

THE INTERNATION CONFEDERATION OF CHRISTIAN FAMILY MOVEMENT
(REPORT 2010 - SINGAPORE)

A very good ~~morning~~ / evening to all my brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are honoured to be here to present our country's report.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with a brief introduction of CFSM (Singapore). CFSM (S) was registered in October 1962. We would be 48 years old this year. To-date, we have a total of 14 groups comprising an average of 5 to 8 families in each group.

Our patron is Archbishop Nicholas Chia. We are affiliated to the World Movement for Christian Workers (WMCW), International Confederation of Christian Family Movement (ICCFM) and we work closely with Caritas Singapore Community Council (Singapore).

2. CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN SINGAPORE

The current economic climate in Singapore is very good. Singapore has projected a growth rate of 13% to 15% for this year. This would make Singapore one of the fastest growing country in the world.

While the country is progressing, the tell tale signs of the latest statistics show that Singapore's social issues are getting bigger? We would like to highlight 4 areas of concerns affecting families in Singapore; cost of daily necessities, housing, education and social issues.

Daily Necessities

The consumer price index for the 1st half of 2010 increased by 3.5% compared to the same period in 2009. ie the cost of food and other goods had risen.

Parishes and some non-profit organisations are providing free food on a daily basis. "Willing Hearts", a catholic non-profit organisation cooks for about 1,000 persons a day.

Housing

80% of Singaporeans live in flats in Singapore. These flats have a leasehold life of 99 years. But, the flat belongs to the government.

Just to let you know, how expensive housing in Singapore is; a typical second-hand 5-room flat in central part of Singapore costs US\$305,000 (S\$427,000) to US\$429,000 (S\$600,000). To own your flat, it would cost US\$700 (S\$984) to US\$1,000 (S\$1,400) per square foot - based on latest selling prices – Aug'10.

Education

Singapore is establishing itself as an education centre in South East Asia. New private and government universities have sprung up over the years. The estimated tuition fees for sending one child to a local university would cost US\$13,000 (S\$18,000) to US\$43,000 (S\$60,000) excluding expenses.

The cost of education will continue to rise.

Social Issues

Last month, I attended the Social Mission Conference in Singapore. Dr John Hui presented some startling statistics during the conference. The statistics showed the following:-

- a. declining rates in marriages,
- b. couples getting married later,
- c. singlehood on the rise,
- d. divorce rates are increasing and
- e. fertility rates have gone down.

The government has offered incentives for couples for having babies such as baby bonus, 3 months of paid maternity leave, 3 days of child leave and 3 days paid paternity leave for fathers.

To balance family life, the government has introduced programs to get fathers more involved in family life.

We understand that other religions have also started marriage preparation courses for couples too.

3. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The EXCO committee comprised of 8 volunteers and guided by our spiritual leader, Fr Andre Christophe and older members of the CFSM movement. EXCO committee meets once a month.

The EXCO committee focussed on 5 key areas:-

- a. Group Sharing
- b. Faith Formation Sessions
- c. Foreign Workers
- d. Youth
- e. Newsletter/Communication

Group Sharing

To ensure the group's discussions remain up-to-date, we updated our Leaders' Formation Booklet and started using it in January 2009. We added more relevant topics for discussion such as the internet, family prayers, grandparents, the social teaching of the Church etc.

The groups continued to use the SEE, JUDGE and ACT method.

Parents and their children meet once a month in their homes.

Faith Formation Sessions

In year 2008, we included "parenting skills" sessions for our faith formations; topics such as managing of money, the educational landscape, solidarity and other topics were introduced and presented by professionals. This is to help our younger couples to cope and learn how to be better parents.

In addition, we invited youth to voice their concerns. We hope that it would bond the parents and children through dialogue.

Foreign Workers

Today, there are over a million foreign workers in Singapore. Foreign workers (including permanent residents) make up about 70% of the work force in Singapore.

In October 2008, a member of the CFSM (S) was featured in the Catholic News, our Catholic newsletter with regards to a dormitory of foreign workers living in her residential area. CFSM (S) issued a statement to all members in the same month on our position; these foreign workers are also children of God.

In Singapore, some parishes and catholic organisations offer free legal assistance to foreign workers.

For many years, CFSM have organized formation sessions for the foreign workers during Labour Day or the Feast of St Joseph, the patron saint for workers. We would continue to do so.

Youth

Since year 2009, we have organized activities for the youth; overnight camping, barbecue etc We will be including some youth activities during our overseas trip next year.

In 2009, CFSM had set up a Facebook account for the youth to communicate. There are about 50 youth linked to the Facebook (cfsmy09@gmail.com).

Newsletter

CFSM provides monthly newsletter to our members. These newsletters are sent to the youth, members, parishes and readers via emails. We have about 200 readers in our mailing list.

Communication

CFSM has opened many channels of communication for our members.

- a. Website; A forum column for discussion has been added. Our monthly newsletter is archived under "Calendar" followed by "Newsletters & CFSM Calendar". www.c fsm.org.sg
- b. Facebook; for the youth.
- c. Monthly meetings; EXCO members would visit the groups and gather feedbacks.

4. MAIN CHALLENGES

There are 2 main challenges faced by CFSM Singapore:-

A New Approach

CFSM (Singapore) has to be relevant in today's very stressful environment.

The continuous change; such as parenting, education, the Church etc makes it a real challenge to make us relevant.

How can we better deliver God's message to families (single parent, divorcees, widows etc).

How can information technology further enhance our communication with our members?

SUCCESSION PLANNING & RESOURCING

We have identified 3 key areas we need to address in terms of succession planning:-

- a. We need another spiritual leader to guide us.
- b. We need to build a strong editorial team: newsletter and website. Mr Mark Tan our main editor & writer has served CFSM more than 40 years.
- c. We need more dedicated people to serve.

Thank you.

Donald Sng
President, CFSM Singapore

10 Sep 2010