

WAU statement on the Corona Virus and related Social consequences

At present there is a global situation of distress, described by the WHO as a Pandemic. This is a situation in which many of the taken for granted facets of modern life are grinding to a slow halt. Airports are losing their hustle and bustle, hotels are spectres of their former selves, glittering Malls, Cinema houses, streets and even schools and colleges are shut, deserted, desolated. Children are out of school in many places and as we know this is impacting their education and having negative consequences for the families.

We, as anthropologists are facing one of the biggest predicaments of recent history. How should we make ourselves relevant when the human species facing such a huge dilemma of existence? There are lessons to be learnt and understood. There is an even greater need to listen to what anthropology has been saying all along. The Human is a common identity. All others, gender, race, caste, class, ethnicity, colour and morphology are mere social constructs that dissolve in front of a crisis like one we are facing. In front of the virus we are all the same, all alike, all included, no one excluded. When anthropologists describe inclusiveness and decry exclusions, this is perhaps the outermost limits of that inclusiveness. Be it presidents, or paupers, men or women, white, yellow or black, the virus does not distinguish. In fact, the virus is perceiving what we had blinded ourselves to for so long, there is no difference, all are alike.

Secondly, it brings to fore the fact, that human survival depends on human co-operation. We can only live, if we respect each other. Even if boundaries and borders are closed, they have to be done with common consent. For this the world needs peace, understanding and good will. Humanism, for long the forte of anthropologists, has to become a common theme for all to learn.

Thirdly, anthropologists can help in identifying the cultural modes of dealing with the disease as well as the inherited practices that provide the social environment critical to control and management of the epidemic.

To face the threat, humans must unite in a common identity, transcend all artificial divisive constructs and come together in peace and good will. Anthropology strives towards understanding the social and cultural dimensions of the human species as one. It is time everyone else applied the same knowledge to not just make the world better but to have a world at all.