

Established in 1974, JPPF is the world's first supra-partisan parliamentary group on population and development.

In an age when global solidarity is needed to address various challenges, JPPF is expected to play an increasingly important role as a parliamentary caucus with a long history and tradition of leading Japan's diplomacy in the international community.

In every issue of JPPF Newsletter, we will carry "JPPF Column" and "News" on activities and initiatives related to population and development issues.

## News:

- *Online Seminar on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth*
- *Online Seminars on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)*

[Editorial responsibility: JPPF secretariat]

## News

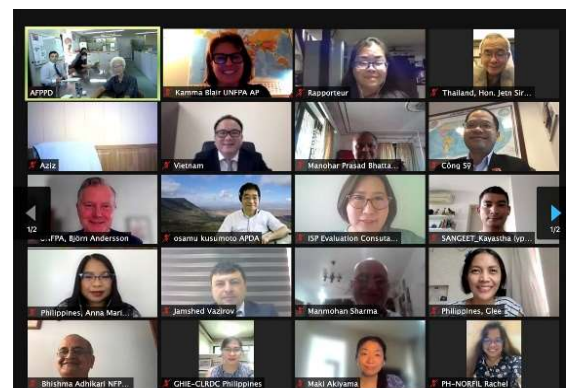
### Online Seminar on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA; JPPF secretariat) have been conducting studies and organizing online seminars on the three pillars of AFPPD's activities, namely, "active ageing," "gender equality and women's empowerment," and "investing in youth." The surveys and seminars are supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Asia and the Pacific Regional Office (APRO) and the Japan Trust Fund (JTF).

For this year, Mongolia, the Philippines, Nepal, and Tajikistan were selected from East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia regions. Experts were commissioned to conduct surveys on legislation and policies on youth under the COVID-19 pandemic in those countries for analysis. The survey results were presented at the Online Seminar on the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Youth on September 24. Thirty persons participated, including parliamentarians and representatives of national committees, United Nations agencies, and civil society organizations. Active questions from the participants revealed a high level of interest in this topic.

At the opening of the seminar, AFPPD Chair Hon. Prof. Keizo Takemi (Executive Director of JPPF) delivered the welcome address, in which he warned that COVID-19 is causing an "inequality pandemic" between nations and within nations. He said that while youths are often placed in vulnerable positions, it is also the youth who are contributing as public health workers, health care professionals, and other essential workers during the pandemic. He shared a success story, as a best practice, of volunteer youth activism initiated by a parliamentarian from the Indian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (IAPPD), recounting how the lives of more than 10,000 people were saved in a youth-led effort. They set up a COVID-19 telephone consultation system that promoted information sharing thereby connecting the health ministry, health care professionals and patients with the involvement of more than 500 young volunteers. He further expressed hope that these new activities contributed by youth, through AFPPD's network, could widely conducted in the future.

Mr. Björn Andersson, Regional Director of UNFPA APRO, delivered an address on behalf of the supporting organizations. He expressed concern that while the involvement of the youth is making innovative, constructive response to COVID-19 possible, there is a worrying trend that the situation of youths in vulnerable positions is further deteriorating. In more than 20 countries in Asia, UNFPA has established a website for providing information on sexual and reproductive health (SRH), family planning, and HIV services under the COVID-19 pandemic, working with youth networks in the region. UNFPA has also set up a hotline on gender-based violence and another hotline dedicated to mental health. He emphasized that governments should prioritize the issues of the youth in their response to COVID-19.



In the next session, each of the four experts gave a presentation. In Mongolia, education has been entirely provided online or on television since February 2020, but only three in five pupils can regularly attend the classes because not all have television or Internet connection. The expert said that this is a serious issue as economic inequality is creating a gap in the opportunities to receive education.

## Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JFPF)

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The situation is similar in the Philippines. Even though many students take online classes, the biggest reason that students cannot take those courses is that they have no access to online devices or they cannot use such devices. Youth unemployment rate was on the decline before the pandemic, but it has risen from 14.7% in July 2019 to 22.4% in July 2020 due to the pandemic, which means that 1.7 million young people have lost their jobs. In addition to unemployment, another major concern is the decline in young people's incomes.

In Nepal, 20% of Nepalese who work abroad are reportedly at risk of unemployment, and some young expatriates are not paid their wages or have no access to health services. Although the government is promoting repatriation of migrant workers, many face difficulties because they have to pay for the cost of repatriation.

In Tajikistan too, young people who went overseas to find employment lost their jobs due to COVID-19 lockdowns. Remittances to families in Tajikistan decreased, and many families have been impacted economically. Data show that these remittances made up 30% of GDP in 2019, but the amount of remittances decreased by half in 2021. As for online classes, there are problems with the infrastructure. It was explained that the use of the Internet has not spread because the cost of Internet is very expensive relative to people's income levels.

In the discussion, a question was asked on how to prioritize youth policies given the limitations in the budget. The Tajikistan expert replied that based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to rethink national development strategy particularly in the field of education. Other experts emphasized the importance of involving young people so that we can listen to young people's voices in each country, identify challenges they face, and reflect those issues on policies. A participant proposed that "because the impact of COVID-19 may linger, APDA and AFPPD should take up this issue over the long term".

### Online Seminars on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

It is essential for national committees of AFPPD member countries to improve their capabilities by developing their communication skills as well as their capacity for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). With the support of UNFPA and JTF, the AFPPD organized, in response to requests from national committees, a series of three Online Seminars on Monitoring and Evaluation to strengthen activities in each country.

Experts with more than 30 years' experience at the World Bank served as lecturers. Some 70 persons participated at each seminar, including the national committees' secretariats and parliamentarians, for an active exchange of views.

In the three seminars, the participants started by understanding the need for M&E, and learned how to set indicators and collect and analyze data. In particular, good indicators for policy decisions and implementation need to be SMART. In other words, they need to be Specific, Measurable, Adequate, Realistic, and Targeted. It was explained that good indicators substantially contribute to communication strategy.

The participants also deepened their understanding about the importance of being cognizant, from the very beginning, of the purpose of a project, including who will do what, how the project will be carried out, and what the project is for. They learned how to set key benchmarks and action items in each stage of a project. It was pointed out that the importance of M&E is increasing as governments try to recover lost opportunities and efficiency towards recovery of societies that have become stagnant during two years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There were many questions asked by the participants. A participant asked how the output of a project can satisfy both the beneficiaries and donors. "A project will have many stakeholders", the expert replied. "If sufficient explanation can be provided on why some activities are happening and why others are not happening, donors usually can be very accommodating".

A question was asked on how to use indicators to measure the expected behavioral changes from advocacy efforts in a project. A participant suggested that “donors too should have sufficient knowledge about M&E when constructing a programme and should cooperate in building a programme that will enable the implementing organization to measure the outcomes of the programme by using realistic, measurable indicators”. Other participants agreed.

Parliamentarians have responsibility to allocate the national budget so that tax revenues are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. It was noted that it will be important for parliamentarians to consider how to measure the commitments of respective government ministries and agencies and, at the same time, to become aware of how much citizens are satisfied with the services they are receiving.

Results of a questionnaire survey conducted after the seminars showed that participants had a high level of satisfaction in attending the seminars and felt that the seminars were effective.



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