

## **WILAT CHAT ON COVID-19: IMPACT ON HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIETY**

Thursday March 26, 2020

COVID-19 has affected many communities around the world and has presented a challenge across many countries. WiLAT has initiated a series of chats among WiLATs and the first session on human behavior and society was spearheaded by Reshma Yousuf, Secretary of WiLAT Malaysia who has prepared pre-readings and a few questions in advance. Two other sessions on coping strategies for the home-bound and technology enables social distancing to have been planned for 2 April and 9 April respectively.

The meeting arrangement is facilitated by Vicky Koo, Deputy Global Chairperson and after many months, WiLATs are able to meet on the screen with great relief that we are all well. Other attendees are Dorothy Chan, Gayani de Alwis, Zawiah Abdul Majid, Kelly Lee and Gayathri.

### Sharing of best practices on preventive measures

It is noted that different countries are in different stages of the outbreak. Hong Kong and Singapore encountered the earliest outbreak following Wuhan in China in end January 2020. With the experience gained with SARS in 2003, Hong Kong's community became very alert and there was a huge rush for face masks and sanitizing products such as bleach, alcohol and, for some reasons which we do not fully comprehend, toilet papers. The supply of face masks remains tight today but employers in Hong Kong are able to provide a face mask a day for staff going to work. Don't panic, now in supermarkets in Hong Kong, there is abundant toilet papers, rice, and daily food.

### Avoid gatherings

Group gatherings have shown to be most prone to infection. This happened with wedding banquet, gatherings for prayers during the Chinese new year, group tours and dinner gatherings with a large group. Lately, group infection occurred with pubs and performers going around different clubs and hence carrying the virus with them.

We must therefore work together to cut off the infection. Drastic reduction in business and social activities are some measures and where it became critical, the whole city may have to be locked down.

We may not know enough about the virus but apparently it is highly contagious, affects the elderly most and some infected persons may not carry symptoms. Institutions, offices, hotels and clubs require health declaration and on the spot temperature check.

### Visitors from risk areas

In February, attention is on visitors from China and then from Korea, Italy, whole of Europe, UK and USA etc. Now, practically, different countries are adopting different practices to control importing the virus or controlling the spread of the virus internally with the help of quarantine centers and COVID-19 test administered timely. However, we must not forget the importance of personal hygiene and cleansing of premises and risk areas.

#### Cleansing and sanitization

For office buildings, it is almost a must that lobby areas, lift buttons, handles are disinfected every hour or every two hours. As you can catch the virus through touching your eyes, nose and mouth, regular cleansing of hands are important. Some said that putting on a face mask has helped to prevent touching your face but it also important that you wear your face mask properly. Surgical masks are used commonly to help spreading the virus through coughing, sneezing and droplets while speaking. Standards for masks can be checked according to ASTM level, their ability to screen off particles (PFE), virus (VFE) and bacteria (BFE).

Vicky Koo shared with WiLAT a reusable mask using nano technology and WiLAT Hong Kong would secure some for distribution. Dorothy showed the cap which has a plastic shield over it. It will protect you from droplets and offer a protective shield for your face and eyes. We are adjusting to a new normal.

A practice which Hong Kong families have adopted during SARS is to use diluted bleach (1:99) to soak a towel. This towel is placed outside the door so that as you step your shoes on it to remove germs and virus and you would not bring them inside your home.

The whole community takes responsibility to stop the virus from spreading. Offices, shops, eat outs, banks, would be closed for sanitization for 14 days if they have been visited by infected persons or they have staff who have been infected. Similarly, there is concern that people put on quarantine for 14 days are not observing the rule and putting others at risks. Adopting tracking and tracing technology have been effective in monitoring movements but strict enforcement is needed apart from regular reminders that we have to value and protect our home.

#### Impact on mobility

In some places, public transport services are maintained but some with strict rules that drivers and passengers would have to wear a face mask. Regular sanitization and disinfection of buses and trains will give public confidence. Despite all these measures, the reduction on social activities and with offices encouraging work from home, the number of passengers and the number of vehicles on the roads have reduced dramatically.

Restriction on the movement of goods, however, deserves early attention. Containers in Port Klang, Malaysia are stacking up due to the movement control order limiting the transport of non-essential goods. The Federation of Malaysian Freight Forwarders (FMFF) has warned that this is a potential time bomb affecting port efficiency and capacity. Sri Lanka have similar problems. We are aware of the

impact on the supply chain much earlier on when China had to closed most factories for a period of two months. Now that different countries are closing down, planes are no longer flying as frequently as before, we must keep a close watch and it is necessary for countries to work together to maintain the flow of essential goods , health equipment, medical supplies and food products.

What has flourished during this period is on-line purchase, delivery and door to door food delivery. Many hotels and clubs are offering take away with a bit of competition. Hopefully, WiLAT would find it extremely helpful as household work and sanitization would be a great burden for the family.

Looking ahead

Infectious disease and life threatening virus is something that every community have to be prepared for. COVID-19 have shown that some countries may be more geared up and may have a better medical and health system to support such challenges, it is however a matter of global significance. WiLAT sees the need not only for a sustainable national health policy but also a framework for international support and collaboration.

Many universities and schools have switched to on-line learning while the campuses remain closed. This will likely change the mode of teaching and will have a long enduring impact. During this interim period, some families may not be able to equip their children to switch to this learning mode but in the medium and long term, this should be the aim of education policies to promote multi-medium of learning and teaching.

Concluding remarks

WiLAT have not been able to meet face to face for a while. The last visit made by Gayani and Vicky was to Nasreen in Pakistan in mid-January 2020, just before the outbreak. We would avoid visits until it is safe to do so but, in the meantime, we will continue with our WiLAT Chat on-line. We welcome insightful sharing from logistics and transport professionals across the CILT / WiLAT network in order to support each other through this challenging time. More sharing will come in our upcoming WiLAT Chat sessions in April. Stay tuned!

We are “Stronger Together”.

Dorothy Chan

Global Chairperson



Upcoming sessions:

WiLAT Chat on Covid-19: coping strategies for the home bound

Thu, Apr 2, 2020 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (CST)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/207883269>

WiLAT Chat on COVID19: technology enables social distancing

Thu, Apr 9, 2020 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (CST)

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/744874973>

New to GoToMeeting? Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/207883269>