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Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon
On behalf of AMIC, I am glad to welcome all of you to this Seminar on "Media and Child/Family Health".

The subject of this seminar is clearly of much interest in the region. We had planned to have two participants from each country, barring the host country, but we are gratified that the level of interest has meant an increase in numbers.

Almost nine years ago AMIC and the ICC came together to organise a regional seminar on the topic of Communication and Child/Family Welfare in Singapore. Thereafter we co-sponsored a meeting in New Delhi. We are glad to be associated once again with the ICC and IUFO in organising this seminar in Singapore.

While health is a matter of fundamental concern, it is not always deemed to be newsworthy. But just as media professionals need good health, so do health and nutrition need the persuasive power of the media.

The countries of Asean, as indeed of all Asia, are engaged in a stupendous task of human resource development. Health care is a necessary pre-condition for the development of human resources. While much media attention is devoted to the imminent dawning of
the Pacific country, not much attention has been focussed, for
instance, on the problems posed by the growing numbers of the
ageing. The need in the region is to provide "preventive and
curative services that are active, accessible, affordable and
acceptable for the population".

The key word is "acceptable". We need to employ the skills of
the professional communicator and commercial marketer to make
socially useful goals acceptable and desirable and, therefore,
achievable. This is a task that calls for sustained and
systematic cooperation between the medical experts and the media
professionals for the benefit of the community.

The choice of Singapore for this seminar is singularly
appropriate. No communication practitioner can fail to be
impressed by the outstanding professionalism of many of the
campaigns released by different agencies for socially beneficial
causes. Besides, there is a constant effort to anticipate, plan
and improve. This is typified by the report, Opportunities for
the Disabled, recently submitted by the Advisory Council on the
Disabled, of which both Dr. Dixie Tan and Mr. Mike Gray were
members.

Since 1984, AMIC annual programme of activities has included at
least one workshop on a health-related topic. We have had 3
workshops on Health and the Media and, in the last two years, we
have had workshops on Information, Education and Communication on Nutrition for Rural Women. These workshops have served to generate health projects in the participating countries. It is our hope that this meeting will not only serve as a forum for the exchange of experience and ideas but also provide an opportunity for the shaping of regional initiatives for collaborative effort.

For the benefit of those who are unfamiliar with our organisation, I might explain that AMIC is a non-profit, non-governmental communication centre serving the Asia-Pacific from its secretariat in Singapore. AMIC is supported by the Government in Singapore and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, an independent foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany, which has given us much moral and material support. Equally important and gratifying to us is the cooperation that we are privileged to receive from so many individuals and institutions from within the region and beyond. This is best exemplified by the participants and co-sponsors present here today.

We are most grateful to you, Dr. Dixie Tan, for so gracefully accepting our invitation despite your prior commitments. We thank you Dr. Han for agreeing to deliver the keynote address despite the comparatively short notice. To the representatives of CAMHADD and UNICEF we would like to express our appreciation for their presence and participation. Finally, we must express our warmest gratitude to the International Children's Centre and the International Union of Family Organisations for making this seminar possible.

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