

COMMEET Newsletter 2020-2

This is the second COMMEET Newsletter of 2020. The situation in the world now is completely different from the one we had when the first newsletter was published early this year. Coronavirus has the world firmly in its grips, and is doing its devastating work in communities everywhere. I sincerely hope that you and everybody around you are safe, and will remain so!

Especially communities in developing countries, and migrant and refugee groups are at risk: these people often live close together and may have insufficient access to medical assistance. Some COMMEET fellows, like Sigfried Janzing who supports our community in Bangladesh, continue to do excellent work now even more so than usual, helping with making basic needs like food available.

Closer to COMMEET's home base, the Board has been working hard on essential issues, such as raising funds to cover expenses, and devising an organisational structure for COMMEET that prepares us for the years ahead. Physical board meetings are impossible now, so we have discussions with the help of Skype, Zoom, good old telephones and the like. Our ambassadors in Canada, Charles Hopkins and Katrin Kohl, have joined some of these discussions, and have given the Board very valuable advice on how to proceed.

In this issue you can find an update by Ros Wade from the UK on the very positive developments regarding the Migrant toolkit, some information on the developments regarding the organisational structure of COMMEET and on our attempts to secure financial assistance. Enjoy the issue!

Maarten Schrevel, COMMEET secretary

MIGRANT TOOLKIT

Ros Wade (see the picture, with Ros signing copies of her book *The Challenge of Sustainability*) has sent me the following text on her and her team's work on the new Migrant Toolkit. A first draft of this new Toolkit has now been produced. Thank you, Ros, for your excellent contribution and your and your team's hard work on this!



Developing the COMMEET migrant toolkit

In recognition of the challenges facing us at local, regional and national levels, a COMMEET group was formed in February 2020 to develop a migrant toolkit. The aim of this is to help empower local communities and migrants to take action to enable mutual appreciation, which is beneficial to both migrants themselves and the destination communities. This will be made available to the work of the many refugee and community organisations, NGOs and volunteers who are busy supporting migrants with settling down in their new home towns and communities. It will be founded on co learning principles, in that both migrant and host communities have much to learn and benefit from each other.

At this time of world crisis over the Covid 19 virus, there is a danger that some vulnerable communities will be sidelined or forgotten. Migration is an ongoing concern as there will still be ongoing movements of people across the globe as a result of conflict, natural disasters, poverty, persecution and, increasingly, climate change. Predictions by the International Organisation for Migration (2008) estimate that there will be between 50 and 200 million climate refugees by 2050. Many of the factors that force people to migrate are linked together so the global partnership for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, 17) is becoming ever more important in order to address the imbalance of resources and power between and within countries. All the factors above are, in effect, sustainability issues and if they are not addressed, the SDGs will fail to be delivered by 2030. For example, one of the key causes of forced migration relates to the effects of climate change, which is causing land degradation, leading in many places to food shortages for local populations. This affects delivery of SDG 2 which aims to 'End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture' (UN 2020).

The toolkit will provide ideas and share examples of activities which address negative perceptions and stereotypes of migrants and build more positive relationships. It will provide examples of activities which can be shared and adapted for different regions. Members of the COMMEET group have a wide range of valuable expertise and experience which will enhance and deepen the project. In particular they bring expertise from the experience of being migrants or refugees themselves. We started work in February 2020 with a group of 10 people from a wide range of countries including Malaysia, Nigeria, the UK and the Netherlands. One of the key issues for migrants that has emerged already is that of access to health care, both for physical and mental conditions. This is even more important at this time of crisis when many migrants do not have official access to medical attention.

We intend to complete the work over the next few months and hope that the toolkit will be available for use by the end of June 2020.

Ros Wade, COMMEET fellow

COMMEET's ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE and FINANCE

ORGANISATION

During the past six months a team of four Maastricht University master's degree students, Anna, Axelle, Friederike and Katja, under the supervision of Jarrod Ormiston, their professor of Social Business, have been working on advising the Board about how COMMEET can be structured so that it becomes an efficient and effective international organisation. Jos Hermans and I had a videoconference with the four ladies in April, when they presented the results of their research. The students will present their report at the end of May, after which the Board will make final decisions. So far Katja, Friederike, Axelle and Anna have done an excellent job, making many sound recommendations. I list some of them here:

- Formulate a vision and a mission for COMMEET and communicate them effectively.
- Restructure COMMEET with a Board, Active Members (or *Fellows*) and Well Wishers, make clear what their roles, tasks and responsibilities are, set clear expectations for each of these roles. Communicate this new structure on the website and in a newsletter.
- Provide regular updates, for instance by means of a podcast.
- Provide networking opportunities for active members and a platform to share documents.
- Make use of existing platforms like Slack, Zoom, Dropbox, Hootsuite.
- Find one person who is responsible for social media, including an extensive use of LinkedIn.
- Establish more links to universities to increase credibility.
- Improve the organisation, visibility and content of the website.

Jos and I have already started working on some of these recommendations, and think COMMEET is best described as a Fellowship, with a Board, Fellows and Well Wishers. More information on these developments will follow in the near future!

FINANCE

Like many not-for-profit organisations run by and dependent on volunteers, COMMEET has a severe lack of financial means. In fact, some of the Board members and Fellows have made expenses out of their own pockets, with only a vague promise for reimbursement as soon as enough money is available.

There is some light at the horizon, though. COMMEET has started cooperating with an organisation called Qredits, who are prepared to coach us in our quest for support. In addition, Jo Spaubeck and Board members Jos and Peter Ramakers have approached companies and institutes in the Netherlands with requests for financial support, or by making professional staff available for COMMEET. More information will come your way as soon as it is available.