



Date: 27 March 2020

We are writing to you in the midst of a global pandemic that is evolving rapidly by the hour. The Asia Pacific Transgender Network has been closely monitoring the developments of COVID-19 and thinking about how it is affecting the lives of the communities, and the critical work that the trans and gender diverse movement does. Following the global health guidance from the World Health Organisation (WHO), APTN is taking prudent steps to protect the wellbeing of our project partners, our staff, and the communities in which we are located while continuing our work.

We know at this time that all of you are finding ways to cope with the situation, grappling with how to respond to the myriad of news updates, and mitigate further spread of the virus, amidst many unknowns and concerns about the impact on your work and the health and safety of the communities you serve.

The COVID-19 pandemic has made the vast social, economic and health disparities even more evident. Trans people are at more risk because of higher rates of underlying health conditions like HIV which lead to low immunity. If they do get sick, trans people often experience discrimination in healthcare settings; from disrespect, to outright refusal of care. Additionally, trans people are experiencing increased difficulties getting access to hormones and gender-affirmative health care. Unfortunately, social isolation is not new to transgender people. Due to lack of family support and higher rates of unemployment in formal sectors, many trans people experience poverty and are forced into precarious work environments. During this time, many of our community cannot afford to stop working in order to socially isolate.

It is clearer now more than ever that an urgent shift is needed to prioritise investment in free public healthcare and social protection. It has also exposed wealth inequalities: while some can afford to panic buy and stock up on supplies, financially vulnerable communities cannot afford to be quarantined and have less access to essential supplies and food items. We empathize with able-bodied people and their experiences during this global health crisis, however it is equally important to recognise that if governments and public institutions had prioritized the experiences of those at the margins of society, adequate healthcare systems and social protection infrastructure would already be in place.

We stand alongside you amidst the pandemic. APTN wants to hear about your challenges during this health crisis and support you given that the impact and effects of COVID-19 are likely to intensify. Let us know what you need and help us better understand the challenges that have emerged, how you are responding to the crisis, and what collective actions we can take as a movement to address these issues through [this survey](#).

We are all experiencing a great deal of anxiety, fear and uncertainty from this pandemic, and we are mindful of the challenges that it will pose to the most marginalised among us. The team at APTN has put together a list of resources and a Listserv on COVID-19 information that might be useful as you adjust your lives. Please reach out to us at hello@weareaptn.org to join the Listserv or to share resources via the form [here](#) to support trans and gender diverse communities through this difficult time.

This is a time when collectivity, solidarity and humanity matter more than ever. Take care of yourselves and those around you.

In Solidarity,
Joe Wong, Executive Director
Asia Pacific Transgender Network

For up to date information on how we are addressing COVID-19, please visit our page at www.facebook.com/weareaptn and www.weareaptn.org/covid19