, regards all of Creation, including human beings, as part of ‘one sacred body’. Hence, eco-feminism proposes to ‘go beyond the notion of conflict between genders that is promoted by patriarchal and hierarchical systems,’” said Dr Fujiwara. Dr Fujiwara concluded by saying that the *Laudato Si* encyclical overlooked the disproportionate gendered impact of climate change, was grounded in gender dualism and binary constructs, romanticised representations of women as divorced from reality, supported reproductive family-ism and denied the reproductive health and rights of women, and presented heterosexual norms that dismissed people with other sexual orientations and gender diversities. She affirmed that climate justice and gender justice were inseparable.

Dr Binsar J. Pakpahan took another session at the virtual AEI-2020 class. He presented a lecture on ‘Responsible Society and Christian Solidarity in God’s Creation (an ethical perspective)’. Grounding his lecture on the three-fold relationship between “relationship, responsibility, and action”, he presented three models of the association of humans and nature-creation, namely, “conqueror”, “steward”, and “harmonious relationship”. He also highlighted the fact that all human beings were responsible for bringing justice and peace, and that the realisation of humans being only a part of the whole of creation should result in putting the concept of stewardship into practice.

A session focusing on women was led by Dr Eh Tar Gay. Addressing the topic ‘Women Building Peace: Towards a



Peaceful Home’, she shared the situation in Myanmar, where ethnic conflict and civil war had plunged the country into crisis. She invited the students to actively criticise the oppressive power structures which caused the disintegration of “wholeness” and led to separation. Dr Eh Tar emphasised the need for conceptual change which could be done by deconstruction and reconstruction via the eco-feminist perspective.

The importance of ‘Empowering Women and Lay Leadership’ was presented by Ms Jennifer Jag Jivan, the Director of the Christian Study Centre in Pakistan. She raised a fundamental question about the struggle for empowerment, asking, “Are we helping the community to walk with us?” She also demonstrated the “Attitude-Behaviour-Context (the ABC) Triangle”, in the context of doing a progressive analysis of leadership.

The students of the AEI-2020 also engaged in five workshop sessions, which allowed them to have a more extensive discussion among themselves on specific topics.

Rev. Seo-Young Kim, a doctoral student at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom, facilitated a workshop on ‘Climate Change, Environmental Pollution, and Human Lives’. The AEI-2020 students discussed the manifestations of climate change and related issues in their local contexts. Many paradoxes across the region were highlighted, such as water scarcity and extreme flooding, drought, famine, decreasing agricultural yields, hotter temperatures, unsustainable production, rise in vector-borne diseases, and so on. They also discussed what it meant to be a “good steward,” both at the individual level and the community level;



Students of CCA's Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)-2020

along with action plans to enable their churches and communities to address climate change.

Rev. Grace Moon, a programme coordinator at the CCA, initiated the second workshop on 'Churches' Ministry and Liturgy in the Context of Pandemic'. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic had jarring impacts on liturgy and worship, the students discussed the implications of the transition from attending worship in-person to attending online or virtual services, and whether it could be considered an "authentic" form of worship. They also discussed the digital inequality wrought by the pandemic. Finally, they discussed the new forms of *koinonia* and *diakonia* in church ministry and brainstormed the different ways in which multilateral cooperation could be established to address pressing concerns and challenges.

Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia, a CCA programme coordinator, conducted a workshop on 'Health, Healing, and Wholeness of Life to Restore a Wounded World'. The students discussed the biblical perspectives on health and well-being, understood the differences between 'curing' and 'healing', and talked about the achievements and obstacles of the health ministries in their respective communities.

Dr Reynaldo Racaza Ty facilitated a workshop on ' Militarism and Authoritarianism in Local Contexts', which enabled the students to critically analyse their countries' systems of governance, asking who was oppressed by such systems, who benefitted, and discussed different actions that could be taken on an individual, community, and national level.

A workshop on 'Our Stewardship in Renewing and Restoring God's Creation' facilitated by Rosiana Purnomo, CCA's programme consultant, helped participants to revisit their learning journey throughout the month-long training course, to analyse their local contexts and suggest some practical proposals for action.

All AEI-2020 students also joined the CCA's Consultation on Good Governance for Churches and Related Organisations in Asia, with the aim of covering the sub-focus of leadership. During the consultation, the students were equipped with the knowledge and skills on 'Theological Reflection on Good Governance', 'Principle and Ethics of Good Governance', 'Christian values in Management: Accountability and Stewardship', 'Leadership Development: Human Resource Management', 'Qualitative Improvement in Church and Related agencies', and 'Goal Setting: Developing Strategies and Monitoring'.

The AEI-2020 concluded with a valedictory session on 30 November 2020. The students prepared and led the closing worship, which included elements from indigenous Asian religious traditions. In his closing remarks, Dr Chunakara congratulated the students on successfully completing the month-long programme, despite the constraints caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the course had trained them on all aspects of stewardship and it was time for them to step up and take charge, putting into action all the insights and perspectives they had gained. He admired the concrete proposals for action suggested by many students for application in their local context. He

inspired and encouraged the AEI-2020 students to stay connected, network, collaborate, and build bridges beyond boundaries as the future was in their hands.

## Asia Sunday–2020

24 May 2020

Asia Sunday is observed every year on the Sunday before Pentecost, which coincides with the founding of the CCA. The liturgy usually focuses on a specific theme every year. In 2020, the CCA urged its member churches and councils to observe Asia Sunday on 24 May 2020 on the theme of ‘God, Heal Us as We are Vulnerable’ in the context

of the novel COVID-19 pandemic that infected almost all continents in the world. With the outbreak and unprecedented proliferation of COVID-19, the whole global community faced critical conditions that mirrored the fragility of human life and the ultimate vulnerability of the entire oikos. In the span of a few months since the end of December 2019, the total number of confirmed cases had surpassed 51.5 million people in 217 countries worldwide, with over 1.27 million deaths reported, as of the end of October 2020.

On the afternoon of Sunday, 24 May, CCA organised a unique and first-of-its-kind



### Asian ecclesiastical and ecumenical leaders at CCA's Asia Sunday-2020

Asia Sunday online worship service, which was led by twenty-two ecclesiastical and ecumenical leaders from twenty Asian countries, with over 21,000 participants and viewers on the CCA's social media pages in addition to registered participants on Zoom. As churches were

physically constrained and unable to hold the Asia Sunday prayers, many from Asia and beyond joined the online service.

“In faith we come before you, asking for mercy and forgiveness for our sins against you and your creation. In this time of





Christian Conference of Asia



# Asia Sunday

## God, Heal Us as We are Vulnerable



Asia Sunday Observance - Online Service

**Sunday, 24 May 2020**  
from 16:00 to 17:15 (Bangkok Time)

Advance registration for ZOOM live-streaming

anxiety and distress, we lift up to you the COVID-19 situation throughout the world. At this time of our fragility, fear, and death, we cry out to you. Heal our sick, console those who are bereaved, protect those who care for us. We lift up our prayer to you, Lord, and trust in your infinite mercy. God, heal us as we are vulnerable,” prayed all the participants of the online service in unison, despite being located at different time zones in different parts of the world.

The homily during the online service was delivered by Bishop Dhiloraj Canagasabey, Bishop of the Church of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and a member of the CCA Executive Committee. In his sermon, Bishop Canagasabey noted, “It is significant that we are observing Asia Sunday on Ascension Sunday. Jesus passed through the gates of death and was already sharing the Glory of the Father, and for some days he was manifesting himself to his disciples and gave them his last instructions. Jesus fulfilled his mission among humankind, and the time of the Spirit came. Jesus, after ascending unto heaven, would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to the disciples so that they might carry on proclaiming the ‘Good News’ to the world. Jesus is no longer visible among us and this is to our advantage, for we must assume our responsibilities to establish the Reign of God.”

Speaking of the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Christians, Bishop Canagasabey explained, “COVID-19 has forced us to re-examine everything about our lives: our faith, our spirituality, our attitudes, our mindsets, our relationship with our Creator God, our relationship with one another, and our relationship

with God’s creation. It has forced us to see the need to realign ourselves with God, and God’s will and purpose for this world.”

“This worldwide pandemic exposed the nakedness and poverty of humankind and our spiritual sickness. It showed us that as we sought to govern ourselves more and more, and began to depend less and less on God while simultaneously exploiting the very world God entrusted to us. We have been harshly confronted with certain realities that have brought us back to the basics, back to our knees in repentance and faith. We have been reminded of the urgency and importance of our total dependence on God through this crisis,” Bishop Canagasabey reminded the participants.

The facilitators representing the member churches and councils of the CCA at the Asia Sunday–2020 online worship service were His Beatitude Dr Joseph Mar Thoma (Metropolitan of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India and former President of CCA), Archbishop Sebouh Sarkissian (Prelate of the Armenian Orthodox Church in Iran and member of the CCA Executive Committee), Rev. Dr Sang Jung Park (The Holistic Church in Korea and former General Secretary of the CCA), Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang (Communion of Churches in Indonesia and former General Secretary of the CCA), Dr Prawate Khidarn (Church of Christ in Thailand and former General Secretary of the CCA), Bishop Dhiloraj Canagasabey (Anglican Church in Sri Lanka and CCA Executive Committee member), Bishop Philip Huggins (Anglican Church of Australia), Bishop Humphrey Peters (Moderator of the Church of Pakistan), Bishop-designate Dr Renta Nishihara (Anglican Church in Japan),

Rev. Asir Ebenezer (General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in India), Rev. David Das (National Council of Churches in Bangladesh), Rev. Kyrie Kim (Anglican Church in Korea and Chairperson of CCA Programme Committee), Rev. Ramil Aguila (Iglesia Filipina Independiente, Philippines), Pastor Cindy Hwang (Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and CCA Executive Committee member), Dr Tong Wing Sze (Hong Kong

Christian Council and CCA Executive Committee member), Tara Tautari (General Secretary-elect of the Methodist Church in New Zealand), Kaythi Min Din (Myanmar Christian Council), Levi Vasconcelos Pinto (Protestant Church in Timor Leste), Ithrana Lawrence (Council of Churches in Malaysia and member of CCA Executive Committee), and Dymeas Sovy (Kampuchea Christian Council in Cambodia).



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## **BUILDING PEACE AND MOVING BEYOND CONFLICTS**

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### **Objectives**

- To analyse the context of conflicts and develop methodologies for churches' participation in peacebuilding; and,
- To assist churches in their initiatives in responding to conflict situations and to raise awareness through interreligious platforms, enabling them to contribute to the building of sustainable and peaceful societies.

## Webinar Series

### 'Plight of Migrant Workers Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'

30 April 2020

During the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 when most countries were under lockdown, the CCA

hosted a series of webinars in April and May 2020. CCA's first webinar, held on 30 April 2020, was aptly titled 'Plight of Migrant Workers amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'. About eighty registered participants joined the webinar via Zoom, and over 3,100 viewers engaged with the live-



Mathews George



S. Irudaya Rajan



Dolores Pelaez



Helen M. Sarkar



Yusmiati Wangka



Changweon Jang



Soman Baby



Brahm Press



Solomon David

### Panellists of Webinar on 'Plight of Migrant Workers Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'

streaming on the CCA's Facebook page. The webinar aimed to provide a forum in which representatives of the CCA's member churches and councils could provide an overview of the current situation of internal and foreign migrant workers during the COVID-19 pandemic in their communities in Asia and the Arabian Gulf states, obtain first-hand information about the situation of the migrant workers in different Asian countries (sending, receiving, and transit countries), hear from churches, faith-based groups, and civil society organisations which are working to address the challenges related to the

spread of COVID-19 and the increasing level of insecurity and risks for migrant workers, be sensitised to the conditions, problems, and needs of Asian migrant workers, and express solidarity with them during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The panellists invited for the webinar were Dr S. Irudaya Rajan (a scholar who specialises in migration trends and a professor at the Centre for Development Studies from India), Dolores Balladares-Pelaez (Chairperson of UNIFIL-MIGRANTE in the Philippines), Helen Monisha Sarkar (National General Secretary of YWCA



Bangladesh), Soman Baby (a senior journalist in the Arabian Gulf, based in Bahrain), Yusmiati Vistamika Wangka (from the Centre for Migrant Domestic Workers in Hong Kong), Rev. Changweon Jang (Osan Migrant Workers Centre, South Korea), Solomon David (an Aviation and Airline industry consultant from the United Arab Emirates), and Brahm Press (Executive Director of the Migrant Assistance Programme Foundation in Thailand).

Helen Monisha Sarkar and Dr Rajan detailed the situation in South Asia. Dr Rajan expressed that workers who originally came from another part of India were stranded or restricted from returning to their villages, or had travelled on foot for hundreds of kilometres without timely assistance when the federal government imposed the lockdown after giving only four hours' notice. He called on the government to engage its resources to deliver the necessities to accommodation and food of workers who were already

adversely affected by the lockdown. Ms Sarkar noted that there were over fifty million Bangladeshis who migrated from villages to cities for work and were engaged in all kinds of trades and crafts for daily wages. As most were in a hand-to-mouth subsistence situation, losing even a single day's income was painful.

Yusmiati Vistamika Wangka and Rev. Changweon Jang presented the situation in East Asia. Yusmiati Vistamika Wangka pointed out, "98 per cent of domestic household workers are women. Both social unrest and social distancing have led to a worsening situation of domestic workers, as they have to stay in the residence of their employers all the time, as a result of which they lack privacy and work more hours." Rev. Changweon Jang confirmed, "The government's twin policies of 'promptness' and 'transparency' was effective in disease control. On a positive note, foreign



**Partial view of participants of Webinar on 'Plight of Migrant Workers amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'**

migrant workers in South Korea were able to access free testing. On a negative note, however, foreign migrant workers were subjected to discrimination, as locals saw them as the conveyors of the disease. Given the desperate situation of the migrant workers, churches and non-governmental organisations have joined hands in providing succour to foreign migrant workers in need.”

Dolores Balladares-Pelaez and Brahm Press presented the Southeast Asia situation. Dolores Balladares-Pelaez underscored the dire conditions of Filipino migrant workers and described their situation as ‘volatile, insecure, and vulnerable’. Many Filipinos working abroad faced the problem of becoming undocumented, given that they did not have the requisite mechanisms to renew their documents given the imposition of lockdowns. Brahm Press indicated that the condition of Burmese migrant workers in Thailand was deteriorating during the pandemic. He noted that while the national government offered financial support to employers, the funds, however, did not necessarily trickle down to the migrant workers.

Soman Baby and Solomon David shared their insights about the situation in the Arabian Gulf states. Soman Baby observed that the government of Bahrain, in conjunction with NGOs, provided the much-needed support system to alleviate the plight of the foreign migrant workers under the pandemic. The government waived the payment of utility bills which relieved the suffering of not just the country’s citizens but also benefitted the vulnerable migrant workers. Solomon David appreciated the efforts of the government to ameliorate the pain and

suffering of the people living and working in the Emirates. At the same time, he expressed his dismay and concern over the situation of migrant workers based on the mere fact that those who lived in the cramped labour camps were constrained from practising social distancing, as about six to eight persons lived in each room.

Bishop Philip Huggins (Australia), a registered participant of the webinar, observed that the pandemic led to the further vulnerability of migrant workers. He also noted that churches everywhere, be they in the Gulf states, in the cities, or the villages were overwhelmed by the high demand for food, shelter, pastoral care, counselling, and medical care. This pandemic, unprecedented in living memory, exposed the parochialism with which assistance is provided to the needy.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara ended the webinar with a positive note and a challenge: “Almost all churches in CCA constituencies including the Asian Diaspora churches in the Arabian Gulf states are deeply involved in addressing the concerns of the worst effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in their respective communities and societies. However, the vulnerable situations faced by the migrant workers or guest workers in our societies need to be considered as a priority concern by more churches in Asia in the coming days, even in the post-COVID-19 crisis period,” he concluded.

### **‘Will COVID-19 Worsen Food Insecurity in Asia?’**

**28 May 2020**

The CCA organised a webinar on food insecurity on 28 May 2020 titled ‘Will COVID-19 Worsen Food Insecurity in Asia?’. The webinar was attended by sixty

registered participants on Zoom and was viewed over 1,500 times on the CCA's social media channels.

The webinar aimed to discuss to what extent the pandemic was already affecting the entire food production and distribution system, how the lockdowns and restrictions on movement within and across countries had hindered food-related logistic services, disrupted entire

food supply chains and the availability of food, and had impacted agricultural labour and production, especially in the context of those people who lived in the world's poorest countries.

Experts on food security from different parts of Asia were invited to share their insights and observations. They hailed from the United Nations, FBOs/CSOs, and academia. The expert panel comprised

**Christian Conference of Asia** **VIRTUAL CONFERENCE** **f LIVE**

## Will COVID-19 Worsen Food Insecurity in Asia?

 <b>Mathews George</b> (CCA)	 <b>Kun Li</b> (UN WFP)	 <b>Tomoko Arakawa</b> (Japan)	 <b>Joyanta Adhikari</b> (Bangladesh)
 <b>Usha Soolapani</b> (India)	 <b>Jae Hak Ahn</b> (ACLGAF Korea)	 <b>Ed Sablo</b> (ECHO Asia)	 <b>Ardniel Baladjay</b> (Philippines)

**Thursday 28 May 2020, 12.00- 14.00 hrs. (Bangkok Time)** **REGISTER NOW**

### Panellists of Webinar on 'Will COVID-19 Worsen Food Insecurity in Asia?'

Kun Li (World Food Programme of the UN), Joyanta Adhikari (CCDB, Bangladesh), Usha Soolapani (Director of Thanal, India), Rev. Ahn Jae Hak (Associate Secretary of the Asian Christian Life-Giving Agriculture Forum, South Korea), Dr Ed Sablo (Director of ECHO Asia), Dr Ardniel Baladjay (University of Southern Mindanao, Philippines), and Manosi Abe Chatterjee (on behalf of Tomoko Arakawa,

Asian Rural Institute, Japan).

Moderating the webinar, CCA General Secretary, Dr Mathews George Chunakara indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic aggravated the pre-existing food crisis which led to food insecurity. The pandemic led to closures of all places of employment as well as the imposition of restrictions on mobility, leading to loss of employment that impacted the



production, distribution, and sale of food, stoppage of remittances, and the inability to purchase food. As joblessness surged, more and more people became food-insecure.

Kun Li confirmed that the economic impact of COVID-19 would inflict more pain than the virus itself, as millions had lost their jobs and were facing extreme poverty. She also highlighted the frequent occurrence of severe climate change events that could further stress food security. Li recommended that the food system be restructured to solve the problem.

Manosi Abe Chatterjee shared the situation in Japan. Since the outbreak, the Japanese government had advised against panic buying and hoarding to ensure a smooth flow of food. Chatterjee noted that the crisis period was the best time to reflect on how to achieve a sustainable future. The Japanese public was made aware of the heightened need for the youth to engage in farming as a profession, small-scale family farming, domestic agricultural production, and food self-sufficiency.

Speaking on the situation in South Korea, Rev. Ahn Jae Hak stressed the importance of collaborative works between farmers, rural communities, agricultural experts, and church leaders for the restoration of rural communities to ensure the continual supply of agricultural produce locally and nationally. He also noted the need for churches to raise awareness as well as construct agrarian communities based on 'life-giving agriculture' and restore relationships with nature. Rural and urban churches could engage in the

sale and purchase of agricultural produce, which also boosted solidarity, mutual benefit, self-reliance, empowerment, and national food sovereignty.

Dr Ardniel Baladjay pointed out that COVID-19 was a menace to food security. Speaking from the Filipino context, Dr Baladjay identified four lessons during the COVID-19 crisis: (1) social protection for vulnerable groups of people; (2) addressing food needs of vulnerable populations; (3) intergovernmental collaboration to address the food needs of the people; and, (4) realigning government's priorities in response to food security gearing towards rehabilitation and resiliency.

Dr Ed Sabio diagnosed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on food security as having occurred in three stages: immediate, medium-term, and long-term. To avert a major food crisis, Dr Sabio suggested recommendations that could be taken by the government on supply and demand, policy level, and scaling up the social protection programmes. He also called for the mainstreaming of urban agriculture.

Usha Soolapani highlighted the varied government responses towards the crisis in India. Some state governments promised to provide financial support to farmers and the rural poor, some others promised support to those who would return to work, but many others were caught off-guard. On an optimistic note, the Kerala government's response was exemplary and bore lessons on how public healthcare systems and decentralised governance could mobilise human and material resources to monitor the situation, run community kitchens,

and aid health workers and families.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara closed the session by stating that food security had been a major issue even before the pandemic but was made more acute during the outbreak of the public health crisis, especially as the poor lost their jobs (and, by extension, their purchasing

power) and as farmers lost access to the markets, dumping tonnes of otherwise fresh and nutritious agricultural produce. Although food was widely available at the macro-level in the hands of multinational corporations, the poor were the most vulnerable as they did not have access to adequate nutritious food, especially in times of crisis.

**Christian Conference of Asia**

**Virtual Conference**

**Thursday 21 May 2020**  
12.00 -14.00 hrs. (Bangkok Time)

**THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN IN ASIA:  
VITAL NEEDS AND POST-CRISIS RECOVERY**

**PANELLISTS**

 <b>Kyrie Kim</b> South Korea	 <b>Sotheavy Srey</b> Cambodia	 <b>Nirmala Gurung</b> YWCA	 <b>D. Illangasinghe</b> Sri Lanka	 <b>Mathews George</b> CCA	 <b>Melissa Alvarado</b> U.N Women	 <b>Diana Tana</b> New Zealand	 <b>Basil Fernando</b> Hong Kong	 <b>Maya Dania</b> Indonesia
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**REGISTER NOW**

### Panellists of Webinar on 'Impact of COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia: Vital Needs and Post-Crisis Recovery'

## Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence – Webinars

### 'Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia: Vital Needs and Post-Crisis Recovery' 21 May 2020

The CCA facilitated a virtual conference on 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia: Vital Needs and Post-Crisis Recovery' on 21 May 2020, which was attended by about eighty participants

registered on Zoom and was viewed by over 5,500 people across the world on the CCA's social media platforms.

The webinar aimed to serve as a forum wherein the magnitude of the issues and challenges faced uniquely by women amidst the COVID-19 crisis was understood, the endeavours of Asian churches and women's organisations

in helping women to deal with and respond to the pandemic were shared, and deliberations on catering to the vital needs of Asian women as well as the design of the post-crisis recovery were initiated.

Melissa Alvarado (UN Women Asia Pacific), Basil Fernando (Asian Human Rights Commission, Hong Kong), Deekshya Illangasinghe (South Asians for Human Rights in Sri Lanka), Maya Dania (Lecturer at Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand/Indonesia), Rev. Kyrie Kim (Anglican Church of Korea and Chairperson of CCA Programme Committee), Sotheavy Srey (Alliance for Conflict Transformation, Cambodia, and CCA Programme Committee member), Nirmala Gurung (YWCA and CCA Executive Committee member, Nepal) were the esteemed panellists. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the CCA General Secretary, moderated the session.

The webinar, which was structured into five segments, focused on the impact of COVID-19 on women in Asia, the emotional and physical well-being of women, the response of churches in ensuring women's safety and needs in the time of crisis, the post-crisis recovery challenge, and, the way forward to ensure women's rights and well-being post the COVID-19 crisis.

In his introductory remarks, Dr Mathews George Chunakara said, "The spread of COVID-19 is not only a global health pandemic but is also drastically affecting people's livelihoods, especially those of women. Women in Asia are likely to suffer greater economic and social impacts during any crisis, and urgent and pressing needs of women must be addressed not only during the crisis but should be made part of the post-pandemic crisis

recovery. Gender-sensitive policies that recognise and respond to women's needs will benefit not just women but society at large."

Melissa Alvarado emphasised the violence against women and girls. She said that during times of emergencies and crisis, gender inequalities worsened and intimate partner violence (domestic violence) tended to increase. Thus, the ability to address violence against women, from the start of any emergency, was essential and lifesaving. This necessity was to be stitched into the national and local level responses and prevention plans, and could not be relegated to being dealt with only once the crisis had tided over. Alvarado added that gender equality was a priority and gender sensitisation needed to be deeply integrated into all decisions, security, and design of recovery. Women needed to be part of discussions at the table and to participate in decision-making, given that women think differently and provide unique solutions and innovations. For recovery in the post-COVID-19 period, women's voices must lead the decisions about women's lives.

Maya Dania spoke on how the COVID-19 pandemic had spawned a 'new lexicon' in the description of gender relations. She analysed the intersection of gender concerns with language, pop culture, and social media during the crisis, highlighting certain COVID-19-related sexist cultural phenomena, where cartoons and memes were used in Malaysia and Indonesia as advisories on soft-spoken and mild demeanours that women could model to 'prevent' domestic violence against themselves and to appease their frustrated partners.

Dania brought to light the trend of 'COVID divorce' in China, induced by lockdown boredom. She also mentioned WHO's observation, that the lack of access to contraceptive measures could lead to a spike in unplanned pregnancies, thus pushing a large number of women towards greater health risks (pregnant women are among the most susceptible to contracting COVID-19).

Nirmala Gurung focused on the repercussions of the COVID-19 crisis on women working in the informal sectors of the economy. Women formed the majority of the workforce in the informal economy, often taking up low-paying, high-risk jobs. Given their social disadvantages, poor working conditions, and negligible social security, they had fewer resources at their disposal. As such women workers depended on their daily earnings to survive, closures of industry (and by extension, the economy) would result in their falling into extreme and persistent poverty, she warned.

Srey Sotheavy spoke of the widespread human rights abuses occurring under the COVID-19 crisis. She said that around 80,000 Cambodian migrants had returned home from Thailand due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The loss of income pushed many families into micro-finance debts and the women of such families were being exploited by private moneylenders. COVID-19 bore serious implications in both the short- and long-term, making vulnerable communities the target of social and political exclusion, isolation, and stigmatisation.

Deekshya Illangasinghe shed light on the issues of women migrant workers' rights in the host and home country, internal

migration, and the phenomenon of reverse migration. She said that COVID-19 exacerbated the challenges migrant women workers already encountered, such as gender-specific restrictions in migration policies and insecure forms of labour. She further elaborated that most women migrant workers were essential workers with insecure contracts and generally fell through the social security net.

Rev Kim Kyrie shared the initiatives taken by churches and women's groups during the COVID-19 crisis in the country. "It is the role of the Church and Christians to ensure solidarity against the discrimination of those who are socially disadvantaged, those who are vulnerable, and those in the minority—such as women, children, migrant workers, single mothers, abused women, vulnerable women in refugees camps, disabled women, and sexual minorities," said Rev. Kim, hoping that the 'new normal' meant abandoning vested interests in favour of *sangseng*, or living together in cooperation, solidarity, and information-sharing.

Basil Fernando said that CSOs must realise their full potential and persist with greater advocacy despite the shrinking of civil spaces. He also laid stress on the successes of women leaders of states who had led swift and appropriate government responses against COVID-19. Fernando said that the participation of women must be escalated to leadership and that that leadership model was to be all-inclusive.

The panellists unanimously stressed the pressing need of tailoring inclusive responses, ensuring the participation

of faith leaders in shaping the opinions and attitudes of people and securing cooperation between FBOs and CSOs to champion the rights of women.

### **‘Impact of Growing Religious Extremism on Women in Asia’**

*15 December 2020*

The CCA organised a virtual conference on ‘The Impact of Growing Religious Extremism on Women in Asia’ on 15 December 2020. The webinar was attended by fifty registered participants on Zoom and was viewed over 1,000 times on the CCA’s social media channels.

The webinar aimed to analyse the cases of growing religious intolerance and extremism and its deep socioeconomic impacts on the status of women in different countries in Asia, deliberate on the growing trend of violence against women and girls from religious and ethnic minorities and find

ways to combat such inhuman and cruel acts, and strategise means of advocacy and collective action for the protection of women from marginalised groups.

The panellists of the webinar, representing the United Nations (UN), the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), as well as leading human rights defenders, activists, and academicians from different countries observed, “The menace of religious extremism and intolerance has once again reared its ugly head as extremist and fundamentalist groups create dangerous fault-lines within communities in Asia.”

The panellists further collectively opined, “In recent times, there have been severe affronts to the well-being and dignity of religious minorities in many Asian countries, where violence and discrimination have been justified in the name of ‘protecting’ certain religious tenets. A strong tendency towards



**Panellists of Webinar on ‘Impact of Growing Religious Extremism on Women in Asia’**



patriarchy is dominant in extremism, irrespective of the religion.”

“Paradigm shifts in the meaning and performance of femininities and masculinities are key to transforming religious communities into strongholds of peace and harmony. To combat violence against women wrought by religious extremism, it is necessary to articulate and challenge the patriarchy inherent in such ideologies.”

“Protecting and promoting the well-being of women will entail collaborations and partnerships of governments, civil society organisations, and faith communities,” affirmed the expert group of panellists.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, was the moderator of the webinar. In his opening remarks, he said that although the Constitutions of almost every Asian country emphasised the equality of men and women, there was a great chasm between theory and practice. He also said that such relationships were characterised by systemic subordination, all-pervasive patriarchy, and economic disparities. The distortions or manipulations of certain religious tenets and principles were being used to justify the ill-treatment of women, thus intensifying intolerance and violence.

Lesli Davis, a Governance, Peace, and Security specialist from the UN Women Asia Pacific Regional Office shared insights from the research undertaken by the organisation on violent extremism. She said that regional trends demonstrated how extremist ideologies were often underpinned by gender stereotypes and that core values of extremist groups included “specific and rigid ideas about

what it meant to be a man or woman, and how this masculinity or femininity was to be exercised.” She added that extremist group leaders were “threatened” by the norms of equality in larger society and explained how qualitative research had shown that those who espoused sexist attitudes were most likely to support violence as well. She called for initiatives that supported a gender-equal society and that harnessed the potential of the youth.

Basil Fernando, a prominent human rights defender and Director of the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) spoke of the need to “transform the articulation of the law into the implementation of the law”. He stated that law without law enforcement capabilities was even more damaging to the well-being of women and called for stronger institutions and protections in developing countries. He called the attention of the participants to the manner in which communication networks and the media, the fourth pillar of democracy, was being misused for nefarious purposes.

Prof. Dr Sarasu Esther Thomas, the Registrar of the National Law School University in India, said that it was vital to remember that women were first and foremost oppressed by their own communities. She spoke of the oppression of women under Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) and shared major gender stereotypes that affected women in India. She also highlighted how the current pandemic context had increased the vulnerabilities and repercussions faced by women in her country. Given the falling sex ratios in India, Dr Thomas

said that women were being treated as “scarce” commodities in some communities and were being policed to ensure that they did not “defect” to other communities in the form of marriage. She called upon all to foster a “human rights culture” that was founded on education, awareness, and reform.

Asiya Nasir, a former Member of Parliament in Pakistan and currently the Chairperson of the Pakistan Christian

Forum, spoke of the worrisome status of women in her country. She highlighted the contradictions inherent in the Constitution itself—while on the one hand it claimed that men and women were equal before the law, it, on the other hand, said that only a Muslim man could be the Prime Minister/President or hold other key positions. Thus, she asked, how equality could be guaranteed when discrimination was enshrined in the Constitution. She echoed the concerns



### Partial view of participants of Webinar on ‘The Impact of Growing Religious Extremism on Women in Asia’

of loopholes in the implementation of protection mechanisms. She also called upon religious leaders to affirm the dignity of women and ensure the protection of those who were most vulnerable.

Dwi Rubiyanti Kholifah, the Country Director of the Asian Muslim Action

Network in Indonesia, said that growing intolerance provided “fertile ground for extremism” with grave consequences for communal harmony if not immediately addressed. She said that false notions of superiority and disagreements over differences shrunk the space for exchange learning and prevented beneficial dialogue.

From the interfaith perspective, she shared examples from the Indonesian Shia Muslim community.

Amirah Ali Lidasan, a Moro leader, General Secretary of the Moro Christian People's Alliance, and Spokesperson for Suara Bangsamoro, explained the causes and consequences of the resurgence of extremism in the Mindanao region in Southern Philippines. She said that inconsistencies in the interpretations of Islam led to certain strands of extremism and explained the power of the community in valuing a harmonious history of coexistence with other faith communities in the region.

Nandita Biswas, the Youth Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh, shared the daily reality of discrimination faced by the women in her country. She said that although the government had adopted a variety of initiatives and had passed significant legislation to address violence against women and girls, the socio-cultural milieu in the country was still acutely shaped by the doctrines of the majority religion. She shared the social pressure on women and the imposition of a slew of religious practices that were aimed at curtailing the autonomy of women and aggravated intolerance among communities.

In his closing remarks, Dr Mathews George Chunakara said that the webinar offered key insights into the overlapping complexities faced by Asian women in their daily lives. He emphasised the need for developing a human rights culture to address the issues related to growing religious extremism and violence against women, and affirmed the need for stronger linkages and networks to

ameliorate the plight of women in the region. "The CCA will continue to engage its constituencies in addressing gross violations of the rights of women and combat growing religious hatred and intolerance," the CCA General Secretary concluded.

## **Virtual Prayer Service on World Food Day**

*16 October 2020*

The CCA jointly with the World Council of Churches (WCC) organised an online prayer service on World Food Day, which fell on 16 October 2020. The online prayer service, with the participation of representatives from the CCA and WCC member churches and councils from across Asia, was an opportunity to reflect on the urgency of responding for much-needed advocacy to address the alarming trend of food insecurity.

In his introductory address, the General Secretary of the CCA, Dr Mathews George Chunakara said, "We all have a role to play in the 'Food for Life' campaign. On this World Food Day, let us be aware and vigilant of the profound impacts we make through our choice of food. This moment calls the attention of the churches to promote sustainable and life-giving agricultural practices that will preserve the earth's natural resources, health, and the environment."

"We need to be reminded that we all have a role to play in the Food for Life campaign; we must not let sustainable habits fall by the wayside, despite the uncertainty of the pandemic," added Dr Chunakara.

The interim General Secretary of the WCC, Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca, in his address to



## Online Prayer Service observing World Food Day-2020 and Churches' Week of Action on Food



**16 October 2020 | Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together.**

*(Organised by the Christian Conference of Asia and World Council of Churches)*

### Participants of Virtual Prayer Service on World Food Day

the participants, explained the component of “togetherness” in the theme of World Food Day and spoke of three aspects related to food—food that was sustaining, food as being spiritual, and food that needed to be shared with all. “Food is the umbilical cord to nature that can never be severed. We must be responsible and aware that food is meant to be shared, not simply consumed or hoarded—food should not be used for profit or to exploit the vulnerable,” the WCC interim General Secretary added.

Sofia Monsalve Suarez, the Secretary-General of FIAN International, a human rights organisation that works for the right to food and nutrition, delivered the biblical reflections during the virtual service. Ms Suarez highlighted the interrelatedness of the global food shortage with other violations of human rights, and also how the COVID-19 pandemic had exposed how industrialised global food systems were

contributing to ecological destruction, leading to the emergence of zoonotic diseases, and were perpetuating the vulnerability to infections due to unhealthy food and living environments.

“In 2020, we have gone through experiences of discomfort, uncertainty, disquiet, and anxiety. Although the challenges we face overwhelm us, let us be comforted by the verses from Isaiah 43:18–19—‘Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.’ We need open eyes, open ears, open arms, and open hearts to recognise the streams in the wasteland...God is indeed doing a new thing,” said Ms Suarez.

The facilitators of the online prayer service representing the member churches and councils of the CCA and WCC in Asia included Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat

Lebang (Gereja Toraja Indonesia, member of WCC Central Committee), Rev. Dr Kim Sungjae (General Secretary, National Christian Council in Japan), Rt. Rev. Dhiloraj Canagasabey (Church of Ceylon, Member of CCA Executive and WCC Central Committees), Rt. Rev. Humphrey Peters (Church of Pakistan), RomaAnnNishaProdhan (Church of North India, member of WCC Central Committee), Rev. Kingphet Thammavong

(Lao Evangelical Church, member of CCA Executive Committee), Nirmala Gurung (National Council of Churches in Nepal, member of CCA Executive Committee), Rev. Irma Balaba (National Council of Churches in the Philippines), Kaythi Min Din (Myanmar Council of Churches), and Dymeas Sovy (Kampuchea Christian Council in Cambodia).





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## **PROPHETIC DIAKONIA AND ADVOCACY**

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### **Objectives**

- To empower Asian churches to be competent in responding to social, economic, and political issues through acts of prophetic witness at times of brokenness and human needs; and,
- To coordinate and facilitate ecumenical advocacy at the national, regional and global levels on emerging issues in Asia, while expressing solidarity, as well as upholding human rights for human dignity.

## Emerging Issues in Asia: Advocacy

The CCA responded to emerging issues in Asia and accompanied those constituencies that needed support on specific occasions or were caught up in certain situations. The following are summaries of statements and letters of solidarity that were issued in 2020:

### Natural Disasters in Asia

*17 January 2020*

The CCA expressed sympathy with people affected by three major natural disasters—the bushfires in Australia, the flash floods in Indonesia, and the volcanic eruption in the Philippines. The disasters caused unspeakable suffering to the lives, and damage to the property, of thousands of people. In response, the CCA General Secretary called upon the Asian churches to raise their voice as a clarion call to people so that the world's climate

emergency could be collectively averted. Dr Mathews George Chunakara opined, “These ongoing natural disasters and their effects remind us of our Christian responsibility of working together in times of crises and pooling together our efforts and resources not only to help victims but also to mitigate such unforeseen happenings.”

Subsequently, he added, “Our prayers must be supplemented with concrete actions, as such events become more and more commonplace, consequences of the climate crisis and its worst effects. The climate emergency and the subsequent suffering will only intensify if communities and their governments fail to heed the apocalyptic predictions and do not take sufficient measures to mitigate the potentially irreversible damage to the planet.”



International Women's Day (IWD)-2020

## **International Women's Day**

*6 March 2020*

CCA General Secretary released a statement on the occasion of International Women's Day 2020, titled, 'Ending prejudice against women is a prerequisite for securing their fundamental rights'.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara commented on the importance of the IWD 2020 theme, 'An Equal World is Enabled World: Each for Equal', and the UN Women's theme 'I am Generation Equality: Realising Women's Rights', which emphasised the mutual duty of all humans in building a just and fair world. The CCA General Secretary stated, "Asian women have always been motivated to work for renewal and restoration within the ambit of generational equality," and appreciated the leadership and restoration they provided.

The CCA urged its member churches and councils to continue acknowledging and accepting the equality of the leadership of both men and women at all levels and reiterated the CCA's commitment to the gospel message of equality towards an enabled world.

## **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

*27 March 2020*

The CCA along with the WCC and other REOs released a joint pastoral statement affirming the urgency of standing together to protect life amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The text of the statement was deliberated upon and prepared during a virtual meeting hosted by the WCC.

"We urge people everywhere to accord the highest priority to addressing this situation and assist in every way towards our collective efforts to protect life," stated the General Secretaries.

The global ecumenical leaders highlighted the importance of adopting new models of worship and fellowship during the pandemic as well as manifesting God's unconditional love in safe and practical ways, alleviate suffering, and lift up prayers and help for the most vulnerable people.

The CCA General Secretary urged, "At this crucial time when people need mutual solidarity and support, churches in Asia together with other faith communities must come forward to cooperate with governments and health workers when they struggle hard to change the trajectory of this pandemic."

## **Racism and Stigmatisation During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*24 April 2020*

The CCA condemned all acts of stigmatisation, discrimination, and racism wherever they surfaced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several cases of verbal abuse and physical assault against people of Chinese and Asian ethnicity in Europe, the United States, and Australia were reported. Racism was rising and rearing its ugly head.

Cases of racism were reported against Africans in China. The CCA expressed its concern about the maltreatment and harassment of Africans at the time of the pandemic. "Everyone should be treated with dignity, respect, and care in these difficult times," stated CCA General Secretary.

The CCA called for a complete halt to the inhumane treatment of Africans in China, "Despite many differences, each person reflects the image and likeness of

God, therefore in this profound faith, we should continue our advocacy for justice, equality, and peace in the time of this global pandemic.”

### **Cyclone Amphan**

*23 May 2020*



#### **Devastation caused by Cyclone Amphan**

In a letter of solidarity with those affected by Cyclone Amphan, the CCA General Secretary conveyed sympathy and grief over the loss of the lives of over eighty people and widespread damage to many cities and districts, particularly in the states of West Bengal, Odisha, and in the Sunderbans delta area in Bangladesh.

The CCA General Secretary encouraged member churches and councils as well as the REOs around the world to uphold in their prayers those who were affected and to urgently respond to the humanitarian crisis.

### **Racism and Inequality as Threats to Humanity**

*16 June 2020*

The CCA decried the police brutality and murder of two African Americans, George Floyd in Minneapolis and Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta, as well as the destructive acts of protesters in different parts of the country.

The General Secretary of CCA opined, “Economic oppression and political repression have no place in a democracy. Such virulent bigotry is contrary to any sense of human decency. To solve a problem, we must first recognise that a problem exists.”

Dr Mathews George Chunakara noted, “Those who strike against people because of the colour of their skin are striking against God who created all human beings in the image of God.” He subsequently encouraged the recognition of the divine presence in each and every one that God has created and thus called for according to them their respect, dignity, and integrity regardless of their colour, ethnicity, national origin, or social status.

### **Accompaniment with Korean Churches in Reconciliation and Reunification**

*18 June 2020*

On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> memorial of the Korean War, the CCA General Secretary sent a solidarity message to the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) for their special event.

“The new initiative undertaken by PROK to intensify their renewed commitment towards the pilgrimage of healing and reunification is a valuable additional impetus to the wider ecumenical efforts in securing Korean reunification,” said Dr Mathews George Chunakara.

Dr Chunakara added that it was reassuring that the reaffirmation of the vision of peace and the assertion of the Korean reunification process was rooted in the

aspirations of the people themselves. The PROK initiative, he added, was an occasion to reflect upon the commitment to ‘walking together with everyone in the ecumenical family’ on a pilgrimage to healing, reconciliation, and reunification.

### **Condemning the new ‘Anti-Terrorism Act’ in the Philippines**

20 July 2020

The General Secretary of the CCA released the statement that the Philippines’ new

‘Anti-Terrorism Act’, which took effect on 18 July 2020, would undermine basic freedoms and human rights as it would give overreaching powers to the Philippines government and would pave the way for large-scale violations of human rights. He said that CCA condemned how the contentious Anti-Terrorism Act bill was fast-tracked and approved in both Houses of the Philippine Congress while the entire country’s attention was



### **A demonstration against the Anti-Terrorism Act in the Philippines by Church Groups**

focused on the rampant spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statement of the CCA General Secretary observed that the new law, under the Act’s ambiguous definition of terrorism, granted the government sweeping powers to curtail freedoms and criminalise acts that incite terrorism “by means of speeches, proclamations, writings, emblems, banners, or other representations”. It also endowed the President with the power to create an Anti-Terrorism Council that could tag individuals and groups as terrorists, allow authorities to detain suspected terrorists

without charge for up to twenty-four days, and permit the government to conduct ninety days of surveillance and wiretaps. The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) Report on the ‘Human Rights Situation in the Philippines’ (UNHRC 44th Session, 30 June–20 July 2020) also expressed concern on the danger posed by the Anti-Terrorism Act.

The CCA General Secretary’s statement also stated, “The CCA stands in solidarity with the peace-loving and progressive Filipino people in opposing the Anti-Terror Act. The CCA is alarmed at and condemns this law as a menace to the



fundamental rights of the Filipino people. The CCA calls upon its member churches and councils to pray for the safety of the Filipino people, as they face an uncertain future.”

### **Grieving for Victims of the Explosion in Beirut, Lebanon**

*5 August 2020*

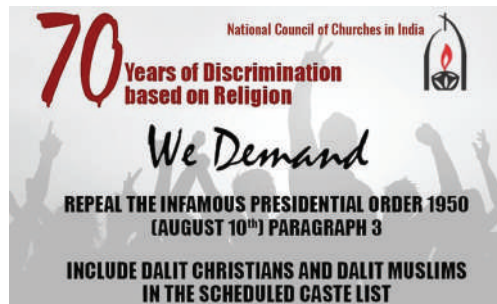
A massive explosion rocked Beirut on Tuesday, 4 August 2020, flattening much of the city’s port and damaging buildings across the Lebanese capital. The explosion killed over 100 people and left around 4,000 injured. In a message of comfort and solidarity issued by the General Secretary of CCA, Dr Mathews George Chunakara said, “We share the grief of the Lebanese people and uphold the victims and families in our prayers. During this critical time in Lebanon, our thoughts are with the affected people and we stand in solidarity with those who are experiencing this painful situation and living amidst fear and deep anxiety.”

“CCA prays for the victims and their families at this time of their bereavement. As the entire country faces extremely tragic and painful moments, we urge all member churches and councils of CCA to pray for the comfort and solace of the numerous victims and their families. The impact of the explosion has revealed to the world the vulnerable situation in which the citizens of Lebanon are forced to now live. Even after the shock of the explosion fades away, the impact will be hard to fathom. Let us pray and hope that the people of Lebanon will overcome the grave crisis they are experiencing,” said the CCA General Secretary.

### **Expressing Solidarity in the Struggle to Accord the ‘Scheduled Caste’ Status for Dalit Christians in India**

*13 August 2020*

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) observed 10 August 2020 as Dalit Rights Day to remind the world about the injustice of 70 years of discrimination against Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims on the grounds of religion. The CCA extended support to their ongoing advocacy efforts and expressed solidarity to all those who were engaged in the struggle to earn the Scheduled Caste status for Dalit Christians.



### **Observance of Dalit Rights Day**

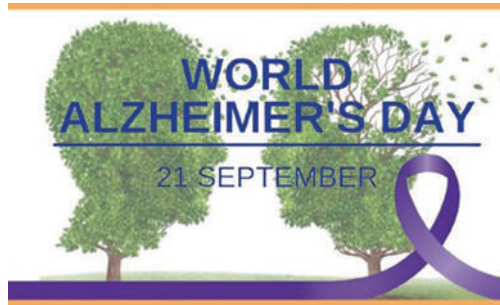
While endorsing the advocacy initiatives of the NCCI and other members of the wider coalition against the discrimination of Dalit Christians, the CCA General Secretary, Dr Mathews George Chunakara stated, “The CCA joins NCC India and all CCA member churches in India to share their hope that the Indian judiciary will act justly as the opportunity has now come to render justice to millions of Dalit Christians and Dalit Muslims who are deprived of their basic human rights and continue to suffer from social stigma and the horrors of untouchability.”

“It is also a positive sign of hope that the Chief Justice of India has issued notice to the central government that reservation for government jobs and admissions in educational institutions should be made ‘religion-neutral’. These measures will be necessary for helping the Dalit Christians

overcome centuries of discrimination and oppression they have been facing,” added Dr Mathews George Chunakara.

### **World Alzheimer’s Day**

*21 September 2020*



#### **World Alzheimer’s Day–2020**

On World Alzheimer’s Day–2020, the CCA General Secretary encouraged Asian churches to facilitate their local congregations to initiate Alzheimer’s caregiver support groups. “One of the first places many families and individuals often turn for help is to their nearby faith community, so it is important that faith-based organisations at local levels be motivated and encouraged to extend help for persons living with Alzheimer’s. The Church, as a community of faith, hope, and love, has to be an inclusive community where they will find peace, support, and safety,” stated the CCA General Secretary.

Most countries in Asia, which accounts for the lion’s share of dementia prevalence in the world, have not formulated public health policies directly targeting the burden of dementia. Thus, informal caregivers such as family members, relatives, friends and neighbours bear the brunt of the burden of taking care

of medical and social support. The CCA called upon its constituencies to recognise the value of caring for people living with dementia along with their families, as well as for caregivers who are nursing and accompanying them; and also reminded the churches in Asia about their role in creating awareness among individuals, congregations and communities. In the context of the increasing number of people living with dementia, our world needs more dementia-friendly communities, said Dr Chunakara.

### **World Mental Health Day**

*10 October 2020*



#### **World Mental Health Day–2020**

On World Mental Health Day, the CCA General Secretary issued a statement in which he called upon the Asian churches to show their commitment as a caring community by being ‘first responders’ to address mental health issues in their own contexts, and become God’s instruments to give ample attention to the mental well-being of all as part of their spiritual accompaniment with them.

Providing examples of the actions churches can take to expand their mental health ministry, the CCA General Secretary stated, “Churches can assist by maintaining resources for support

and ways to cope with the illness, talking about mental illness from the pulpit so that it is no longer considered a taboo, and generating regular awareness about mental health and mental illness.”

### **World Food Day** *16 October 2020*



#### **World Food Day**

On World Food Day, the CCA issued a statement that the theme of World Food Day–2020, ‘Grow, Nourish, Sustain. Together’, highlighted the necessity of joint and collaborative actions to mitigate food insecurity and called for global solidarity in the efforts to strengthen food systems and make them resilient to volatility and shock. The General Secretary of the CCA stated that the right to food required advocacy just as much as any other human rights issue, and called upon churches to promote community-led agriculture and encourage sustainable and mindful consumption.

### **Conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh Region** *16 October 2020*

The General Secretary of the CCA denounced in the strongest terms the ongoing armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh where more than 300 soldiers and civilians were killed with hundreds more wounded.

In a statement released by the CCA General Secretary, Dr Mathews George

Chunakara said, “The CCA, following the gospel call to be peacemakers and reconcilers, condemns all armed conflicts and appeals for peace, especially amidst such troubling times. The Scriptural mandate is to bring an end to all forms of violence throughout the world and to eliminate any actions or practices that threaten the lives of people.” He also stated, “The CCA supports the call for a ceasefire and yearns for the success of the peace negotiations initiated by the ‘Minsk Group’. The CCA also prays for the healing of all people in Armenia and Azerbaijan as they grapple with grave insecurity during these times.”

The Nagorno-Karabakh region became a hotspot for international tensions ever since the Christian majority area, consisting of 95 percent Armenian ethnic people, was placed under Azerbaijani control in the 1920s by the Soviet government.

### **World Children’s Day** *20 November 2020*

On the occasion of World Children’s Day, the CCA released a statement urging churches and related organisations “to strengthen their pastoral services and accompaniment to children and their families by supporting any needs they may have, and weave safety nets for children and their families throughout their communities.”

In the statement, Dr Mathew George Chunakara noted the grave and adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children. Stating that “too many childhoods have been cut short” due to the pandemic, the CCA General Secretary observed that children who were on the brink of vulnerability were at higher risk. He highlighted the ever-increasing digital divide and the education generation gap

and lamented the social alienation that children were facing.

The General Secretary of CCA called for ecclesial leadership to ensure “the safety, security, and stability in the lives of children while mitigating social alienation and protecting them from violence, exploitation, and abuse in all forms.” He appealed for the care and guidance of families and the establishment of stronger collaborations to ensure the well-being of all children.

### **World AIDS Day**

*1 December 2020*



### **World AIDS Day–2020**

On the occasion of World AIDS Day–2020, the General Secretary reaffirmed the CCA’s commitment to ensuring an AIDS-free society. In light of the theme of World AIDS Day–2020, “Global Solidarity and Shared Responsibility”, the General Secretary stated, “Let us take time to reflect upon our actions as churches and faith communities and resolve to strengthen our healthcare systems, the faults of which have been exposed by the COVID-19 crisis.”

In the statement, Dr Mathews George Chunakara noted the myriad ways in which the new COVID-19 pandemic was forcing countries to put their HIV responses, such

as prevention, testing, and treatment, on hold. It is also mentioned, “COVID-19 has made HIV communities more vulnerable as services become limited.”

### **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

*3 December 2020*

A public statement on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) was released to advocate for disability inclusion to be inculcated in the design of the post-COVID-19 world.



### **International Day of Persons with Disabilities–2020**

The General Secretary stated that the theme of IDPD–2020, “Building Back Better: towards a disability-inclusive, accessible, and sustainable post-COVID-19 world”, was “pertinent in the context of advocacy measures carried out to promote the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities and to take action for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development.”

Dr Mathews George Chunakara called upon the churches to listen to the people with disabilities in their communities and respond to the unique needs that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included disruptions of services they rely on, limited access to healthcare and information, the

difficulties in implementation of hygiene measures, the need to touch things to obtain information, and the need for additional support, among others. He also asked churches and communities to “reconsider the shifts in the true meaning of accessibility and inclusion in the new normal.”

### **Campaign for Universal Day for Prevention of Militarism and Authoritarianism** *7 December 2020*

The CCA joined a global cohort of civil society and faith-based organisations to advocate for the declaration of 18 May each year as the Universal Day for the Prevention of Militarism and Authoritarianism.

The global campaign was initiated by the May 18 Memorial Foundation in South Korea in association with the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and aimed to raise awareness to end all forms of militarism and authoritarianism in the world. Several reports indicated that under the guise of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments had been increasingly justifying their abuse of power through countering people’s movements for democratisation and human rights.

While endorsing the campaign to end militarism and authoritarianism, the General Secretary stated that several Asian governments were suppressing virtually every form of dissent or opposition to militarism and authoritarianism. People’s movements, civil society organisations, and human rights defenders in several Asian countries faced arbitrary arrests, imprisonments, extra-judicial killings,

forced disappearances, torture, and various forms of ill-treatment, all of which were used by authoritarian regimes to curtail the legitimate rights of people. In such situations, the genuine voices of the masses and public participation through political self-determination needed to be safeguarded so as to protect the lives and security of citizens.

The General Secretary added that the CCA strongly believed in the spiritual mandate of ensuring genuine and transparent systems and structures that were rooted in the principles of love, equality, and justice.

The message read, “As a fellowship of national ecumenical organisations and member churches, CCA reiterates its commitment to the task of facilitating the emancipation and realisation of a humane polity, thus leading to the establishment of a world free from militarism and authoritarian dictatorship. Our authentic discipleship calls us to transform the world as we know it, thus enabling us to take a step closer towards God’s redemptive plan for humanity.”

### **Human Rights Day** *10 December 2020*

In a statement issued on the occasion of Human Rights Day, the General Secretary said that the COVID-19 pandemic was not just a health emergency, but was a humanitarian crisis with socioeconomic and political dimensions.

Advocating for a rights-based approach to combat the pandemic, the General Secretary stated that the annual theme of Human Rights Day, ‘Recover Better—Stand Up for Human Rights’ conveyed the message of “the need for engagement





### Human Rights Day–2020

with stakeholders and partners as well as the need to involve the people and communities at large to motivate them for transformative action”.

It was further noted that the current period was “a critical opportunity to rectify the errors of the past and set right the inequalities and injustices in the form of multiple human rights violations which had deprived people of their capabilities and privileges in terms of self-determination, power, control over resources, and a representative voice in decision-making processes”.

### International Migrants Day 18 December 2020

A statement released by the General Secretary on the occasion of International Migrants Day called upon the CCA’s member constituencies to commit themselves fully to the cause of upholding the rights and dignity of migrants who lived and worked within their communities and urged to strive for increased communication, cooperation, and collaboration between churches in sending and receiving countries and Asian churches in the diaspora—

actions that were essential to effectively cater to the needs of migrant workers who were stranded or trapped in detrimental circumstances.

Reflecting on the annual theme ‘Reimagining Human Mobility’, the General Secretary stated, “Although it is a slow process, the world is now moving towards global recovery from the pandemic, which now provides an opportunity to reimagine human mobility as well as build more inclusive and resilient societies. The worth and value of migrants in shaping a post-COVID-19 world and their capacities to contribute towards the revival of the economies of both the sending and the receiving countries needs to be recognised.”

The statement further read, “Overcoming the barriers of physical and spiritual distance, let us remember that migrants are not strangers, they are neighbours, deserving of compassion in the face of gross violations and obvious injustices” and called upon churches in Asia to be ‘the welcoming inn’, offering warmth, refuge, hospitality, and love during the Advent season.



### International Migrants Day–2020

## Advocacy Initiatives at the United Nations (UN)

### Advocacy at UN Women Asia Pacific Region

17 June 2020 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has officially accredited the CCA with special consultative status as an international non-governmental organisation since 2003. This special consultative status enables the CCA to facilitate the advocacy of Asian churches in various areas of their concerns through regional and international platforms. A meeting with the UN Women Desk was initiated as a follow up of EWAAB's

webinar on 'The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women', mainly to share CCA's advocacy programmes and activities under EWAAB and to seek possible ways for both parties to work together in realising the rights and dignity of women. A virtual discussion took place between Carly Teng, UN Women's Consultant on Ending Violence against Women, and Sunila Ammar and Rosiana Purnomo from CCA.

## Ecumenical Solidarity Accompaniment and Diakonia in Asia

### Emergency Relief Aid for Vulnerable Communities in Timor Leste

27 May–22 June 2020 | Timor Leste

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, most countries in Asia were on lockdown to prevent the spread of the outbreak and to protect the health of their citizens. Timor Leste was one of them.

With the quick decision of closing the border and lockdown strategy by the government, Timor Leste was able to control the spread of COVID-19. However, this seriously deepened the economic crisis in Timor Leste, pushing Timor people into extreme poverty, affecting households in many ways including losses of jobs, higher prices of food and other basic goods, and disruptions to healthcare, services, and education. The sudden onset of the pandemic rendered children, the disabled, the poor pregnant women, and the elderly without any income as the most vulnerable, who needed immediate help.

With the emergency relief fund of CCA and the other ecumenical support from

Uniting World of Australia and Global Ministries of United Church of Christ, the Protestant Church in Timor Leste (IPTL) was able to carry out relief work for the most vulnerable community in Timor Leste. IPTL distributed emergency relief packs of food containing thirty kilograms of rice, cooking oil, sugar, and milk to 206 households, and distributed facial masks, soap, and hand sanitisers to forty-four local churches in five cities: Dili, Leste, Oeste, Ambeno, and Sul.

Rev. Juliana Temparaja, the General Secretary of IPTL, expressed her sincere gratitude to CCA, "IPTL would like to thank the CCA for providing financial support to help the people of Timor Leste through IPTL. The assistance provided was very meaningful to all the members of IPTL, not only for financial support but for the sincerity and love given to us by the brothers and sisters of CCA."

CCA has consistently accompanied churches in Asia where tragedies have

occurred, the COVID-19 pandemic being one of them. CCA enables churches to

respond effectively to needs in times of emergencies.



**Emergency COVID-19 Relief Aid for Vulnerable Communities in Timor Leste**

## Webinar Series

### **'Right to Health Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'**

*14 May 2020*

The growing COVID-19 crisis was not only a health crisis in the short term but would leave devastating impacts on the socioeconomic lives of people for years to come. Given that over fifty per cent of the world's population has no access to social protection, the impacts are estimated to be manifold. A vast number of people in lesser-developed countries lack access not only to basic health care facilities and have fewer health workers but also do not have living essentials such as potable water, soap, face masks and sanitisers. If this persists, this pandemic would morph into a prolonged health crisis.

The right to health provides that health facilities, goods, and services should be (1) available in sufficient quantity; (2) accessible to everyone without discrimination and affordable for all,

even for marginalised groups; (3) acceptable, that is, respectful of medical ethics and culturally appropriate; and (4) scientifically and medically appropriate and of good quality.

To understand the various challenges posed during this pandemic, CCA invited experts from various Asian countries to discuss the impact on health as a fundamental human right for those affected by the pandemic. The main purpose was to understand how churches and faith communities in Asia play a pivotal role in complementing the work of the government and offer services related to health and humanitarian aid with their resources.

The expert group of panellists represented the United Nations, Christian Medical Associations in Asia, Christian Hospital Networks in Asia, and representatives of health and healing ministries of Asian churches. Along with registered participants, over 2,100 viewers engaged in the proceedings via live-streaming on the CCA's social media platforms.

The webinar emphasised that securing the right to health implied more than just access to health services but constituted the right to the determinants of health along with the absence of discrimination. Successfully tiding over the COVID-19 crisis would entail collaboration not just between affected people or communities and the government, but also with civil

society and faith-based organisations as well as intergovernmental agencies.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, who moderated the virtual conference, said that the COVID-19 pandemic presented an overwhelming public health challenge where the health, freedom, and livelihood of millions of people were negatively

**Christian Conference of Asia** f LIVE

**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**RIGHT TO HEALTH AMIDST THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

| Thursday, 14 May 2020 | From 12:00 to 14:00 hrs. (Bangkok Time) |

**PANELLISTS**

 <b>Dr Mathews George</b> CCA General Secretary	 <b>Dr Salil Panakadan</b> UN	 <b>Stela Sacaliuc</b> UN	 <b>Dr Priya John</b> India
 <b>Dr Daniel B Wobowo</b> Indonesia	 <b>Dr Chiao-Chicy Chen</b> Taiwan	 <b>Dr Prawing Euanontat</b> Thailand	 <b>Rev Callum Tabada</b> Philippines

»»» REGISTER NOW «««

### Panellists of Webinar on 'Right to Health Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'

affected. The situation that emerged due to the COVID-19 crisis presented innumerable instances and examples that indicated the violation of the right to health and the right to life and the denial of the necessities of life, as stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), to millions.

Dr Salil Panakadan, Asia Pacific Regional Adviser of the United Nations AIDS division, shared the realistic approaches

that could be adopted to address the challenges to the health and well-being of all people. He advised that governments develop a long-term strategy with carefully tailored solutions and enable communities to be partners in national affairs, rather than enforcing coercive top-down lockdowns that generated stigma and discrimination against those infected and those fighting the virus at the frontlines.



From the perspective of the inter governmental organisation, Dr Panakadan proposed a multi-sectoral strategy that focused on three broad streams, namely, 'health', 'humanitarian', and 'socioeconomic', as was done by the UN. He also suggested ways in which the UN and FBOs could collaborate and highlighted 'country coordinating mechanisms' that FBOs could partner with to secure funding for providing

livelihood support, insurance coverage, and other medical resources.

The other panellists, including Dr Priya John (the General Secretary of the Christian Medical Association of India), Dr Daniel Budi Wobowo (Indonesian Christian Association of Health Services), Stela Sacaliuc (Executive Officer, UNAIDS Asia and Pacific Regional Support Team); Prof. Dr Chiao-Chicy Chen (Taipei Mackay



### Partial view of participants at Webinar on 'Right to Health Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'

Memorial hospital of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan); Dr Prawing Euonontat (Chairman of the Medical Mission of the Church of Christ in Thailand); and, Rev. Callum Tabada (United Church of Christ in the Philippines), spoke of the resourcefulness and prompt work undertaken by Asian churches and Christian healthcare institutions with a distinct Christian mission identity.

Despite the constraints on their resources in the wake of the pandemic, mission hospitals, with their self-led initiatives, were crucial to the well-being of the communities around them. Health workers were actively working in communities, distributing medical help and food ration, and generating awareness on sanitation and hygiene. Tele-counselling was also set up to cater to the mental health and well-being of people. They also advocated



and cooperated with the government to address the pandemic in a joint effort. The importance of ‘knowledge’ (community awareness and correct information), ‘tools’ (mass screening, medical resources, quarantine facilities, nutritious food), and ‘support’ (socioeconomic relief packages and stimulus) was also highlighted.

The webinar served as a platform to share best practices and inspire all attendees into action. While the global situation may be grim, the key to successfully mitigating the crisis and restoring the right to health of all people was accompanying communities and making them salient partners in decision-making. “It is easier to prevent than to treat,” said the panel, while unanimously stressing the importance of community-based recovery with localised solutions in cooperation with government measures that were mindful of the needs and situation of the people. That would be more effective than a one-size-fits-all approach.

### **‘Upholding the Rights and Dignity of Children Amidst the COVID-19 Crisis’** *19 May 2020*

The CCA through its Asian Advocacy Network on Dignity and Rights of Children (AANDRoC) initiated a virtual conference to mainly discuss the struggles faced by children in Asia, in light of the COVID-19 crisis. While children had been largely spared the direct health effects of the disease, the crisis bore profound effects on their overall well-being. All children, of all ages and in all countries, could be catastrophically affected, in particular by the socioeconomic consequences of the

crisis, and in some cases by the mitigation measures implemented to stem the spread of the disease.

Representatives of UN bodies, CSOs/FBOs, and Asian churches were invited to express their perspective. The panellists included Rachel Harvey (UNICEF); John Pattiwael (Indonesia); Eule Rico Bonganay (Philippines); Sharmila Sekarajasekaran (Malaysia); Rev. Kim Minji (Korea); and Stella Dharshini (Sri Lanka). The webinar was conducted through Zoom on 19 May 2020 with the participation of forty-seven people who joined on Zoom and almost 2,600 others who engaged through the CCA’s Facebook page. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of CCA, moderated the webinar.

In his opening remarks, Dr Mathews George Chunakara highlighted at least two aspects of children’s lives that were affected the most: access to good healthcare (immunisation) and education (due to school closures). He also raised an alert on the potential of permanent damage as a result of this crisis to future generations in the long run. Speaking from the human rights perspective, the CCA General Secretary affirmed that children are subjects of the rights appropriate to their age and stage of development, which were essential parameters to safeguard their future.

Rachel Harvey, the regional adviser on child protection (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office), gave a broad introduction on the current situation and challenges faced by children. She pointed out some major challenges, including the impact of COVID-19 on children’s mental health; the increase in abuse, violence,

and exploitation, either online abuse and exploitation, or domestic violence; and the economic impact that would induce more child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, sexual exploitation, family separation, and homelessness. Harvey also explained the work undertaken by UNICEF since the beginning of the proliferation of COVID-19. “Children must be at the heart of the recovery and response,” affirmed Harvey.

Harvey also explained that children had to be equipped with basic knowledge, skill, and practical tips (such as setting their privacy). Parents and guardians, governments, regulators, internet service providers, and social media companies played important roles in their capacities to ensure the safety of children while they were online. Additionally, Harvey also stressed the mental health of children during the pandemic that was exacerbated by fear, anxiety, increased stress on the family, and lack of peer socialisation.

John Pattiwael, the coordinator of AANDRoC, specifically emphasised the plight of an extremely marginalised and neglected set of children—children in conflict with the law—who were struggling to access legal representation, formal education, social services, and pastoral care.

Eule Rico Bonganay from Salinlahi Alliance for Children’s Concerns (Philippines) and Sharmila Sekarajasekaran from Voice of the Children (Malaysia) echoed the roles of CSOs/FBOs to preserve the security and safety of children. Strong collaborative works between CSOs/FBOs and intergovernmental agencies were required to ensure that the needs of children and their families were met and that communities were empowered during the crisis.

Instances of the way churches were accompanying parents/guardians and children in precarious situations were shared by churches from Korea and Sri Lanka. Rev. Kim Minji, from the Human

**VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**UPHOLDING THE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF CHILDREN AMIDST COVID-19 CRISIS**

**Tuesday 19 May 2020**  
12.00 - 14.00 hrs. (Bangkok Time)

**Christian Conference of Asia**

**PANELLISTS**

<b>Dr Mathews George</b> CCA	<b>Rachel Harvey</b> UNICEF
<b>Stella Dharshini</b> Sri Lanka	<b>John Pattiwael</b> Indonesia
<b>Eule R. Bonganay</b> Philippines	<b>Sharmila</b> Malaysia
	<b>Kim Minji</b> Korea

**Panellists of Webinar on 'Upholding the Rights and Dignity of Children amidst the COVID-19 Crisis'**

Rights Centre of the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK), shared the initiatives taken by Korean churches to ensure the nourishment of children's spiritual lives during the COVID-19 crisis. The NCCCK actively prepared online services for children and ensured paper-based distribution services for the elderly. However, the NCCCK also realised the challenges to access the online service especially faced by children who were living with single parents, without parents, or those living only with guardians.

Stella Dharshini, from the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, shared information on the concrete steps, measures, and actions taken by the churches in Sri Lanka to ensure the care of children amidst the pandemic. NCC Sri Lanka has currently revised its Sunday School curriculum/syllabus to accommodate the needs and situations of children in Sri Lanka and has introduced novel forms of education and dissemination to ensure the spiritual welfare of children.

The last segment of the conference was dedicated to seeking specific recommendations from the experiences of FBOs/CSOs in their local situations. The panellists recommended that (1) churches adjust their services to remain relevant to current contexts; (2) church members' needs, including those of children, of pastoral care and psychosocial support are fulfilled; and (3) churches strengthen their cooperation and collaboration with other CSOs/FBOs and governments, especially for advocacy to ensure that all children—whether the ones confined to their homes or those without homes—were safe, well-informed, and empowered.

In his concluding remarks, Dr Mathews George Chunakara said that as the crisis deepened, family stress levels also rose, and children confined at homes were both victims and witnesses of increasing

levels of domestic violence and abuse. Besides, increasing unemployment had shrunk families' financial stability, which in turn triggered abuse and violence within families, with children often ending up as victims. He further said that children could face the hidden impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in the long run. He called upon CCA's constituents to continue their journey with hope and keep accompanying the most vulnerable of society both during and after the current global crisis.

### **'Towards Wider Partnerships for Combatting Trafficking in Women and Girls Amidst COVID-19'**

*1 October 2020*

The virtual conference that focused on the theme 'Towards Wider Partnerships for Combatting Trafficking in Women and Girls amidst COVID-19' was conducted to discuss the need for systemic change supplemented with grassroots efforts to tackle the menace of human trafficking, especially among women.

Worrying spikes in the incidence of human trafficking—both trafficking-in-persons and online exploitation—was being reported through the COVID-19 pandemic. Women and girls, who majorly comprise the victims of trafficking, were being specifically targeted by traffickers given their vulnerabilities. New risks and challenges posed by the pandemic were slowing down the identification, rescue, rehabilitation, and integration of the victims of human trafficking.

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, said that the impact of trafficking in women and girls in Asia had become a hidden scourge as it led to sex trafficking. The crimes of human trafficking were not often detected, properly reported, or

adequately prosecuted in most Asian countries. The CCA General Secretary expressed concerns about the covert and overt ways in which predators and other criminals were now taking advantage of the 'new normal' to expand their dark web of operations.

Gaelle Demolis from the UN Women Asia Pacific office presented the emerging trends and changing nature of human

trafficking in Asia after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the importance of women law enforcement officials at the border who play a crucial role in detecting cases of human trafficking, as they were the only ones who could perform body searches on women and listen to the women who risked becoming potential victims of trafficking. "We must have good

**Christian Conference of Asia Virtual Conference**

**Towards Wider Partnerships for Combating Trafficking in Women and Girls**

**PANELLISTS**

- Gaelle Demolis (UN Women)
- Peppi Siddiq (IOM)
- Bandana Pattanaik (GATW)
- Rev. Diana Tana (CCA)
- Rupa Pradhan Chettri (Mukti Nepal)
- Rev. Dr Lintje Pelli (PGI Indonesia)
- Rev. Marisol Villalon (UMC, Philippines)

**Thursday 1 October 2020**  
12.00 -14.00 hrs. (Bangkok Time)

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### Panellists of Webinar on 'Towards Wider Partnerships for Combating Trafficking in Women and Girls Amidst COVID-19'

partnerships at the local level between grassroots women's organisations and law enforcement agencies. We may not always be coordinated, but we must build on each other's work and support each other in our own ways," added the UN Women official.

Peppi Kiviniemi-Siddiq from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) spoke of how the challenges of

human trafficking were compounded under COVID-19. "The global recession and the decreasing opportunities for regular migration have created conducive conditions for exploitation and human trafficking. We need to start thinking of how to ramp up the identification of victims of trafficking and protection measures, and see where we can improve and how we can streamline assistance," said Siddiq. Bandana Pattanaik from the Global



Alliance against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) focused on the world of work and employment. “Exploitation is no longer ‘exceptional’. Precarity is now a given in both the formal and informal sectors of the economy; coupled with the lack of public services and social safety nets, we see cascading impacts, where the informal employment of women itself is generated within the spaces of precarity,” said Pattanaik.

Rupa Pradhan Chetri, of the Mukti Network Nepal, shared the ground realities of the India-Nepal border, which is notorious as one of the busiest human trafficking gateways in the world. Chetri spoke of how the traffickers’ tactics of coercion had morphed, saying that the traffickers now relied on the grooming of potential victims rather than direct physical intimidation. “Under the

COVID-19 pandemic, we are hearing cases of how traffickers are providing paltry relief and aid to create a sense of obligation in the minds of their victims. This new form of exploitation and grooming allows traffickers to lure victims into jobs and then traffic them for labour.” Chetri also called upon churches and faith-based organisations to intervene and aid in the prevention of trafficking. “We are called to be the salt of the earth. This implies that we must step out of our churches and into the communities of vulnerable people. Traffickers lure their victims in convoluted ways. We must be creative and innovative in reaching out to potential victims and prevent them from being exploited,” she said.

Rev. Mariesol Villalon, who works in the Anti-Human Trafficking and Migrant



**Participants of Webinar on ‘Towards Wider Partnerships for Combatting Trafficking in Women and Girls Amidst COVID-19’**



Ministry of the United Methodist Church in the Philippines, spoke specifically of her country's context, which has been termed 'the global epicentre of the live-stream sexual abuse trade'. "Images of naked and sexualised Filipino children are being uploaded, shared, and sold online. Filipino children are forced to do unspeakable acts in front of cameras and are ideal targets of predators and traffickers online. Poverty, cheap internet and smartphones, the ability to communicate well in English, the curtailing of means of family income, and the lack of parental supervision are all to be blamed for the sexual exploitation of Filipino children," she said. "We must empower our children to speak out. Churches must popularise children's rights among the children and include them as core components in Christian education programmes. We must advocate for the responsible use of the internet and reiterate our prophetic ministry. This is a kairos moment to remind our congregations that each Filipino child and each Filipino woman is created in God's image," added Rev. Villalon.

Rev. Dr Lintje H. Pellu, of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), shared the law enforcement concerns and inadequacies of the Indonesian government in effectively combatting human trafficking in the archipelagic country. "Inconsistencies in implementation, minimal coordination, and poor budgeting continue to adversely impact the progress of the Indonesian government in tackling human trafficking. We must also consider how human

trafficking victims are likely to be re-trafficked due to lack of permanent jobs and past debt traps, which is exacerbated for women and children who are considered commodities in patriarchal Indonesian society," she said.

The panellists also shared best practices from their local contexts and organisational experiences. They suggested strategies for joint and collaborative actions to combat the trafficking of women and girls in Asia. These included: the creation of training manuals to handle cases of trafficking from a gender- and victim-centred perspective, the strengthening of linkages between national counter-trafficking taskforces and civil society organisations, strategic and innovative community and political mobilisation for broader engagement, community awareness-building concerning legal mechanisms, reaching out to perpetrators, bearing down on transnational trafficking networks to break the demand-supply chain, and economic empowerment of the vulnerable to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking.

Bringing together an expert group of panellists representing the UN and other international organisations, civil society organisations, as well as faith-based organisations, this virtual conference provided a common platform to devise renewed forms of partnerships and collaborations for joint action against trafficking in women and girls.

## Online Training on Good Governance for Churches and Related Organisations in Asia

25–27 November 2020

A three-day online training programme organised by the CCA from 25–27 November 2020 on ‘Good Governance for Churches and Related Organisations in Asia’ was attended by about 20 specially invited church leaders as well as 36 students of the Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)–2020. The training focused on aspects of governance which is inherent to the existence of any organisation and society.

Over the three days course, the participants learnt, discussed, and deliberated topics on “Theological Reflection on Good Governance”, “Good Governance: Principles and Ethics”, “Christian Values in Management”, “Human Resource Management”, “Self-Assessment Framework”, and “Qualitative Improvement in Church and Related Organisations”.

In the opening remarks, the CCA General Secretary Dr Mathews George Chunakara stated “there is a growing need for an effective governance system for churches and ecumenical organisations in Asia



### Training on Good Governance for Asian church leaders



### Partial view of participants of Online Training on Good Governance for Churches and Related Organisations in Asia

that will ensure efficient and effective utilisation of resources as well as proficient management practices in churches. The training is part of CCA’s efforts to help churches in capacity-building to establish good governance, effective management and decision-making.”

Rev. Terence Corkin, a minister from the Uniting Church in Australia, laid the foundation for the training. He provided the theological basis for the meaning and characteristics of good governance. He stated that good governance implied putting in place effective systems and big-picture policies, maintaining and

monitoring organisational culture and performance, ensuring compliance with the law, communicating with stakeholders, and evaluation, among others. He described the characteristics of good governance as being accountable and transparent, responsive and open to new information and opinions, equitable and inclusive, effective and efficient, participatory and in line with mission.

Aby Alexander of the Christian Institute of Management (CIM) in India spoke about the Christian approach to management, which he explained in the light of the values and principles of the scripture. He proposed an approach to re-read the Bible from a management point of view, thus drawing out the lesson from using hermeneutical principles for modern-day management. He explained the methodology for ensuring stewardship and accountability in governance, maintaining integrity, structure, control systems, reporting financial management, and human resource development.

Sony Thomas, a Leadership Trainer and Coach from “Celebrating Life”, shared the importance, relevance, and core principles of leadership. He spoke of the need for strong character and competency and said that the hallmark of a true leader was their skill in making more leaders. He said that the tasks a good leader necessarily maintained connections and a sense of community, inspired the people to buy into their vision, and empowered others to reach their full potential.

Arpit Waghmare spoke about how networking and partnership drove the effectiveness of Christian ministry. He explained the need for building networks and partnership as the biblical imperative, referring to love, unity, and diversity in the body of Christ. He challenged participants to articulate the hindrances in the way of establishing meaningful partnerships within Christian organisations, which he specified as theological differences,

sharing of resources, and safeguarding of reputation, relationships, and credibility. He also reiterated that all were both objects as well as agents of reconciliation, and hence were called to engage with others as part of mission.

Daniel Jacob, of EC Group, talked about staff capacity-building, which was the key driver for adaptation to change. He further emphasised human resources development which included self-development, skills, development of various abilities, and self-reflection. Furthermore, he explained capacity-building as the process of developing the strength and sustainability of an organisation, enabling the organisation to focus on its mission, and not simply on its survival. He shared the importance of hiring the right people and putting them in the right positions, per the culture and values of the organisation.

Anand Joshua, of the Christian Institute of Management in India, spoke of the qualitative improvement in the church and its related organisations. He said that governance was guided by the principles of stewardship and emphasised the necessity of maintaining clarity in the organisation’s vision, mission, and core values. He pointed out that good governance was visible in the day-to-day tasks of engagement (awareness, ownership, processes), development (formulation, strategic planning), execution (implementation, programming, delivery), and monitoring and evaluation (review, impact, reformation, learning), as well as in developing monitoring mechanisms.

On the last day of the training programme, participants were divided into small groups based on their country and region to discuss and re-examine the best practices of good governance among their church/organisations and developed action plans to be implementing within their local contexts and renew their commitments to upholding the principles of good governance.



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## **SPECIAL PROGRAMME: ACTION TOGETHER IN COMBATTING HIV & AIDS IN ASIA (ATCHAA)**

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HIV and AIDS has been a special focus of CCA programme priorities. Several skill-building and advocacy programmes have been initiated by CCA to address the concerns along with efforts to build an HIV competent church and community in Asia.

To effectively respond to HIV and AIDS with the member churches and councils, CCA is continuing its journey in building the capacity of its members to become inclusive and relevant for people living with HIV and AIDS through its ***Action Together in Combatting HIV and AIDS in Asia (ATCHAA)*** programme.

Asia-Pacific is the region with the second-highest number of people living with HIV in the world—an estimated 5.9 million in 2018. (UNAIDS 2018 The Prevention Gap Report).

To contribute to the initiatives of global, national and local bodies to combat the alarming trend of increase in the number of HIV and AIDS affected people, CCA will join together with governments and UN agencies such as UNAIDS. CCA is engaged in working with and through its member constituencies in Asia at national and local levels. The specific objectives developed by CCA include:

1. To *build the capacity* of CCA members by training facilitators at regional, sub-regional and local levels with the exchange of learning and experiences.
2. To scale up the *advocacy* initiatives among CCA member constituencies targeting member churches, governments and UN agencies.
3. To strengthen existing *faith-based networks* and initiate new networks of faith-based groups in Asia to address the consequences of HIV and AIDS.
4. To play its role in an effective, efficient, responsible and sustainable way of addressing the problem of HIV and AIDS.

The expected outcomes are:

1. CCA programmes make significant contributions towards the global HIV and AIDS goals of 'getting to zero': zero new infections, zero

discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths within Asia.

2. CCA member churches and councils work more actively in solidarity with interfaith partnerships in advocacy for addressing care, support and treatment including Anti-retroviral Therapy.
3. CCA member churches and communities will be more competent in responding to HIV and AIDS and related issues, including human sexuality, Sexual Orientation Gender Identity (SOGI), reproductive health and human rights, based on faith values and inclusive principles.

## Strategies

- Capacity-building of facilitators within the CCA networks.
- Self-Assessment of churches' inclusiveness by using Appreciative Inquiry Methods.
- Exchange of learning and sharing of resources within CCA and other interfaith networks.
- Addressing factors governing HIV vulnerabilities, including human sexuality and gender.
- Documentation of good practices and building resources for models of intervention within the network.
- Motivating youth as change agents.
- Specific advocacy measures related to prevention, care, support, and treatment for global and concerned organisations, development agencies, and governments regionally and locally.



- Dissemination of learning at national and international forums based on first-hand research.
- Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA): Interfaith networks will be strengthened in each country for exchange of learning, expertise and linkages for care and support within faith-based communities and organisations in Asia.
- Provide and facilitate interfaith platforms to address HIV and AIDS issues.

## Capacity-Building

### Skill-building Workshop for HIV Facilitators 19–20 February 2020 | Sarmi, Papua, Indonesia

A total of thirty pastors and school teachers of Klasis Sarmi of Gereja Kristen Indonesia Tanah Papua (GKITP) were trained between 19–20 February 2020 at Sarmi, Papua. The training focused on building the capacities of the pastors and teachers to respond to the HIV crisis in their region. The training was facilitated by CCA along with Dr Raymond Bachongo Gbombo and Donaltus Rumbesu of GKITP Synod.

The participants highlighted the need for testing facilities in the area, as there were limited data and information regarding HIV in Sarmi. They also mentioned that youth-friendly training programmes are required to motivate the youth to protect themselves from HIV infection. Dr Raymond also highlighted the need for sex education for youth in Papua, and particularly, for Sarmi.

The Department of Diakonia of GKITP will continue to engage with the participants for two years to carry on the training of youth in the region.



**Skill-building Workshop for HIV Facilitators in Papua, Indonesia**

## **Health, Healing, and Wholeness in the Context of HIV**

*22–23, 29 February 2020 | Papua, Indonesia*

Some sessions on ‘Health, Healing, and Wholeness’ in the context of HIV were conducted for different audiences in Papua, Indonesia. A session of the same with an audience of fifteen female pastors in Klasis Sentani Region was held on 22 February 2020.

Through the session, the participants were able to increase their knowledge and identify ways in which the Church could support PLHIVs (people living with HIV). They mentioned that there was stigma within the churches and many PLHIV did not come forward to receive care and support. They committed to reducing stigma and discrimination and initiating more awareness programmes on HIV and AIDS, and through the CCA’s training session, they gained a very good understanding of HIV and AIDS, and also basic health in general.

A half-day session was held on ‘Health, Healing, and Wholeness’ in the context of HIV on 23 February 2020, in conjunction with the Youth Fellowship Service of fifty congregations in Klasis Sentani. There were 440 young people and other guests who attended the worship together. The topics of Health and HIV were discussed through an interactive question-and-answer session. The programme was an opportunity for mass awareness for the youth from different parts of Jayapura, Papua.

A session for Klasis leaders was held at GKITP Synod office in Jayapura on 29 February 2020, for sixteen Klasis leaders from different parts of Papua. The interaction was productive and encouraged the pastors to promote testing for HIV, generate awareness, and provide care and support for PLHIVs.

## **Youth Motivational Programme for Youth in Klasis Port Numbay (Klasis Jayapura)**

*24–26 February 2020 | Papua, Indonesia*

The programme was held between 24–26 February 2020 at GKI Sion Padang Bulan Church, Port Numbay Klasis. There were twenty-one young people from the medical community, theologians, pastors, and youth leaders at the training



## **Youth Motivational Programme for Youth in Papua, Indonesia**

programme, representing many churches in Jayapura including GKI in Papua, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Catholic Church, the Pentecostal Church in Indonesia, and the Evangelical Church in Indonesia.

Participants said that this activity had motivated them to understand the current situation of HIV in the country, and particularly in Papua. They imbibed

in themselves the need to have an open mindset and reduce stigma and discrimination towards HIV and AIDS. The theological biblical reflection also provided an opportunity to use the Bible in reducing stigma and discrimination. They also mentioned that they gained a renewed understanding of the role of the Church, especially the role of church leaders, to deal with HIV and AIDS issues within the scope of church services without any discrimination. The participants decided to start a core group to address HIV in Papua. They agreed

on using the resources of CCA and on assisting each other in their programmes. One of the participants, who was a doctor, mentioned that the training provided a new approach to make people aware of HIV and that she would use the same approach to sensitise the youth in her church.

On the last day, the participants joined the Port Numbay Klasis Medical Community and visited Lake Sentani for a medical camp and community health education. They also conducted screening for HIV.

## Advocacy

### **Asian Interfaith Consultation on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy** 27–31 January 2020 | Chiang Mai, Thailand

CCA-ATCHAA organised a three-day programme between 27–31 January 2020 titled 'Asian Interfaith Consultation

in Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy'. Twenty-five faith leaders, including Buddhist monks and Islamic scholars, representing different faith-based organisations and PLHIV networks from across nine countries in Asia, were brought together to discuss the role of faith and faith-based institutions in



**Asian Interfaith Consultation on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy in Chiang Mai, Thailand**

addressing the concerns of HIV and AIDS, and also to intensify interfaith advocacy collaborations in Asia.

In his opening remarks, Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, spoke of the consultation as a significant move in revitalising the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA). “In its efforts to strengthen HIV and AIDS advocacy, the CCA is resolute in accompanying all member constituencies and beyond, and thus we have orchestrated this interfaith consultation,” he said.

“This consultation comes as part of the CCA’s larger commitment to strengthening ecumenism in Asia in its wider connotation. We must advocate, educate, and sensitise religious communities around this issue. CCA’s ATCHAA programme emphasises ‘Action Together’ as the only way to initiate and facilitate work in combatting HIV and AIDS,” added Dr Mathews George.

Venerable Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai, the Chairperson of AINA, said that he was grateful for this timely interfaith collaboration. “Most people do not prefer engaging in conversations around HIV

and AIDS because of the discomfort and stigma surrounding it. An international interfaith consultation such as this sets a positive precedent and invites other Asian faith communities and networks to work in this space,” he shared.

The need for this consultation was placed in context by CCA Advocacy Coordinator Jay Roy Tipayan, who spoke of the role of FBOs in dealing with HIV and AIDS in Asia. Busting cultural myths surrounding HIV and AIDS, he spelt out the potential and opportunities for FBOs in Asian society. This is because Asian FBOs are characterised by their ability to be more people-centric, have increased partnerships, and mobilise communities, he said. The first day of the consultation witnessed panel presentations centred around faith-based perspectives on HIV and AIDS. Elucidating the Buddhist perspective, Venerable Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai spoke of *mahakaruna*, or ‘great compassion’. He provided numerous examples of the work of Buddhist monks in responding to HIV and AIDS in Thailand. The Islamic perspective was shared by Siti Sugina, a young woman representing the Komisi Penanggulangan AIDS (KPA) in Indonesia. She shared, “Though there is tremendous stigma around sexual freedom and drug use in traditionally conservative societies like Indonesia, Muslim communities are called upon theologically to serve the underserved.”

Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia, CCA Programme Coordinator, spoke on the Christian perspective in the panel presentation. He emphasised the need to stop considering



**Ven. Phramaha Boonchuay Doojai during Asian Interfaith Consultation on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy**



HIV-AIDS as an issue of morality or sin and called for developing an inclusive theology that was grounded in compassion, care, and support.

Myanmar Interfaith Network on AIDS (MINA) was an offshoot of the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA) and celebrated ten years of its existence. The General Secretary of MINA, Khawn Taung presented the journey of MINA and how the faith communities were able to work together on the issue rather than looking at their differences.

Sujan Thapa, the President of the National Association of People Living with HIV in Nepal (NAP+N) informed the participants about the work of the organisation in addressing HIV and AIDS in Nepal. He mentioned that the PLHIV in Nepal had health insurance for free care and treatment as a result of the advocacy initiative of the organisation.

Lhaksam (Bhutan Network of Positive) has been an initiative of Wangda Dorji in Bhutan. He mentioned that it was the only civil society organisation working



**Participants of Asian Interfaith Consultation on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy in Chiang Mai, Thailand**

to address HIV and AIDS in Bhutan. He mentioned that there were possibilities in reaching out to the faith leaders in Bhutan to reduce stigma and discrimination for those living with the virus.

The participants went through an assessment of their own organisations and institutions through an Assessment Framework which helped them to understand the extent of their involvement in addressing HIV and AIDS. They felt that the framework served as an important tool to guide them in enhancing their involvement in addressing HIV and AIDS.

The participants made plans to strengthen and revive their own National Interfaith Network on AIDS and also initiate the same in countries where it did not currently exist. There was also discussion on how to strengthen AINA in the future.

The participants were encouraged to learn from one another and strengthen collaborations between countries and networks. The consultation provided a platform for the sharing and development of strategies in strengthening advocacy for HIV and AIDS in Asia.



## **Online Consultation on the ‘Vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS—Challenges and Issues of Human Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and Gender Discrimination’**

*2–4 September 2020*

The consultation on ‘Vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS—Challenges and Issues of Human Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and Gender Discrimination’ was held from 2–4 September 2020 and attended by about forty registered participants from across Asia. The facilitators of the consultation included representatives from UNAIDS and FBOs/CSOs that dealt with HIV and AIDS advocacy.



### **Consultation on ‘Vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS—Challenges and Issues of Human Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and Gender Discrimination’**

Delivering the opening address, Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA, said, “Despite many challenges we are all facing today under the conditions of the COVID-19 crisis and lockdowns across the world, dilemmas are still commonplace in many countries. CCA has initiated this special online programme to enhance the capacities of member churches and councils to respond to the emerging concerns and to become more inclusive and relevant for people living with HIV and AIDS.”

The first session was jointly presented by representatives from UNAIDS Asia Pacific Regional Support Team, Dr Salil Panakadan and Stela Sacaliuc. Their presentation on ‘HIV, Human Sexuality, and Reproductive Health Situation in Asia’ addressed key data points and the intersectionalities that exist between HIV, sexuality, and reproductive health rights.

The UNAIDS officials stated that although in 2015 all UN member states had mutually agreed to lower the rate of new infections to below 500,000 by 2020, the goal had not been met until now. The reason for this, they stressed, was that the Asian countries, in particular, were not doing well given the social amnesia of the political leaders and health sector leaders in the region who assumed “AIDS is over.” However, the virus still affected the most marginalised in society.

In addition to addressing HIV and AIDS, Dr Panakadan called for simultaneous engagement with sexual and reproductive health issues as well. He highlighted the issues of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Given that gender inequality, poverty, stigma, discrimination, and marginalisation of vulnerable groups affected access to SRHR and HIV services, there was a clear and imminent need to integrate SRHR and HIV services at the policy, programme, and provider levels.

Ms Sacaliuc addressed the ‘elephant in the room’ while discussing the HIV response, namely, gender-based violence (GBV). “GBV is an extreme manifestation of gender inequality and encompasses physical, sexual, economic, structural, and emotional violence. Marginalised groups among key populations experience

the highest rates of GBV and are also more susceptible to acquiring HIV. GBV undermines the HIV response.”

Justin Bionat, the Executive Director of Youth Voices Count, spoke about ‘Understanding Vulnerabilities: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression (SOGIE)’. He explained the relevance of SOGIE to HIV and AIDS awareness, treatment, care, and support. Approaching work with a rights-based approach, he emphasised, was critical not just for accessibility but also affordability, quality, and non-discrimination.

Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia, CCA Programme Coordinator for Prophetic Diaconia and Advocacy, presented ‘The Medical Perspective in Understanding the Correlation between HIV, Human Sexuality, and Gender Justice’, and addressed some common concerns. Dr Lalthanmawia explained the vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS key populations. These included (1) anatomical vulnerabilities; (2) criminalisation and lack of laws for protection; (3) lack of educational facilities; (4) lack of employment opportunities; (5) stigma and discrimination; and, (6) susceptibility to high-risk behaviours.

Gopi Shankar, from the vulnerable community, spoke on ‘Voices from



### Partial view of participants at Consultation on ‘Vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS—Challenges and Issues of Human Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and Gender Discrimination’

the Community: Social Perspective in Understanding the Correlation of HIV, Human Sexuality, and Gender Justice’. Gopi shared several anecdotes and stories about the experiences of the community, such as the challenges, practical difficulties, and discrimination that were faced daily, thus sensitising the consultation’s participants to their plight.

Rev. Carleen Nomorosa, an HIV Programme Coordinator of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines delivered a presentation on ‘Created in the Image of God: Theological Perspective on HIV, Human Sexuality, and Gender Justice’. She shared theological reflections on Mark 2:1–12.

“The story in Mark tells us and shows us perspectives from different angles—

Jesus, the crowd, the four people carrying the paralytic, the scribes, the owner of the house, the paralytics, and so on—about forgiving sins and healing the sick. Jesus reverses the logic of the traditional assumption that sickness is the divine judgement for sin and shatters the intersection of sin and sickness,” she claimed.

“Our challenge today is to allow our imaginations, discomfort, and distress to be confronted by the faith of the paralytic’s friends and the paralytic himself and look beyond what at first appear to be impossible obstacles, and carve out fresh openings for human liberation and deliverance. We must embrace an alternative consciousness; we have to revolutionise our ministry and advocacies,” Rev. Nomorosa emphatically stated.

Rev. Among Jamir, a pastor from the Nagaland Baptist Church Council in India and former Coordinator of Ecumenical Solidarity for HIV and AIDS (ESHA) with the National Council of Churches in India, delivered an insightful presentation on ‘Towards an Inclusive Church within an Inclusive Community: Churches’ Response to Vulnerable Communities’.

“The Church can no longer afford to isolate itself from pressing issues. As a community, the Church must practice a culture that promotes belonging and inclusion; the idea of community entails the celebration of diversities and not the erasure of diversities,” said Rev. Jamir. He also said that the issues of sexuality and gender were one of the biggest divisive issues of contemporary times and that the Church’s moral tradition and taboos exclude certain groups of people,

thus relegating them to the margins and making them victims of stigma and discrimination.

The participants developed practical suggestions for the engagement of churches in their local contexts.

### **National Consultative Meeting on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy Programme in Bhutan**

*3–4 November 2020 | Punakha, Bhutan*

The National Consultative Meeting to Strengthen HIV and AIDS Advocacy Programme titled “Bridging the Gap” (By Leaving No One Behind) was held in Punakha, Bhutan from 4–5 November 2020. It was organized by Lhak Sam (Bhutan Network of Positives, Timphu, Bhutan) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA).

A total of thirty-two participants attended the meeting. The meeting also witnessed the participation of key affected populations including PLHIV, members from the LGBTQ community, and commercial sex workers. The participants from different organisations including government ministries and agencies, civil society organisations, faith based organisations, media houses, and the private sector who work closely in response to HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country attended the two-day consultative meeting.

Representatives from National AIDS Control Programme, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health; Office of the Attorney General (OAG); Chithuen Phendhey Association (CPA) – Recovering drugusers, a drug prevention organisation; Rainbow Bhutan, an informal network

of LGBTQ people in Bhutan; Red Purse Network, an informal network of high risk women/sex workers; UNAIDS Nepal and Bhutan, Regional Support Team, Asia and Pacific; United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA); Save the Children Bhutan; Health and Religion, Dratshang Lhentshog; Commission for Religious Organisation (Chhoekey Lhentshog); Ati Foundation; Hindu Dharma Samudaya of Bhutan

(HDSB); representatives from Christian community; Bhutan Nuns Foundation; Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS); Kuensel Corporation; LhakSam (BNP+); Travel Agents; and those from the private sector/business entities discussed various aspects of HIV and AIDS in Bhutan. Wangda Dorji, President of Lhak Sam (BNP+) highlighted the main aim of the consultative meeting which was to help



### **National Consultative Meeting on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy Programme in Bhutan**

review and build stronger network and partnerships thereby strengthening the leadership on advocacy in addressing stigma, discrimination, and inequalities, and engaging in national and regional level policy dialogue and resources mobilisation. He underscored that the consultation would help intensify partnerships and linkages with different organisations at the national level and in the region, particularly in Asia, for building stronger, effective, efficient, and

sustainable relationships for action plans to address HIV and AIDS issues.

The first day saw presentations from regional and national partner agencies advocating on the works each agencies does in response to HIV and AIDS epidemic in the country. The Country Director of UNAIDS for Nepal and Bhutan made a presentation on the overview of the HIV situation globally and in Asia and the Pacific region in particular. He mentioned that 20 countries in the region have



adopted community-based HIV testing, 12 countries allow lay provider HIV testing and 4 countries have HIV self-testing. About half of key populations in Asia-Pacific region do not know their HIV status. He emphasised that the private sectors could play a crucial role in avenues such as financing HIV response activities and service delivery in the form of health services, laboratories, condom distribution, testing, and trainings.

Lekey Khandu, the Programme Manager for National AIDS and STIs Control Programme, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health presented the trends of HIV epidemic in Bhutan in the last 26 years ever since the first case was detected in 1993. The new HIV case detection increased beginning 2005 as the government established Health Information and Service Centers (HISC) in urban areas followed by institution of voluntary counselling and testing services (VCT) in the health centers in 2006. The Ministry of Health urged the participants to align their plan of action (POA) with the overall national strategies thus enabling in the fulfillment of the national vision of “Ending the AIDS epidemic as public health threat in Bhutan” and national goal “to achieve 90-100-90 national targets for HIV response by 2023, and continue through the planning period, towards ending of the HIV epidemic by 2030”.

A presentation was made by Tenzin Gyeltshen of Rainbow Bhutan, an informal network of 206 registered LGBTQ community members distributed across the country except for Gasa Dzongkhag. He mentioned that the vision of Rainbow Bhutan was celebrating diversity. Some of the specific activities done by Rainbow

Bhutan in response to HIV and AIDS epidemic included testing and prevention endeavours. They helped in referring their community members for HIV/STI testing in HISCs and condom distribution.

Kencho Zangmo shared the background of Red Purse Network, an informal network of high risk women/commercial sex workers in the country, established in June 2020 as a self-help group. There were 32 members in the Red Purse Network. She explained that the colour red was often associated with red light work that includes nightlife, violence, and was also associated with danger. Most of the members associated with such ventures constantly faced this situation and emotion, and thus the colour red was used. The word ‘purse’ is associated with the money the members get at the end of the business transaction like any businessperson. The money is then used to support their family and friends.

Dawa Penjor on behalf of Chithuen Phendhey Association (CPA) presented the activities CPA was doing in the country. CPA was established in 2011 as a non-profit public benefit organisation under the patronage of His Majesty to address drug- and alcohol-affected people in Bhutan through prevention, treatment, and aftercare. CPA’s vision was to promote a drug and alcohol free society in the country while at the same time according full respect and dignity to all human beings and their family members suffering from addiction-related problems. CPA believes that all people must be treated with dignity and compassion, and provided the necessary spiritual and professional support to attain mental and physical health, keeping in mind the special needs of each person.



Dhan Raj Rai presented that Lhak Sam (BNP+) was the first and only network of HIV positive people formed in 2010 to address the needs of people living with HIV (PLHIV) for mutual support, solidarity, and social networking in Bhutan. Lhak Sam provided leadership, education support, and capacity building to create an environment free from stigma, discrimination, and a society wherein all PLHIV and affected family members have opportunities to lead meaningful lives. Lhak Sam had 198 PLHIV members.

Ani Namgyel Lhamo presented about Bhutan Nuns Foundation (BNF) which was founded in 2009 to improve the basic living conditions and education of the nuns in the country. There are currently 30 nunneries registered under BNF. BNF's vision is to enhance Bhutanese society by empowering and building the capacity of nuns, girls, and women through education, trainings, and other relevant life skills. Its mission is to educate Bhutanese women and young girls who are in the nunneries.

Lopen Pema Gyeltshen, the focal person for Health and Religion from Dratshang Lhentshog, made a presentation about the activities done by the Central Monastic Body. He highlighted that faith based organisations, including monks and nuns, were excellent communicators and would be game-changers as agents of change

for HIV response if their capabilities were harnessed to the advantage. He also emphasised that fidelity among married couples would decrease the spread of HIV and STI in the community.

Narayan Prasad Sharma mentioned that Hindu Dharma Samudaya of Bhutan (HDSB) promoted religious harmony and strove to strengthen socio-cultural development and unity in Bhutan. It co-ordinated and conducted prayers, religious discourses and activities, and meditation. It also organised and celebrated religious functions, festivals, and events for peace and well-being of the King, country, and the people of Bhutan.

Based on the presentations made by different agencies on the first day, Dr Nima Wangchuk collated and presented the challenges faced by different organisations while responding to the HIV epidemic in the country. While some of the challenges may be specific to a particular organisation, many were found to be cross-cutting in nature.

In the afternoon session, participants were divided into three groups to discuss means and methods of improving testing, access to treatment, and ending stigma and discrimination. Recommendations and action plans were prepared and presented.

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## Strengthening Networks and Collaborations

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### **Advocacy Meeting with Parliament of the Papua Province, Papua Provincial Health Office, and other related organisations**

*27 February 2020 | Jayapura, Indonesia*

In response to the increasing incidence of HIV and AIDS in West Papua, the CCA

initiated advocacy efforts in combatting HIV and AIDS in the region in collaboration with members of parliament in Papua.

A meeting was held with seven Members of Parliament of the Papua Province, CCA, and GKITP Synod on 27 February 2020. The meeting was led by the Chairman of

the Papua Parliament, Johny Banua Rouw. Members of the Commission-V, along with its Deputy Chairman, Kasmasan Jack Komboy, were also present.

Various topics were discussed, including the role of the Church in the response to HIV in Papua. They acknowledged the strength of the churches in Papua. A few areas where the Church could contribute were suggested. These included creating awareness, reducing stigma and discrimination, enhancing testing, and encouraging treatment. They suggested that the Church make a proper strategy and present it to the parliament for a cooperative and combined effort in response.

The crux of the meeting's discussions was the emphasis on devising concrete plans for partnerships between the state and faith-based organisations to combat HIV and AIDS.

"We have talked about the challenges and opportunities in Papua's health sector and we envision a future where the local government and the church councils can collaborate to facilitate better health services for the people of Papua. The Papuan Parliament is open to working with the Papuan churches because the churches have been the first to respond to community health issues, especially in rural areas," said



**Advocacy Meeting with Papua Parliamentarians**

the Chairman of the Papuan Parliament. Dr Raymong Bachongo, from GKI Tanah Papua's Department of Health and Diakonia, who attended the meeting along with the CCA staff members, said, "I am impressed by the warm reception of the Papuan Parliament and the opening up of the potential of collaboration and cooperation between the church and the state. This alliance will greatly improve grassroots mobilisation for combatting HIV and AIDS, and help to improve the

overall quality of health services for all Papuans."

A meeting with UNICEF and WHO Papua was also conducted. The meeting's discussions centred on the vulnerabilities of children as well as the healthcare system of Papua with regards to HIV. UNICEF expressed their desire to collaborate with Papuan churches especially at the grassroots to respond to the challenges children are facing.

## HIV Advocacy Meetings with Church-Based Organisations in Papua

21, 28 February 2020 | Papua, Indonesia

During the visit to Papua, Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia and Jay Roy Tipayan from the CCA met with different groups of people and conducted a one-day sharing session with them.

They met with different Klasis in Region-II of GKI Tanah Papua on 21 February 2020. Twenty participants attended the meeting of CCA, Department of Diakonia, GKITP and Klasis in Region-II of GKITP. The meeting was conducted by Rev. Ebron Abisay, the Secretary of the Diakonia Department of GKITP Synod.

The main purpose of the meeting was to encourage churches to adopt a proactive role in combatting HIV and AIDS in the region. Upon discussion, it was highlighted that the main concerns were the lack of

health facilities and the distance between the facilities for the general public. It was also highlighted that services for HIV were limited. Another major concern was the adverse health-seeking behaviour of the Papuans—many people self-medicated or obtained over-the-counter medication from pharmacies.

What was also mentioned was that the past had left a scar on many Papuans, making it extremely tough for them to trust the government and its facilities.

On 28 February 2020, the CCA staff members also had a session with students and faculty of Izaak Samuel Kijne School of Philosophy and Theology. The lecture was attended by the STT Rector along with all STFT lecturers and around 500 students. The theologians showed their appreciation and were challenged to think about HIV in the context of theological biblical perspectives.



**HIV Advocacy Meetings with Church-Based Organisations in Papua**

## APPENDICES

### CCA Programmes and Activities in 2020

No.	Programme/Activity	Date	No. of Participants	Ref. Number as per 2020 Programme Plan
1.	Asian Interfaith Consultation on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy	27–31 January	25	HIV 2.1
2.	General Assembly Worship Preparation Team Meeting	2–4 February	3	GS 7
3.	Theological Consultation on General Assembly Theme	4–7 February	7	GS 7
4.	Skill-building Workshop for HIV Facilitators	19–20 February	30	HIV 1.1
5.	Meeting with the Local Arrangement Committee of the General Assembly	20 February	20	GS 7
6.	Health, Healing, and Wholeness in the Context of HIV	22–23, 29 February	455	HIV 1.3
7.	Youth Motivational Programme for Youth in Klasis Port Numbay (Klasis Jayapura)	24–26 February	21	HIV 1.3
8.	HIV Advocacy Meeting with Church-Based Organisations in Papua	21, 28 February	520	HIV 1.3
9.	Consultation on Contextual Theology and Sustainability of Creation	24–26 February	45	MU 1
10.	Advocacy Meeting with Parliament of the Papua Province, Papua Provincial Health Office, and other related organisations	27 February	7	HIV 1.3
11.	Webinar Series: Plight of Migrant Workers amidst the COVID-19 Crisis	30 April	100	BP 1

12.	Webinar Series: Churches in Asia Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis	7 May	100	MU 1
13.	Webinar Series: Right to Health amidst the COVID-19 Crisis	14 May	56	PD 8
14.	Webinar Series: Upholding the Rights and Dignity of Children amidst the COVID-19 Crisis	19 May	47	PD 5
15.	Webinar Series: Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia: Vital Needs and Post-Crisis Recovery	21 May	80	BP 3
16.	Asia Sunday—2020	24 May	22 leaders + 21,000 viewers	EF 6.1
17.	Webinar Series: Will COVID-19 Worsen Food Insecurity in Asia?	28 May	60	BP 5
18.	Advocacy at the UN Women Asia Pacific Region	17 June	3	PD 2
19.	Online Consultation on the ‘Vulnerabilities of HIV and AIDS—Challenges and Issues of Human Sexuality, Reproductive Health, and Gender Discrimination’	2–4 September	60	HIV 1.4
20.	Towards Wider Partnerships for Combatting Trafficking in Women and Girls amidst COVID-19	1 October	50	PD 4
21.	Virtual Prayer Service on World Food Day	16 October	50	BP 5
22.	Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI)—2020	2–30 November	36	EF 1
23.	National Consultative Meeting on Strengthening HIV and AIDS Advocacy in Bhutan	3–4 November	32	HIV 1.4
24.	Online Training on Good Governance for Churches and Related Organisations in Asia	25–27 November	20+36	PD 1.1



## Report of the General Secretary to CCA Executive Committee Meeting–2020

We are meeting at a time when the world is passing through the most decisive era in history. This virtual meeting of the CCA governing board will be recorded in the annals and archives of our organisation as the first of its kind. One of the most unexpected advantages of the COVID-19 pandemic has been the reduced pace warranted or demanded in our routine lifestyle. In the pre-COVID-19 era, we would complain about the hectic nature of our day-to-day life. We were so eloquent and proud of our special multitasking abilities, which actually only added to the chaos of our frenzied lifestyles. As we face the vicissitudes of our lives, we realise that we are ultimately very fragile beings. Our very existence is only a fraction of God's grand design. We are subject to the same laws that govern the rest of God's creation on the planet. We are also forced to remember that our anthropocentrism and our assumptions of centrality and superiority is futile at best and egoistic at worst.

The pandemic also reminds us that we are “a piece of the continent”—that beneath our artificial and arbitrary boundaries and differentiations of ethnicity, physical features, colour, language, and nationality lie the same fears, same longings, same pain, and ultimately, the same fate of mortality. We have been woven together in a rich tapestry by our great Creator with the threads of interdependence with each other and with all else on this planet.

We are, therefore, learning now to be a little kinder. The smiles we give our neighbours are brighter. The calls and messages to our dear ones scattered across the world are more frequent and important. The sense of community, of shared circumstances, and ultimately of solidarity, has become a little stronger.

### **Impact of the COVID-19 on the Church and Ecumenical Movement and the “New Normal”**

It is becoming more and more clear that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the ecumenical movement and its witness will be long-lasting and complex. We can no longer consider returning to the Church's and the ecumenical movement's prior and so-called “normal” functioning in most contexts. We need to construct and accept the “new normal.” This “new normal” is applicable not only in companies or in the secular framework, but in the Church and ecumenical movement as well.

In every sphere of life, we see new norms and regulations. At this point, none of us can predict what the future may hold. As we are beginning to envisage what shape this “new normal” might take, we also need to foresee the substantial changes in the ecumenical movement as the world emerges and evolves from the COVID-19 crisis. To meet the challenges of this “new normal”, the ecumenical movement also will have to re-invent the way it operates. It is our prayer and hope that the threat of the pandemic will ebb over the coming months, and the Church and the ecumenical movement will resume full functionality.

The digital transformation of our systems and information, which we assumed would happen in the distant future, was quickly accelerated and became our daily reality. The shift from centralised physical offices, where all staff sat at their desks, to remote and at-home work fundamentally changed the day-to-day operations of not only private corporate companies, but also churches and ecumenical organisations in many parts of the world. Almost overnight, even rural churches with the least digital access found ways to conduct online worship services. What was earlier considered unnecessary or irrelevant quickly became critically important.

### **CCA in the Context of the “New Normal”**

Starting from the end of March to June, the CCA office in Chiang Mai was under lockdown. We followed the Thai government’s instructions and guidelines. The office has been functional on a part-time basis from the first week of June and timings were rescheduled again in November, but we are still not fully back to normal and have not resumed our original timings and schedule.

During the lockdown period and in the subsequent months, CCA staff members have been involved in organising and facilitating several programmes virtually, despite all adversities, given the wide spread of COVID-19. This includes the month-long Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI), which is currently underway with the participation of 38 students across Asia, Europe and North America.

Seven webinars were organised during the lockdown period on the emerging issues and challenges caused by the pandemic. The CCA Webinar series focused on topics and issues such as “Churches Responding to the COVID-19 Crisis”, “Plight of Migrant Workers amidst the COVID-19 Crisis”, “Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on Women in Asia”, “Food Insecurity in Asia”, “Right to Health amidst the COVID-19 Crisis”, “Upholding the Rights and Dignity of Children amidst the COVID-19 Crisis”, and “Towards Wider Partnerships for Combatting Trafficking in Women and Girls amidst COVID-19”.

The Asia Sunday observance organised by CCA on 25 May 2020 witnessed the unprecedented virtual participation of 22,000 people from across the world.

Other programmes were also organised virtually since March 2020 and a detailed report will be shared in the next session.

### **An Update on CCA Programme Evaluation**

The Executive Committee Meeting held in Phnom Penh from 16 to 18 July 2019 approved the terms of reference for CCA programme evaluation from 2016 and appointed two external evaluators—Leo Bashyam and Helen Monisha Sarker. The evaluation process commenced on 30 September 2019. In a planning meeting held at the CCA headquarters from 30 September to 4 October 2019, the details of the evaluation process were worked out. The discussion finalised the CCA programmes where the evaluators would participate, the countries they would visit for interviews, and the selected participants of earlier programmes for surveys.

The survey questionnaire has been sent to all Executive Committee, Finance Committee, and Programme Committee members. A total of 30 programmes conducted since 2016 were selected at random and the survey questionnaire has been circulated among participants of these programmes. Focus group discussions and one-on-one telephonic interviews were conducted with the leadership of several CCA member churches and councils. The evaluators attended various programmes of CCA and directly interviewed and interacted with the participants. The review of all relevant documents—including annual Programme Reports, Minutes of various meetings since 2016, Finance Reports and CCA policies and guidelines—was completed.

According to the original plan and timeframe, the evaluation process was expected to conclude in the first half of 2020, with the draft report submitted to the Executive Committee in July 2020 and the final report to the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in September 2020. However, the COVID-19 situation hampered the ongoing evaluation process. The intention now is to complete the evaluation process by mid-2021.

### **An Update on CCA's 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Preparations**

The outbreak of the pandemic has had direct and indirect impacts on all aspects and plans. Our aim of holding the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly is no exception to these unique COVID-19-induced circumstances.

The CCA's 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly was slated to be held in Kerala, India, after the resolutions of the July 2019 meeting of the Executive Committee and subsequent discussions with our member churches and council in India.

A local organising committee was formed in India with representatives from CCA member churches and the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). In September 2019 and February 2020, the CCA staff core group and the local organising committee in India met and worked out several details of the proposed Assembly. Reservations were made for delegates' accommodation in two different hotels and a Convention Centre was finalised. However, at the last minute, the advance payments to the hotels and the Convention Centre were halted due to early warnings about the spread of COVID-19 by the first week of March. Ever since, we have been monitoring the COVID-19 situation and reports coming in from various Asian countries, with special attention to the situation in India.

Members of the Executive Committee might recall that they were informed about the proposal to postpone the date of the Assembly. I have been discussing with various Indian church leaders about the emerging COVID-19 situation and the changing policies of federal and state governments in the country. As the number of cases continues to rise exponentially, and with regard to the government policies concerning international travel and other health-related warnings, I have shared my reservations with the CCA Officers concerning the organisation of a major international event like the CCA General Assembly in India. I have also informally discussed these concerns with several Indian

church leaders. As there is no substantial improvement in the COVID-19 situation in India, we need to consider not only changing the date but also identifying another suitable venue for the 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly. We shall be discussing more details about this during another session in this meeting.

### **Financial Situation and Future Sustainability**

The financial situation and sustainability in the future have been points of discussion in all our previous Executive Committee meetings. The overall situation of contributions and income for the CCA to run its programmes and activities as well as to cover administrative and operational costs does not seem encouraging. The most recent accounts by the CCA's Hong Kong-based Investment Committee on the status of the CCA's investment portfolio in Hong Kong reported a net 10 percent depreciation in the value of the assets, given market fluctuations and the global economic downturn caused by the pandemic. Since the markets were unfavourable, making new purchases and investments were on pause. However, it is hoped that as the markets slowly pick up, the value of our assets would rise again.

As we all know, our main source of income is not from investments or fixed deposits but is generated through contributions from ecumenical partners and member churches. In this context, we need to reappraise the future financial sustainability of the CCA.

### **Property Development and the CCA Office Building Project**

Our discussions in the past Executive Committee meetings as well as our earlier decisions to commence the construction of the CCA office building and complex has not yet materialised due to various reasons. The Executive Committee meeting held in 2017 decided to consider the Finance Committee's proposal to implement the plan of using two plots out of the total of four plots, utilising 20,000 square feet to be divided for the purposes of CCA office space, meeting rooms, and an Asian Ecumenical Institute and Training Centre.

The initial proposal and decision was withheld in light of others, considering new land in other locations. Meanwhile, a new proposal came in at the end of 2019 from the Payap University leadership about the sale of a plot of land outside the main campus. When the land was inspected, it was found that hidden costs would be incurred during construction as the plot was low-lying and would need additional work to raise it to road level. However, the price of the land was not expected to come down.

We came to know about the government's decision to raise land taxes for vacant plots within the city, and so CCA had to plant 40 mango saplings in line with government specifications to deem the plot as agricultural land. This was also done to reduce the overall tax amount. What we need at this stage is to determine the next course of action. Although this may not be an appropriate time, it will be good to revert to the original decision in 2017 with a plan of using at least 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the land for the CCA's office complex. However, we must bear in mind that

the present period is not the optimal time to begin construction. If there is a firm blueprint in place, we may consider further progress once the COVID-19 situation is ameliorated. The Finance Committee decided, on 25 November 2020, to propose to the Executive Committee the following: “To develop 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the CCA’s land to construct the office building as soon as possible. The downturn of the construction industry caused by the pandemic could be advantageous in terms of reduced construction costs. This would also avoid the incorrect impression to ecumenical partners that the CCA has accumulated funds without using it for any other purposes, and CCA was quite self-sufficient and needed no financial support.” This Executive Committee meeting must discuss this proposal.

### **Our Hope for a New Beginning**

The news concerning effective vaccines and experimental drugs to fight the virus allow us to hope for a new beginning, despite any existential anxiety we have borne since the beginning of the year, or even the persistence of the fear of regressing to a worse situation; of a world dominated by vaccine nationalism and a lack of compassion or concern for one’s neighbour. We may even witness the further widening of the chasm between the privileged and the oppressed. We must be ready for the daunting tasks that await us. Any recovery and rebuilding now will take time as we will continue to be haunted by the spectre of this virus for generations to come. The latest news reported from Europe is again alarming as several European countries are on the verge of a second wave. Before we begin to pick up the pieces from this devastation, we must first and foremost acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic has morphed into a humanitarian crisis, from which healing will be impossible without God’s divine mercy and grace.

Our world today desperately needs God’s intervention as we develop a solution that is all-encompassing and mindful of not just humans but the entirety of creation. We need to re-examine our conscience and embrace each other at this time of our vulnerability. Even amidst hope, there is undoubtedly a question that we may harbour in our hearts—“Where is God amidst the pandemic?” We may even ask, “What is truly the best and most certain path to love, peace, happiness, and life in all abundance?”

The prophet Hosea posed this question to his religious community, the people of Israel. Hosea’s people lived in a time of great uncertainty, international tensions, and hostility among nations. They were tempted to place their security in their own material possessions and in their political alliances with other nations rather than in God. Hosea called his people to return to God and receive pardon, healing, and restoration. He reminded them that God would “heal their faithlessness and love them freely” (Hosea 14:4). God’s ways are right and God’s wisdom brings strength and blessing to those who follow and trust God.

Despite all our sufferings and difficulties, the message of the Gospel inspires and strengthens us as we continue to believe in the redeeming power of the love of God, the giver and sustainer of life. We believe that God does not abandon us. God is with us even now amidst these great tribulations. As we grapple with great uncertainty and apprehension, let us intensify our prayers and anchor ourselves in the



steadfastness of the promise of God. Our hope in God's abundant mercies and love will not disappoint us. Let us recall God's assurance: "Behold, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security." (Jeremiah 33:6).

26 November 2020  
Mathews George Chunakara  
*General Secretary, CCA*

## Abbreviations

AANDRoC	Asian Advocacy Network on Dignity and Rights of Children
ACISCA	Association of the Christian Institutes for Social Concerns in Asia
AEI	Asian Ecumenical Institute
AHRC	Asian Human Rights Commission
AINA	Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ATCHAA	Action Together in Combatting HIV and AIDS in Asia
CASA	Churches' Auxiliary for Social Action (India)
CCA	Christian Conference of Asia
CCDB	Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh
CCI	Communion of Churches in Indonesia ( <i>see: PGI</i> )
CIM	Christian Institute of Management
CLLT	Course for Leadership in Lay Training
COVID-19	The novel coronavirus disease first identified in China in 2019
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
EWAAV	Ecumenical Women's Action Against Violence
FABC	Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
GA	General Assembly (of the Christian Conference of Asia)
GAATW	Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IDPD	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPTL	Igreja Protestante iha Timor Lorosae (Protestant Church in East Timor)
KPA	Komisi Penanggulangan AIDS (Indonesia)
MINA	Myanmar Interfaith Network on AIDS
NAP+N	National Association of People Living with HIV in Nepal
NCCB	National Council of Churches in Bangladesh
NCCI	National Council of Churches in India
NCCJ	National Christian Council in Japan
NCCK	National Council of Churches in Korea
NCCP	National Council of Churches in the Philippines
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PGI	Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja Indonesia ( <i>see: CCI</i> )
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
REO	Regional Ecumenical Organisation
SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

SOGIE	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund (formerly, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund)
WCC	World Council of Churches
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

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## CCA Executive Committee Members 2015–2020

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### Officers

#### **Moderator**

Archbishop William T. P. Simarmata  
*Huria Kristen Batak Protestan in Indonesia*

#### **Vice Moderator**

Rev. Diana Tana  
*Te Runanga Whakawanaunga I Nga Nahi O Aoteroa*

#### **Treasurer**

Augustine Dipak Karmakar  
*Church of Bangladesh*

#### **General Secretary**

Dr Mathews George Chunakara  
*Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India*

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*Church of Pakistan*

Rt. Rev. Dhiloraj Canagasabey  
*Church of Ceylon*

Huang Shin-Yi  
*Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*

Ithrana Lawrence  
*Council of Churches in Malaysia*

Rev. Kim Jong-goo  
*Korean Methodist Church*

Rev. Kingphet Thammavong  
*Lao Evangelical Church*

Rev. Moises Antonio da Silva  
*Protestant Church in Timor Leste*

Nirmala Gurung  
*National Council of Churches in Nepal*

Bishop P. C. Singh  
*National Council of Churches in India*

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*United Church of Christ in the Philippines*

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*Armenian Orthodox Church in Iran*

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*National Christian Council in Japan*

Supaporn Yarnasarn  
*Church of Christ in Thailand*

Rev. Terence Corkin  
*Uniting Church in Australia*

Dr Tong Wing Sze  
*Hong Kong Christian Council*

Win Htut Thar Kyi  
*Myanmar Baptist Convention*

Rev. Kim Kyrie  
*Anglican Church in Korea*



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## CCA Programme Committee 2015–2020

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- Rev. Kim Kyrie (Chairperson)  
*Anglican Church in Korea*
- Agatha Abrahamian  
*Armenian Orthodox Church in Iran*
- Chhoden Tshering  
*National Christian Council of Bhutan*
- Rt. Rev. Dr Daniel S. Thiagarajah  
*Jaffna Diocese of Church of South India*
- Rev. Dr Henny William Booth Sumakul  
*The Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa, Indonesia*
- Rev. Evelyn Ruth Bhajan  
*Church of Pakistan*
- Kathy Min Din  
*Myanmar Council of Churches*
- Bishop Kuriakose Mar Theophilose  
*Malankara Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church*
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*United Methodist Church in the Philippines*
- Prof. Martha Mary Marwein  
*National Council of Churches in India*
- Mary Thomas  
*Council of Churches in Malaysia*
- Rev. Dr Mery Kolimon  
*Protestant Evangelical Church in Timor*
- Molina Karmaker  
*Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha*
- Bishop Philip Huggins  
*Anglican Church of Australia*
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*Methodist Church in Aotearoa New Zealand*

Dr Sawako Fujiwara

*National Christian Council in Japan*

Srey Sotheavy

*Kampuchea Christian Council in Cambodia*

Rev. Dr Stephen Arulampalam

*Church of Ceylon*

Tso Hiu-tung, Jessica

*Hong Kong Christian Council*

Victor Wan Chi Hsu

*Presbyterian Church in Taiwan*

## CCA Staff Members–2020

### General Secretariat (GS)

Dr Mathews George Chunakara

### Mission in Unity and Contextual Theology (MU)

Rev. Jung Eun Grace Moon

Chalvin Kores Tehuayo

### Ecumenical Leadership Development and Spirituality (EF)

Rosiana Purnomo

### Building Peace and Moving Beyond Conflicts (BP)

Dr Reynaldo Racaza Ty (until July 2020)

Sunila Ammar

Ruth Mathen

### Prophetic Diakonia and Advocacy (PD)

Dr Ronald Lalthanmawia

Jay Roy Tipayan

Patchayotai Boontama (until February 2020)

### Communications

Hlaing Yadanar Htun, Meemee

Jessica Richard (until July 2020)

### Finance & Accounts

Friona Kallyani Sarkar

Nathi Schumann

Della Lee

### Administration, Library, House Service

Netnapa Rattanajiamrangsri

Arpa Yai-Chid

Wittaya Makasuk





**2020**

**PROGRAMME  
REPORT**