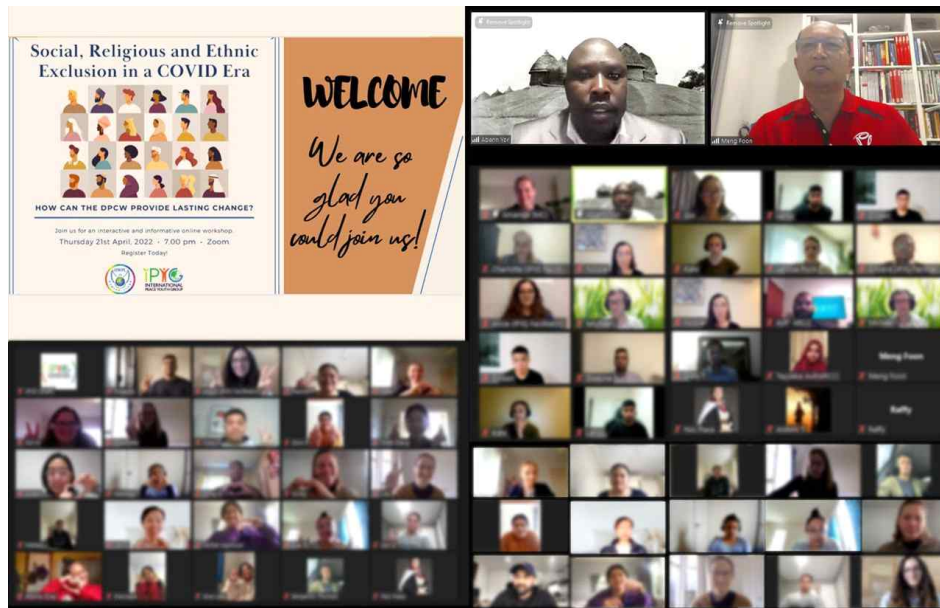




WEBINAR REPORT

“Social Religious and Ethnic Exclusion in a COVID Era, how can the DPCW provide lasting change?”



Date and Time: Thursday, April 21st, 2022, 16:00PM (KST)
Location: Online (Zoom)
Topics: Human Rights, Discrimination, Xenophobia
Host: HWPL New Zealand Branch

Speakers: Mr. Abann Yor, New Zealand, CEO, Aoatearora Resettled Community Coalition (ARCC)
Mr. Meng Foon, New Zealand, Race Relations Commissioner, Human Rights Commission

This webinar was held to raise awareness of the increasing social, religious and ethnic exclusion brought about by the pandemic in NZ; and how the framework of the DPCW provides practical solutions to such injustice.

*"*When we have an equal society,
we understand and accept one another as humans
regardless of our background,
race, or skin colour.
A community-driven by humans share values of love,
respect and care
with empathy, using our differences as strength
for a peaceful world."*

Abann Yor

Introduction Webinar

On April 21st, 2022, the New Zealand branch of the IPYG (International Peace Youth Group) hosted the webinar "Social Religious and Ethnic Exclusion in a COVID Era, how can the DPCW provide lasting change?".

The webinar was held to raise awareness of the increasing discrimination and xenophobia experienced in the community, and gather our voices to find ways to solve such issues, and how to better communicate with government officials.

Our two guest speakers, Mr. Abann Yor and Mr. Meng Foon joined our live event and each gave a keynote speech relating to their areas of expertise. Mr Abann Yor as well as some of his colleagues from ARCC also participated in a breakout room discussion to further discuss the current situation of New Zealand and their understanding of DPCW articles 9 and 10.

Background Information

It is quite clear that New Zealand has experienced an increase in social, ethnic and religious discrimination in the past five years; and the Christchurch mosque shooting is a prime example of the various changes occurring in our society. Moreover, during the pandemic in New Zealand we witnessed a clear division between certain groups caused by social exclusion within the Auckland Community. New Zealand as a society had a perspective that COVID-19 was a disease which would affect those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, New Zealand Prime Minister even addressed this thought stating that COVID-19 affects all areas and suburbs of society. Despite this, South Auckland was statistically challenged during COVID-19 due to a larger population mass and more members in one household. Because of this circumstance, the government had to provide additional support for this community, which is predominately made up of Pacifica and Maori ethnic groups. Not only that, but Chinese and Asian communities have



also been quite heavily impacted and stereotypes have unfortunately flourished out of the pandemic, calling the COVID-19 'the Chinese virus' or the 'Asian disease'.

Hence why as the IPYG, we decided to raise awareness through this workshop, gather our voices and find ways to solve the issue of discrimination that was enhanced during COVID-19.

Points of discussion

In Abann Yor's poignant speech, we heard about his reality of arriving in New Zealand as a refugee, and his journey to becoming a citizen. Abann is determined for New Zealand's society to change their mindset, and gave the audience some tips to do so, the first and most important one being that as individuals we need to better understand each other. Mutual understanding and compassion are the key to bring people from all walks of life together. He also emphasised the need to develop effective communication skills, so that our voices are heard loud and clear, and to better understand our own thoughts and beliefs. Moreover, Abann challenged the audience and asked them this one question: "Who am I?", once we remove all the things and labels we use to define ourselves, and what we, or others, think our identity is. What is my mission as a citizen in this world? His answer was concise and sharp: it is to help others.

Once in the breakout room, Abann shared on the topic of education and how it plays a part in fostering social, ethnic and religious diversity and respect. Not only do children and students need to learn these skills, but everyone in society need to upskill themselves, whether we work at our local café, hospital, school, or at the mayor's office. As a member of society, we all need to learn from each other and grow in our understanding and respect of each other's values, beliefs and backgrounds. Abann shared that some newly arrived migrants have been victims of service providers, and he stated that this itself is '*human violation*'. That is why Aotearoa Resettled Community Coalition (ARCC) is working on educating the system itself, not with the intention of pointing fingers and blaming those in power, but rather of becoming one with them and leading by example.

Working at the Human Rights Commission as the race relations commissioner, Meng Foon gave the audience a thorough insight of what New Zealand society looks like now, and explained the current situation thanks to his expertise. He cited recent statistics that showed only 55% of children in New Zealand attend school on a daily basis, and among Maori, that statistic drops to less than 50%. Furthermore, 40% of children at school are bullied. We can see through these statistics that New Zealand is not perfect, and there are many areas in which we can improve. Meng therefore saluted Abann for his work and agreed with him on the importance of education. Meng shared that the Commission was working on some guidelines for schools to be aware and respectful of the variety of cultures and traditions present in New Zealand. Indeed, there have been cases of students being denied access to school due to their appearance, their hair being too long for example, or some students having to miss some school days where

physical education was on, due to having to wear a swimsuit, which is something that does not align with all cultures and beliefs. Some schools have therefore shown discriminatory tendencies, hence the need for a framework to be established so that all students are given equal opportunities to succeed. Moreover, Meng shared another solution the Commission is working on, which is an electronic contract, a plan to be adopted by all businesses and NGOs who wish to receive government funding for their activities. The purpose of this contract is to ensure that businesses are looking after their employees, for example making sure they are providing growth opportunities and training to gain new skills.

Both guest speakers agreed that education has a key role in building understanding and getting rid of prejudices and injustice. They also both acknowledged that New Zealand needs to have more dialogue and platforms such as this workshop to give everyone an opportunity to express their concerns and share their experiences. Moreover, we were able to witness how their experiences could have been different if the principles of the DPCW, especially articles 9 and 10, had been implemented among society. We discussed how article 9 ties in with article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and declares that religious freedom is a fundamental liberty for all ethnicities; therefore, religious conflicts should be solved through identifying the root causes and most importantly by promoting mutual understanding between all groups of society. This is a value and concept that our guest speakers resonated with deeply, as well as the principle of article 10 to spread a culture of peace that transcends the borders of nationality, ethnicity and religion.

Highlights

Abann Yor: "we need to start from the education system, respect every individual regardless of who they are".

Meng Foon: "given those stats, we have got a lot of work to do, it's not all roses and chocolate out there, but you have a role, I have a role and together we have a role to actually try and support people and help them have a better life in New Zealand"

Next Steps

We will hold a DPCW handbook training to help citizens, and especially the New Zealand law community, understand the framework of the DPCW and how it tackles current issues such as discrimination and provides platforms to solve misunderstandings. We hope to empower our attendees so they can help create peace in their environments, and understand the importance of our duty as global citizens.



Heavenly Culture World Peace
Restoration of Light

www.hwpl.kr

Contact Information

nz@ipyg.org

Department of International Law of HWPL New Zealand Branch