

Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region

Chairperson's Report (1 January 2023 to 31 December 2023)

Introduction

As we returned to normalcy in 2023 after several years of COVID-19, we were excited to resume face-to-face interactions, events, and campaigns. We were delighted to reconnect with all our partners and families through our continuous active engagement activities, celebration events, and regional campaigns. CIFA's work had continued with renewed vigour and positive energy, showcasing our commitment to advancing family well-being in the Asian region and beyond.

Throughout the year, we maintained active communication with the United Nations and participated actively in its activities, particularly in organizing a series of events for the celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF+30). Collaborating with our Asian and global counterparts, we proudly led the Asian region, responding proactively to requests, fostering collaboration, and advocating for family well-being, enhancing our presence in the international arena.

CIFA was ready to lead a new chapter in Asian family well-being by bridging the voices of counterparts in Asia to the United Nations. This milestone not only brought recognition but also opened doors for greater collaboration, joint projects, and regional campaigns that would empower families and significantly enhance our impact. With our extensive experience and expertise, we were well-equipped to navigate this new chapter and make a substantial difference.

Corporate Governance

The Council

Through the collaborative efforts and dedication of the Council and committee members, we continued to strive for the common goal of “Converging Professional Wisdom for Family Well-Being”, a mission pledged by the Founding Members of CIFA when it was inaugurated in 2008 with increasing recognition.

We are most thankful to Ms. Elsie Leung, Ms. May Tsui and Mr. Edwin Chiu, who have continued to serve as our Hon. Advisor, Hon. Legal Advisor and Hon. Auditor, giving timely assistance and wise advice on many important issues. We are most thankful for their staunch support and involvement whenever their expert input is called for.

With high team spirit and close collaboration, the Council and various committees had been busily engaged in the various aspects of work of CIFA, with the support from the Secretariat. This involved a lot of coordination with concerned parties, including funding bodies, member organisations, collaborators in specific projects etc. In the spirit of accountability and

transparency, reports to funders and information on events and announcement of upcoming activities had been included in CIFA-NET, the quarterly newsletter, and uploaded onto the CIFA website for information. All these were made possible due to good will and understanding in achieving a common goal to strive for improvement and excellence.

Financial Management

We are thankful to our supporters who continued to sponsor our activities. These include the Wofoo Social Enterprises (WSE), the Title sponsor of the Asian Award For Advancing Family Well-Being (3A Project) since this regional initiative was launched in 2010. We are also thankful to the Family Council for its provision of funds and to co-organise the Exchange Programs on Wofoo 3A Project throughout the years. With their generous support, we have been able to provide opportunity for sharing of knowledge, experience and good practice. Through close dialogue with concerned parties and monitoring by the 3A Committee, the funding bodies are satisfied with the deliverables and the financial management of the various activities under the Wofoo 3A Project umbrella.

With prudent financial management and continued support from various quarters, I am pleased to report that we are in a healthy financial position. I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to Ms. Lam Yee Mui, the Hon. Treasurer to work closely with the Secretariat in overseeing the financial management of CIFA.

We will continue to adopt a prudent approach in financial management as well as complying with the principle of transparency and accountability to gain the recognition and trust from our supporters and members.

Membership

The Membership Committee under the chairmanship of Ms. Eliza Lam had continued to focus on database management of CIFA membership. With the completion of updating and validation exercise of the existing membership, the Committee had conducted database analysis to provide the basis for monitoring and measures for follow up actions. Recommendations for more promotional efforts to engage members from various regions and countries beyond Hong Kong had been made, especially among Council members and the Vice-Chairpersons. The process of updating the database management was ongoing.

While enhancements in promoting CIFA activities and news could be made with improved database management, parallel promotion of membership, along with forthcoming CIFA activities, especially those in celebrating IYF+30, would be conducted to attract new members.

Wofoo 3A Project

The 3A Committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Agnes Ng continued to sustain the efforts in the Wofoo 3A Project. In order to provide an opportunity for sharing of best practice through the Exchange Program of Wofoo 3A Project 2022 and to launch the Wofoo 3A Project 2024, funding support from the Family Council had been sought. At the same time, efforts had been made to seek sponsorship from Wofoo Social Enterprises for a new round of

competition. Meanwhile, with the formation of the 4A Core Group (4ACG), efforts were being made to consolidate their plan for further development in capacity building and exchange.

The Exchange Program of Wofoo 3A Project 2022 and launching of the Wofoo 3A Project 2024 took place on 21 February, 2024 with the presence of Ms. Melissa Pang, chairman of the Family Council of the HKSAR to officiate at the ceremony.

Beside the acceptance and publication of the paper titled “Multilevel Impacts of the Wofoo Asian Award for Advancing Family Well-being: A multimethod qualitative study applying a socio-ecological model” in the Social Sciences & Humanities Open Journal (Volume 7 Issue 1, 2023), we were pleased that another paper on Best Practices in Advancing Family Well-Being in Asia: A Multimethod Qualitative Study had been accepted and published in the Asian Social Science. Full appreciation must be given to the research team headed by Prof. Vivian Lou of the Sau Po Centre on Ageing, who had conducted the study on a pro bono basis.

Publicity and Fund-raising

The Publicity and Fund-raising Committee chaired by Ms. Alice Wan is pleased to share the key initiatives and activities undertaken in the year in enhancing CIFA’s community engagement and public presence while raising funds.

Charity Fundraising Concert

A preparatory meeting with the SAR Philharmonic Orchestra was held to discuss the charity concert, initially planned for November 2023. However, due to the limited seating capacity of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Amphitheatre and the unavailability of venues at HKU and PolyU, the concert had been postponed to March 2024 to be held at the Hong Kong City Hall.

Regional Family We-Time Campaign

As one of the major activities to celebrate IYF+30, the Committee was heavily involved in organising the Regional Family We-Time Campaign. Based on the experience gained in organising the Family We-Time At Home Challenge in 2022, the Working Group on Regional Family We-Time Campaign had adopted "Family Daily: Spending Quality Time Together in Clothing, Food & Nutrition, Living & Environment, Travelling & Leisure" as the theme for this regional initiative. The Campaign, running from October 2023 to May 2024, aimed to promote quality family time through various activities. The campaign featured a collage of photos and colour-filling art pieces, with an Award Presentation Ceremony scheduled on 15 May 2024, to coincide with the International Family Day.

An official website had been designed and launched in October 2023 to facilitate registration and submission of works. Eventually the campaign involved 33 organizations from 18 countries and regions in Asia Pacific region, including Brunei, Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, and Vietnam.

Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF+30)

With the setting up of the Working Group on IYF+30 in April 2022 and continuous dialogue with Renata of the Focal Point on the Family of the United Nations to keep pace with the global efforts to celebrate the IYF+30, the Council continued to steer the various working groups/committees, including the Working Group on Regional Family We-Time Campaign and Expert Group Meeting on Ageing of Population in Asia, the Organising Committee on Asian Family Summit 2024, and the Editorial Group on the production of the Commemorative Publication on IYF+30, which have been set up to work out the details of these activities.

Production of Commemorative Publication on IYF+30

The Editorial Group led by the two editors-in-chief, Prof. Joyce Ma and Prof. Kim, with members including Prof. Joyce Feng, Prof. Zhu Mei Hua, Ms. Bawany Chinapan and Tabitha Ho met to work out the theme, contents, and invitation of contributions for the publication.

Towards A Better Tomorrow for Families has been chosen as the title of the publication to echo that of the Asian Family Summit, with sections on (1) Asia- along the Megatrends, including climate change, ICT development, urbanisation & migration, and demographic changes. (2) CIFA in Asia – The Regional Hub, including Footprints of Converging Professional Wisdom for Families, Highlights on the work of CIFA, CIFA and IYF+30, CIFA & I, and CIFA Information.

The Editorial Group aimed to have the commemorative publication to be ready for distribution at the Asian Family Summit 2024 scheduled to be held on 27th December 2024 at the University of Hong Kong.

The EGM on Demographic Changes & Ageing of Population in Asia

The EGM on Demographic Changes & Ageing of Population in Asia, held from 30 November to 1 December at the University of Hong Kong, was a significant event co-hosted by the Centre for Family and Population Research (CFPR) of the National University of Singapore, the Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA), the Sau Po Centre on Ageing of the University of Hong Kong, and the Focal Point on the Family of the United Nations. This event marked the first activity in Asia to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF+30) as promulgated by the United Nations.

It provided a platform for 14 experts from 8 countries/regions, including former policy-makers, academics, researchers, and practitioners from tertiary institutes and non-profit organizations, to exchange knowledge and insights on the topic of Ageing in Asia, under the mega trend of demographic changes. We are thankful to the Social Welfare Department, the Best Wishes Charity Limited, and the HKU Research Hub of Population Studies for sponsoring the event.

We were honored to have Mr. Chris SUN, Secretary for Labour and Welfare of the HKSAR, as the Guest of Honour. Despite his busy schedule, he delivered a pre-recorded Opening Address, providing an overview of the efforts made in Hong Kong to enhance the well-being of older persons and stimulating thoughts on initiatives and measures to cope with the challenges brought about by the ageing population in Asia.

The scientific program was divided into seven sessions, each focusing on different aspects of demographic changes and ageing:

Session 1 explored the demographic changes in Asia, including declines in fertility and mortality, increased migration, and rapid ageing of the population, and how these changes impact family life. Experts shared insights on living arrangements among middle-aged and older adults in China and discussed healthy longevity and productive aging.

Session 2 addressed the economic insecurity and poverty faced by older persons in Asia Pacific. Presenters recommended policies and strategies to alleviate poverty among older persons, citing examples from various parts of Asia.

Session 3 focused on enhancing the quality of life for older people. Experts emphasized the importance of a holistic approach and collaborative efforts in improving the well-being of older adults and their families affected by dementia.

Session 4 discussed creating enabling environments and innovations to cater to the evolving needs of the ageing population. Topics included bridging the digital divide, universal design and accessibility, and intergenerational living.

Session 5 highlighted the need to change mindsets, especially in the media, and the importance of developing policy initiatives and strategies for enhancing age-friendliness. Experts shared insights on building age-friendly communities and addressing ageism.

Session 6 emphasized the significance of partnership and collaboration among academics, policymakers, practitioners, the private sector, and civil society in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The role of the United Nations in supporting countries in achieving the SDGs was also discussed.

Session 7 addressed the impact of COVID-19 on older persons, highlighting the devastating effects on their physical and mental health, financial insecurity, and increased vulnerability to abuse and neglect. Experts called for proactive policies, strengthening healthcare systems, and collaborative efforts to cope with these challenges.

The event concluded with remarks and recommendations for the road ahead, emphasizing the importance of networking and collaboration. Participants appreciated the logistical arrangements and hospitality events, including welcoming and farewell dinners and a sightseeing tour at the Peak.

A full report on the EGM had been submitted to the Focal Point on the Family of the United Nations and it has been uploaded onto the UN Portal for wider viewing.

Asian Family Summit 2024

An Organising Committee co-chaired by me and Ms. Melissa Pang, chairman of the Family Council was formed on 28 July, 2023 with representative from co-organisers, namely Social Welfare Department, Connecting Hearts, the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Hong Kong, and Hong Kong Council of Social Services was set up, together with Scientific Committee, Hospitality Committee, Communication & Public Relations Committee and Family Well-Being Expo Committee.

We have been successful to get sponsorship support from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, with funding support both for the AFS 2024 and other capacity building activities. A total amount of \$5.93 million has been approved, with the understanding the SMART Family LINK Project funded by HKJC would be the sole sponsor and proper recognition had to be made. The sponsorship did not cover funding support for the VIP reception dinner and the Gala Dinner cum Award Presentation of the Wofoo 3A Project 2024, and separate sponsorship had to be sought for these two events.

The Organising Committee had decided to engage an event manager to assist in the logistic works involved, including development and setting up of the website, registration of participants, invitation and liaison with speakers and call for and vetting of submissions, as well as providing all the secretarial support to the OC and sub-committees. Call for tender had taken place, and eventually OMG under the overall coordination of Paco So had been selected as the event secretary for the AFS2024.

We were grateful to have Mrs. Renata Kaczmarek, Ms. Elsie Leung, Dr. Lam Ching and Mr. Bernard Chan as our Hon Advisors who had given full support and advice to the OC in different aspects, including connection with the Under Secretary General for Economic & Social Affairs, the Commissioner of Foreign Affairs of PRC in HK, etc.

A lot of preparatory work had been going on during the year, and I would like to thank all for their dedication and hard work in making the AFS2024 a great success.

Website Revamping

Throughout the year, the WEP Development Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Kwok Wai Keung had been working closely with the ITRC of HKCSS via the Project Management Team (PMT) and Project Steering Committee (PSC) on the production of the new website, according to the Project Initiation Document (PID) endorsed by the PSC in November 2021. The members, particularly Mr. Tim Li, our Secretary, had put in painstaking efforts to repeatedly run the User Acceptance Test (UAT) for the administration and user models of the new website. The results of these tests were sent to ITRC for fixing the identified problems and producing the amended UAT environment for the Committee to verify if the bugs were fixed or if any further bugs were found.

By 3 October 2023, we had completed 18 rounds of testing, and all identified bugs had been fixed. The PMT meeting on 4 October 2023 concluded that the UAT was completed, and a recommendation was made to the Chairman of the PSC to sign the Acceptance Certificate for the UAT.

Upon receiving the Certificate signed by the Chairman on 10 October 2023, ITRC submitted the plan for Data Migration, System Rollout, and System Nursing, along with the schedule for submitting the user manual and administration manual. The plan was endorsed by the PSC on 13 November 2023, with the target to complete the project by December 2023. It was planned that upon completion of data migration by ITRC and fixing all issues on data verification identified by the Secretary in early December 2023, the System Live Run would start around 11-15 December 2023.

However, due to some reasons, data migration and data verification were still not completed in December 2023. A PMT meeting was conducted on 13 December 2023, when it was agreed that the Secretary would work with ITRC to complete the data migration and verification within December 2023.

A follow-up meeting of the WEP Development Committee on 27 December 2023 revealed that the Secretary was still working on data verification. Hence, the meeting concluded that the task should be completed within January 2024, so that the new website could be launched in February 2024. The chairman of the PSC had expressed concern over the delay in the exercise and had urged for a speedy completion of the revamping exercise to tie in with the launching of the website for AFS 2024.

Research & Training

Webinars

Under the coordination of the Research and Training Committee chaired by Prof. Vivian Lou and with the support from the Membership Committee, the Webinar on “Father’s Involvement in Helping Families during COVID-19 in Asia” was successfully held on 21 April 2023, with around 70 participants attending the session. Professor Kim Yeong-Hee (Vice-chairperson of Korea & Japan; Emeritus Professor of Chungbuk National University & Endowed Chair Professor of SolBridge International School of Business, Korea) and Ms. Lam Yee Wan Eliza (Chairman of Membership Committee, CIFA & Service Head of Family Service, Caritas Hong Kong) were invited to speak and share their insights on the topics of “Father Involvement” and “How to Build up PAPA Zone in Synergy with Core Services of Family Work - Succession of Heritage with Local Experience of Caritas – Hong Kong” respectively. Their enlightening presentations generated much discussion and sharing among the participants. The overall response to the webinar was very positive, with encouraging remarks received from attendees.

Cross regional study

The Research and Training Committee had endorsed a cross-regional study, with a view to collect data in 2023 and 2024. This was a collaborative effort between PolyU and CIFA, originally planned to involve teams from Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Korea, and Malaysia, to examine the application of ICT in family services, ascertain the benefits to client families after the application of ICT, and explore the integration of ICT with traditional family services in the post-pandemic era. Professor Eric Chui, Dr. Herman Lo, and Dr. George Lau of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University served as members of the research team, with Professor Chui as the Project Leader and Dr. Herman Lo as the Chief Coordinator.

CIFA WEP & CIFA-NET

Throughout the year, CIFA-NET continued to be published on a quarterly basis to include reports and announcements on CIFA activities and its member organisations. We are most thankful to CIFA member organisations for contributing articles to CIFA-NET.

Conclusion

Reflecting on the achievements of the past year, we are filled with optimism and determination for the future. As we move forward, CIFA remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing family well-being in Asia and beyond. Our competence and dedication have been recognized through the Special Consultative Status granted by the United Nations, exemplified by our organization of a series of IYF International Year of the Family +30 celebration events. This milestone not only brings recognition but also opens doors for greater collaboration, joint projects, and regional campaigns that will empower families and significantly enhance our impact. With our extensive experience and expertise, we are well-equipped to navigate this new chapter and make a substantial difference.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to the growth and success of CIFA. It is through your unwavering support, commitment, and shared vision that we have been able to take the lead in Asia for family well-being and make a tangible difference in the lives of families. Together, we will continue to work towards sustainable development and the betterment of humanity.

Patricia CHU
Chairperson
CIFA

10 January 2025