

CONSORTIUM OF INSTITUTES ON FAMILY IN THE ASIAN REGION (CIFA)

Chairperson's Report (17 August 2007 – 31 December 2008)

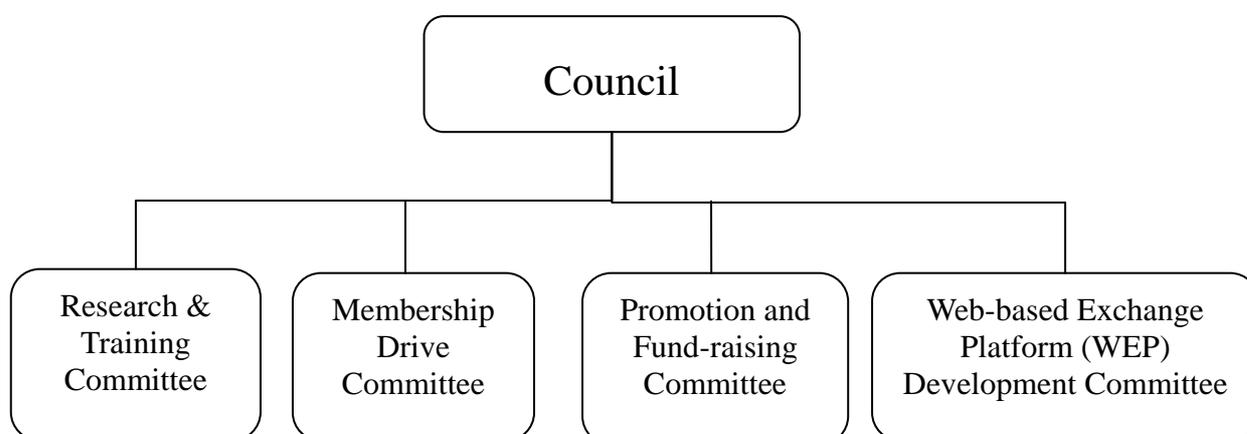
Incorporation of CIFA

The idea of a Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region (CIFA) was conceived at the successful International Conference on Couples held in May 2005 in Hong Kong. The HKU Family Institute (HKUFI) was entrusted to initiate its formation. A Provisional Council was formed to undertake preparatory work to set up CIFA under the relevant ordinances of Hong Kong.

CIFA is the first of its kind in the Asian region. It was incorporated on 17th August 2007 as a company with limited liability under the Company Ordinance (Cap.32) and approved for tax exemption under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue Ordinance (Cap.112). It is an independent organization which serves as a regional hub for networking with similar organizations / interested professionals in the region with the mission of 'Converging Professional Wisdom for Family Well-being'. Its function is to provide a platform for trans-disciplinary collaboration in promoting the importance of family studies, clinical practice and policy development.

Organizational Structure

The CIFA Council is the decision-making body of the Consortium and exercises all the powers conferred by the Memorandum and Articles of Association. I am honoured to have been elected as the Chairperson of the Council. We have also four deputy Chairpersons to serve as co-ordinators for the various sub-regions in Asia. We have also appointed Ms. Elsie Leung as honorary advisor, Ms. Ivy Tong as the honorary legal advisor, and Mr. Simon Ng of Simon W.F. Ng & Company as the Auditor. Four committees have been formed to take forward the various aspects of work of CIFA, The Organizational Chart of CIFA is as below:-



Secretariat

The secretariat provides administrative support to the Council and the chairpersons, maintains the information clearing house and develops/upkeeps the CIFA website. Initially, the secretariat is based in the HKUFI.

Membership

As at 31 December 2008, there were 50 Full Members and 42 Associate Members, coming from 7 cities in the region.

Funding

In the past period, funding has been secured from the following sources to take forward the work of CIFA:-

1. Professional Services Development Assistance Scheme of the HKSAR government.
2. Social Welfare Department of the HKSAR government
3. HKU Family Institute
4. Donation/sponsorship from Hong Kong & China Gas Co. Ltd., Asia Financial Group and individuals
5. Membership fees

I would like to acknowledge the generous support given by these sponsors to CIFA and we look forward to their continued support in the coming years.

Activities Highlights

1. CIFA WEP and E-newsletter

The launching ceremony of CIFA Web-based Exchange Platform (WEP) was held on 6 June 2007 at the Hong Kong University Family Institute (HKUFI). The ceremony was officiated by the Hon. Bernard Chan, GBS, JP, Member of Executive Council and Legislative Council of the HKSAR, Chairman of Hong Kong Council of Social Service and Professor Ian Holliday, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences, the University of Hong Kong. Since then, the WEP has served as a platform for sharing information on the work of CIFA and its members. The Council has decided to issue a bi-weekly e-newsletter to update members on the latest development of family-related issues and activities of CIFA and its members. The first e-newsletter was issued on November 1, 2008. Members have been encouraged to contribute material to the E-newsletter for sharing.

2. Launching Ceremony of the Membership Drive

Two launching ceremonies were held on 9 October and 30 November 2007 respectively to recruit members to join the Consortium. Potential members from the social welfare, education

and private sectors joined the event to have a better understanding of CIFA, and served as a good start in promoting CIFA.

3. Videos – Appeal for support

Representatives from various organizations have been invited to appeal for support for the work of CIFA. These have been uploaded onto the CIFA WEP:

- a. Dr. CHOI Yuen Wan, Honorary General Secretary of Breakthrough
- b. Ms. KAO Ching-chi, Sophia, JP, Chairperson, Women's Commission
- c. Mr. KO Tin-lung, Artistic Director, Chung Ying Theatre Company
- d. Mr. James KWAN, Executive Director & Chief Operating Officer, The HK & China Gas Co. Ltd.

4. Survey on Challenges faced by Families in Hong Kong

Two public opinion surveys on Challenges Faced by Families in Hong Kong was conducted in June - August 2007 in HK to provide a snapshot of current situation in Hong Kong and to serve as a basis for similar survey in other countries in the region to facilitate cross country comparison on family challenges. Findings from the two surveys conducted in 2007 indicate that the most common challenges faced by families in Hong Kong are: (1) long working hours/heavy workload; (2) worries over how they could do their best to nurture their children as well as to provide their children with best educational opportunities; and (3) great stress due to illness or anxieties over physical or mental health. The findings of the survey were announced on 30 November 2007 and attracted some media attention.

5. Inauguration and Inaugural Symposium of CIFA

The Inauguration of CIFA was held on 24 January 2008 followed by a 3 day Inaugural Symposium. The Inauguration was officiated by the Acting Chief Secretary for Administration Mr. Michael SUEN by delivering a keynote address and witnessing the signing of document by CIFA Council members to mark the Inauguration of CIFA.

Representatives from Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan etc joined the ceremony to witness the milestone in the development of CIFA. The 3 day Inaugural Symposium with the theme of 'Families in Asia: Challenges and Opportunities' was held at the Graduate House of University of Hong Kong. 300 academics and professionals attended the Inaugural Symposium.

On this rare occasion, over 40 speakers from UK, USA, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan had used the platform to share their experience and research findings on various family issues. This combined synergy had radiated the attempts of cross regional collaboration that enhance the unique collective cultural identity while also recognizing diversity.

In addition to the Symposium, three pre and post symposium workshop/training programmes were organized. A two day workshop on Multi-family Groups, an innovative clinical approach that has gained momentum in Europe and North America and two AAMFT courses designed for clinicians who were interested in seeking professional accreditation were organized.

Very positive feedback has been gathered from participants. All members are looking forward to the next regional symposium which will be held in the fall of 2010 in Tokyo, Japan.

6. Forum on Dialogue between Clinical Practitioners and Policy Makers

The Inauguration cum Inaugural Symposium of the Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region Limited (“CIFA”) has generated much interest and enthusiasm for the development of CIFA. Interest was expressed from various quarters to organize a forum when some keynote presentations can be shared with more interested parties in Hong Kong. A follow up forum on “Dialogue Between Clinical Practitioners & Policy Makers” was jointly organized by CIFA, HKUFI and HKCSS and sponsored by the Social Welfare Department on 7 September 2008, attracting about 150 participants.

7. Production of DVD

The major activities leading to the setting up of CIFA, including the symposium and other efforts made throughout the past 24 months to build the regional platform has been summarized in a DVD. It captures all related promotional materials, snapshots of different events and appeal messages for support from the community. A DVD is being distributed to members and participants of the Inaugural symposium to further promote the work of CIFA.

Upcoming Activities in 2009:

1. Cross-country survey on Challenges faced by Families in Asia

Based on the findings of the two surveys in Hong Kong, the Council of CIFA decided that it would be useful to conduct similar surveys in different cities of the region to facilitate cross-country comparison and to provide a baseline for trends on family challenges in the contemporary era in the Asian region. Currently, this cross-country survey on Challenges faced by Families in Asia is being conducted in 6 cities, with the results to be announced in April 2009.

2. Cross-country research on couple issues

Under the Research and Training Committee, a collaborative study involving Japan, Mainland China, Taiwan, Korea and Hong Kong with the goal of comparing the similarities and differences of couples in contemporary society among the five Asian regions will be conducted. The project aims to extract the major themes and interactive patterns of couples in conflict, as well as examine the gender issues involved in both male and female development that may contribute to the couple conflict. It is planned to publish the finding of the research in the coming regional symposium.

3. Monthly forum

The monthly forum for 2009 is planned with the first 3 meetings focusing on the impact of the 2008 financial tsunami to families in Asia. The official launch of the first forum is organized to tie in with the Annual General Meeting on 9.2.09, with speakers to share their views and experience on the topic.

4. Local agency visits

A half-day agency visit to the integrated family service centers in Tin Shui Wai and Yuen Long would be arranged in late-March 2009 to enable CIFA members to have first hand information on the latest delivery model of services for families in Hong Kong. The target number of

participants is 20. 2 places would be reserved for each CIFA member and no fee would be charged for participation.

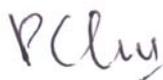
5. Asian Award for Advancing Family Functioning

The proposal of establishing an “Asian Award for Advancing Family Functioning” to promote outstanding projects for enhancing family functioning in the Asian region to engage CIFA members in the region, as well as to raise the profile of CIFA has been endorsed by the Council. Details will be worked out and sponsorship would be sought from charitable foundations or private corporations to support the Award.

6. Planning for Regional Symposium in 2010, Tokyo, Japan

Further to my visit, together with Dr. Lee Wai Yung to Tokyo in June 2008, and discussion among board members of the Japan Association of Family Therapy (JAFT), it was decided that Japan would host the next regional symposium in the fall of 2010 in Tokyo.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Council members and members of the various committees. With everyone’s hard work and commitment, we have been able to arrive at this first milestone of CIFA and to celebrate its first birthday. I believe we have laid a good foundation for the future development of CIFA and I would appeal to all for your continuous support to make our dream come true.



Patricia CHU (Mrs.)

Chairperson, CIFA Council