MUJIB 100

Towards Strengthening Community Resilience & Global Connectedness

Opening Issue

Community
Social Work
Practice &
Development
Foundation

CSWPD

www.cswpd.com

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Editor's Note

M. Habibur Rahman
A promising Social Worker
Founding President
CSWPD Foundation

I would like to convey my sincere regards to you all for your kind presence and wishes to *Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD)* Foundation to mark its 3rd Founding Anniversary Ceremony and inauguration of its international newsletter **'COMMUNITY TALKS'**. CSWPD Foundation is a non-profit and purely non-political community services organization registered by Joint Stock Companies Bangladesh since January 2018. Being a promising social worker and founder of the organization, I am quite hopeful regarding the vision and mission statement of CSWPD Foundation, which are positively aligned with the **'Vision 2030'** and **'Vision 2041'** of our country. We desire to see a sound, livable and sustainable community with assessment, exploration and understanding problems through strengths justification of every member. We love to transform our existing community resilient and self-reliant through empowering people of all walks of life. We are promising to establish global community level platform with a motive of 'Share and Care' of the community peoples' thoughts and grievances for suitable and sustainable resolution through this Community Talks, which is basically a community leader's platform, where everybody will be treated equally dignified and valuable in terms of their latent and hidden capacities.

I am very thankful to all respected authors and contributors for their precious thoughtful expressions in writing on different contemporary issues pertinent to current global communities. I also convey my gratitude and sincerity to distinguished guests who encouraged us by their physical and virtual presence both from home and abroad.

I should express my heartiest felicitation and indebtedness to my working team, volunteers, and advisers who really extended tremendous efforts to make this event and publication successful. Finally, I wish all of your sound health and safe stay during invisible enemy Covid19.

M. Habibur Rahman

MESSAGE

On the auspicious occasion of the Mujib 100 Year, the year declared to celebrate the centennial birth anniversary of the father of the nation of Bangladesh, Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I am indeed delighted to know that the Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation is going to celebrate its 3rd Founding Anniversary on 20th January 2021 and launch an International Community Talks Newsletter. I do firmly anticipate that this aforesaid organization will definitely play a very vital role to extend social services through practicing social work towards sustainable development of country and contribute fulfilling the dream of 'Sonar Bangla' of the father of the nation. So far, I know, the CSWPD Foundation is committed towards bringing a sustainable resilient community through the empowerment of the disadvantaged, oppressed and back warded as well as psycho-socially problematic group of the society especially poor, destitute women and helpless children, transgender, ignorance, domestic violence, drug addiction, violation of rights and susceptibility find themselves deprived and oppressed in many ways which are closely aligned to the vision 2041 of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh. I do believe that the CSWPD Foundation will continue its efforts to enhance overall sustainable community development in the coming days.

I extend my warm greetings and felicitations to all those associated with the CSWPD Foundation and wish the inaugural celebration of International Community Talks Newsletter all success.

Allah Hafez.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabondhu
Long live Bangladesh

MD. Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru, MP

মোঃ ফরিদুল হক খান, এমপি
প্রতিমন্ত্রী
ধর্ম বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয়
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

MESSAGE

It is my pleasure to know that the Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation is going to celebrate its 3 Foundation Anniversary on 20th January 2021 and launch an International Community Talks Newsletter. On the long-cherished occasion of the Mujib 100 Year, the year that is declared to celebrate the centennial birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh, Bangabondhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, I firmly believe that this aforesaid organization will definitely play a significant role to ensure community building services through practicing social work towards sustainable development of the country to fulfill the dream of ' Sonar Bangla'. So far, I could come to know that the CSWPD Foundation is promised to bring a sustainable, resilient community through empowering the disadvantaged, oppressed and backwarded as well as socially problematic group of the society keeping the positive alignment of the 'Vision-2041' of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I do believe that the CSWPD Foundation will continue its efforts to enhance overall sustainable community development in the coming days.

I convey my best wishes and warm greetings to all those people who are associated with the CSWPD Foundation and wish the inaugural celebration of International Community Talks Newsletter all success.

Allah Hafez.

Joy Bangla, Joy Bangabandhu
Long live Bangladesh.

18/01/2021

MD. Faridul Haque Khan, MP

Forward Message

Professor Dr. Brij Mohan
Dean Emeritus, LSU School of Social Work, USA

I am delighted to know that Associate Professor Habibur Rahman's Community Social Work Practice and Development Foundation is celebrating its 3rd year. A progressive event during this historical coronavirus crisis calls for hearty congratulations. Forty thousand Americans lost lives in the wake of this pandemic in a single day (January 7, 2021) on the heels of a violent attack by a racist mob instigated by their delusional President. This is a snapshot from the hallowed corridors of civility, affluence and democracy. A world plagued by inequality, injustice and Covid 19 has become a surreal planet where its inhabitants are endangered by its own trappings: catastrophic landscapes punctuated by man-made horrors that are detrimental to mental health and human wellness.

When existential stressors endanger health and well-being, world leaders, community organizers, NGOs and other gatekeepers of society, must seriously consider reconstruction of basic social institutions that organization that are conducive to social development improving healthier environment, non-toxic workplaces, productive occupations and holistic arrangements that promote egalitarian values, common joy, and developmental projects at the expense of mayhem, chaos and dehumanization.

Sapiens are "unfinished" products of the evolutionary process. It's incumbent on all peoples to rebuild institutional infrastructure and human relationships that mitigate anxiety, depression and varied mental and spiritual aspects of life which enlighten and improve the human condition.
www.brijmohan.org

Professor Dr. Brij Mohan

Forward Message

Antonina Dashkina

President of Union of social workers and social pedagogues of Russia,
Chief editor of «Social work» magazine.

Today is a very important day for members and friends of Community Social Work Practice and Development Foundation. This organisation is 3 years old today. Should we say – only 3 years or 3 years already ?

I think we can say both – this organisation is only 3 years old but have already done a lot to bring practicing social workers, professors of social work from all over the world together.

Often a lot depends on the leader of organisation – it can be factory, plant, university, social services institution etc – and the successful ones have very motivated and passionate leaders. We as friends of CSWPD Foundation are very privileged to have Habibur Rahman to be at the head of this organisation because of the several reasons:

- My country Russia had a chance to talk about the role of social workers in Russian Federation;

- We got to know a lot about social work and social developments in Bangladesh;

- We all met many new friends from all over the world which would not be possible without Foundation;

- During pandemia the role of Foundation was even more important as we could discuss the activities of social workers being on the front line helping our clients.

My strong belief is that each serious organisation has to have a magazine, booklet, leaflet, newspaper. In Russia for instance we have a «Social work» magazine which is the mass media tool of the Union of social workers and social pedagogues of Russia. It is produced 6 times a year and very popular among social workers of my country.

I am very happy that today the Foundation is launching its newsletter. It will by all means contribute to the work of Foundation and will make its important work a historical significance.
Good luck, Foundation! All the best, newsletter ! Thank you, Habibur Rahman!

Antonina Dashkina

Message

I am highly pleased to know that Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation is going to celebrate its 3rd Founding Anniversary followed by launching an International Community Talks Newsletter on 20th January 2021. It is my belief that CSWPD Foundation will continue its efforts to enhance human well-being and help meet the prior human needs of community people with specific attention and care to the needs and necessities by enabling and empowering people through social work practice in community level.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all professionals of CSWPD Foundation for extending such precious efforts towards community sustainability which will act as additional supporting force beside government initiatives to achieve the Vison 2030 and 2041 of our country. I do heartily appreciate their endeavor to quarterly publish the International Community Talks Newsletter which will be a pioneering community-based knowledge sharing platform.

Md. Shirajul Islam Mollah
Honorable Chairman, Board of Trustees
The People's University of Bangladesh
Former Member of Parliament
Narsingdi (Constituency 03)

Message

It is my pleasure to know that the Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation is going to launch An International Community Talks Newsletter at the gracious celebration of its 3rd Founding Anniversary on 20th January 2021. I have been in touch with the community based human wellbeing activities of the aforesaid organization over the last couple of years, those really fascinated me. I hope the CSWPD Foundation will continue its efforts to keep connecting and empowering people from all walks of life towards creating a human friendly society through their community engaging activities.

I would like to convey my profound gratitude and congratulation to every single person involved with the endeavor of the organization in community building initiatives and extend my best wishes for the up coming international community talks newsletter.

Professor Dr. Shamima Nasrin Shahed
Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
University of Dhaka
Honorable Member Secretary, Board of Trustees
The People's University of Bangladesh

Message

I highly appreciate the efforts of the "Community Social Work Practice and Development (CSWPD)Foundation and its undertakings since its initiation three years ago. I have always welcomed any form of community development or kindness towards parts of the society who require it the most, and thus this endeavor by CSWPD excites me to the fullest.

Finally, I look forward to a successful launch of the Community Talks Newsletter.

Professor Dr. A.K.M Salahuddin
Vice-Chancellor
The People's University of Bangladesh
3/2 Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka-1207

Message

Md. Saiful Islam
Additional Secretary
Ministry of Social Welfare
The People's Republic of Bangladesh

It's my pleasure to convey my best wishesto the Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation on their 3rd Founding Anniversary followed by launching an International Community Talks Newsletter on 20th January 2021. I would really appreciate the human wellbeing activities extended by the vibrant team of CSWPD Foundation over the years. Their efforts and engagement in creation of social cohesion and community resilience are very positively aligned with the national social security services provided by the Ministry of Social Welfare of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

I do heartily appreciate and encourage their attempt to quarterly publish the International Newsletter "Community Talks" which will be a pioneering step insharing community-based knowledge.

Md. Saiful Islam

Message

Kamrunnessa Ashraf Dina
President of Bangladesh Mohila Awamileague
Netrokona District Committee
Executive Director of Shram Unnayan Sangstha-SUS

I am really delighted and honoared to say a few words on the auspicious occasion of 3rd Founding Anniversary of Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation and inaugural ceremony of very prestigious International Community Talks Newsletter. The social service efforts extended towards community transformation and resilience of this organization are praised nationally and globally as well over the last few years. In particular, their tremendous efforts pertaining to 'No Mask No Service' monthlong national awareness campaign has already drawn remarkable attention. I hope the CSWPD Foundation will step forward to empower common people and keep contributing to build a well-being society.

I congratulate everyone who is connected with the CSWPD Foundation and wish the foundation all the very best in future endeavors.

Kamrunnessa Ashraf Dina

Message

Shale Ahmed
Executive Director
Bandhu Social Welfare Society

It is my pleasure to convey my best regards to the proactive team of Community Social Work Practice & Development (CSWPD) Foundation on their 3rd Founding Anniversary followed by launching an International Community Talks Newsletter on 20th January 2021. I especially appreciate all wonderful efforts made by the organization over the last couple of years to promote social work profession and community building through recapitalizing its resources. I am amazed bytheir dedication and engagement in enhancing social solidarity, capacity building and community resilience are very positively aligned with vision 2030 and 2041 where no one is left behind.

I do appreciate and encourage their cordial initiative to quarterly publish the International Newsletter "Community Talks" which will be of course a pioneering step in sharingand amplifying community-based knowledge.

Shale Ahmed

Message

Md. Zakir Hossain
Executive Director
Rural Development Organization

This is our pleasure of Rural Development Organization (RDO), Kachikata, Gurudaspur, Natore, Bangladesh to congratulate CSWPD Foundation on their 3rd Founding Anniversary and special launching ceremony of Community Talks international Newsletter. We firmly believe that the said organization will keep huge impact on community building activities in future through human well-being activities and empowering disadvantaged people of the society. We really have become very impressed to observe and participate as associate to their Monthlong National Mask Wear Awareness Campaign, which added additional importance with the government 'No Mask No Service' slogan to motivate mass people.

I on behalf of RDO family would like to convey my heartiest thanks to all who are associated with their journey to achieve the success.

Md. Zakir Hossain

Consanguinity, Inbreeding and their effect on Probability of Autism in Inbred Communities across the World

Professor Dr. P.C. Sarker
Vice-Chencellor, Royal University of
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Introduction

Consanguineous marriage is referred to a marital union among close biological kin. In clinical genetics, it is called the relationship by marriage between first and second cousins. Consanguineous marriage is most common in the Middle East, West Asia and North Africa in general and particular to Bangladesh among the Muslims (Darr and Model, 1988; Al-Gazali, 2014). Rate of consanguineous marriage in different countries are dependent on different factors like education level, religion, local tradition, and socio-economic status. Studies over several decades have shown that there is a high correlation between consanguineous marriage and inherited congenital malformation (Fuster and Colantonio, 2004). The offspring of consanguineous parents are at a risk of a host of disease like cancer, mental disorders, hypertension, hearing deficit, diabetes mellitus, epilepsy, asthma, leukemia, congenital and non- congenital heart diseases. Studies revealed that consanguineous marriage is significantly high among the Muslims across the world.
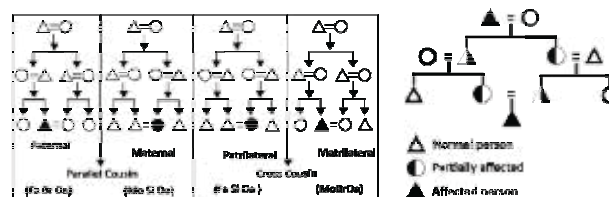
Theoretical Framework

The word consanguinity comes from the two Latin words "con" meaning shares and "sanguis" meaning blood. Consanguinity describes a conjugal relationship between two people who share an ancestor, or share blood. Such marriages are favored by different populations usually bound to traditional customs, beliefs, and values and to keep property in united form within the family. On the other hand, autism is a development disorder characterized by a pattern of impaired social interactions and restricted or repetitive patterns of behavior. It is a complex, lifelong disability that typically becomes apparent during the first three years of life. However, the condition is often missed and not diagnosed until later in a child's life, especially when the condition is mild or even moderate in severity. Autism is associated with inbreeding due to consanguinity. Inbreeding describes the mating between two blood relative i.e. consanguineous relatives.

Consanguinity, Inbreeding and Autism

A model is enclosed here about the cross and parallel cousin marriage and how inbreeding takes place and thus affects autism.

Autism and Related Problems

Children with difficulties or differences in relating and communicating may fall within a broad spectrum of diagnoses or challenges that includes language processing disorders, attention disorders, sensory or regulatory disorders, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. These challenges often involve a number of different underlying difficulties, including:

- Taking in sensations or information: the child may be under or over reactive to the information received through his senses of vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste and body awareness.

- Processing information: the child may have difficulty understanding or organizing the sensory information he or she receives.

- Planning or executing responses: the child may have trouble using his body or his thoughts to respond to the information he has taken in.

Discussions and Conclusions

Research on autism in Bangladesh is still in its infancy and needs organization efforts to be fruitful. Intensive research is needed to determine the most effective and efficient means of improving diagnosis and service delivery for the autistic children of Bangladesh where consanguinity, inbreeding and autism are associated with culture in terms of customs, beliefs and values. For example, the royal houses of Europe where royal families often married among each other, because tradition did not allow them to marry people of non-royal class and as a result it affects the mental retardation and physical deformation of their offspring. Under the circumstances, the results of this research paper will able to contribute to the knowledge of the planners, policy makers, practitioners, and researchers to take initiative to prevent consanguinity through cross cousin and parallel cousin marriage to get rid of autism of inbred community in Bangladesh to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the future generations for human resource development.

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Social work in Time of Crises

Annamaria Campanini
President IASSW
Retired Prof. PhD. Milano Bicocca University

We are living in a very difficult period. The COVID 19 pandemic is still affecting many countries around the world and some of them are going through the second or also the third wave of contagion. Difficulties in facing this pandemic are increasing both under health and social sides. Social work, in its different components, professional and academic, is at the forefront with an incredible engagement. As International Association of Schools of Social Work we have received a lot of information about what social work academics, researchers, students and practitioners have been doing to safeguard the health and well-being of the communities during this pandemic, but also how teaching and learning methodologies have been innovated using online tools.

A comprehensive and interesting document has been edited by Lena Dominelli and others, collecting 16 reports from different countries and a very extensive addendum from China (https://www.iassw-aiets.org/covid-19/5369-covid-19-and-social-work-a-collection-of-country-report/.) This unbelievable situation makes clear, once more, the interconnectedness and interdependencies that characterise the modern social work life, encompassing economic, political, social, interpersonal, technological, environmental and cultural aspects between all the different parts of the world. Social work needs to assume a global awareness that enhances the ability to transcend their preoccupation with the local and contextualize the problems within a broad global setting (eg. demographic changes, migration, managerialism….). Different are the crisis that affect our time, not only the pandemic, although this phenomenon can exacerbate many problems that are always present in our context.

Neoliberalism and Managerialism

Neoliberalism aims to reduce the size and influence of aspects of the state, increase deregulation and promote private enterprise, with the belief that, as the state has less responsibility, its financial requirements diminish than resulting in lower taxation rates, which is considered good for economic growth.However, the consequence of neoliberalism has been the widening of social inequality and consolidation of wealth by the richest in society, with policies that contributed to economic crisisand also impacted on the social field. Many people from the middle classes have been pushed into poverty and exclusion, they are the 'new poor' that contribute to the vast expansion of social work's client base. On the other side, the social welfare system has been affected by cut of public expenditure with increasingly restricted welfare benefit. Concern about efficiency and effectiveness are on the top of managerial regulation of social services, with a diminishing professional discretion amongst social workers, that have to follow guidelines, standard and procedures that increased the bureaucratization of the profession.

The emphasis on the individual responsibility and activation measures, discourages collective solutions that promote solidarity and social justice. If social workers want to be active players in the restructuring of welfare systems, it is imperative that they rediscover the connections between politics, social policy and social services The challenge for social workers is to understand the political dimensions involved in decision making regarding the provision of social services and the connection between the local and the global in order to provide professional practice with a policy practice interventions, aimed at achieving social justice and human rights. It is important that they don't lose faith in the possibilities for change, resisting unethical demands and, in close collaboration with user participation movements, find the path to build a better world based on social justice.

Individualism and importance of relationship

One other effect of the liberalist logics that have invaded also the welfare system, is the focus on individualism and consumerism. It is more important than in the past to reflect on the meaning and the effects of the professional action that cannot be limited to the bureaucratic provision of resources, be they few or many. Social workers should rediscover the heart of the professional intervention: acceptance, listening, identification of capabilities and not only problems in the client's situation, dialogue to grasp the other in its wholeness. Should consider their positioning not as experts who adopt an instructive logic, but as a professional that can temporarily accompany the person in his life, developing a collaboration process towards possible change. Social work since its inception has fixed the helping relationship as a central element of the professional intervention and the use of this tool can be considered at various levels, all extremely important.

Every day social workers are involved in dealing with circumstances where relationships are disrupted by tensions and conflicts, that can affect people who use the services, their families, the community in which they live. But also, at more general level, contexts when professionals have to deal with colleagues, administrators, social actors in the society. Moreover, there are occurrences where it is necessary to link the issue of relations with rights, to ensure that these are respected and where is needed to find a balance between possible concurrent rights. In these situations, social workers are engaged in interventions aimed to reduce the marginalization of those who are often invisible, developing participatory processes in communities, directed to increase health and well-being for all and to promote sustainable development

Climate change, environment and sustainable development

Issues related to sustainability and climate change have had and will continue to have a significant influence on social work and social work education. As stipulated in the Paris Agreement 'climate change represents an urgent and potentially irreversible threat to human societies and the planet', and is a 'common concern of humankind'. As research indicates, social work educators know that the effects of natural disasters are affecting the

world population in a different way. The poor and marginalized people such as children, women, older and disabled people, and those displaced by such crises like (im)migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are the most vulnerable and the small communities are likely to be the most severely affected by climate change impacts and yet are least equipped to cope and adapt.

Climate change and disaster interventions require the development of new theories and practices that enhance social workers' capacities to intervene in such situations. Social workers have an important role in piloting and building community-based projects to enhance the resiliency of communities, and/or the ecosystems on which they rely, in response to climate change impacts. They should become involved with local communities to develop alternative sustainable models of socio-economic development that acknowledge global interdependency and the need to share green technologies.

The social work profession can play an important role in the achievement of the SDGs that have the inclusion at the core of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development. This can be done by revitalizing the term 'partnerships', by ensuring the meaningful empowerment, inclusion and capacity building of all citizens, in order to address the growing and interlinked challenges that our society is facing, to support the long-term development of communities and societies, to protect our endangered environment. Target groups and individuals has to be considered not as mere beneficiaries anymore, but rather as change makers, equals and partners in our pursuit towards a better world.

Migration, discrimination, racism
The migrations phenomenon is increasing not only in number but also in complexity: economic migrants, refugees, asylum sicker, but also human trafficking, contemporary slavery, unaccompanied minors and undocumented migrants are different facets of the same reality. Social workers are deeply implicated in defining and assessing need and in shaping the nature of the responses to need, and navigating between the context of national eligibility criteria and legal status and taking into consideration transnational factors that define the contours of migration. There are many ethical challenges in defining appropriate responses to issues of migration.

In the last decade, there has been an alarming upsurge in intolerance, discrimination, racism and xenophobia in the form of outright violence against migrants in practically every region of the world. Racism may be aggravated by inequitable distribution of wealth, marginalization and social exclusion. Social workers need to use an anti-discriminatory and anti-oppressive practice and be able to respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each. Cultural competence also requires the ability to recognize the convergence and disparity between the values of the dominant society and those of historically oppressed, underrepresented, and underserved population.

These are only few aspects that social workers have to face in our society. Social work education should be able to prepare a truly integrated international profession that reflects social work's capacity to respond appropriately and effectively, to the various global challenges that are having a significant impact on the well-being of large sections of the world's population. Should be based on an integrated-perspectives approac synthetizes global, human rights, ecological, and social development perspectives of international situations and responses to them that will fit with the characteristic of the local needs. For this reason, internationalization of curricula has to be provided not as alternative but as fundamental complementary element of preparation for today social workers

Where do we go to from here?

Ruth Stark
Social Worker, President IFSW (2014-18)

2020 and 2021 mark a period of great change in the world. The impact of a global pandemic compared to a local disaster like a flood or earthquake is that it affects many more people in different countries, with different cultural and political perspectives. It therefore challenges us in our understanding of globalisation and how we work together internationally.

The fundamental principles of responding to immediate need are common features in all post disaster work. The work done in the last ten years in IFSW Asia/Pacific region on responses to disasters has given world leadership in developing our knowledge of what is needed beyond the response to the initial crisis. It has informed the evolution of the Global Agenda 2020-2030 which are now focused on strategies for shaping our joint sustainable futures.

- **Valuing Social Work as an Essential Service**
  Realising the essential role of the social work profession to connect people, communities and systems, to co-build sustainable communities and to contribute to liveable futures.

  Resourcing the profession with legal recognition, respectful working conditions, education and continuing professional development and supporting professional associations.

- **Co-building Inclusive Social Transformation**
  Co-building with peoplefamilies, communities,

social movements and governments to achieve inclusive social transformation locally, nationally, regionally and globa Promoting participatory democracy, gender equality, action to address racism, economic sustainability and climate justice.

- **Ubuntu: ´I am because we are´**
  Nurturing relationships are central to the social work profession in all aspects of our work. Promoting indigenous knowledge and the decolonisation of the social work profession.

- **Transforming Social Protections Systems**
  Transforming social protections systems to secure the human dignity and rights of all peoples. Strengthening connections for security and change. Promoting harmony in relationships and a way of living between peoples, communities and mother earth.

- **Promoting Diversity and the Power of Joint Social Action**
  Celebrating the strengths of all people and their active role in leading social development. Working together to co-design and co-build thriving communities and societies for people and the environment.

In starting to develop this agenda IFSW is focusing on ubuntu a south African indigenous term that speaks to our inter-relatedness with each other. As the pandemic has unfolded, we have seen borders raised between countries, economic gaps widening and subsequent deepening of social problems in many countries. Sometimes this erupts in violence as people cry out to be heard. Our social work principles of love and inclusion, respect for each person, will be fundamental in our role in the coming months and years in co-designing and co-producing with our communities a safer and more sustainable world for us all to share.

Congratulations on your work in the last 3 years for this important contribution through your Community Social Work Practice & Development Foundation and I wish you well for the future.

Ageism, neoliberalism, older people and the Covid-19 pandemic

Malcolm Payne

Emeritus professor, Manchester Metropolitan University; Honorary Professor, Kingston University London.

The international research shows that the older people are, the more likely they are to catch Covid-19 and to die from the disease. That susceptibility intersects with other susceptibilities, for example, people with pre-existing health conditions. People in these groups, therefore, are even more likely to contract the disease and die from it as they grow older. Among all the other issues to be faced, therefore, public policy and social work practice must deal with the impact on older people of the 2020 coronavirus pandemic. Older people themselves reacted emotionally, psychologically and in their social relations to their understanding of the situation and services need to respond to their special needs. Services will also have to provide for older people's needs for protection and treatment.

Health emergencies such as the pandemic always illuminate underlying values and political ideologies: cultural attitudes and policy predispositions stand revealed. An important barrier to effective policy and social work actions is the priority in dominant economic and political policy to the neoliberal assumption that gives priority to maintaining the economy above the health, social relations and even the lives of older people. Neoliberal economic policies ramped up rates of infection because governments sought to maintain economic activity rather than emphasise public health infection control measures.

Neoliberal economics encouragesgeism, devaluing older people, because they do not contribute to the economy. This is an influential cultural discourse in Western countries, and contests the respect given to age and experience in some cultures. While older people may be valued for their past contributions, or out of family or community attachments, younger people are seen as the future. Their medical treatment, their work and the freedom to live their lives was a great public concern in many Western countries, amplified by the media.

Advised mainly by doctors and public health professionals, governments prioritized hospital services and social restrictions to prevent virus transmission for the benefit of the young and thought little about the psychological and social consequences for older people affected by lack of care and social isolation.

Community social care provision was closed down or made inaccessible by public health measures and community involvement of older people in volunteering and caring for their grandchildren or other people in their community was lost. Although end-of-life and bereavement care was needed because of increasing COVID-19 deaths, little guidance was offered to support this as part of Covid-19 treatment. Palliative care services came under pressure and were de-prioritized in favour of hospital treatment including the distribution and provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect front-line staff working with Covid-19 patients.

Governments knew little about the infrastructure of social provision that supports the resilience of older people's lives in the community and had not planned to maintain it in a healthcare emergency. The frailest older people are usually housed in care homes (long-term care facilities – LTCFs). These have been poorly funded over the years and were staffed by poorly-paid, devalued employees unable to deliver services with PPE that would enable them to work safely. Sick and elderly people were clustered together in these often-over-crowded buildings which were difficult to adapt so that residents were protected from respiratory

infections, even though older people are most likely to suffer such infections, and financial pressures and the needs of hospitals meant that full capacity was a more important priority than safe and appropriate care.

Strict infection control measures aimed at protecting younger people in the community, meant that residents, even those with dementia, were cut off from family and friends. In some countries, residents with COVID-19 were refused treatment in hospital or discharged to care homes that were unable to cope with caring for them safely. Discharge support and care outside hospitals was unsatisfactory.

Social workers, therefore, have to ask serious questions about the world-wide failure to plan to protect older people in the Covid-19 pandemic, even though their vulnerability to respiratory conditions was known, particularly in crowded LTCFs. Reports from Medicin sans Frontières and Helpage International, available on the Internet, show how badly prepared many countries were to help older people during the pandemic and how disadvantaged they were.

Helpage International publishes many reports on the situation in Asian countries: https://www.helpage.org/resources/publications/ Medicin sans Frontières has a wide range of reports based on its work in 70 countries, and long-term reflection and evaluation on human rights in health and social concern: https://www.msf.org/covid-19

Resurgence of Nationalism, Fundamentalism, and Fascism in South Asia: Implications for Social Work Education and Practice

Golam M. Mathbor, MSW, Ph.D.
Professor, School of Social Work
Monmouth University, New Jersey, USA

South Asia is comprised of the following eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One fourth of the world population lives in this region. This region is situated between the Himalayas on the North and the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal on the South. It houses peoples of many ethnic groups, linguistic communities, major religious persuasions, and numerous economic and professional categories. Its songs and dances, its poetry and literature, its folklores and philosophies, its sages and saints draw on a tradition that is thousands of years old.

This land has been conquered many times for its riches but never completely defeated. The Pathans, the Mughals, the British have all had their day but people have stood firm, fought back, and in the end prevailed. British colonialists ruled this region for more than 200 years. The language, the literature, the arts, the culture, and the people as a whole are richer because of those contacts.This region has been able to hold on to its democratic processes, in spite of the numerous obstacles thrown at it periodically. However, currently there is a resurgence of nationalism, fundamentalism, and fascism in this region. Some political parties are using religion as an instrument to divide people and

to stay in power by taking advantage of this mechanism. People with a fundamentalist agenda are further taking advantage by dividing people, both within and between the countries. Nationalism is another technique countries are trying to utilize to cause severe tension on borders between and among the countries.

All these elements have severe consequences for the social safety net prevalent in the region. Residual approach of use of social safety nets is a major impediment to social development in the south Asia region. This is because countries in the region have never recognized social work as a profession. Because no professional organizations exist in the region that can advocate on behalf of the vulnerable constituents of the region, the result is that the population is becoming gradually marginalized, disenfranchised, and disentitled.

Social work has often been considered as a profession to work with beggars and vagrants in the region. Social work education does exist, but university trained social work graduates with bachelor and master's degrees take other positions in the civil services and are reluctant to join as social workers,even with some positions available. Social work curriculum in the region is mainly focuses on community development approaches because of the history and long tradition of the regional culture. Receiving mental health treatment from an institution is-still seen as a stigma in the region.

Social work is a professional discipline deeply grounded in human rights and social justices since its inception. Social workers have a role to offer in ensuring that progress is made in addressing systemic inequity, inequality, and injustice. As a professional discipline, social workers promote individual, family, and community well-being in behavioral health care, child welfare, schools, hospitals, local social services, community agencies, advocacy organizations, and with veterans across the United States (CSWE 1/18/2021). Recognition of social work as a profession in South Asian countries is Social work is well-positioned to address the global resurgence of nationalism, fundamentalism, fascism, etc. and to provide comprehensive responses grounded in social work ethics and

practice.Inherent in social work practice is the fact that services are provided to all. The focus of social work is practice for the good of humanity, and discrimination is not an option. Social work provides services to people from all different backgrounds, and there must never be practice based on nationalism, fundamentalism and fascism. However, within practice, both domestically in South Asian countries and globally, social workers will face these issues and must be trained in how to work in any type of discriminatory environment. Besides meeting the needs of the population of a country, social workers can support people to act accordingly to be good citizens of their countries. It is a delicate balance to create harmony between the dissidence of extremist views and the rule of law, but with proper training, social workers should be able to meet the challenge. Social education prepare us not only by providing the necessary knowledge base and skills, but also by enabling us to become advocates for the vulnerable constituents of our global population. Solidarity among professional organizations throughout the region need to be fomented in order to hold the violation of human rights predators' misdeeds that are causing deprivation among billion people in the region of personal and situational factors. Retaining one's job and having a loving and caring family and being cocooned from the immediate effects of the virus might serve as buffers against fear, anxiety

Covid-19: Mental health and meaning making

Dr. Vishanthie Sewpaul
Emeritus Professor, University of Kwazulu Matal, South Africa
Professor, University of Stavanger, Norway

As Covid-19 took the world by storm in 2020 many of us felt we were walking the tightrope of a

science fiction, caught in a whirlwind of rising infections and deaths, job losses, crashing economies, closed borders, lockdowns, and stay-at-home orders. Some degrees of fear and anxiety are anticipated responses to an invisible virus wreaking havoc across the globe, accentuated by much disinformation and conspiracy theories about the virus, and its antidote – the vaccines. Given the impacts of colonialism and neo-colonialism, narrow nationalism, corporate greed, and rampant global racism one can understand the skepticism. Now that the vaccines are out, the added anxieties for some are that if persons of colour, and certain nationalities, do not die of what they think is a human engineered virus, then they will die from the vaccines. Mistrust abounds and when this happens it renders people more uncertain, fearful and anxious. Engaging in meaningful dialogue, evaluating conflicting and contradictory messages, being reflexive, and listening to scientific evidence, will help to assuage some of the fears and tensions at individual and community levels.

How we respond to Covid-19 depends on a range of personal and situational factors. Retaining one's job and having a loving and caring family and being cocooned from the immediate effects of the virus might serve as buffers against fear, anxi and depression. In contrast, those who have lost jobs, are experiencing family strife, domestic violence, loneliness, are infected or affected directly, or have lost loved ones to Covid-19 might be more prone to mental health challenges. There is no shame in any of this. On the contrary, there is virtue in reaching out and receiving help when necessary. When we give ourselves permission to receive help, and deal with our feelings and life circumstances, we give permission to others to do the same, and - in our strengthened selves - we give off ourselves to others around us.

Covid-19 has laid bare the embodied vulnerability of all of humanity, with a challenge to bear witness to our fates as we care for ourselves and others or see ourselves as victims of fate. The lines between witness and victim can be fluid and thin, with shifting circumstances, the meanings attached to Covid-19, and our beliefs. At its inception the

following kinds of questions gripped the world's attention: Would Covid-19 be the great equalizer that the world is so much in need of? Would it further exacerbate existing inequalities and power imbalances? Is Covid-19 going to be the great liberator that frees humankind from the chains of its own greed? Would it induce a fundamental re-ordering of human values and help heal the world? Might it force us to acknowledge what we have always known, but choose to ignore – the profound and inextricable inter-connectedness between the Self and the universe? Is this the harbinger of a global collective awakening of consciousness? A warning that if we, as human beings, refuse to take care of the whole of nature, nature will find ways of taking care of itself? There are those who believe that we are at a conjectural, evolutionary moment with the manifestation of the virus at this time, and ask what lessons are to be learnt from the pandemic.

Being witness to our suffering and those around us, rather than hapless victims, being engaged, reaching out to others, and meaning-making, are ways of remaining resilient. Covid-19 makes us confront our own primordial fears of illness, aloneness, incapacitation, and death, which can be sources of deep introspection and profound growth or debilitating anxiety. Some have attributed to the virus liberating and/or oppressive potential. It is the nature of the virus to destroy; it's liberating or oppressive potential rests on how we choose to respond to it. Our mental well-being and resilience can come from knowing that we do truly live in an inter-dependent world – the suffering of one, is the suffering of all, and that what we do need are the more pervasive, powerful and permeating forces of love, care, kindness and compassion for Self and Other, empathy and solidarity.

Giving and Gratitude During COVID

Mark A. Reinecke, PhD
Professor Emeritus
Northwestern University
Chicago, IL. USA

It's been a difficult year. COVID-19 has had global effects not just on health, but on a broad range of institutions around the world. To date nearly 100 million persons have been infected and nearly 2 million have died. It has affected the very fabric of our lives. Many have lost jobs, schools and businesses have been shuttered and, most painfully, many have lost friends and family members to the disease. Beyond this, the pandemic has exposed a range of political, social, and economic fault lines in our society. Virtually no one is unaffected. While vaccines have been developed, it will take months to years for all to receive them. Recovery will be a slow, halting process. Not surprisingly, feelings of depression, anxiety, discouragement, frustration, and apathy are surging worldwide. What can be done? What can each of us do to manage these very difficult times?

A number of years ago the Dalai Lama gave a commencement address at the University of California-San Diego. It was a short, but generous and optimistic talk. He proposed that each of us can work to create a happier, more peaceful, and more prosperous world through two steps--developing inner peace and maintaining a warm-hearted, compassionate attitude toward others. It is, at its heart, a bold notion—The key to managing stress, turmoil, loss, and tragedy in the time of COVID may come from within. It comes from developing a patient, benevolent attitude toward ourselves and others.

How can we do this? The answer is remarkably simple. Give. Offer support to others. Lend a hand. As numerous studies have found, the act of giving improves the giver's well-being as much as it can help those in need. Give freely, don't feel compelled or coerced. You'll feel more connected with others, better about yourself, and your mood will improve. Interestingly, recent research suggests that giving may stimulate a cascade of neurocognitive changes in the brain, several of which involve opioid systems. At a fundamental level, then, behaving in a kind and generous manner can help you to manage the challenges of life. How you do this is entirely up to you. Offer advice or support to someone who is struggling. Tutor a child. Offer a meal to someone who has lost their job. Help an elderly person carry their groceries. A suggestion—Make a list of ways you might be of support to family members, friends, and people in your community. Start local, stay simple, and think of practical ways you might help. Then do one or two each day and note how you feel.

Along the same lines, expressing gratitude to others who have supported or helped you can be beneficial. As Robert Emmons, a psychologist at the University of California-Davis, notes, "gratitude heals, energizes, and transforms lives." We've known this for millennia, counting one's blessings and, as importantly, expressing appreciation to others, can have positive effects on mood and the quality of our relationships. Expressing appreciation is a cement, a glue, which ties us to one another. It encourages commitment and reciprocity. Think, if you will, of the last time someone offered you an unexpected thanks. How did you feel? With this in mind, take a moment each day to think about experiences and events for which you are thankful. Write them down. Reflect on them. If you are thankful for a kindness or support given you by someone, let them know. It only takes a moment. Write them a note. The recipient will remember and value your words. Gratitude, like giving, benefits both the giver and the receiver in ways that are broad and unforeseen.

These are very difficult times. Compassion gratitude, and a giving heart are never more important than now. Offering appreciation, saying "Thanks", and

offering support to others are simple acts. They take virtually no time and cost little. Their benefits, though, can be significant and long lasting. Perhaps the Dalai Lama is right. Developing inner peace, a sense of hopeful equanimity in difficult times, and maintaining a warm-hearted, compassionate attitude toward others, offer a path forward. It's something each of us can do.

Mark A. Reinecke, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and past Chief of the Division of Psychology at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. He also served for 14 years as the Director of the Center for Cognitive Therapy in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Neuroscience at the University of Chicago. He is a Distinguished Fellow and former president of the Academy of Cognitive Therapy, and a Diplomat of the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) in Clinical Psychology and Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. Dr. Reinecke also is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the Association for Psychological Science, and the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies. He is the 2015 recipient of the Cynthia D. Belar Distinguished Service Award from the American Psychological Association. His research and clinical interests center on understanding and treating depression, suicide, and anxiety among children and adolescents. He has lectured internationally and has served as a visiting professor at institutions in Europe and Asia. Widely published, he has authored or edited eleven books, including Cognitive therapy across the lifespan, Comparative treatments of depression, Cognitive therapy with children and adolescents, Personality disorders in children and adolescents and Cognitive-behavioral therapy with adults. His first book for a general audience, Little ways to keep calm and carry on was published by New Harbinger and a new book, Landmark papers in psychiatry (Oxford University Press) was published earlier this year.

www.markreinecke.com

Let the social work in the community under COVID-19 survive!

Mariko Kimura, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, Japan Women's University
Executive Director of Aikei Welfare Relief Foundation

I would like to congratulate on the third anniversary of the CSWPD Foundation.

There must be many hurdles to overcome for CSWPD to come this far. In many parts of the world, the value of social work has not been recognized as essential part of the social service system yet. However, with the recent rapid pace of societal development, governments in many countries are beginning to recognize the role of social work in human services besides equipping the social service programs in place. It is very important for the professional social workers to organize themselves let the society and the government aware of the critical role they take, and be connected to the international professional social work bodies.

The outbreak of COVID-19 forced us to change our daily working style dramatically. The situation under disaster urged social workers to work creatively and effectively in our daily work. In most of the activities from individual counseling to group activities and community work, many of the restrictions are placed in front of us trying to avoid viral infection. In Japan, we are still in the middle of a chaotic situation with the uprising the infection rate, the best thing we could do is to avoid contacts with groups of people, wear masks, and wash hands since there is still an effective solution not having discovered, hoping for the vaccine to

become available soon.

Being in the social work profession, one of our concerns has been the impact of mental health on people, especially service users in the time of COVID-19. The outbreak and rapid spread of the virus infection have stopped or limited us to be involved with the daily routine activities compared to those we used to be involved. Clearly, the new live style people adopted with COVID-19 is affecting our physical health, mental health, and daily lives. The protective measures to avoid infection restricted the scale of economic growth world over, and it affects our mental health when there is not enough security.

Based on psycho-social training background, our attention has been paid to the mental health impact on people under this unprecedented disaster situation--some may be affected more seriously than others. According to a report by the president of the Japanese Association of Mental Health Social Workers, the service users in mental health service programs have been struggling to live through this unprecedented situation. There is a critical part in our social work, the actual face to face contact cannot be avoided and it is very important. Many of the service users come to attend the programs in order to keep their mental health stable. Social workers are also aware that there may be an emergency that requires prompt intervention.

During the government order of quarantine under COVID-19, many of social service programs have stayed open. In other words, social, in spite of the fear of infection, the doors of the social service programs have stayed open to service users in order to meet their needs.

Under the quarantine, many activities in many cities were closed, however, the director of the Colabo made a decision to keep the trailer house Café open at every weekend till present located in the center of Tokyo. The Colabo is a small NGO, trying to provide a series of support service in a continuum to the young girls. These girls at the age of high school are experiencing difficulty staying home under COVID-19, because they live under the condition of sexual abuse and

exploitation. Girls are trying to seek their own independence once they are able to have access to this NGO program to explore their new way of living. These girls who come to visit Colabo's Trailer house Café begin to talk about their fears staying home under COVID-19 and ask for refuge. After counseling, the Colabo staff place them in a shelter apartment and help the girls seek further paths, such as career development training or going back to school to get the graduate certificate.

In the above example described, the social work in COVID-19 has maintained its work in the community with the extreme caution about the virus infection. It is our strong wish to "Let the social work in the community under COVID-19 survive! " Social workers in the world have sent their voices and struggles to IFSW for the study on "COVID-19 and social work", and one of them saying "The social worker in the community is reviving! Social workers always find a way out under difficulties. We know what we have to do as a social worker."

Mental Health of the Elderly in the Covid 19 Situation

Sug Pyo Kim
Representative of International Federation of
Social Workers (IFSW)
President of Daegu Association of
Social Workers, South Korea

"About a month after the first confirmed case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in South Korea on January 20, 2020, mass outbreaks began to hit the Daegu metropolitan region, where I live, causing great confusion and difficulty. At present, there are concerns about the spread of corona virus to other regions, and the World Health

Organization (WHO) has declared the spread of COVID-19 as an epidemic outbreak." (sorce: The Korean Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, 2020)

I would like to mention two problems through this article about mental health. The first is about the mental health problems experienced by the elderly and the second is the mental health stress experienced by social workers and care givers who provide care in the field. This particularly focuses on the elderly care center, nursing home I run, among social welfare areas.

First, During Covid 19, visitation to nursing homes have been completely banned since March. The family generally understood well. un-contact vistis have been available since July, 2020. Un-tact visits were made by meeting family members with windows between then or by keeping social distancing measure in the garden. For the whole period of 2020, the prohibition and restrictions on visitation were implemented alternately in line within the state's social distancing phase which is decided according to the number of new confirmed cases. As a result of the extended visit prohibition, the depression among the elderly were increased. We sought various ways to solve this problem. In particular, the programs included video calls through tablet PCs, communication through SNS, and doing things that the family couldn't do. For example, the 15th of August in lunar calendar is Chuseok, the most important traditional holiday in Korea. Chuseok in Korea is the day when whole family gather together, but this Chuseok in 2020 was not able to meet their families. So, on the day of Chuseok, employees came to nursing home even though they were off duties to relieve the loneliness of the elderly.

Second, we recognized the importance of psychological prevention. Social workers have been fighting the virus for months in the Covid 19 situation. As a result, social workers working in the field experienced exhaustion, and the need for methods of crisis response emerged. Therefore, multidisciplinary help was implemented. The Korean Association of Social Workers worked with the Korean Society for Traumatic Stress Studies(KSTSS) to create a psychological

quarantine manual to respond to crisis experiences. 84% of Korean social workers have experienced a crisis. Psychological quarantine is now the most needed service for clients and social workers in the corona era. It has become a social service that plays a necessary role in the social welfare field. Therefore, We hold an online concert to release psychological stress for social workers. In an era where we have to live 'with Corona', psychological prevention against weakening mental health is emerging as a very important issue. This is why it seems necessary to prepare a psychological quarantine manual in advance.

Community Economy, The Way Forward For The Grassroots Community

Dr. Eri Trinurini, Deputy Chair, ASEC
Dr. Ben Quinones, Founder, ASEC
Prof. Datuk Dr Denison Jayasooria
Chair, ASEC and Associate
Fellow of the Institute of Ethnic Studies
National University of Malaysia (UKM)

Congratulations to M. Habibur Rahman and the Community Social Work Practice & Development Foundation at the 3rd year anniversary of the foundation. Community social work is an important dimension of professional social work and this foundation is playing an important role is fostering social work practice in local communities' especially in education and training.

I bring you greetings from the Asia Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC) which is a network of practitioners and academics promoting Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) in Asia. We are a network which is a registered society in Malaysia with active members in 15 Asian countries. Our online ASEC SSE Academy which was set up in

2020 has about 500 registered members from 17 Asian countries. Last year we conducted 24 online educational and training sessions. We have about 70 recorded case studies of community based economy programs undertaken by our partners in Asia.

ASEC is promoting an alternative way of doing business and managing the economy where there are five key dimensions. The first three are known as the triple bottom line and there must be a balance in this so as to ensure that any development has sustainability in focus.

The first is people as they are at the heart of business and economic development. The ultimate objective is to ensure that the needs and concerns of people should not be side-lined in the process of economic development and prosperity. The human being is at the heart of business success. Here the Sustainable Development Goals or the 2030 agenda is significant as the thrust towards leaving no one behind.

The second is profits or prosperity where the economic activity must general wealth and economic growth. There must be returns for investment. However the profits made must not be exploitive on either humans or the natural environment. It must result in balanced growth

The third is the planate or the environment. This is the natural environment and we must be involved in the conservation and if there is extraction we must use a sustainable approach. The fourth is good governance which must be both accountable as well as transparent and inclusive. The structure must facilitate people participation and they must have access to the data and the collective decision making process. The fifth is ethical values which fosters peace, mutual respect, justice, non-discrimination and in ensuring that no one is left behind.

ASEC recognises that there is a dynamic grassroots movement of people who are resilient and dynamic, who are in this COVID 19 pandemic undertaking alternative economic arrangements which keep the poor and the grassroots especially women at the heart of socio-economic development. We need to give greater visibility and support to these movements though our networking, research and advocacy work.

ASEC is globally linked to RIPESS an inter-continental organisation for the promotion of SSE from North America, Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. RIPESS has Consultative Status with ECOSOC and is an observer member of the United Nations Taskforce on SSE.

ASEC looks forward to working closely with M. Habibur Rahman and the Community Social Work Practice & Development Foundation. We have had interactions over zoom and through online communications. We promise to visit you and your people especially when this pandemic passes us. All the best and lets strive hard for the empowerment of local grassroots communities.

Higher Education in New Normal Situation

Professor Dr. Md. Nasiruddin Mitul
Dean, National University Bangladesh

The coronavirus pandemic has had a profound impact on Bangladesh, the eighth most populous country in the world. It is among the worst hit countries in the Asian Region. The first case of COVID-19 was detected on March 8, 2020. Eight days later, on March 16, the government decided to keep all educational institutions closed from March 17-31, aiming to prevent the spread of the deadly virus. Later, the Education Ministry extended the closure several times and as of today education institutions remain closed. The paper aims to propound the author's own views as a university teacher on how to continue and maintain higher education activities through online sessions. The

question remains, what will happen if this coronavirus never leaves us? If so, then how long will educational institutions be shut down? Are we ready for adapting ourselves with this revolutionary online platform'? The simple answer is "no, we are not ready yet'. The topsy-turvy situation in this pandemic also reveals that.

The biggest drawback is the mindset of the teachers and students. Teachers are so accustomed to being in physical classes that they lack confidence when it comes to virtual classes. Their major challenges are inertia and the fear of not being able to do the job correctly. Teachers still feel more at ease conducting classes in the 300-year-old "Chalk and Talk" education system.

In the horrifying situation of this pandemic, every teacher is home-quarantined. Teachers had to prepare lectures for face-to-face classes; in my opinion, they must do the same thing more or less for the purposes of online teaching. The only difference is that the teachers now have to be a little more creative. They must use real examples, various pictographs or videography to create a course content that is more interesting and more understandable. This just takes a little more effort. To do this, a teacher does not need to be a tech-savvy. He just needs a little time, initiative and imagination to create something new, which we simply call "innovation". In addition to the pedagogy and a platform, online classes require a high speed Internet connection, a smart phone or a good quality tablet or a laptop or desktop.

I have already had the opportunity to attend several such kinds of summits as Dean of the National University Bangladesh. Of course, there will be some challenges. The authorities should keep in mind the following three significant questions on this matter a). whether the teacher is ready b). whether the students are ready and c). whether the necessities are available.

Engagement and collaboration between teachers and students have to be strong enough for a well-organized online class. It helps to build enthusiasm among the students. These self-motivated students eventually become more inclined towards innovation. This is called 'meta-cognition', where students will be self-motivated and interested in reading and learning on their own. Teachers are just helping to create such a world.

There are some challenges indeed in the management of higher education activities through online work. Broadly, those are as follows: a). lack of appropriate content b). lack of preparedness c). lack of detailed information about online classes in university rules and regulations d). problems in adapting technology f). problems of uninterrupted power supply which cause time wastage g). the hassle of creating and changing class routines frequently, and h). lack of content safety and security. However, in this regard, the government's existing eFiling policy option can be a best practice to follow.

Many people have questions about the examination process through an online mode. In my opinion, the examination process should be undertaken in such a way that teachers take group presentations from the students through a video conference every day and are also able to give the marks based on their presentation. Apart from this, the teachers can give the numbers by evaluating previously offered assignments, research papers or term papers.

In this regard, the students must be warned about plagiarism. It will be more likely if questions are based on the MCQ (multiple choice questions) format. For broad questions, teachers should be more careful about cheating or plagiarism. This will help to increase the knowledge and wisdom of the students.

The 'seen paper method' can also be applied to take online examinations. In this method, students can have all examination-related references or documents from where they will just choose the correct answer to a question. Written answers can be scanned or photographed within a specified time and uploaded via e-mail or any other portal. Finally, examination procedures can be completed by conducting an online interview. In all cases, the university examination rules and regulations must be kept intact.

Currently, online educational activities are treated as emergency measures. They are a key factor in overcoming the risk of session jams and other problems. But universities are not benefiting from this approach because of unplanned, unprepared and discriminatory administrative decisions and pressure. Vaccines are being touted everywhere to combat the coronavirus. Similarly, online education is seen as the only solution to combat session jam. Done properly, it can revive the education sector from the current stagnant situation.

সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি: জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান প্রদত্ত সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের পেশাগত স্বীকৃতির ব্যত্যয়

অধ্যাপক ড. মো. আবুল হোসেন
সমাজকর্ম বিভাগ ও
পরিচালক, সেন্টার ফর সোশ্যাল সাইন্স রিসার্চ এন্ড ট্রেনিং সেন্টার
জগন্নাথ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা

সমাজের পিছিয়ে পড়া ব্যক্তি ও শ্রেণিকে বৈজ্ঞানিক পদ্ধতিতে কার্যকর সাহায্য দানের লক্ষ্য ও উদ্দেশ্য নিয়ে আধুনিক সমাজকর্ম পেশার উদ্ভব। উনিশ শতকের শেষার্ধে ইংল্যান্ডে শিল্লায়ন ও নগরায়ানের ফলে সৃষ্ট আর্থ-সামাজিক পরিবর্তনের উপজাত হিসেবেই জটিল সামাজিক সমস্যার সমাধানে এই পেশার উৎপত্তি যা পরবর্তীতে মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও কানাডায় সম্প্রসারিত এবং বিকশিত হয়েছে। এ পেশার মূল উদ্দেশ্য হলো একটি সুন্দর, মানবিক ও বৈচিত্র্যপূর্ণ সমাজ ব্যবস্থা গড়ে তোলা যেখানে প্রত্যেকটি মানুষ (বিশেষত: পিছিয়ে পড়া জনগোষ্ঠী) তার মানবীয় সত্তা বিকাশের পরিপূর্ণ সুযোগ লাভ করবে, জাতি, ধর্ম, বর্ণ নির্বিশেষে নিশ্চিত হবে সবার মানবাধিকার তথা সমানাধিকার। সমাজকর্ম পেশার এ মূল্যবোধের কারণেই এই পেশাটি বিশ্বে দ্রুত বিস্তার লাভ করে। সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষা বলতে বোঝায়, সুসংগঠিত বৈজ্ঞানিক পদ্ধতিতে সেবাদানের প্রয়োজনে পেশাগত জ্ঞান ও তা প্রয়োগে দক্ষতাসম্পন্ন একদল মানবদরদী কর্মী তৈরি করা। সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষার মূল উদ্দেশ্য হলো দক্ষ সমাজকর্মী তৈরি করা যারা সমাজে বিভিন্ন ধরনের সমাজ উন্নয়ন ও জনকল্যাণমূলক প্রতিষ্ঠানে নিয়োজিত থেকে অথবা সরকার কর্তৃক স্বীকৃতি প্রাপ্ত হয়ে ব্যক্তিগতভাবে বিভিন্ন সামাজিক সমস্যার

সমাধান ও সমস্যাগ্রস্ত মানুষকে সেবা প্রদান করবেন। ব্যক্তি, দল ও জনসমষ্টির সামর্থের সম্প্রসারণ ও পুনরুদ্ধার এবং অনুকূল সামাজিক পরিবেশ সৃষ্টির মাধ্যমে মানুষকে সাহায্য করার পেশাগত তৎপরতা হল সমাজকর্ম। সমাজকর্মের এই মূল্যবোধের কারণেই বিশ্বব্যাপী সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষার প্রক্রিয়া অত্যন্ত দ্রুত গতিতে প্রসারমান। একমাত্র মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রেই এক হাজারেরও অধিক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ে স্নাতক, স্নাতকোত্তর ও পিএইচডি ডিগ্রী প্রদান করছে। কানাডাতে প্রায় প্রত্যেকটি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়েই সমাজকর্ম বিভাগ রয়েছে। যুক্তরাষ্ট্র, কানাডা, স্ক্যান্ডিনেভিয়ান দেশসমূহ ও যুক্তরাজ্য সহ পৃথিবীর বহু দেশে সমাজকর্ম বিষয় অনেক আগে থেকেই পেশাগত স্বীকৃতি লাভ করেছে। শুধুমাত্র একটি বিষয়কে কেন্দ্র করে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠার উদাহরণ বিরল হলেও জাপানের টোকিওতে 'জাপান কলেজ অব সোশ্যাল ওয়ার্ক' নামে পৃথক একটি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় প্রতিষ্ঠা সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের প্রতি তাদের আগ্রহ ও গুরুত্বের বিষয়টি প্রতিফলিত হয়েছে। শিক্ষা- সামাজিক ও অর্থনৈতিক ক্ষেত্রে বিশ্বের অন্যতম শক্তি হিসেবে দ্রুত ধাবমান দেশসমূহের মধ্যে অন্যতম চীন যারা দেরিতে হলেও সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষার গুরুত্ব অনুধাবন করতে সক্ষম হয়েছে। চীন সরকার ২০০৯ সালে প্রাথমিকভাবে দশটি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে সমাজকর্ম বিভাগ চালু করে বর্তমানে প্রায় ৩১২টি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে এর বিস্তার ঘটিয়েছে।

সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের অনন্যতা হল এটি তাত্ত্বিক জ্ঞানের পাশাপাশি এর সফল প্রয়োগের উপর গুরুত্বারোপ করে থাকে । সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের প্রত্যেক ছাত্র-ছাত্রীকে স্নাতক ও স্নাতকোত্তর দুটো পর্যায়েই মাঠ পর্যায়ে সমাজের দুঃস্থ ও সমস্যাগ্রস্ত মানুষকে নিয়ে সামাজিক প্রতিষ্ঠানে নির্দিষ্ট তত্ত্বাবধায়ক এর অধীনে ৬০ কর্মদিবস করে বাধ্যতামূলকভাবে ইন্টার্নশীপ বা সরেজমিন প্রশিক্ষণ নিতে হয় যা আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষাক্রমে নির্ধারিত। এখানে দুজন তত্ত্বাবধায়কের (একজন বিভাগীয় ও একজন সমাজসেবা প্রতিষ্ঠানের) অধীনে শিক্ষার্থীরা সমাজকর্মের অর্জিত জ্ঞানের প্রয়োগ করার সুবাদে উন্নয়নমূলক ও সেবাদানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান এর দৈনন্দিন কার্যক্রম এর সাথে সরাসরি সম্পৃক্ত হয়ে হাতে কলমে শিক্ষা লাভ করে। ১৯৪৭ সালে দ্বিজাতি তত্ত্বের ভিত্তিতে পাকিস্তান রাষ্ট্রের সৃষ্টি হলে স্বাধীনতা প্রাপ্ত তদানীন্তন পূর্ব পাকিস্তানের হাজারো সমস্যার লাগসই সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে ডক্টর জেমস আর দাম সং এর নেতৃত্বে জাতিসংঘের ছয় সদস্যের একটি প্রতিনিধি দল এসে এ দেশের আর্থ-সামাজিক সাংস্কৃতিক অবস্থার পর্যালোচনা করে সমাজসেবা মূলক কর্মকাণ্ড সুসংগঠিত ও লক্ষ্য ভিত্তিকভাবে পরিচালনার জন্য সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষা ও প্রশিক্ষণের উপর গুরুত্বারোপ করেন। এ নিউ প্রফেশন ফর এ নিউ নেশন ইন এ নিউ এইজ -এ স্লোগানকে সামনে রেখে শুরু হয় সমাজকর্মের নতুন অভিযাত্রা। যার ফলশ্রুতিতে ১৯৫৩ সালে ঢাকায় তিন মাসের স্বল্পকালীন সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ক প্রশিক্ষণের আয়োজন করা হয়। পরবর্তীতে পূর্ব পাকিস্তানে শহর সমষ্টি উন্নয়ন ও চিকিৎসা সমাজকর্ম কর্মসূচি আনুষ্ঠানিকভাবে শুরু হয় এবং সামাজিক চাহিদার বিস্তৃত প্রেক্ষাপটে ১৯৫৭ সালে সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের উপর নয় মাসব্যাপী আরেকটি প্রশিক্ষণ কর্মসূচির বাস্তবায়ন করা হয়। কিন্তু সীমিত প্রশিক্ষণ ব্যাপক জনগোষ্ঠীর

বিশাল সমস্যার সমাধানে অপ্রতুল বিবেচিত হওয়ায় ১৯৫৮-১৯৫৯ হতে সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ে এম.এ. কোর্স চালু করা হয়। ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের একাডেমিক তত্ত্বাবধান এবং সরকারি কর্তৃত্বাধীনে ১৯৫৮ সালে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয় 'কলেজ অব সোশ্যাল ওয়েলফেয়ার অ্যান্ড রিসার্চ সেন্টার'। পরবর্তীতে ১৯৭৩ সালে বঙ্গবন্ধু সরকারের সময় কলেজটির নতুন নামকরণ করা হয় 'সমাজকল্যাণ ও গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট'। বর্তমানে এই স্বনামধন্য প্রতিষ্ঠানটি স্নাতক, স্নাতকোত্তর, ও পিএইচডি ডিগ্রী প্রদান করে বাংলাদেশে সমাজকর্ম পঠন ও পাঠনের বাতিঘর হিসেবে কাজ করে যাচ্ছে। সময়ের বিবর্তনে এবং দেশে প্রশিক্ষিত সমাজকর্মীর চাহিদা বিবেচনায় পরবর্তীতে আরো কয়েকটি সরকারি ও বেসরকারি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় সমাজকর্ম বিভাগ চালু করে। ১৯৭৩ সালের ৯ জানুয়ারি নাটোর গণভবনে জাতির জনক বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের সামনে বিভিন্ন তথ্য উপাত্তের ভিত্তিতে সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের স্বীকৃতির প্রয়োজনীয়তা তুলে ধরা হলে বঙ্গবন্ধু উক্ত বিষয়ের গুরুত্ব উপলব্ধি করে সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের অধীনে সমাজকল্যাণ অধিদপ্তরের সকল নিয়োগে শুধুমাত্র সমাজকর্মের গ্রাজুয়েটদের নিয়োগ প্রদানের নির্দেশনা দান করেন। সিংহ হৃদয়ের এই মহান মানুষটির প্রতি আমরা সমাজকর্মীরা বিশেষভাবে কৃতজ্ঞ। কারণ বঙ্গবন্ধু মনে-প্রাণে বিশ্বাস করতেন কাঙ্খিত সোনার বাংলা গড়ে তুলতে হলে প্রশিক্ষিত জনগোষ্ঠীকে উপযুক্ত স্থানে জায়গা করে দিতে হবে। কিন্তু পরবর্তীতে সামরিক স্বৈরশাসক জিয়াউর রহমান ১৯৭৮ সালে বঙ্গবন্ধুর নির্দেশনাকে উপেক্ষা করে সমাজসেবা অধিদপ্তরের বিভিন্ন পদে সকল বিষয়ের ডিগ্রী প্রাপ্ত শিক্ষার্থীদের জন্য উন্মুক্ত করে দিয়ে আর্থ-সামাজিক অন্যান্য বিষয়ের মতোই সেবাধর্মী এ বিষয়টিকেও তার সস্তা রাজনীতির উপকরণ হিসেবে ব্যবহার করেন। এতে করে প্রশিক্ষিত সমাজকর্মীদের তত্ত্বাবধানে বঙ্গবন্ধু সরকারের সময় সমাজসেবা অধিদপ্তরের কর্মকাণ্ডে যে সাফল্য অর্জিত হয়েছিলো তা ম্লান হতে থাকে ।

২০১৩ সালে প্রজ্ঞাপনে সমাজসেবা অফিসার পদে সমাজকল্যাণ/কর্ম বিষয় থেকে অনার্স মাস্টার্স ডিগ্রি প্রাপ্তদের অগ্রাধিকারের ভিত্তিতে নিয়োগদানের বিষয়টি বলা হলেও ২০২০ সালের মার্চ মাসে সমাজকল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয় কর্তৃক প্রকাশিত নিয়োগ বিধিমালা ২০১৩ -এর তফসিলের ক-কলাম ১-এর ক্রমিক নং-১০ ও উহার বিপরীতে ৫ -এর থ-তে সংযুক্ত সমাজকল্যাণ/কর্ম বিষয়ে নন-ক্যাডার সুপারিশ প্রাপ্তদের অগ্রাধিকারের শর্তকে বাতিল করার মাধ্যমে বিষয়ভিত্তিক সেবা প্রদান ব্যবস্থাটিতে প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত সমাজকর্মীদেরকে সম্পূর্ণভাবে উপেক্ষা এবং বঞ্চিত করা হয়েছে। এতে করে সমাজসেবা অধিদপ্তরের কর্মসূচিগুলোতে প্রশিক্ষণপ্রাপ্ত সমাজকর্মী নিয়োগের মাধ্যমে উন্নত সেবাদান প্রক্রিয়ার যে সীমিত সুযোগ তৈরি হয়েছিলো তাও শেষ হয়ে যায়।

এমনকি অতি সম্প্রতি ২০২০ সালের ১৭ জুলাই তারিখে দৈনিক প্রথম আলোতে সমাজসেবা অধিদপ্তরের মাধ্যমে ১২৭ জন সমাজকর্মী নিয়োগের বিজ্ঞপ্তিতেও একই বিষয়ের পুনরাবৃত্তি ঘটানো হয়েছে। এই নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তিটির শিরোনামই হল সমাজসেবা

অধিদপ্তর নেবে ১২৭ সমাজকর্মী। এখানে প্রার্থীর যোগ্যতা হিসেবে বলা হয়েছে শিশু অধিকার, শিশু আইন, শিশু সুরক্ষা সম্পর্কে সম্যক ধারণা যা সমাজকর্ম বিষয়ের মূল ফোকাসের অন্যতম। সমাজকর্ম শিক্ষায় শিশু অধিকার ও কল্যাণ, শিশুশ্রম, আন্তর্জাতিক শিশু আইন সম্পর্কিত একাধিক কোর্স পড়িয়ে থাকে যা আমাদের সিলেবাস ও কারিকুলামে দৃশ্যমান। বিষয়টি পরিস্কার হলেও কি উদ্দেশ্য নিয়ে এখানে বিভিন্ন বিষয়ের গ্রাজুয়েটদের আবেদন করতে বলা হয়েছে তা বোধগম্য নয় বরং বর্তমানে পরিস্থিতি বিশেষ করে যেখানে সব সেন্টারে অনৈতিকতার মহোৎসব চলছে তা আমাদেরকে ভাবিয়ে তুলেছে। বিশ্বায়নের ফলে উদ্ভূত জটিল, পারস্পরিক সম্পর্কিত বিভিন্ন সমস্যার সমাধানে যেখানে বিশেষায়িত জ্ঞানের ওপর গুরুত্বারোপ করা হচ্ছে সেখানে সমাজসেবা অধিদপ্তরের নিয়োগ বিষয়ক নীতি নির্ধারকরা কোন বিবেচনায় উল্টো পথে হাঁটছেন তা বোধগম্য নয়।

এ ধরনের নীতির কারণেই মূলতঃ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়গুলোতে শিক্ষার্থীদের একাডেমিক পড়াশোনায় দিন দিন আগ্রহ কমে যাচ্ছে। বিশেষ করে বিশেষায়িত পড়াশোনায় এর প্রভাব পড়ছে সবচেয়ে বেশি। বিজ্ঞানী, গবেষক, ডাক্তার, প্রকৌশলী, সমাজকর্মী তৈরির পথ রুদ্ধ করার বিষয়টি আমাদের নীতি নির্ধারণ প্রক্রিয়া থেকেই শুরু হয়েছে। এ আত্মঘাতী প্রবণতা থেকে সরে আসতে না পারলে ভয়াবহ বিপদ সামনে অপেক্ষা করছে। বর্তমান সময়ে অধিকহারে ডাক্তার ও প্রকৌশলীদের সাধারণ ক্যাডারে চলে আসার প্রবণতা এই আত্মঘাতি নীতির বাস্তব প্রতিফলন। আমরা মনে করি এই ব্যবস্থার অবসান হওয়া জরুরি। এভাবে চলতে থাকলে বিশেষায়িত শিক্ষা যে মুখ থুবরে পড়বে তা বলার অপেক্ষা রাখেনা।

ব্যাপকভিত্তিক গণদারিদ্র্যের কারণেই এবং ক্ষুধা ও দারিদ্র্যমুক্ত সোনার বাংলা গড়ার লক্ষেই জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান বলেছিলেন, 'আমার জীবনের একমাত্র কামনা বাংলার মানুষ যেন তাদের খাদ্য পায়, আশ্রয় পায় এবং উন্নত জীবনের অধিকারী হয়।' তার এই দর্শনকে বাস্তবায়নের লক্ষ্যে তিনি ১৯৭২ সালের সংবিধানের ১৫গ অনুচ্ছেদের সামাজিক নিরাপত্তার অধিকার অর্থাৎ বেকারত্ব, ব্যাধি বা পঙ্গুত্বজনিত কিংবা বৈধব্য, মাতৃ-পিতৃহীনতা বা বার্ধক্যজনিত কিংবা অনুরূপ অন্যান্য পরিস্থিতিজনিত আয়ত্তাতিত কারণে অভাবগ্রস্তার ক্ষেত্রে সরকারি সাহায্য লাভের অধিকারকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করেছেন।'

সংবিধানের এই বাধ্যবাধকতার পূরণের লক্ষ্যে বঙ্গবন্ধু সরকার যুদ্ধ পরবর্তীতে ব্যাপক পুনর্গঠন ও পুনর্বাসন কর্মকাণ্ডে ব্রতী হন। বঙ্গবন্ধু সরকারের একটি বিশাল চ্যালেঞ্জ ছিল ভারত থেকে প্রত্যাগত প্রায় ১ কেটি শরণার্থী পুনর্বাসন, দেশের অভ্যন্তরে ধ্বংস হওয়া প্রায় ৪৩ লক্ষ বসতবাড়ি পুনঃনির্মাণ, তাদের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় খাদ্য ও অন্যান্য সামগ্রী সংগ্রহ করা এবং যুদ্ধে গৃহহীন লোকদের পুনর্বাসন যা তিনি অত্যন্ত সুচারুভাবে সম্পন্ন করেছেন। প্রাথমিক সুরক্ষা দেওয়ার পর বঙ্গবন্ধু যখন সাধারণ মানুষের জন্য ব্যাপকভিত্তিক সুরক্ষা অর্থাৎ দ্বিতীয় বিপ্লবে ডাক দিলেন তখনই স্বপরিবারে তাকে

হত্যা করা হয়। ১৫ আগস্টের নির্মম হত্যাকাণ্ড বাংলাদেশকে এক ভয়াবহ পরিণতির দিকে ঠেলে দেয়। অর্থনৈতিক, রাজনৈতিক এবং সামাজিক প্রত্যেকটি ক্ষেত্রে বাংলাদেশ দ্রুত ধ্বংসের দিকে এগিয়ে যায়। বঙ্গবন্ধুকে নৃশংস হত্যার পূর্বে বাংলাদেশ বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে পুনর্গঠিত ও পুনর্বাসিত হয়ে অতি দ্রুত উন্নয়নের পথে এগিয়ে চলেছিল। দেশ শত্রুমুক্ত হবার সময় বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রে পুনর্গঠিত ও পুনর্বাসিত হয়ে অতি দ্রুত উন্নয়নের পথে এগিয়ে চলেছিল। এরপর সামরিক স্বৈরশাসকরা দীর্ঘদিন ক্ষমতায় এসে সামাজিক সুরক্ষার বিষয়টিকে প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক ভিত্তি দিতে খুব একটা আগ্রহী ছিলেননা।

মুজিববর্ষ উপলক্ষে সরকার প্রতিটি ইউনিয়নে ভূমিহীনদের জন্য ঘর তৈরি করে দেওয়ার উদ্যোগ নেয়। নাম দেওয়া হয়েছে আশ্রয়ণ প্রকল্প-২। এর আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনার প্রথম সরকারের আমলে আশ্রয়ণ প্রকল্প-১ করা হয়েছিল। পল্লী অঞ্চলের মানুষের ভাগ্য পরিবর্তনে জাতির জনকই প্রচেষ্টা গ্রহণ করেন উল্লেখ করে সরকার প্রধান বলেন, তিনি পল্লী সমাজসেবা কার্যক্রম, প্রতিটি পর্যায় পর্যন্ত হাসপাতাল করা থেকে শুরু করে সমবায়ভিত্তিক চাষাবাদ চালু এবং উৎপাদিত পণ্যের ন্যায্যমূল্য নিশ্চিত করার উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করেন। জাতির পিতার সুযোগ্য কন্যা মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী ক্ষমতায় আসার পর তার উদ্যোগে ব্যাপকভিত্তিক সামাজিক সুরক্ষা ব্যবস্থা প্রচলনের উদ্যোগ নেওয়া হয়। ৯৭/৯৮ অর্থবছরে প্রথমবারের মতো বয়স্ক ভাতা, ৯৮/৯৯ অর্থবছরে বিধবা স্বামী পরিত্যক্তা মুক্তিযোদ্ধা সম্মানী চালু করা হয়। দ্বিতীয় মেয়াদে দায়িত্ব গ্রহণের পর প্রতিবন্ধী শিক্ষা উপবৃত্তি, হিজরা, বেদে, শ্রমিক, চা শ্রমিক, কিডনী, লিভার ও জন্মগত হৃদরোগীদের আর্থিক সহায়তা প্রদানের লক্ষে ৪১৯টি উপজেলায় রোগী কল্যাণ সমিতি গঠন, ভিক্ষুক পুনর্বাসন, প্রতিবন্ধী কোটা, পথ শিশুদের নিরাপত্তা এবং অতি দরিদ্রদের জন্য সামাজিক নিরাপত্তা বেষ্টনি গড়ে তোলেন। এছাড়া জাতীয় সামাজিক নিরাপত্তা কৌশল, ভবঘুরে আইন ২০১১, শিশু আইন ২০১৩, মাতা পিতার ভরণ পোষণ আইন ২০১৩, প্রতিবন্ধী ব্যক্তির সুরক্ষা আইন ২০১৩ প্রণয়ন করে ব্যাপকভিত্তিক কল্যাণ রাষ্ট্রের পথে এক নতুন দিগন্তের উম্মোচন করেন। ভিশন ২০২১, ৪১, এসডিজি পার্সপেকটিভ প্লান সবকিছুতেই দরিদ্র মানুষের হিস্যাকে প্রাধান্য দিয়ে স্টেট মেশিনারীকে কল্যাণ রাষ্ট্রের পরিবর্তনের লক্ষ্যে এগিয়ে নিয়ে চলেছে। ৯৮ সালে এসএসএনপিতে বরাদ্দ ছিল জিডিপির ১.৩ শতাংশ যা ২০১৯ সালে এসে ২.৩ অংশে উন্নীত হয়েছে। বর্তমানে ৩২ টি মন্ত্রণালয়ের মাধ্যমে ১৪৫ ধরনের কর্মসূচি বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে।

বর্তমান গণতান্ত্রিক সরকার বিশেষ করে জননেত্রী শেখ হাসিনার আমলে সমাজসেবা কর্মকাণ্ডের ব্যাপক ব্যাপ্তি ঘটেছে। টেকসই উন্নয়ন লক্ষ্যমাত্রা অর্জনের লক্ষ্যে সরকার কর্তৃক ঘোষিত অনেক কর্মসূচি-ই সমাজসেবা বিভাগের মাধ্যমে বাস্তবায়িত হচ্ছে। সরকার পরিচালিত আমার বাড়ি আমার খামার, আশ্রায়ন, গৃহায়ন, আদর্শ গ্রাম, ঘরে ফেরা, বয়স্ক ভাতা, মুক্তিযোদ্ধা সম্মানী, প্রতিবন্ধী, ছোটমণি নিবাস, কিশোর-কিশোরী উন্নয়ন কেন্দ্র, দক্ষতা উন্নয়ন কর্মকাণ্ড সমাজসেবা বিভাগের মাধ্যমে পরিচালিত হয়ে আসছে। সরকারের এই ব্যাপক সমাজসেবামূলক কর্মকাণ্ড মাঠ পর্যায়ে

বাস্তবায়নের জন্য প্রশিক্ষিত কর্মীর বিকল্প আছে বলে মনে করি না।

Mental Health and Stress Response to Pandemic: Impact for Community Social Work

Professor Ngoh Tiong TAN
Singapore University of Social Sciences

This year has been an unusual and tough time for everyone. Of course, we need to be concerned about the Covid-19 pandemic and yet we all have to try to go on with life in the new normal. Many of us are cautious and do take precautions and ensure our own safety, and that of family, and community. On the one hand we need to stay connected with others and on the other we are listening to the news update and the latest development of the crisis as it unfolds.

Mental well-being is essential for happiness and a productive life. The Covid-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc not only to the economy but every aspect of human society. It has disrupted lives and livelihoods and impacted the mental health and social well-being of many. Stress and confusion have exacerbated during this Covid-19 time especially at the onset of the emergency. Fear, anxiety and trauma may not be uncommon in the time of social isolation and physical distancing. All over the world we see an increased reliance on communication technology to keep in touch with others, as face to face human contacts were kept minimal and only when essential.

Family members living and working in close proximity due to Work from Home protocols may inadvertently have raised the levels of conflict, or even that of interpersonal and family violence. There are some evidences of higher-than-usual levels of symptoms of depression and anxiety since

the start of the pandemic.

The impact of the epidemic and the development in intensity to that of a global pandemic had affected people and society differentially. The process of virus containment and their side effects on businesses and lifestyles had repercussions on the health situation and economic life of people albeit disproportionately to the poor. The homeless, for example, who do not have safe shelter are at higher risk of being exposed to the danger. Refugees, migrants, or displaced persons are most vulnerable with limited movement, fewer employment opportunities and they also lack social support and medical services. This may also create great greater anxiety and apprehension amongst the poor and vulnerable populations.

Social psychological response to discrimination and trauma have been observed in the COVID-19 pandemic and this may also indirectly heightened inequality and conjured social exclusion. With higher retrenchment and lay-offs, the longer-term impacts of the crisis are yet to take its toll on people's mental health and the wellbeing of families and the wider society.

What is Social Work Response?
Social work is the bridge to deal with public issues and private concerns and social workers have to work at both the policy level with advocacy and greater awareness of needs of clients and the communities as well as helping at the individual and interpersonal level ameliorating the social-psychological impact from the highly charged environment brought about by the health crisis.

Practically social workers enable people to take care of their own mental well-being and well as serve and support the vulnerable. They link resources and implement programmes to strengthen the resilience and coping of people and communities.

First during the lockdown period, where people tend to be isolated, social workers help educate people to recognize and be aware of their own emotions and mental state. Social workers can assure people that it is normal to be anxious and

perhaps even have fears. This will help people to be more careful and take preventive steps to avoid contracting the disease. They help people also to stay socially connected with loved ones through phones or chat groups, video calls and to build strong support networks. So the effect should not be that of social distancing, but rather safe or physical distancing. Taking precautions such as wearing masks or protective gears and having other barriers, if necessary, prevent the transmission of the virus, especially if one is in the high risk situations. Have a calm composure in the midst of crisis helps with effective coping and maintaining good mental health.

Social resilience involves looking out for others, like paying attention to the physical and social needs of family and friends, especially the elderlies, making sure that they are healthy, staying safe and coping well. If necessary, they may call a helpline, especially if thry feel more anxious and distressed and needs to speak to someone for support. If the line, whether hotlines or friend's phone, is busy you they should leave a message for them to call back. It is useful to have a handy list of community helplines or agencies to refer to for emergencies.

The elderly group, especially, people with chronic health problems such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease and diabetes, may be less capable of supporting themselves. If isolated, they may need more support.

The risks of infection from COVID-19 for persons with disabilities are compounded by other issues such as access to information and services, mobility and having appropriate mental health and health services in times of emergency. The issues of availability and affordability of services may also create stress. Women and children may also experience increased domestic violence and abuse in the midst of this crisis situations, creating a crisis within a crisis.

Mental health practitioners need to note that misinformation about the virus and prevention measures may add to the distress. All in all, social workers need to focus mental health and other services for the poor and vulnerable groups to assist in adaptation in view of the looming Covid-19 crisis.

Everyone has a Part to Play in Combating the Virus
The community must respond in solidarity with people affected by the pandemic, both directly and indirectly. Employers, for example, could help in ensuring the mental well-being of employees who may face anxieties regarding social isolation, stress from home, changes in job demands and job insecurity. It is difficult to balance the new demands of work at home and taking care of children and elderly. Checking in regularly with staff on both the work and family life and offering flexibility for them to tend to children and sending support and encouragement such as cards, gifts, food deliveries, as well as providing access to information and counselling services, would be helpful. Neighbors, leaders and community workers can provide mutual assistance and practical support to one another as well as organize public health measures and projects.

So how do we deal with our own and the mental health of the clients and that of social workers? Well, practically let us keep active with exercise and be occupied workwise as well as socially, maintaining a balanced diet and getting enough sleep and rest, all these little things are important. Above all, keep the our spirits high, dwell with hope and compassion, keep praying and always looking up!

Achieving SDG 5 and women's rights in Bangladesh

Professor Salma Akhter
Department of Sociology, University of Dhaka

Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in September 2015, is a landmark agreement approved by the 193 Member States of the United Nations to address the economic, social, environmental and political dimensions of sustainable development in a comprehensive and integrated way. 17 SDG 5 goal is to Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Gender equality is not just the focus of Sustainable Development Goal 5; it is also integrated throughout the SDGs, as gender equality has multiplier effect across spectrum of development. In addition to the nine targets under Goal 5 on gender equality, gender equality is reflected in 36 targets and 54 indicators across the other Goals. Targets focus on poverty reduction, work, agricultural productivity, hunger, health and nutrition, water and sanitation, climate change related planning, participation in public life and sustainable cities and communities.Closing gender gaps by achieving these targets will have multiplier effects across the Goals and accelerate their achievement.

SDG 5 can be achieved by Ending discrimination against all women and girls, eliminate violence against all women and girls, elimination of harmful practices such as child marriage, recognition and value unpaid care and domestic work, ensure women's participation and leadership in decision making, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. These can be achieved by undertaking reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, enhance use of information and communications technology adopt

and strengthen policies and legislations.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are among the most effective ways to combat poverty, hunger, and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable. It was projected that Asia Pacific countries could add $4.5 trillion to their collective annual GDP by 2025, a 12 % increase over the business-as-usual trajectory if women's equality is advanced.

The Constitution of Bangladesh clearly states that "the State Shall endeavor to ensure equality of opportunity and participation of women in all spheres of national life" and "women shall have equal rights with men in all spheres of the State and of public life". Bangladesh Government considered and put special emphasis on the programs to promote women's empowerment in the 7th and 8th 5 year Plans as well as National Women's Policy (2011) has set 22 targets). The Bangladesh government has taken a variety of initiatives and passed significant legislation to address violence against women and girls, prevent violence and discrimination against women and to ensure empowerment of women, and their equal rights and opportunities actions that are key to fulfilling the government's commitment to meeting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The state of women is improving in relation to their male counterparts across multiple metrics, including health and education, but they are not yet equal and still face many unique challenges. Bangladesh ranks 50 out of 153 countries for gender parity, and highest among South Asian nations (World Economic Forum, 2020). Women's adult (age 15+) literacy rate is 71.18%, while men's adult (age 15+) literacy rate is 76.67% (UNESCO). Women's participation in the formal labor force is 36%, compared to 80.7% for men (World Bank, 2017). According to the Global Gender Gap report 2020, Bangladesh ranked 7th in the world in the political empowerment. Women hold 20.6% of parliamentary seats and 8 % of ministerial positions. It stands as the top country for the third time in a row among South Asian countries.

However, the areas of concerns are violence against women and child marriage. 72.6% of ever-married women have experienced one or more forms of violence (physical, sexual, economic or emotional) (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Bangladesh ranks 4th in the world for rates of early marriage, with 22% of girls married by age 15 and 59% married by age 18 (Girls Not Brides/UNICEF, 2017. Despite Bangladesh's effort in undertaking policies and strategies to achieve SDG 5 and ensuring women's equal rights, the country's achievement is hampered by violence against women and child marriage. As Bangladesh was a role model in achieving MDG on women's empowerment among the South Asian countries, for SDG harder struggle will be to eliminate these two obstacles which are affecting the macro level high achieving areas of education, politics, administration. As Covid 19 has added new challenges in these critical areas, new strategies and actions will be needed incorporating all relevant stakeholders.

Can We Do Better than "Normal"?

Debra Efroymson
Executive Director
Institute of Wellbeing Bangladesh

Perhaps the phrase I have heard most often in the last several months (other than "you're on mute") is some variation of "I can't wait to get back to normal." Every time I hear it, I have the same reaction: normal was miserable! Can't we do better? I understand what people mean. They are tired of being shut up in home, of studying and working remotely. They are tired of the fear of getting sick. Many are even worse off, having lost their livelihoods or even their lives. On the flip side, the

air has grown much cleaner in many cities. Cities are quieter. People have more time for themselves and their families, in part due to not wasting hours a day stuck in traffic. Opportunities to connect with people around the world without leaving one's home are more abundant than ever. Wildlife is getting, in many countries, a break from human incursion on their habitat.

When I hear the phrase "return to normal" I imagine Dhaka as it was in 2019: congested, noisy, and polluted. I imagine family members once again having almost no time for each other. I imagine once again being expected to travel, releasing dangerous greenhouse gases, in order to attend meetings, seminars, and conferences. I imagine the ongoing decimation of wildlife and our planet once again proceeding apace.

The more I reflect on the word "normal", the more abnormal it seems. It is, after all, normal to be terrified when crossing a street. It is normal to make space for cars even on narrow streets, and then say that even wide ones have no space for a bicycle lane. It is normal to assume that it is too dangerous for children to walk or cycle to school or to play outdoors. It is normal for people to fear and hate those of different ethnic, racial, or religious backgrounds or sexual and gender identities. It is normal to believe that things will continue to get worse, that the global community is unable to take serious action to address the climate crisis, that the extinction of a million species on our shared planet is inevitable.

At which point I can only throw up my hands and say, "I don't want to go back to normal!" As the hashtag #BuildBackBetter beautifully encapsulates, there is no reason, once we get Covid-19 under control, to return to the way things were before the pandemic hit. There is ample reason to reflect on what aspects of the pandemic lifestyle have actually been positive and to consider how to incorporate them into our daily lives.

When the Internet was first invented, many predicted that work from home would become common. That did not materialize until the pandemic. Now that people have discovered the possibilities (and, yes, limitations—but wasn't spending hours a day commuting also a limitation?), I hope that many will shift to at least a partial remote workplace, going in only when necessary, or once a week or so. Students need to return to the classroom for lab, but some other classes could, at least occasionally, meet online. I have been part of the successful organizing of a remote conference which allowed us to overcome limitations of physical space; I see great potential for remote conferences in the future as well. Reducing travel would not only mean saving time and money, but also reducing the spewing of harmful toxins in the air, a decrease in incessant noise, a slowing of the climate crisis, and a reduction in the daily slaughter on our roads.

But my suggestion is even more ambitious. We have long taken for granted that governments will subsidize polluting industry in order to create jobs. What if instead governments subsidized jobs that are actually good for the environment, such as promoting urban agriculture, repairing and maintaining footpaths and bicycle ways, and providing rickshaw service at a subsidized rate to people with disabilities? What if instead of ministries of trade and industry being the most powerful in government, it was instead ministries of climate, health, environment, and women/children/minorities/people with disabilities?

What if, collectively, we acknowledged that within the last several decades of constant economic growth we have actually been carrying out a wholly unsustainable program around the world? That the harm inflicted on the planet and its non-human life forms has been too great? That we need to slow down, produce and consume less stuff, and start to value healthy people, unpolluted rivers, plastic-free oceans, bio-diverse forests, and that simplest but most valuable commodity, time, over material wealth?

With a major re-examination of our priorities, we can redefine what we want as normal and work together to #BuildBackBetter post-pandemic. Only then will "normal" become a truly desirable goal.

Public Health & Social Work are Interlinked

Dr. Abu Jamil Faisel
Chairman Health21
Social Worker & Public Health Expert

Social work (SW) is an academic discipline and practice-based profession that concerns itself with individuals, families, groups, communities and society as a whole in an effort to meet basic needs and enhance social functioning, self-determination, collective responsibility, and overall well-being (Wikipedia). Many of us recognize this as Social Welfare. No matter what we say there are several inherent elements in it and that always matters. The elements include an intertwined principles and core values. The values are:

- Service; service in all forms and means to the people
- Social justice; ensuring equity and equality as and where applicable
- Dignity; upholding and ensuring the rights of individuals
- Importance of human relationships; developing connection with all individuals
- Integrity; all activities shall have to be conducted within legal and social framework
- Competence; to ensure high-quality top-level competency has to be an integral part As nearly six decades have passed since Professor Biestek introduced his seven principles of Social Work which are:
- Individualization; all individuals has to be addressed with respect and honor
- Purposeful expression of feelings; purposive and positive communication
- Controlled emotional involvement; relationship shall have to be a balanced one

- Acceptance; all work to be carried out in a socially acceptable manner
- Non-judgmental attitude; avoid biases and be objective
- Self-determination; builds empowerment capabilities leading to self confidence
- Confidentiality; privacy and confidentiality shall have to be the corner stone

When the Social Work leads to Social Welfare it does embraces and automatically becomes a Public Health (PH) matter impacting social welfare and wellbeing. Health according to WHO means physical, social, mental and spiritual well being and not only just mere absence of diseases. In reality Health becomes paying attention to the physical component and thus becomes very curative oriented. But if someone has to work towards the social, mental and spiritual aspects of Health shall have to resort to more towards indulging into Social Work.

The age old saying that "prevention is better than cure" is still considered to be the anchoring point of Public Health. If someone has to progress on the principles of Public Health focusing on Social Welfare, he/she cannot just achieve it unless the principles and core values of Social Work is embraced. We will have to keep on following the theme of the International Social Work Day 2019 "Building Relationship and Ensuring Community Accountability".

Mental Health of Migrant Workers in India In Covid-19 - An Overview

Dr. R. Sakthi Prabha
Dean & Head, Department of Social Work
Hindustan College of Arts & Science, Chennai, India

The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, social distancing policies, mandatory

lockdowns, isolations periods, anxiety to getting sick, loss of income and fear of future jointly influenced the mental health of all the everyone (Tandon, 2020). The most affected group of population were interstate migrant workers. Migrant labourers form a significant workforce in many parts of Indian workforce. They are employed in cities as domestic workers, drivers and gardeners or as daily wage earners on construction sites, building malls, flyovers and homes or as street vendors and other fields of daily wages with no job security. The daily wagers were engaged broadly in MSME sectors. They had no savings for their future. The only period of relaxation for the people is going back to their homes after their work is over or during festivals, marriages or during the harvesting season (Singh,2020).

The announcement of lock down on 24th March 2020, 4 crores of workers went jobless and made their life into standstill. The immediate concerns of the migrant workers were related to food, shelter, health care, fear of getting infection, loss of wages, concerns about the family, facing harassment and adverse reaction to the local community, anxiety and fear (Singh, 2020). The most risking factor they lived in the densely populated residential places and rooms with minimal spaced per person in which social distancing strategy cannot be ensured. They lost their livelihood, financial insecurity, some were alone in their homes and were not able to support their family in their native places. They neither had any work nor had the access to the transportation to go back to their native places. From the month of March onwards in every media was reporting on migrant workers travelling to their native places far off through cycle or bicycle. Many scumbled to death on the way or after reaching their destination. These factors led to sociological, psychological and emotional trauma among the migrant workers. Hence it is very important to develop important action to help people to get basic needs, employment, financial help and mental health counselling services to overcome the mental distress experienced by them.

Several studies have been conducted all over the country to evaluate the mental status of the migrants have come with possible suggested interventions. The finding of the several studies has revealed the migrant workers have experienced distress like anxiety and depression and also factors causing the mental distress. Since migrants belong to the marginalised sections of the society, who are dependent on daily ways for their living and in time of distress need sympathy, empathy from the others in the community (Hargreaves et at., 2019). Hence it is very important for others to listen to them with patience to understand their problems at individual levels and to provide counselling to overcome their mental and emotional trauma. The most importantly to educate about COVID-19 and various Governmental medical facilities available to the people in the various states, district and village levels.

The Government and Non- Governmental organisations have played a very important role during this pandemic period. Based on the various existing mental distress among the migrant labourers the Government suggested that institution's such as the National institution of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in Bengaluru and the Central Institute of Ranchi (CIP) and Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi Regional Institute of Mental Health in Assam's Tezpur could be roped in for providing services. The Government insisted on the teams of professionals available under the District Mental Health programme to be called upon to provide counselling services. The Government took initiatives of providing trained counsellors and community group leaders of all faiths to visit the relief camp and counsel migrants. The ministry also shared a list of clinical psychologist and counsellors registered to the Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists who have volunteered to provide counselling. Several Non-Governmental organisation and suicide prevention centers and helpline numbers were made available to provide the essential counselling services to the migrant labourers.

To enhance the mental health of the labourers the most important was to help the labourers reach their home town safely. In March 2020 the Union Home Ministry directed the state to make use of National

Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for providing food and shelter and other needs to the immigrant workers. The Central and State Government asked the landlords not to compel the rent from the tenants until the lock down period is over. The State Government also set up the relief camps for providing food to be served free of cost for the workers on their transit route. The migrant labourers were provided with transport facilities to reach to their destination in various states through Shramik special train. In addition to this various state operated registration portal to give information to the workers regarding their lodging and the places they were stranded. These portals helped the workers to find out the places of their location. The Central Government announced a relief package worth of Rs.1.7 lakhs to help the migrant workers. It consisted of cash transfer also free arrangement of food grains from the public distributions system. Various State Governments took measures to provide employment of these migrant workers at the place of their homes. Many states relaxed labour to increase the employment opportunity to migrant workers. The Government announced the Atmanirbhar Bharat Scheme to provide free to loans to MSME sector which employment to the migrant people. Several Non- Governmental organisations reached all the people in the relief camp and provided the needed services.

This COVID-19 pandemic has taught us many lessons on giving priority on health, mental health and disaster management. As still the COVID-19 is existing there is much more to be done to provide better services for migrant labourers in future also. Many of the migrant labourers would like to return back to their early employed places. The coming years will give us a clear picture on this aspect.

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Drug Addcition Recovery Amidst Covid 19 Pandemic

Mary Grace Perez-Monocillo
RSW,MSSW
Professor, Department of Social Work
Ateneo de Davao University, Philippines

Drug addiction is a chronic brain relapsing disorder. It means that the journey towards recovery can be challenging to the person in recovery especially when he/she is exposed to high-risk situations. These situations may include having "euphoric recall" or the act of recalling drug use experience; feeling bored, lonely, and angry; being with friends or going to places that are associated with previous drug use activities; accessibility to illegal drugs; stresses at home and work, among others. However, a person's responses to these situations may depend on his/her coping capacity, level of drug dependence, and the available support he/she has from the immediate environment.

With the current COVID 19 Pandemic, staying sober had become more challenging. With the implementation of health protocols, there were sudden changes in our day-to-day activities such as having to observe community/home quarantine, social isolation, and restricted mobility. Others experienced a sudden loss of a job, sickness, and death of loved ones. As a result, people experienced boredom, loneliness, anxieties, and uncertainties which may trigger a relapse. These triggers, combined with cravings and urges to use illegal drugs, increases the risk for a person in recovery to use and/or engage in drug selling.

Moreover, drug trading still occurs in the communities despite the strict health protocols and mobility restrictions being implemented. Every day, there are cases of apprehended drug pushers being reported. This access to illegal drugs in the communities increases more the risk for a person in recovery to use illegal drugs again. Some might engage in selling to earn money after losing a job.

We may have programs and interventions available to help people in recovery. However, the current situation has hindered its implementations. Given the situation, how can we address this problem? As social workers and community carers, how can we help?

For me, this a reminder for the policymakers and program implementers to strengthen the implementation of a community-based rehabilitation program for the people in recovery. We can start by organizing and capacitating them as a self-help support group in their respective communities. A self-help support group would be a great help since nobody can understand more what they are going through more than those who have the same experience with them. The activities may focus on enhancing coping capacities and relapse prevention adapting to the "new normal".

We also need to intensify the advocacy efforts on drug use prevention by maximizing existing online platforms as it can reach more people nowadays. We can encourage them to access online counseling services and virtual support groups.

Most importantly, the programs need to focus more on strengthening community support and family relationship since they play a significant role in the recovery process.

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Emotional Health in the Current Times

Dr. Roma Kumar, PhD
Senior Consultant Psychologist
Sir Ganga Ram Hospital
Max Hospital
Saksham Mental Health Emotionally

The Covid-19 Pandemic has left many of us stressed and worried. Many factors affect our mental and emotional health. It can be hard to accept things have become tough, and to take the first step in changing that, but know that help is available, and change is possible. During this time of uncertainty and instability, it's quite important to take care of your mental state as it will help you emotionally deal this outbreak and its effects successfully and be present as a support system for your family, friends and colleagues and also help keep anger and tension at bay. Having good emotional health is a fundamental aspect of fostering resilience, self-awareness, and overall contentment. Emotional health flourishes when you're curious about your thoughts, behaviors, and feelings and why they might arise at the current times.

It's good to remember that even negative emotions can be useful under certain circumstances, such as fear that keep us from taking unnecessary risks or sadness that helps signal to others that we need comfort and assistance. It isn't necessary that we simply put on a happy face when we don't feel happy. Accepting our negative emotions is actually useful for our well-being, while repressing them generallyisn't.

People who are emotionally healthy are in control of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They're able to cope with life's setbacks, adversities and challenges. They are able to keep problems in perspective and bounce back from setbacks.Our emotional well-being helps us engage in problem solve our interpersonal problems and helps us lead a happy and contended life.

Some of the ways we can work on ourselves so as to improve or maintain good emotional health are:

- Try to be aware what makes you sad, frustrated, or angry. Try to address or change those areas. Keeping feelings of sadness or anger inside adds tostress.

- When we express our feelings in appropriate manners, it helps people close to you know when something is botheringyou.

- Respond rather than React. This will help you remain calm before you say or do something you mightregret.

- We have to learn to manage stress through relaxation methods. These could include deep breathing, meditation, andexercise.

- Try to strive for a balance between work and home, and between activity and rest. Make time for things you enjoy. Focus on positive things in yourlife.

- Your physical health is equally important where you can exercise regularly, eat healthy meals, and get enough sleep. Usage of excessive substances, drugs or alcohol can create upsurge of negative emotions and thus negatively impact your emotionalhealth.

- Keep connected with your friends and family. These are great positive connections.

- Figure out what's important to you in life, and focus on that and remain positive. This could be your work, your family, caregiving, or anything else. Spend your time doing what feels meaningful to you. Focus on the good things in your life. Forgive yourself for making mistakes and forgive others. Spend time with healthy, positivepeople.

Despite all of the above, we also need to understand that people who have good emotional health can still have emotional problems or mental health issues.

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Stress and problems with family, work, or school can trigger mental illness or make it worse. Mental illness often has a physical cause. This could be from a chemical imbalance in the brain.

Emotional health allows you to work productively and cope with the stresses of everyday life. It makes you realize your full potential and be functional in all aspects of life. Research shows a link between an upbeat mental state and physical signs of good health. These include lower blood pressure, reduced risk of heart disease, and a healthier weight.During such moments and continued negative emotional outbursts it is well known that Counseling, Psychotherapy, support groups, and medicines can help people who have emotional problems or mental illness. If you have an ongoing emotional problem and you want to feel better, please do not hesitate to meet up a Mental Health Professional. They are trained to help you.

Many people seek psychotherapy because they have felt sad, depressed, anxious, or angry for a very long time and have not been able to speak to anyone. You can also get help from a Mental health professional if there is a chronic illness that is interfering with your emotional or physical well-being. There are many others who may have short-term problems like an on-going argument, teenager who is argumentative, struggling to deal with life's painful challenges, loss of a loved one, non-caring spouse, loss of a job, over critical parents etc., can get helpfrom a Psychologist to help them navigate through this. Psychotherapy is effective at improving symptoms in a wide array of mental health issues. It can help families, couples and groups.When you have thoughts, emotions or behaviours that are out of control, especially when they are affecting your relationships, your work or your sense of well-being, do not hesitate connecting to a Psychologist. Never feel embarrassed to ask for help at times when you are upset or depressed. Psychologists help you when you are confused, fraught with emotions and need the perspectives of a caring yet unbiased person to help sort among difficult choices.

Mental health professionals can give help in person or through a phone or computer (telehealth). Having your emotional health treated can also improve your productivity. It will help you understand how you can focus better on daily tasks and give you the motivation to get things done in a timely manner and create boundaries. Thus, improving your emotional health can even extend your life expectancy.
www.emotionally.in

Life during Pandemic and living with the New Normal

Manoj Kumar Sircar
Founder, Development Professionals
West Bengal, India

The outbreak of Corona virus across the globe has equally affected India. The pandemic has put the people of the country into severe trouble owing to the country wide lock down declared from the last week of March 2020. The worst affected are the daily wage earners and the migrant labourers. A large number of populations lost their occupations out of the lock down. The migrant labourers could not manage to get back to their home as the lock down was declared all of a sudden. There are others who have faced challenges on the health front, both physical and mental and some others are living in confined spaces dealing with abusive partners or family members. But not everything has been negative as we have seen many of our friends reconnect with family, spend quality time with their spouses and children, take up new hobbies or resume old ones which had been forgotten in a hectic work schedule, tick off pending items on a bucket list or while away the time to recover their energy. Subsequent to this, all academic institutions are yet to open even after the new normal situation has

begun for over 5 months. Businesses have started operating though not in its full pace. Several IT companies have placed their employees to work from home and have cut short in their operation costs. The youth of the country are facing significant challenges going through extreme uncertainty in course of completion of their higher studies, skill development and job placement. The overall situation has put impetus in rise of critical problems like:

a. Increase in child labour
b. Increase in cases of child marriages
c. Increase in cases of human trafficking
d. Rise in cases of mental health issues leading to increase in suicidal incidences
e. Significant rise in cases of domestic violence

Several studies across the country have shown that life of all sections of people have been affected due to prolonged lock down. Apart from the migrant labourers, students have equally been affected and it has come out that majority of the students do not have access to digital learning opportunities. Students of private school & colleges have been attending virtual classes but those studying in government schools and colleges have not been able to access such facilities. Significant impact has been shown on existing livelihood of the people and it has been observed that there has been shift in nature of livelihood for large number of populations. Life of common people have been affected both economically and socially, resulting to rise in several other psycho-social disorders.

Way Forward
At this point of time, when the vaccine for COVID-19 has been commissioned and being applied, it is important for all to keep patience and slowly move ahead with the emerging situation in the new normal situation. The damaged caused out of the prolonged lock down would require significant time to get normalized and it would require cooperation from across all sections of the society.

- Parents of the children need to spend quality time since the children have almost been locked at home for over 9 months. This is important for the parents to be withtheir
children so as to help them get an opportunity to ventilate their feelings.

- Since majority of the offices have started operating during the new normal situation and businesses are getting to normal pace, thus it would be important to explore possibilities of additional sources of earning to address the income & expenditure gap caused out of the lock down.

- Youth members of the society should explore to start entrepreneurship instead of waiting for any job opportunity, which is hardly available in the market during new normal situation.

- People from all sections of the society to continue in following the COVID-19 protocol as safety measure to save themselves and save others, as the pandemic situation is yet to get over.

- Staying positive about future is also important at this point of time and cooperate with the emerging situation, else further mental stress would result in negative consequences.

Let us reach out to the ones who matter and express love and gratitude, forgive past mistakes and be mindful and conscious about what we have. We definitely don't need to consume excessively and can survive with the basics. But we cannot thrive without love, companionship and community.
manojsircar@gmail.com

Covid-19 and Its Impact on Mental Health of The Student Community

Dr. Dimpy Mahanta
Founding Head
Department of Psychology,
Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam, India

Covid-19 pandemic has taken a huge toll on the lives of billions of people all across the globe. One of the sections of the population to have been most

affected is the students. Due to the lockdown, all educational institutions like schools and colleges were forced to shut down. It had a devastating impact in the minds of the students alike for one of the primary needs of the student life is socialization with peers besides academic discourse. The emotional effects of being physically distant from their friends along with the impact of losing out playtime had contributed to various psychological issues. Main mental health issues that have been observed in students during Covid-19 are anxiety and low mood, irritability and mood swings, depressive thoughts and recurrent suicidal thoughts due to social isolation, dependence on video games, emotional eating, increased social media use which aggravates negative feelings such as comparison, low self esteem etc, PTSD if exposed to family violence and also experiments with high risk behaviors, such as gambling, sexting, etc. The uncertainty of the situation coupled with increased screen time (whether for the purpose of entertainment or because of the shift to a complete online mode of education) also contributed to heightened stress levels leading to anxiety, low moods, sleep deprivation, low self esteem etc.

It is extremely important for students, parents and teachers to remain vigilant about the onset of any mental health related issues for early diagnosis and timely interventions from specialists. Treatment involves psychotherapy and counselling by a psychologist or medication prescribed by a psychiatrist. Parental expectations need to be realistic; an atmosphere of open empathetic communication must be encouraged in the family.

Following are the few ways through which students can take care of their mental health:
a) Eat balanced meal
b) Exercise regularly
c) Get enough sleep
d) Stay connected with near and dear ones.
e) Register yourself in online skill enhancement courses.
f) Develop a hobby
g) Engage in household chores which would inturn lead to better family bonding
h) Manage your time and create a to-do list for prioritizing tasks.
i) Reward yourself for completing tasks which would enhance the motivation levels.
j) Limit screen time. Select offline and no screen activities.
k) Practice self compassion, mindfulness meditation and an attitude of gratitude which would shift the focus from deficiency to abundance.
l) Reach out to family, friends and mental health professionals in case of any mental health issues.

With the awareness of these above mentioned factors, all the stake holders (students, teachers and parents) can tackle together the mental health concerns during the present crisis.

Last but not the least, it is wiser to have a broader perspective towards life and comfort yourself and your loved ones. Negative coping strategies like alcohol use, drug abuse, excessive sleep, over-eating etc must be avoided. Rather than attempting to exert "over-control" of the situation and getting tensed in the process, it is wiser to "let go" by reframing ones' thoughts and redirecting those towards living in the present moment. As they say, only the present moment is inevitable. Together we can fight this menace where humanity is on one side and the deadly Virus on the other. I am very optimistic that Humanity will win. Just like any other storm, this too shall pass and clear the cloudy skies for the beautiful sun-rays to peep in. Let us keep the faith ~ breathe, smile and comfort!

*****

The Author is the Founding Head of the Post Graduate Department of Psychology, Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam (India). She is a champion in the field of promoting psychological well-being and managing stress and has been counseling and guiding students and public for over 15 years. She is also a visiting Faculty and Resource Person in the prestigious Assam Administrative Staff College, the North Eastern Police Academy (NEPA), Meghalaya and the North Eastern Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS), Meghalaya. Besides this, she is also an Expert Member (Psychologist) empanelled in the Selection Boards

of the renowned PSUs of the country. Besides being a Coordinator of the Student Counselling Cell of her University Dr. Mahanta had been selected to be a part and parcel of the prestigious IAHP COVID-19 National Task Force and has been providing Free Counseling and Psychological Assistance to the public during the present crisis.

E-mail: drdimpymahanta@gmail.com,
        dimpy.mahanta@cottonuniversity.ac.in

Mental Health challenges among the youth during Covid-19

Dr. Wilkins Ndege Muhingi
Faculty Member, Department of
Community Development
Pan Africa Christian University, Kenya

Children and adolescents represent one third of the world's population, with the majority living in low- and middle-income countries [LMIC] (UNICEF, 2016). There are many ways of defining mental health. In the simplest way, it is should be understood as a 'peaceful' state of mind, which include a balanced state that would not exclude illness, but would include being free from obstacles that can affect a person physically, emotionally, or cognitively. The awareness of good mental health and mental illness by young people in Kenya is limited, and the aetiology of mental illness is primarily linked to economic and parenting variables. Scope and definition of mental health and conceptualization of core symptoms associated with mental health problems is a challenge. There is a range of factors contributing to mental health problems, and their impact on the young person, family and society. Moreover, responsibility regarding youth mental health in Kenya is also of great concern.

The multidimensional aspects of ill mental health among youth in Kenya and world over are considered in terms of the influence of peers, family, and society. The economic climate of the country and a general lack of investment in young people influences their mental health outcomes. Sometimes the young people are forgotten by the society. It is about poverty and no one seems to care about them. This has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. We have had cases of young people in Kenya suffering from mental disorders with an increase during the time the pandemic struck. The pandemic has pushed people a majority being the young into excessive use of social media and other conducive means of connecting with peers. It can be argued that social media is at least partially responsible for mental wellbeing. Social media has a possible negative effect on young people's mental health (Thomee et al., 2010).

Some parents do not sufficiently support their offspring and often they are unable to identify the issues that the young person is experiencing. Largely this is a lack of knowledge or awareness on the part of the parent, as they are not provided with information 'earlier enough on how to deal with mental health issues in case they arise. All levels of society need to take young people's mental health seriously and that 'everybody' is responsible. However, responsibility is more relevant to specific groups of parents, teachers, community or government.

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Impact of Covid-19 on Children and Youth

Minara Meghna Uddin
Co-founder of JustSmiles.Original Uk
Trustee at Newark Youth London
United Kingdon

The Covid-19 pandemic, restrictions and lockdown has brought about a sense of ongoing anxiety and fear around the globe. No doubt the now what can be said a phenomenon has not only led to short term as well as long term psychosocial and mental health implications on all ages and communities across the globe for children and adolescents. The impact and magnitude of impact on children and young people is determined by many vulnerability factors like developmental age, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically underprivileged, educational status, or isolating due to infection or the fear of infection. What we can do is pay critical attention to mental health that moves beyond treatment that is programme orientated in community, education, and mentoring, coaching, social and health care settings. The need to include broader approaches by public global health as well as governmental investments to help and support children, adolescents and young adults.

We have required and continue to identify to have an understanding of what children and young people have been experiencing during the lockdown period in the UK, where children and youth organisations are conducting surveys with children and youth. This will show how children and young people can be best supported to resume to normal life or the 'new normal' way of life in the coming months and years. This understanding can inform responses to recovery implemented at the policy level and by those working directly with children and adolescents. For example, the New Zealand Government have published a national psychosocial and wellbeing recovery framework with a focus on prevention and early intervention upheld through the principles of collectively, empowerment, community solutions, assets-focus, and support for community and specialist services.

I conclude the need for evidence based elaborative plan of action to cater to the psycho social and mental health needs of the vulnerable children and adolescents during pandemic as well as post pandemic. There is a need to support services geared towards providing measures for developing healthy coping mechanisms during the current crisis. For child and adolescent mental health policies with direct work, digital collaborative networks of professionals, in health and social work and community volunteers.

[Statistical data pre Covid-19 was high: There are more than 2.2 billion children in the world who constitute approximately 28% of the world's population. Those aged between 10 to 19 years make up 16 % of the world's population (UNICEF, 2019).]
https://www.cph.co.nz/your-health/youth-mental-health/
https://www.youthsporttrust.org/evidence-paper-impact-covid-19-restrictions-children-and-young-people

The other Pandemic

Vladimiro Chiattone
Therapeutic Accompanying Senior Technician
ATALyC FOUNDATION
(Therapeutic Companions of
Latin America & The Caribbean) Ppjj45812

On March 12, 2020, the lives of all Argentines would change forever, the government elected in the October 2019 elections and assumed in December of the same year debuted with a global

pandemic, prepared to face the biggest economic crisis. In the last 100 years, the product of a terrible neoliberal administration that had destroyed education and decimated health, had to redirect its efforts to something that no one was prepared for a Pandemic.

In a context of destruction of the public health system, which ultimately is the one who always comes out in defense of those who have the least, the problem was faced sharply, a total quarantine, total isolation, nothing and nobody should leave their homes, Except for health personnel and the state, they had to go out to cover the shortcomings of a private system that had only been effective in the collection but voracious and miserly in investment, help was sought, companies were reactivated to be able to build respirators, the research system The state was launched, hospitals began to equip themselves and while the world fell into an unprecedented debacle, to the point of stealing shipments that were going to other countries, in underdeveloped Latin America a new way of understanding medicine was beginning to develop. and little by little he began to fall into the error that is still paying today, he faced the pandemic only with the intention of curing the coronavirus, but I do not pay or pay attention to mental health that of a terrified population acting in command, we saw how the corpses were thrown in the street because nobody was going to pick them up, fortunes were paid for a bottle of alcohol and food and work began to be scarce and people left to their fate without emotional restraint On the part of the state, the one who was subjected to preventive isolation for suspected COVID, then when he was discharged he was left alone with the regret of having been able to die from a disease without a cure, the state became a biologic concept, without take into account the outbreak of a new pandemic that is mental health, even today the world does not pay attention to it, only some countries have allowed us to coordinate and supervise the incorporation of therapeutic companions to preventive isolation centers to be supporting the isolated person's mood, see if there are changes in their mood, and once they are discharged outside, another therapeutic companion awaits them who

will monitor their health. ntal and report it to a team that will jointly evaluate the actions to be taken, it is not only effective for that but to prevent this pandemic in this area that will not take long to arrive, whoever took these precautions will be prepared to face them, whoever has not done it must Navigate in the sea of uncertainty just as it did with COVID and let us remember that in mental health, there are no effective vaccines, there are only effective preventive models and the therapeutic accompaniment has shown it where they have allowed it to act.

Our Foundation has been the pioneer in this area. EMAIL: atalyc18@gmail.com

Mental Health and Covid-19: Attuning to The Inner World to Gain Resilience for The Outer World

Goly Emam
Clinical Counselor & Hypnotherapist
Canada

It is safe to say that when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the globe, it threw humanity into a spiral of uncertainty. Deep anxieties about health and survival surfaced. People were suddenly burdened with worry for their loved ones, the elderly, the health-care system, their ability to access the necessities of life, their occupation, and the government's ability to keep them safe.

As with anything in this life there is an equal and opposite tension that occurs. In this global pandemic, for example, people were also provided an opportunity to go inward. To seek within for what truly matters in life. As a result, there has been a re-evaluation of nearly every paradigm we live in. The school system educating our children, the health care system providing assistance to the ill, other essential services contributing to th wheel

that keeps our society running, and our government making decisions for our health and well-being. There was also a deeper look within as millions were home in quarantine. Having to spend more time at home allowed us to look at our family dynamics and patterns of relating to one another. For many it was an awakening of sorts for introspection into these internal patterns creating their outer expression.

This shift created two camps and two general modes of coping. For some, the pandemic and resulting slowing down was an opportunity to heal and shift into higher states of love and compassion. For others it was a spiral into fear and despair.

In my clinical practice, strategies and interventions that help mitigate the mental health and relationship challenges that have ensued have been to work on the inner world of the self first. This means to turn the focus from outside news and events, to inner reactions of thoughts and feelings. For example, when fear of uncertainty and economic hardship is activated, instead of trying to change the outside world (which is usually impossible to change) turning inward to shift our response to it. Turning inward like this is to cultivate an internal locus of control. When we practice this shift in focus, we are better able to attend to our thoughts and feelings and able to shift our emotional states more easily. As a result, we feel empowered and resilient that despite what may be threatening our survival in the outer world, we have an inner wealth that can help us cope and return to calm.

Compassion, Empathy, and… What Else?

Victoria Spashchenko
Coach, mentor, speaker, author and
Solution-Focused practitioner, Ukraine

Social workers are expected to be compassionate and empathetic and those expectations are well-justified. People we serve are in need of those behaviors which are important and necessary but… are they enough? We work with people who are in trouble and/or face problems. By demonstrating our understanding of their problems and sympathizing with them we, may themfeeling better, and we do not necessarily help them out!

My observation is that often many social workers, acting from their best intentions, try generating and giving some good advice to their clients. Although these pieces of advice might be useful, I would challenge whether they are always helpful. In most cases receivers of advice victimize themselves even more and feel powerless. Also, let us be honest: if we give advice, do we have trust in that person? Do we believe that (s)he is able and capable of solving their own problem? Not really. But let us imagine they ARE experts of themselves!

Then we would probably have a different conversation with them. Instead of supporting a problem-dominating talk, and discussing what goes wrong, why it goes wrong, what is missing, and how to fix the problem, we would engage them into a different type of dialogue which we, Solution-Focused practitioners, call a Solution Talk. We would probably bridge the problem talk to a Solution Talk by saying: "Yes, things happen to be difficult for now. Nevertheless, you cope! How do you do that?" What difference does such only this one question make? Once again, instead of asking "what's wrong with you?" we ask "What's right with you? What works?"

I would argue that many "people with problems" are seldom asked the question of how they cope and manage their lives under unfavorable circumstances. And that's unfortunate, isn't it?! This is a very powerful question, I think. By asking "How do you cope?" and "How do you, at your best, manage your difficult life cases?" we re-focus the situation and co-create a different story! In that story "victims" become "heroes", they discover their good qualities, talents, and strength, highlight opportunities, and accumulate helpful resources needed for the desired break-through to reach their preferred CHANGE.

I appeal to social workers to rev vocabularies and

hopefully, to update them by including more of Solution-Focused questions:

- How do you want things to be for you?
- What gives you confidence the situation will go your way?
- What is already working (well) for you?
- How will you know things are developing in the "right" direction?
- What is the smallest change that will signal you that the situation has been improving? Etc. Every time we have a conversation with our clients, we either help growing their problems or supporting their flourishing solutions. What's your choice?

Action for Social and Emotional Wellbeing; Indigenous Leadership in Australia during Covid-19

Carolyn Minchin
Social Work Teacher &
\Member of AASW, Australia

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is focused on action and flexibility, and the pandemic response in Australia has been a time when this approach has really come into its own. The pandemic in Australia has challenged us to re-imagine our ways of connecting, to stay true to our values while dramatically transforming our cultural expressions of care, community, mental health and wellbeing.

A research dialogue project in Redfern, Sydney with community healing group Gamarada – meaning 'friends with a purpose' in Gadigal language - has given me the opportunity to learn and experience an ancient culture and community in transition. Traditional Indigenous practice wisdom, zoom technology and third wave behavioral science have come together in a remarkable synergy, to create new Covid-safe ways of being, thinking and creating community during the pandemic. Using ACT as a means of supporting goal setting and accountability, the group's move online since lock-down has enabled social connection and cultural renewal to continue in challenging times, when face-to-face gatherings where no longer possible.

The group meets to support and encourage each other to practice Dadirri, a traditional deep listening practice inspired by the work of Dr Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, Aboriginal elder and former primary school principal in Nauiyu, Daily River, in the Northern Territory. Dadirri is translated as "inner deep listening and quiet still awareness" and has been adapted for trauma recovery through the work of Professor Judy Atkinson, author of "Trauma Trails: Recreating Song Lines". Awareness of the breath is a core technique to bring stillness, reflection, and discernment to determine the appropriate actions to take in relation to country, to community, understanding seasonal change, knowing how to grieve and pay respect when people pass: knowing what to do and when.

Gamarada founder Ken Zulumovski has been recognized with an honorary doctorate by the University of Sydney for his work as group facilitator, holding the space in inner city Redfern open for over a decade and engaging in a dialogue with Western therapeutic models. The Gamarada Community does not receive funding and works on a train-the-trainer model, with participants becoming volunteers, learning leadership roles and sharing the weekly running of the group. The weekly sessions build capacity for social and emotional wellbeing and the recognition of Indigenous practice wisdom as a valid form of evidence-based practice. Speaking at the Western Sydney Community Forum in October 2020 on the impact of Covid-19 on Indigenous communities, Dr Zulumovski states; "We can't wait for government or for community services to reach us, we have to be very proactive, we have to lead, we have to take initiative".

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and other Third Wave mindfulness-based therapies provide a kind bridge, linking the practices that are valued in the Gamarada community to mainstream psychology and evidence-based practice. Leading ACT trainer Dr Russ Harris, author of "The Happiness Trap", describes The Choice Point, an activity designed to assist people to identify the things that take us away from living our values and the actions we can take to move towards our valued direction in life. This reflective practice is congruent with Indigenous practice wisdom, and the group reinforces Indigenous community values such as spiritual values and cultural continuity.

The online version of the group has allowed participants to contribute from a wide range of settings, including regional rehab programs, health students learning about cultural safety and appropriate practice for working with Indigenous communities, together with local Inner city Sydney community role models in wisdom practices.

The stress, uncertainty and dramatic changes we have faced over the past twelve months due to Covid-19 has been counter-balanced by growth in community knowledge and initiatives. A community of practice on Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) is evolving, led by many Indigenous practitioners, including psychologist Professor Pat Dudgeon and social worker Dr Tom Calma. The first publication of "Working Together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice" in 2010 brought recognition to SEWB as an inclusive practice framework that is increasingly relevant for Covid-19 recovery. Indigenous traditions embody practices for healing and the language reflects this wisdom. Kuarna elder Lewis O'Brien highlights the word 'Tanka Manninendi' meaning ' to alter the mind for the better', as evidence of the practice of traditional Indigenous psychology.

The responses of Indigenous communities around the country to the challenges of the pandemic have been inspiring in so many ways. In my own neighborhood in Canberra, the local Aboriginal Health service WinnungaNimmityjah acts as a role model to other services, with safety protocols in place early in 2020 and staff ready and visible in the community in protective equipment. Assertive advocacy with the local government brought testing to our local community and reassurance that all possible measures are being taken to maintain safety and awareness.

The Lowitja Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research has been equally proactive in research and online communication, broadcasting culturally appropriate messages on maintaining community connections alongside social distancing protocols. Respect for elders is central to culture and allowing elders to take time out while staying in touch online can be a great way to adjust to the times. Indigenous community online communication is moving forward in leaps and bounds.

As an Australian social worker from English and Irish backgrounds, with all of the colonial baggage that entails, I feel privileged to connect with Indigenous communities, to learn and share as we face new challenges and change in 2021.

Carolyn Minchin is a Canberra-based teacher and social worker with a passion for social and emotional wellbeing, community empowerment and capacity building, and evidence-based practice.

Tips to help students during Covid-19

Chanie Messinger
OTR/L, AAPC, ABNLP:
Author: Breathe, Breathe, Breathe…, USA

As New York city is amidst the cold winter months, COVID-19 is spiking. Students often spend time with winter sports and activities such as ice skating, skiing, snow tubing, etc. Yet more and

more people are diagnosed with COVID-19, and there is an increased rate of mortality. The impact on students from COVID-19 can result in increased anxiety, stress, depression, and loneliness. Extreme measures are put in place to decrease the spread of the virus. States are on relocked down, Broadway shows, concerts, plays, movie theaters, and some restaurants are closed for the time being. Students are removed from social support systems and extracurricular activities on campus, resulting in a decreased connection to peers, hobbies, and organization. Added to the mix can be fears linked with heightening unknowns and uncertainty in their life. There might be fears of loss of control, death, and vulnerability for the development of mental health concerns.

As an occupational therapy professor at Long Island University, most of the classes taught in the Fall of 2020 semester were held online. For the first 15 minutes of the course, the students and I had conversations about the importance of self-care, especially now more than ever due heighten time for uncertainty and unknown. Ideas and suggestions that we have discussed in detail included the following:

1. Feeling your feelings. How you are feeling is okay to feel. It's normal to feel sad, upset, angry, anxious. You can communicate with others your feelings. You can sit and feel your feelings. When you notice that your feelings are heightened, reaching out to a professional for help is important.
2. Sleep. Practice sleep hygiene with a consistent sleep routine by going to bed every night around the same time. Limit screen time before bed and avoid caffeine in the afternoon hours.
3. Social. It is easy to feel alone, especially when you are not seeing your peers in person, and you are not engaging in the activities that you were accustomed to. Daily set an intention to call, text, or video chat friends and family.
4. Exercise. Many gyms maybe close, yet you can do yoga, dance, and workouts all from the comfort of your own home via YouTube channels and websites.
5. Disconnect from social media each and

every day by setting a timer on your phone. Limit your news intake.
6. Healthy eating. Eat a well-balanced diet. Try new recipes and increase the immune system with healthy eating.

Covid-19 can be an isolating experience for students. It is especially important to maintain self-care by processing feelings, get enough sleep, interact with others, exercise, and eat healthily. These are tips and suggestions to help students cope and cultivate reliance during these heightened times of uncertainty.

Covid-19 and Mental Health: Nigerian Perspective- A Brief

Jamal Ali Ahmed
Senior Lecturer in Social Work
Jigawa State Polytechnic, Dutse, Nigeria

A great threat of coronavirus otherwise known as COVID-19 pandemic rocked the entire world in the wake of the year 2020. COVID-19 which was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan China, declared as Public Health Emergency of International Concern in January 2020 and later a pandemic in March 2020 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The threat is so strenuous that the entire world was placed on lockdown in the matter of social restriction such as on international and national transport links, market or business transaction, school and organization activities, and all related social and religious gatherings.

Mental health, according to WHO (2019), is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses

of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her communiy. It is cognitive, behavioral and emotional well-being; it is all about how people think, feel and behave. Individual's mental health can affect daily living, personal routine, relationship and physical health. Poor mental health is associated with rapid social change, stressful work conditions, social exclusion, unhealthy lifestyle, anxiety, depression and stress. Mental health includes subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, inter-generational dependence and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others.

Being a disease that is highly contagious, spreading fast across the world, and the fact that there is yet to be an established cure for it, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot of panic in every part of the world. Also, information and misinformation about such factors as those associated with the transmission of the virus, period of incubation, and impact on the socio-economic, political and psychological livelihood of people in the society put the general population at risk of mental health distress. In Nigeria, there is no empirical finding establishing the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the general populace. However, several studies have reported serious psychological distress experiences of members of the society in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the means of containing the pandemic such as; self-isolation, quarantine, social distancing, and treatment of infected persons can further pose a detrimental effect of psychological distress. Specifically, the loneliness effect of reduced social interactions is a risk factor for several psychological disorders such as; anxiety, drug use, insomnia, major depression, and suicidal ideation especially among vulnerable populations like the elderly and those with health challenges. Excessive quarantine tends to give rise to anxiety which may also trigger and initiate the implications for some related mental health issues. The implication of confinement on the psychological well-being of the public, by identifying hysteria,

rejection and dejection feelings, obsessive-compulsive symptoms and mood challenges as conditions that can lead to complicated health issues in the victims and the public. Presently, the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19) is well-established in Nigeria with increasing community transmission. While a significant response has been initiated by the Federal Government of Nigeria through a multidisciplinary task force, there are challenges for the country's already weak health sector and invariably the mental health systems. For example, the testing capacity is inadequate because of limited technical, infrastructural, financial and logistical capacity to rapidly scale-up testing which could be a reflection of the health system. Mental illnesses can result from social isolation, loss of pleasures of life and stress arising from working at the frontlines. Others include unstructured work, handling children while working, and job loss amongst others. With lockdowns and movement restrictions in place in many states, levels of loneliness, depression, harmful alcohol and drug use, and self-harm or suicidal behavior may also be on the increase.

To have good mental health during the pandemic, people need to focus on what is within their control, take care of their general health including diet, sleep and exercise, reduce listening or watching unreliable news, connect with loved ones remotely and speak out if they are struggling and speak to a licensed professional (counseling, other therapies, medication if needed).

The new realities of working from home, temporary unemployment, home-schooling of children, and lack of physical contact with other family members, friends and colleagues take time to get used to. Adapting to lifestyle changes such as these, and managing the fear of contracting the virus and worry about people close to us who are particularly vulnerable, are challenging for all of us. They can be particularly difficult for people with mental health conditions.

As countries introduce measures to restrict movement as part of efforts to reduce the number

of people infected with COVID-19, more and more of are making huge changes to their daily routines. Fortunately, there are lots of things that we can do to look after our own mental health and to help others who may need some extra support and care.

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Justin Obiagwu c.
President
National Association of
Social Work Students (NASoWs), Nijeria

In understanding the impact of COVID-19 Pendemic on school pupils as regards their perception on education It is imparative to note that the systematic modalities being put in place by the government of different countries to help curtail the wide spread of the Corona virus such as the imposition of a total lockdown, which impedes the activities of the lower class citizens who are mostly dependent on their daily earnings derived through their day to day endeavours such as petty trading and other menial jobs. In this article, we try to understand the effects of of these imposed modalities on children whose parents and Guardians have thus been affected, Looking precisely upon the effects on their educational psychology.

It is right to note that the class room set up was designed to help make learning alot easier through Physical and social interaction as well as visual learning with drawings and paintings which children are permitted to explore on regular school attendance which helps to improve their zeal towards education such that their aspirations towards a better career life path are heightened.

But where schools are suddenly shut down, in a bid by the Government to curtail the spread of the virus, it is imparative to expect a backslide in education resulting from a disorientation especially when parents who are not well equipped for online classes begin to indulge their children into their different work-lives in their struggle for survival pending the initial aspiration of giving them a better life through education.

"Operant conditioning (also called instrumental conditioning) is a type of associative learning process through which the strength of a behavior is modified by reinforcement or punishment."(skinner B.N, 1938).This is to say that drives and motives can be influenced by sanctions and impositions, when the average child is introduced to a life of toil at an early age due to impositions by the Government, one would expect a retrogression and a diversion of interest from formal education to other matters due to such unfavorable modalities.

In providing a solution to a problem we make other problems which is to say that no matter how good the intention, there's always a side effect.Therefore, social workers must be proactive in understanding the pending effects generated from solutions provided by the authorities and must strive to lobby on an outstanding resource system to help the affected vulnerable population to cope in the face of these challenges.

THE GREAT CHALLENGE FOR SOCIAL WORK AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Reflections of a social worker on the lessons of the pandemic

Rosa Chan Cikalo
Clinical Social Worker
Founder of the first Community Day Care
in Costa Rica

The Covid 19 pandemic has undoubtedly impacted the work of the Social Worker in the different fields of practice and has exacerbated the manifestations in people who are dealing with mental health problems, addiction problems, poverty, homelessness, bad interpersonal relationships, violence. In the midst of this panorama, it is also inevitable the need to evaluate reality from the deficiencies and on the functionality and the need for new services and approaches in the treatment of economic and social needs in each of our societies The medical model and specialized practice have covered everything that the fight against the pandemic means, and most social workers in the field of health have faithfully followed the indications of the epidemiology health team. The World health organization has published a report on the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on the mental health of the population In this study, a series of evaluation instruments are used for the population, from different disciplines pharmacology, psychiatry, psychopharmacology, etc. They mention the severity of the virus outbreak for world mental health, finding high rates of symptoms of anxiety, depression, disorders of post-traumatic stress, psychological anguish, pointing out how the sectors most at risk include the female sex,

younger age groups around 40 years of age, and the presence of chronic psychiatric diseases and frequent exposure to social networks - The study is interesting in its recommendations on the education of the population and on the need to provide psychosocial guidance to the population about symptoms, control of moods and possibilities of help. As it is well observed, the study makes recommendations related to mental health and, of course, social workers, without a doubt, are also involved in fulfilling their contribution, in many cases helping with different populations. However, at no time has the WH0 study referred to the social determinants of health, in which the variable poverty, the absence of mental health services, the need for services that provide follow-up, especially in the treatment of addictions, depressive problems, anguish, family conflicts caused by the absence of mental health and pressured by the conditions of poverty and education, unemployment, the absence of housing, definitely play a determining role in the state of mental health. Based on the above, the question arises, will we be able to implement strategies that at the political level feed new and possible programs within a vision in which the social conditions for the well-being of the populations are contemplated? Will we Social Workers accept the technocratic vision of the neutral health problem analysis model, without any mention of the structural conditions that promote the greatest social and economic vulnerability and its repercussions on the mental and physical health of the populations? Or will we be encouraged to initiate processes to promote research to assess the state of mental health and the lack of services, especially for the lowest-income populations, the impact of living conditions and deficiencies in the development of this, we will promote evaluations of services and results in established social agencies, especially governmental ones? Will we further promote action research in existing institutions, making prevail the vision of integrality that characterizes Social Work, or community organization to launch demonstration programs or projects to overcome the conditions that most affect populations? We would be encouraged to promote that organizations made up of Social Work professionals in our countries use the product of

our research to support proposals at the macro-political level to feed the perspective of politicians to promote a change in the population's situation. Colleagues, the challenge that the epidemiological reality poses is interesting! and challenges our professional commitment ... What do you think?

Mental Health in Palestine during Covid-19

Raed Amira

President of the Community Center for Training and Development – Bethlehem, Palestine

According to what the World Health Organization stated, "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social safety, not merely the absence of disease or disability." Thus, public health is not complete without mental health.Palestinians do not have an environment that has all the elements of life and psychological well-being, for the crisis that the Palestinian society is experiencing with all its complexities and interactions has affected public life great psychological effects that created crises at the individual and societal level, Palestinians faced many pandemics before corona, the most prominent of which is the epidemic of occupation that has plagued the Palestinian people for more than 73 years, its daily practice of killing, arresting, house demolishing, and land confiscating, closure, siege, and nightly raids of Palestinian camps, cities and villages, psychological and physical torture, division of West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, are daily events that constitute the worst forms of violations, in addition to the internal political reality of Palestinian society represented by the division that was accompanied by internal political and social crises that threw itself into the psychological, social and economic reality of Palestinian society.

The economic repercussions were not less severe on the Palestinian community, where more than 321,400 unemployed people suffer in Palestine, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in October 2020. This was accompanied by the spread of Coronavirus in March 2020, which led to a new social situation in understanding and the social and cultural distancing, as this affected many aspects of Palestinian community life.

Palestinian situation with its components and dimensions affect the society as the Palestinian people find themselves daily face psychological distress, anxiety and tension. All these circumstances have other psychological consequences and indicators, including social isolation, depression and anxiety, Chronic aggressive behaviour, the presence of different types of psychological problems and the collapse of the community system in light of all these projections on society, the inevitable transition from one situation to another is imposed by restrictions and data that Palestinian society can't control.

Mental health is related to daily, stressful and arduous events in society which create painful situation due to distortions in thoughts, frequent events and their daily acceleration, and in the midst of all these events, all social and psychological specialists and institutions working in this field seek efforts to preserve the mental health of the individual and society through continuous awareness and support preservation of healthy, psychological, national and social cultural system as well, and working under exceptional circumstances to face this great challenge to reduce the undermining and looting of mental, physical and mental health in Palestine.

The association of mental health with the major events that we mentioned previously did not stop at the limits of symptoms, their causes and consequences, but went beyond that to a state of prevalence in Palestinian society. Many studies indicate very high rates among children in particular suffering from anxiety and tension in different proportions (medium and strong) Many

studies also indicate that families are living the phenomenon of violence in Palestinian society of all kinds, especially in light of the Corona pandemic, despite the organized work and efforts made among specialists to reduce these phenomena.

However, the psychological dimensions and their consequences indicate a very high concern about what is the mechanism of the circumstances and the results, and this in itself is a fear about where the Palestinian society is heading and what are the ways, solutions and remedies. Do the specialists have solutions, whether they are training, educational or other?

The question remains about the other epidemiological dimensions, such as the occupation, which stands at any place or time and practices all forms of violence and human rights violations against the Palestinian citizen, and to what extent we can also, despite the existing attempts or to intensify Arab and international efforts and solidarity to stop all these practices by the occupation, because in my opinion, it is the largest part of the psychological and social imbalance of the Palestinian society.The state of psychological and social balance in society has great requirements and entitlements, the most important of which are readiness, internal community response, solidarity and stability, and this in itself requires great effort and great physical and psychological energy.

Finally, Palestinian society, despite all these circumstances, always seeks, with all its components, for another meaning of life, which is the beautiful meaning that carries with it the hope for a bright future, free from occupation and plague under the shade of the sun of freedom, democracy and self-determination. Here Palestine was not a model of well-being in all its forms. However, it is an example of challenge, patience, and how to confront to protect the Palestinian people as much as possible.

A DNA nano-signature discovery could result in a quick and easy test for cancer detection

Dr. Abu Ali Ibn Sina
NHMRC Emerging Leader Fellow
Center for Personalized Nanomedicine
Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology (AIBN)
The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia

Cancer has become one of the leading causes of death in the world and costs billions of dollars in the direct healthcare system. Early diagnosis of cancer can significantly improve patient survival and reduce the economic burden. However, cancer is an incredibly complicated disease and the large versatility in cancer types makes it extremely difficult to develop a single test to detect all different types of cancer at an early stage. Moreover, current cancer detection procedures require a surgical procedure called tissue biopsy which is painful. I and my colleague's research published in the journal Nature Communications, has discovered a unique DNA nano-signature that appears to be common to all cancers and can be found in both blood and biopsy tissue samples. Based on this discovery, we developed a pan-cancer diagnostic test that potentially can be used for early diagnosis and routine monitoring of cancer in the clinicwith a minimally invasive procedure. The technology has recently been licensed by a US company named aiGene and currently under the process of commercialisation.

How the test works/ how did you conduct the research?
During cancer progression, DNA undergoes considerable reprogramming particularly, in the distribution pattern of a tiny molecule called

methyl group which decorates the DNA. Normal cell DNA carries a distinct pattern of methyl groups which is significantly altered in cancer. We discovered that cancer DNA with this altered pattern of methyl groups forms a unique nanostructure in water. Wealso discovered that the cancerousDNA nanostructures stick to the gold with high affinity in comparison to the normal DNA. This fundamental discoverydirected usto develop a quick and easy test to identify the cancerous DNA from any tissue types, e.g. blood or biopsy. The assay which we termed as "Methylscape" requires a tiny amount of purified genomic DNA to be mixed with few drops of gold nanoparticle solution. By simply observing the color change, it is possible to identify the cancerous DNAby naked eye within 10 minutes. The assay also works for electrochemical detection which could eventually be used as a diagnostic tool, possibly with a mobile phone.

What are the implications of this?
A pan-cancer diagnostic test like Methylscape can overcome many limitations of current procedures. For example, if a patient feels sick, the doctors can potentially include the Methylscape test along with the other test to rule out any chances of cancer. Overall, the test is simple, quick and detectable by the naked eye and therefore carries highpotentialityto be integrated into the clinic as a universal cancer screening method.So far,we have tested over 200 clinical samples with 90% accuracy. It seems to be a promising start; however, further analysis with more samples is required to bring the test into the clinic.

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Our mission is to develop the vocational skills of the labour market of Bangladesh to generate more value for the country. We strive to set the standard for vocational training by creating and sustaining the conditions that enable all students to experience an unparalleled educational journey that is intellectually life changing and market relevant.

ACE works with Industry Skills Council and Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation to help youths enter the job market. We recruit students from rural and semi-rural Bangladesh, train them at our institute and then place them at jobs. In 3-6 months a student can become an earning member of the family.

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AKS KHAN CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE

6th Floor, Rupayan Prime (Level-06), House #02 Road #07, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1205

Telephone : +88 02 9614561
Mobile: 01730 474781, 01730 474783

Facebook:
acehospitalitymanagementinstitute

Website: www.ace.edu.bd
Email: info@ace.edu.bd

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