



From SASW President Long Chey May's Desk 10th Message and Reflections for 2020 (4th message for 2019/2021)

Dear SASW Family,

First, I want to thank you for caring for a whole awful lot of others under your care. I also want to congratulate our Social Work fraternity for the resilience shown as we prepare to move towards Phase 3 on 28 Dec 2020. As a nation, we have successfully faced the challenges brought on by the Covid-19 situation, and we must still stay vigilant and watch out for ourselves and others. Director-General of Social Welfare Ms Ang Bee Lian has challenged us to work towards not only a “New Normal” but to a “Better Normal”. For this to happen, social workers must partner our clients and stakeholders to create this as we adapt to an evolving economy, and a digital and advanced technological society and environment.

SASW has been busy despite the closure of the physical office. We have organised several events and started virtual courses which include new training programmes like **Community Law Basics for Social Work Practice** to ensure our Social Workers stay relevant and in tune with professional competencies. We have worked on various projects and had our first virtual Outstanding Social Worker Award 2020 ceremony, recognising 4 deserving winners. Each had a story to tell and was very inspiring indeed. Do have a look at the videos produced to showcase their work via Singapore Association of Social Workers YouTube channel or read my welcome speech to find out more. We responded via social media or the ST Forum page and clarified misconceptions where relevant on issues about our profession. I wish to see more of us sharing our expertise by volunteering to be a mentor, or to sit in workgroups to offer professional perspectives. More can be done to uplift lives in our professional role or as a volunteer in various boards and platforms.

Reflections and Hopes

As the year comes to an end, I reflected on how this year’s events have impacted me personally and as a Social Work Leader, as well as the social service and health sector. We frequently read on various platforms about the community gathering for mutual support or to initiate new programmes. There were several webinars organised locally and internationally. Virtual meetings and conferences have a wider reach, and the world appears “smaller”, more accessible for some and confusing to others especially those who are less savvy in information technology.

Overall, Covid-19 has shown we are more similar than different as the world share best practice and approaches, learning how to create a vaccine and how to prevent 2nd and 3rd waves of infection. I saw how the pandemic brought important lessons for the social workers globally and the role of Social Workers in various countries coping with the pandemic. The IFSW book published gave a good account of how social



workers fought the Covid situation and how social workers advocated for the vulnerable. Do have a read of the book on “To the top of the cliff- how social work changed with covid” (<https://www.ifsw.org/product/books/to-the-top-of-the-cliff-how-social-work-changed-with-covid-19/>). Human beings’ needs are a lot simpler and what exactly is deemed as essential and what can be discarded or seem irrelevant.

I want to applaud our leaders and many unsung heroes whether they are Singapore citizens or non-residents, who stood together to fight a common enemy. One important lesson for me is to let go of the things we cannot control, find alternative ways to do things better and engage in collective wisdom to solve complex issues. We should hold on to our belief and faith, focusing on being open-minded and be adaptive if we want to overcome the unknown and unwanted challenges.

Singaporeans are resilient and many of our clients and social workers are stronger than what we believe them to be. Have we grown closer as a fraternity, transformed our practice and adopted more technology or innovative practice as we worked on social health integration over the past few months? I welcome your stories as SASW celebrates its 50th anniversary next year.

What’s coming up?

Do look out for SASW announcement on our World Social Work Day celebration 2021 and various exciting events as we welcome the New Year. SASW intends to meet the new MSF Minister up close and personal. I have special interest on his perspectives as he holds 3 portfolios (MSF Minister, MOH 2nd Minister and Minister in charge of Muslim affairs). As social workers, we have a role to play in social and health services integration and to advocate for various issues such as Conversations on Singapore Women’s Development dialogue. While our civil servants have demonstrated to be a reliable group in Strengthening Social Services Delivery, social workers and social service practitioners can provide expert opinions and perspectives to partner them together with our citizens and beneficiaries to enhance social mobility, social stability and help people bounce back to a new or better normal. Meanwhile have a break and take time to recharge.

Here wishing our Social Workers and Accredited members a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthier 2021!

Remember to stay safe, hopeful and relevant!

Long Chey May
President, SASW
24 Dec 2020