



Mid-western University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Science
Master in International Cooperation and Development

**Adapting in the Times of COVID-19
The Engagements of CDN Partners**

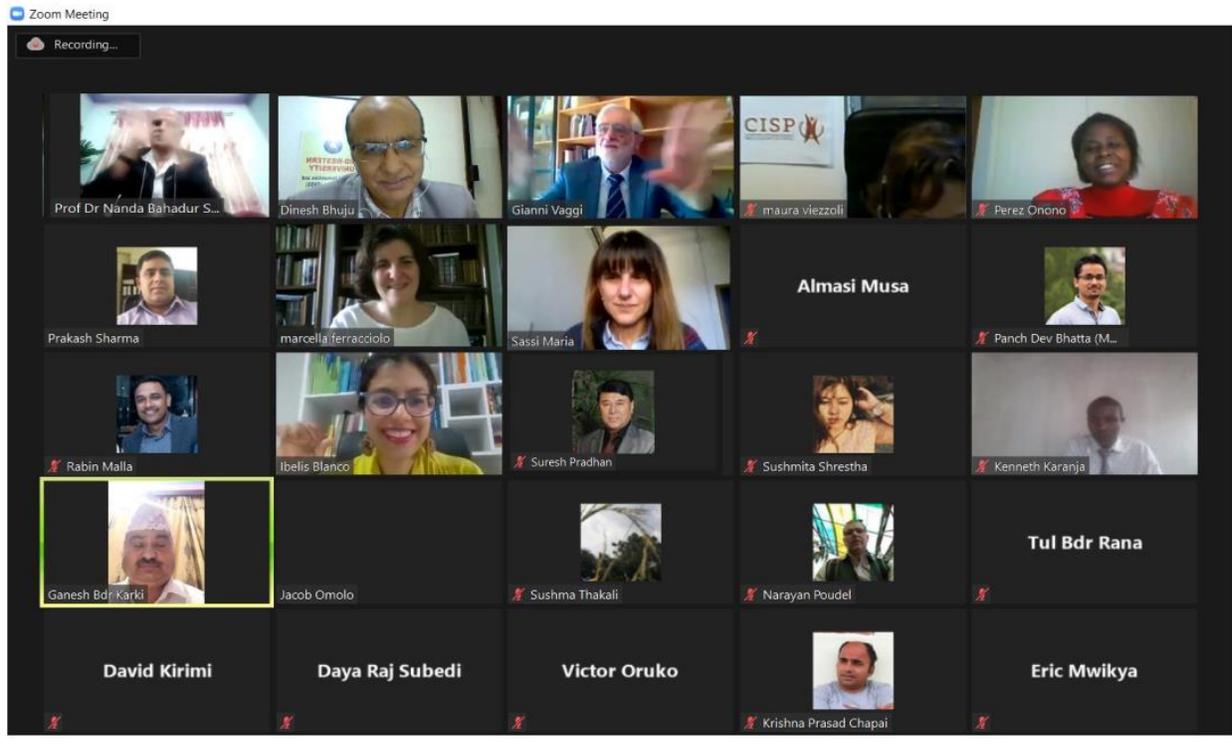
A WEBINAR BY MICD-MWU

The Master in International Cooperation and Development (MICD) under Mid-Western University (MWU) organized a webinar on “Adapting in the Times of COVID-19: The Engagements of CDN Partners” on 29 June 2020. This was the fifth virtual seminar of the MICD-MWU since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the ‘old normal’. The main objective of the program was to bring the representatives of all the partner universities of the Cooperation and Development Network (CDN) in a single platform to share their experiences in the peril of the pandemic. Prof. Dr Nanda Bahadur Singh, Vice-Chancellor of MWU was the chief guest of the program. Dr Gianni Vaggi, Professor at University of Pavia, Italy gave a special remark. There were more than 70 attendees including officials, faculty members, and graduate students from the CDN partner universities Universidad de San Buenaventura (Colombia), Kenyatta University (Kenya), UP (Italy) and MWU (Nepal). The webinar had four sessions opening, presentation and opinion sharing and valedictory.

Report

Opening Session

At the outset, moderating the webinar Dr Dinesh R. Bhujju, Hon. Professor and Academic head, welcomed the participants and thanked them for allowing their valuable time to grace the program. Recalling a novel “Love in the Time of Cholera” by the Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Dr Bhujju believed this gathering of partner universities of CDN from the Africa, Asia-Pacific,



Europe and Latin America of the world would be a memory to cherish for long time to come. He emphasized that the COVID-19 has stuck the education institutions across the world and shaken their core values and principles. This has forced the institutions to move from on campus education to the virtual classes. Dr Bhujju hoped such webinars will help discuss on questions hovering around the education institutions in the globe at present: How effective is the online mode of education? How should the education institutions mainstream the online mode of education? Reminding the paradigm shift in education in post-industrial revolution era, Dr Bhujju recommended the need to discuss the future of education in the post-COVID-19 world as “will there be a paradigm shift in education due to COVID-19 pandemic?”

Delivering his opening remarks, Vice Chancellor Prof. Singh said he is delighted and honored to welcome the participants from four continents in the program. Illustrating the current crisis is not a new phenomenon in the human history; he showed the optimism that humanism will prevail over the pandemic like it happened in the past. The statistics speak that Nepal lies at the tail end of the mortality rate of pandemic in comparison with other countries Columbia, Italy, Kenya and Palestine, Dr. Singh elaborated. He put the reason of the low mortality rate as the culture, lifestyle, food habit, social behavior and geographical location which reinforce the natural immunity power of Nepali people. Stating the ongoing virtual classes in MWU, the Vice Chancellor mentioned that the university will incorporate the hybrid teaching and learning method of on campus plus online teaching and learning mode in its long-term strategy. Furthermore, he believed Information Technology (IT) revolution and artificial intelligence will help to achieve this strategy.

Presentation by CDN Partner Universities

In this session, the CDN partner universities presented the update of current situation in the respective education institutions and the country. The presentations covered the following points:

1. What is the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic in the home country?
2. How the academic programs were resumed at the time of pandemic/lockdown?
3. What strategies the university is adopting or developing in the wake of long-term impacts of the pandemic?

The first presenter, Dr Perez Onono, Dean of School of Economics, Kenyatta University (KU) in Kenya, overviewed the prevailing situation in the area surrounding the university and the Kenya. Moreover, Dr Onono discussed the outbreak of pandemic with subsequent lockdown resulted into

low economic activities with high impact on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as well as loss of good number of jobs. Mentioning the closure of the university since 17 March 2020, Dr Onono highlighted the academic programs during the pandemic as following:

- Remaining credit hours have been completed through online mode of teaching and learning. However, the university is yet to conduct the examinations.
- For post-graduate students, the following academic activities are increasingly organized through virtual platforms like Skype and Zoom: supervision of research/project/thesis, presentation of proposals and research findings, examination of project/thesis, and defense of dissertation/thesis.

Dr Onono elaborated the KU contributions to the country's efforts to combat the COVID-19. They are:

- The university has distributed the materials to the surrounding community for the safety including sanitizers and face masks.
- The fifteen students of KU from school of engineering, pharmacy and medicine have developed the first home grown ventilators in the invention center of the university. The ministry of health in Kenya has accredited the ventilators and the university will start the manufacturing the ventilators for the use in the health center.

The dean of school of economics in the KU briefed the long-term strategy as:

- The university has included the blended teaching and learning approach in its strategic plan of 2018-2027. The blended approach is augmented face to face interaction with online classes.
- From September 2020 onwards, the students in all programs, both full-time as well as part-time, will have virtual classes.
- The university is currently facilitating the development of online interactive modules for all courses and organizing the training for the faculty on online facilitation.

Prof. Maria Sassi from Master Program in Cooperation and Development (MCD) in the University of Pavia, Italy, the second presenter, elaborated the overview of the number of COVID-19 cases

Presentations from Partner Universities

A new phase: two clear decisions in a period of uncertainty

On-campus education

Blended learning → Face-to-face teaching maintaining the physical distance and virtual classroom

Internationalisation
A synergic effort among all the

Introduction

- The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was reported on 13th March 2020. So far by yesterday 28th of June, the total confirmed cases to 6070
- The President of the republic of Kenya gave the first address to the citizens on 14th March, and there after, several other addresses to review actions that the government are taking to curb spread of the disease
- As is the case globally, citizens are advised to observe social distancing and all guidelines given by the Ministry of Health to keep safe
 - All learning institutions closed – there is no face to face learning in all private and public learning institutions – 20th March
 - The government also put in place countrywide Curfew – initially from 7 pm in the evening to 5 am in the morning up to 6th June- later revised to 9pm – 4 am in the current period.
 - Lock downs - for counties where disproportionately high cases were reported
- With the restrictions in Place**
 - Economic activities remain low with high impacts on SMEs and a good number of people have lost jobs
 - Schools and Universities have remained closed – with expectations of reopening in September
 - There is also increased efforts to find solutions as we also respond to the effects

CARTAGENA

In Cartagena, the city presented its first confirmed COVID-19 on March 11. Comparing the number of confirmed cases and deaths of the main cities of Colombia, Cartagena has the third largest number of cases in the country and the second most in the Caribbean coast.

CORONAVIRUS en Cartagena y Colombia

Snap: Condition of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal?

- The pandemic COVID-19 caused by novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) is a highly infectious disease that has created an exceptional global challenge affecting all the countries including Nepal.
- In Nepal, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on 24 January, 2020.
- In recent days, most of the cases have been recorded in the lowland districts of the country.
- We have a trend that thousands of Nepali people go to India for work every year. This year, they returned en-masse to Nepal after India declared lockdown.

and casualties as well as the status of lockdown in Lombardy and the Italy. Dr Sassi said the University of Pavia is a Spark of Knowledge, where the full form of Spark is system, prestige, ancient, research and knowledge sharing. Stating the closure of the university with the imposition of lockdown in Lombardy since 8 March 2020, she briefed the academic programs of Pavia during the lockdown as:

- The teaching and learning activities have been shifted from on campus education to the distance learning education.
- The university has been investing in didactic innovation and digital communication service for the innovative solutions for connecting virtual and physical space before and during the pandemic. This has eased the online mode of examinations, teachings and learning activities and graduation ceremony within short period of time.
- Webinars have been organized in order to generate and disseminate ideas, knowledge and practices.
- The virtual meeting of student to connect with the classmates as well as knowledge sharing has been promoted. Moreover, the university has encouraged the regular attendance of students in online classes and stimulated them to ask the questions and exchanges of the course materials.
- The university has introduced the new management of the university and new services such as crisis unit as well as psychological counseling services. The crisis unit is set up in order to effectively coordinate the university activities for the better result in the emergencies. Similarly, the unit circulates the periodic and authentic information to

the students and professors. The psychological counseling service is offered for students, professors and administrative staff.

Dr Sassi also discussed the contribution of the university in the global fight against the pandemic:

- Pavia University is a part of an international team working on how to find the solutions to the COVID-19, understand its impact and design the post-COVID-19 period.

She updated the following strategy adopted by the university in the new emerging reality:

- The university has taken the clear decisions in a period of uncertainty: the blended learning approach i.e. face to face teaching maintaining physical distance and virtual classes will be adopted in the new reality.

Representing from the Latin America, the third speaker, Ms. Ibelis Blanco Rangel from Universidad de San Buenaventura, Columbia, presented the cases and statistics of the pandemic in Cartagena (area surrounding the university), Columbia and Latin America. There are higher risks of pandemic persist in Latin America because of the deficit of beds for patients, ICU and ventilators, she said. She illustrated that the number of student enrollments in approximately 367 universities of Columbia (76 public universities and 281 private universities) will dramatically go down in new academic year due to COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Rangel highlighted the academic activities and strategies in the peril of pandemic:

- In new reality, the university revised the face to face teaching format and adopted new format as conducting classes through video conferencing.
- Information and health advices had been disseminated through email to students, professors and employees
- Student health insurance recognized and covered the COVID-19 as disease if necessary
- Provision of financial assistance like discounts and flexible payment and technical assistance such as internet connection and computer equipment for students who may need.
- When entering the university, every person must fill out a survey about the condition of the health.

Speaking from the side of MWU, Mr Rabin Malla, Program Coordinator of MICD-MWU, discussed the condition of COVID-19 in Nepal. Updating the shutdown of education institutions across Nepal since mid-March 2020, Mr. Malla stated the following academic programs in MICD and the university during the pandemic:

- The ministry of education, science and technology has developed the national guidelines of the virtual classes.
- The MICD resumed the regular classes from early April. Most interestingly, the students' attendance is better in virtual classes reaching over 90 percent. MICD conducted mid-term examinations using the same methodology. Besides, it has regularly been organizing the webinars on the various aspects of the pandemic since 4 May 2020.

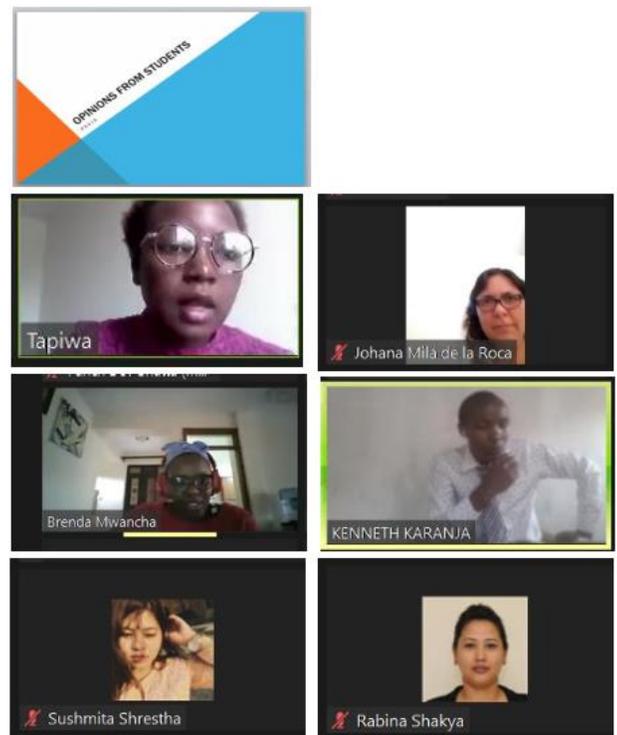
- At the MWU level, the online classes are being operated in all 15 constituent campuses of the university. The university is currently hosting the quarantine centre having more than 600 beds in its premises. Moreover, the executive council of the university has formed the Combat COVID-19 expert panel including national and international experts.

Mr Malla also pointed out the strategies adopted by the university and concerned authorities in the wake of long-term impact of the pandemic. They are:

- MWU is of the opinion that the on-line classes must be mainstreamed as complimentary even after resuming face-face classes later.
- On the examinations, the University Grant Commission has brought Guidelines for e-learning and examination system for the universities in Nepal 2020. The guideline has given priority to conduct conventional examinations by maintaining safety protocols; however, when such is not possible it has suggested upgrading the students to next semester or year.

Opinion from the Participating Graduate Students

In the webinar, there were graduate students representing the CDN partner universities, Universidad de San Buenaventura (Colombia), Kenyatta University (Kenya), UP (Italy) and MWU (Nepal). The graduate students from each partner universities of CDN shared their experiences about the ongoing academic programs in the university in the time of the pandemic. The students who expressed their views were Tapiwa Penama (Malawi) from University of Pavia, Johana Mila De la Roca (Venezuela) from Universidad de San Buenaventura, Kenneth Karanja and Brenda Mwanicha (Kenya) from Kenyatta University and Suhsmitta Shrestha and Rabina Shakya (Nepal) from Mid-Western University. The graduate students were of the view that they are motivated and encouraged to join the virtual academic activities happening in the university i.e. very effective. According to them, this is a new experience as well as pushed them to think out of the box. In course of adjusting to the new normal, the important lessons learned that have lifetime implication is how to work under the emergencies as a development practitioners. However, some students put serious concerns towards the uncertainties of examinations or evaluation system in the university. In positive note, the students wanted to have student exchange programs and internship opportunities across the partner universities of CDN in order to augment the student exposure in new settings.



Valedictory Session

Professor Gianni Vaggi delivered his closing remarks. The excerpt of his speech includes:

- Following the pandemic, we need more international cooperation not less. It does not mean we get more international cooperation. There are forces pulling on one side and the forces pulling on the other side. (There are) two leaders, leaders of country, and political parties. From our side, where we have not only our academic institutions and but also colleagues from civil societies, have to do as much as we can to move further to more international partnership and cooperation. It will not be easy but we have to try. As a part of academic institutions and also as a part of the network (CDN) what we could do what we have learned during this period of pandemic. For sure, we have to strengthen our activities as CDN members. Here, I would make two suggestions. First, let's each of five partner universities make a commitment to organize one webinar on the contemporary topics or issues per month from October/November onwards. We can pick up one topic per month, it could be an economic issue, environmental issue or political issue relating to development and cooperation. Second, I would suggest commencing the initiations and activities like blogs sharing and else among the students of five partner universities in order to activate the student connection and interaction between them.
- Regarding the teaching learning, we will have to use both the campus teaching as well as online distance learning. The value of getting young people together is enormous which can really be not measured. When we gather young people from different parts of the world, it is simply not sharing their experiences but we give them a framework to do so in a structures and an organized way. If we look at SDGs, we should be in number four, that is education. However, I think SDG-17 is becoming more and more important. I see that SDG-17 on partnership is an instrumental to better achievement of SDG-4 which is quality education for all and at all levels. More the quality education we have, the more we can go for global partnership, which is a true partnership. Therefore, we must do as much as we can for more international partnership among the institution and students using the network.
- Time flies, but in front of us there is always a possibility to make better and even in deeper way. Tragedies and disasters such as the present pandemic give us reasons to take more commitment. With the young people we have and work with, these efforts are not going to be lost. When such efforts are being not lost, essentially they become more important.

The webinar was officially closed with the vote of thanks by Professor Ganesh Karki, Director of International Relations Directorate at Mid-western University (MWU).

Report prepared by Dayaraj Subedi, Asst. Professor, MICD-MW

Zoom Group Chat

From SAMINA SHRESTHA to Everyone:
Dear All respected Professor...thanks for providing an oppourtunity for participating in this zoom meeting . Me, Samina Shrestha(4th batch of MICD college) . But..as I have some urgent work to do..so I have to leave the meeting right now.

From Ishwari Prasad Regmi to Everyone:
Thank you for organising international webinar.

From maura viezzoli to Everyone:
thank you very much

From Ishwari Prasad Regmi to Everyone:
Thank you for all including VC sir.

From Rabina Shakya to Everyone:
Thank You very much for this opportunity.

From Prakash Sharma to Everyone:
Dear all, thank you so much for your time and contribution, it has been a great occasion to share and connect among us in this unprecedented situation, very grateful indeed.

From Brenda Mwancha to Everyone:
Thank you for organizing this, it was very inciteful.

From Pushpa Raj Acharya to Everyone:
Thanks a lot everyone