



WFPMA

World Federation of People
Management Associations

World Federation of People Management Associations

COVID-19 Global Report

Disclaimer: This report is a compilation of reports as submitted by each of the listed National Associations. Data for this report was collected in late April 2020.

A Message from the WFPMA President on COVID-19



Dear Human Resources Leaders and Professionals,

COVID-19 caused us all to reflect and take immediate actions to preserve workplaces around the globe, in response to one of the largest pandemics in world history. We are at a point when government, business and society must work together and develop shared solutions that effectively safeguard human lives and support economic growth.

Organizations around the world are taking the necessary steps to mitigate the impact of this pandemic and safeguard jobs—not an easy task with such a rapidly evolving situation. While it is not business as usual, with great stress and uncertainty, we are at a moment where the HR community must work together, as what we do across all industries, is most critical.

Human Resources Professionals are in the front lines, taking the lead to create smart and efficient business solutions that take care of both employers and employees—while paying special attention to essential workers, so they can work in healthy and safe environments. The world of work is relying on HR professionals to navigate through these uncertain times.

As this situation continues to develop, know that The World Federation of People Management Associations remains committed to serving you and your members across the world, and joins you in keeping our communities healthy and safe.

If you need any support, please reach out to me or your WFPMA Regional Federation Leader.

Together, we will keep our workers and workplaces safe and healthy, and create better workplaces for all.


Leyla Nascimento
WFPMA President



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Introduction



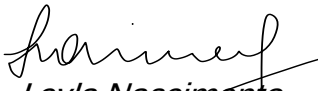
The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way we think of work. Leaders all over the world are relying on HR professionals to navigate these challenges—presenting us with an opportunity to rise to the calling. Crises come and go, but it is our leadership in times like these, that demonstrate our value.

With that said, and with the goal of adding value to our members and HR professionals around the world, the WFPMA has created this relevant and timely tool, that we hope will be useful for HR Professionals around the world.

WFPMA Regional Federations were asked to reach out to their Presidents of National Associations (PNA) to get a better pulse of what is happening on the ground and at the National levels. For which PNAs were asked to answer the following five questions for this global report:

1. What is the current situation in your home country (i.e. lockdown, economic impact, policy changes, etc.), and what are some of the immediate measures your country has taken to limit the spread?
2. How is immigration, workforce provisions (i.e. paid/unpaid leave, sick leave, vacation, reduction of work hours, contract suspensions, layoffs, furloughs, etc.) and healthcare being impacted?
3. What are some of the measures that governments and employers in your respective countries are taking to mitigate these issues and any financial losses?
4. What immediate lessons have you learned in your part of the world, in dealing with the challenges posed by COVID-19 and social distancing? (i.e. instituting telework policies, layoffs and furloughs, general & mental health of employees, communication methods, etc.)
5. Human resource management plays a key role in planning for any disaster or emergency, whether for staffing and workforce planning, training, reorganization or revising plans and policies to accommodate the changing needs and priorities of organizations across the world—Can you share some best practices HR professionals can follow to better prepare their organizations for future unexpected crises?

Together, we will keep our workers and workplaces safe and healthy and create better workplaces for all.


Leyla Nascimento
WFPMA President

In the United States, [95 percent](#) of the American population in 42 states, three counties, nine cities, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have been instructed to stay at home. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, unemployment hit record lows of around 3.5 percent. Now, more than 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment benefits in the past four weeks. [Some economists](#) believe the unemployment rate is already over 20 percent—something we haven't seen since the Great Depression nearly 100 years ago.

[One estimate](#) claims that the U.S. real GDP growth rate will decline 5 percent for each month of partial economic shutdown. By these estimates, the economic cost of the first two months spent fighting the pandemic will equal \$2.14 trillion. What's certain is that we have no way of knowing the true economic impact while states remain under lockdown. The President [said](#) that businesses can reopen sooner than May 1, but these decisions are largely the decision of the state governors. Some states are already following suit, despite strong expert recommendations against easing social distancing orders.

Until then, all residents are being encouraged to comply with guidelines established by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). And while states vary across the country in terms of required lockdowns and policy changes, the federal government has implemented the [Coronavirus Guidelines for America](#), which were extended through April 30, 2020. In this collaboration between the CDC, the White House, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), these guidelines include:

- **"If you feel sick**, stay home. Do not go to work. Contact your medical provider."
- **"If your children are sick**, keep them at home. Do not send them to school."
- **"If someone in your household has tested positive** for the coronavirus, keep the entire household at home."
- **"If you are an older person**, stay home and away from other people."
- **"If you are a person with a serious underlying health condition** that can put at increased risk, stay home and away from other people."

Guidelines also address working/schooling from home where possible, avoiding social gatherings of more than 10 people, using drive-thru, pickup or delivery options wherever possible, and practicing good personal hygiene (e.g., hand washing), among others. In an effort to boost the economy, the government introduced a \$2 trillion federal package called the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which sends \$1,200 checks to many Americans, creates a \$367 billion paycheck protection program for small businesses, and establishes a \$500 billion lending fund for industries, cities and states.

In addition, at least 35 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico have [introduced legislation](#) to support state action to COVID-19. Each state legislation varies, but many focus on topics such as insurance coverage, medical costs, or telehealth services. Others involve paid leave, unemployment benefits, and workforce protections.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has [suspended](#) in-person services beginning March 18 through May 3 to help slow the spread of the virus. As a result, many services have been altered, rescheduled, or cancelled completely. And as of Monday, April 20, the President announced plans to sign an executive order temporarily suspending immigration to the U.S. in an effort to protect American jobs.

The healthcare industry has been hit particularly hard, and many are postponing elective procedures, surgeries, and non-urgent visits. The CARES Act [includes](#) \$100 billion for hospitals, boosts reimbursements by 20 percent for treating Medicare patients with coronavirus, and eliminates \$8 billion in scheduled payment reductions to hospitals caring for large numbers of uninsured and Medicaid patients. While this funding is projected to offset some of the revenue losses hospitals are expecting, the outlook is still bleak.



Many hospitals will not be able to survive the damage—[researchers](#) [found](#) that the worst case scenario will result in 97 percent of health systems losing an average of \$2,800 per COVID-19 case, with many losing between \$8,000 and \$10,000 per case. NAACOS [reports](#) that the potential cost to Medicare of the COVID-19 pandemic over the next 12 months could range from \$38.5 billion to \$115.4 billion.

In addition, nearly half of Americans receive their health insurance through their employer. [One analysis](#) estimates that 9.2 million workers have likely lost their employer-provided health insurance as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Now, those who have recently become unemployed are left to find coverage on their own. A sidecar health [survey](#) found that 55 percent of the recently unemployed have faced challenges finding health insurance and 43 percent were unlikely to seek medical care while without health coverage. What's more, the biggest challenges for those seeking health insurance coverage were high cost (74 percent) and lack of options (49 percent).

As for workforce provisions, certain public and private employers with fewer than 500 employees are required to follow the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#), meaning they must provide paid sick leave for employees impacted by a required quarantine or care for someone under

quarantine. Many small businesses have also found some relief with the Paycheck Protection Program. However, the fund is falling short in the industries, states, and with the businesses that need help the most. And as of [April 15](#), it is running out of money too. In the meantime, employers are resorting to layoffs, furloughs, and decreasing hours (among others) to keep their businesses afloat. In fact, 38 percent of employers who have made business adjustments have decreased hours for their employees, and a further 28 percent are considering this action.

Now the federal government plans to bailout businesses, states and local governments that have suffered the most damage as a result of COVID-19. The Treasury will pool \$454 billion with the Federal Reserve's lending facilities to create \$4 trillion in loans. One of the most impacted, the airline industry, will get a [\\$25 billion bailout](#) to pay flight attendants, pilots, and other employees. The Treasury stated that 70 percent of airline aid would be in the form of grants, and the other 30 percent would be repaid as a loan over a period of 10 years.

In a SHRM survey conducted in the beginning of the pandemic, 1 in 5 small businesses reported that they could only afford to pay employees for one week or less under quarantine, and less than a third of small businesses said they could operate totally remotely. The U.S. Small Business Association is currently [providing low-interest federal disaster loans](#) to small businesses suffering substantial economic injury as a result of COVID-19.

To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the U.S. workforce, nearly 60 percent of organizations have either had to lay off employees or have considered this as a strategy for ensuring their business survives the pandemic. Half of organizations are no longer hiring and nearly 20 percent are considering taking this action. Likewise, half of organizations are delaying new hire start dates. Other employer responses include decreasing hours for employees (38 percent have, 28 percent are considering), and decreasing pay rates (19 percent have, 21 percent are considering).

While many business are deciding whether or not they can maintain their current workforce, some major organizations, including [Amazon](#) and [Walmart](#), are increasing their hiring efforts to meet surges in demand through online shopping.

Looking ahead, many businesses are preparing for their employees to return to work. Some car companies even expect to begin production [as soon as](#) May 4, 2020. The retail industry is looking to China for guidance, as the government has slowly lifted lockdown orders and people are heading to the streets to shop. Efforts to reopen the country [increase](#) and the CDC plans to announce hiring of hundreds of people to conduct contract tracing.

While the challenges posed by COVID-19 are felt by all, they look different for each region, industry, and business size. Since the start of the pandemic, more than 22 million people have filed for unemployment benefits. It is uncertain what percentage of those claims are due to

layoffs or furloughs. What is certain is that some industries have been hit harder than others, such as accommodation or food services. In fact, over 90 percent of employers in the accommodation or food services industry have either decreased hours or considered decreasing hours for employees in order to sustain their business. Nearly 90 percent of employers in the same industry have had to lay off their employees or are considering taking this action.

This is the ongoing reality for thousands of American businesses. Employers are still navigating unpredictable and turbulent waters, and recommendations on how to mitigate the damaging effects of COVID-19 are changing every day. While many employers are resorting to layoffs, an alternative method is furloughing employees with the hopes of bringing them back when the economy starts recovering. In this scenario, many furloughed employees can retain their benefits despite not earning wages. For example, Best Buy [announced](#) that it would furlough more than 50,000 hourly part-time employees, but it will continue to pay their health care costs for a minimum of three months. The same goes for Disney, who will pay [100 percent](#) of health insurance costs for furloughed workers that are currently covered.

Another lesson learned is that perhaps it is that when taken seriously, social distancing can prove a quick and effective method at restoring the global economy. As a result, more and more employees are required to telework, which also happens to be a major challenge faced by companies right now. In fact, SHRM found that 71 percent of organizations found adjusting to telework to be a challenge. Businesses can do their part by supporting this transition when and wherever possible. The good news is that more than half of organizations surveyed by SHRM have offset some of the costs or plan to offset costs incurred by employees from teleworking.

When COVID-19 hit U.S. shores, it was difficult to predict how prepared American businesses and the HR profession were in the wake of the pandemic. To bridge the gap, SHRM fielded multiple surveys to gauge how organizations were responding. Some results weren't surprising: For example, most organizations have implemented new cleaning procedures. This is important as organizations begin calling back their employees to work. Here are other ways that organizations are preparing:

- Over 70% of organizations have sought outside advice during the COVID-19 pandemic for workforce-related issues—an indication that organizations are consulting with experts and external resources to help inform their decisions.
- Over half of organizations have offered additional pandemic-related education training—organizations are keeping employees informed and up to date around COVID-19 and their organization's approach through all future stages.
- Over half (52.7%) of organizations are revising their emergency preparedness plans—organizations are adapting their policies to reflect the times. Further, once policies are modified, employees will need to be notified and any changes should be clearly outlined.

HR professionals have a [major role](#) to play during times of unexpected crises, particularly around staffing and workforce planning, training, reorganization or revising plans and policies to accommodate changing needs. These topics, among others, should be included in an organization's disaster and operations continuity plan, which should be reviewed and updated regularly.

Each preparedness plan should address the following:

- Resource management
- Emergency response
- Crisis communications
- Business continuity
- Information technology
- Employee assistance
- Incident management
- Training



Keep in mind that contingency staffing plans should be included as part of the preparedness plan. HR professionals should prepare to advise on: essential personnel, alternative work schedules, alternative worksites and telecommuting arrangements, transportation services, new-hire and recruitment pipeline issues, temporary staffing issues, and emergency responders. (If you do not have a business continuity plan, [here's a link](#) to a template to get started.)

Other best practices include implementing preventative measures and educating employees. Examples could include providing hand sanitizers to employees or providing education materials on the proper way to wash hands. [Here's](#) a link to CDC business resources.

Interamerican Federation of Human Resource Management (FIDAGH)

Nicaragua: Asociación de Ejecutivos de Recursos Humanos de Nicaragua (AERHNIC)

Currently in Nicaragua we have ten COVID-19 confirmed cases. However, the government has very little information on the progress and measures that the population must take to avoid the spread of the virus. In Nicaragua, immigration has decreased. However, we have more than 80,000 people who migrated due to the sociopolitical crisis that began in 2018.

The private sector has taken measures to try to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 contagion, such as teleworking, reduction of working hours, equipping personnel with protective equipment (i.e. masks, hand sanitizer, among others), increasing hygiene in work centers. Some companies, such as the free zone and tourism companies, have made fixed-term contract

suspensions, and others have closed. Likewise, other companies have chosen to reduce working hours and wages.

Digital transformation continues to be a learning curve, adapting to new work schemes and creating programs that help workers manage emotions in complex times. Putting resilience into practice has been one of the biggest challenges.

Best practices that all HR professionals can follow to better prepare their organizations for future unexpected crises include: the promotion of a transparent culture, at all times, and sending clear messages to all workers. Involve senior management in communicating the company's crisis. Identifying the most effective communication channels and listening to workers has proven to be very important. In the event of reducing personnel, employees should be provided with exit alternatives in alignment with the labor laws of each country.

Brazil: Associação Brasileira de Recursos Humanos (ABRH)

The situation in Brazil is rapidly evolving, and so far, a state of public calamity has been decreed in order to guarantee resources for health and employment and it will last until December 2020, and borders have been closed until further notice. The "Bolsa Familia program" has been reinforced, however, there has been a delay in payments from the Time Guarantee Fund (FGTS) and Simples National for three months to support companies' with additional funds. Medical products have been decreed to be tax-free, with the government releasing R\$ 24 billion for personal credit lines (in order to help self-employed workers), and R\$48 billion for companies and civil aviation. An Emergency fund called "Corona Voucher" has also been created, which is a financial benefit for informal workers, Individual Micro-Entrepreneurs, self-employed and unemployed.

The main objective is to provide emergency protection while facing this crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Each State has their own policies regarding restrictions of public mobility. Although there is no lockdown actually in course, there are some States like Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro that are prohibiting the functioning of shops and schools, with a few exceptions. Measures are being revisited weekly or biweekly.

The great majority of companies have adopted measures to reduce wages, collective vacations, reduced production and health care. Those who need to continue their activities have redoubled measures with their employees. The Government approved measures that make it possible to reduce employment contracts, suspend contracts, anticipate vacations and release employee funds (FGTS). However, layoffs are still taking place despite efforts to avoid them. The impact of economic reduction are already being felt, with a large number of people relying on requests for financial assistance, such as the health system.

The biggest cities in the country are expected to receive a large number of infected people. In São Paulo, five temporary hospitals have been set up and the number of ICU beds in existing hospitals has been increased by 20 percent. In addition, nursing and medicine students have been called to collaborate under "controlled" environments, since they are still in training and do not have the necessary Intensive Care expertise. The economic impact on health is massive, and companies have been striving to negotiate and renegotiate contracts with health insurance to serve their employees.

The government stated that the best action to face the crisis is the approval of policy reforms, and actions ranging from the withdrawal of funds from FGTS and Bolsa Familia to cheaper lines of credit and flexibility, within compulsory deposit regulations. The Government, through BNDES (the Brazilian Development Bank), has been offering subsidized credit lines for small and medium companies to help them fund up to two months of wages. Some federal tax payments are being postponed. The most recent initiative, already as a reaction to the spread of the coronavirus in Brazil, was the anticipation of the half of the 13th pensioners payment by INSS. The money will be deposited in April.

A measure under a study by the Ministry of Finance, allows workers who have chosen for the FGTS birthday withdrawal to be anticipated upon request, providing resources in up to three years. This advance would be made by taking credit from a financial institution and will be subject to interest. Previously, the government had already released the immediate withdrawal of up to R\$998 from FGTS accounts and launched the new method of withdrawing funds: the anniversary withdrawal. The immediate withdrawal goes until the end of this month, while the anniversary is a permanent modality—with both seeking to inject money into the economy.

Regarding public banks, Caixa and Banco do Brazil announced that they are considering launching a specific credit line for companies affected by the coronavirus. Caixa has also reduced overdraft interest and launched new real estate credit lines, an example that was later followed by Banco do Brazil.

The Central Bank, despite acting independently, and being formally linked to the Ministry of Finance, has lowered the basic interest rate to the lowest level in the history series and eased the compulsory policy starting this month. This measure has the potential to inject up to R\$ 135 billion in the economy and limit overdraft interest. These measures have been taken to stimulate the economy. Last year, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew only 1.1%, the smallest advance in three years. For 2020, the financial market estimates that the economy will advance by only 1.99%, according to the latest Focus bulletin. The projection is expected to drop even further in the next release, reflecting the oil crisis that brought down the stock markets around the world at the beginning of last week. "the measures already adopted or under study to stimulate the economy.

The list below, includes actions by the government, the Central Bank and public banks:

1. "Immediate withdrawal from FGTS and PIS PASEP ": Considered the government's main measure to inject money into the economy and try to heat consumption."
2. 13th salary of Bolsa Familia
3. To reduce the basic interest rate. The Central Bank lowered the economy's basic interest rate (the Selic) to its lowest historical level. Today it is already at 3.75% and there is an expectation of another cut. The reduction in the economy's basic interest rate was mainly due to low inflation and the relative weak performance of the economy. In general, a lower basic interest rate tends to have a positive effect on borrowing.
4. Limit the overdraft interest rate Still on interest, the Central Bank limited the interest rate on the so-called overdraft (when the bank account is negative) to 152% per year, or 8% per month. It was the first time that the monetary authority had set a ceiling for overdraft.
5. Release of reserve requirements with this percentage, the Central Bank estimates that R\$ 135 billion can be injected into the market.
5. Mortgage loans
6. Reaction to coronavirus: credit for working capital cheaper line of credit for companies affected by the effects of coronavirus on the economy. This line would be used for working capital (money that is used on a daily basis) and tends to have more attractive interest rates. Caixa, for example, provided its clients with R\$50 billion in working capital lines.
7. Reaction to coronavirus: anticipation of the 13th of retirees
8. Half payment of the 13th of INSS retirees and pensioners, totaling R\$ 23 billion, will be brought forward to April. The proof of life is suspended for 120 days. It is under study to reduce the interest ceiling for the payroll loan to the beneficiaries of the INSS, to extend the maximum term of the operations and to increase the consignable margin."
9. The overall government economy initiatives worth around R\$ 750 billion. We highlight an important initiative created by forty-one companies, the majority of large ones, called "NÃO DEMITA" (DON'T FIRE!). These companies employ about 1.1 million people, according to estimation. It is a commitment to maintain staff for at least two months, in the midst of the economic crisis caused by the coronavirus. The Movement has been endorsed by Brazilian Association of Human Resources - ABRH Brasil.

About 2,700 Brazilian companies have already joined the movement ." The author of the idea, chairman of the board of Ânima Educação (an educational company), Daniel Castanho, and the campaign website went live on April 3rd. This is where interested companies can join.

The main learnings are linked to the virtual environment. Companies have encouraged their employees to stay and work from home, when possible. Currently they are working remotely, distance and online learning, trainings and video conferences are taking place.

Furthermore, citizens are being encouraged to use this time to learn new skills and other relevant aspects of their work. What has been most mentioned by HR collaborators and managers, refers to learning how to deal with new demands that did not necessarily have an impact on day-to-day routines, such as managing family demands at home, especially with small children. As well as dividing spaces accordingly to meet the demands of both sides.

Throughout this time, we have also learned that establishing common goals and developing empathy characteristics is important. Having emotional balance in an unpredictable situation is particularly important for leaders needing to balance the impacts on people and businesses. In an environment of intense uncertainty, the leader must protect lives while securing business sustainability and, at the same time, having his personal and professional values and resilience under scrutiny.

Best practices that all HR professionals can follow to better prepare their organizations for future unexpected crises deal with preparing people to be more dedicated to a common goal and to pay attention to global movements (social, cultural and economic)—and in some cases, even creating a new position such. Strengthening culture through increasingly clear purpose and values has also proven to be important, as well as fostering leadership learning and training and improving flexibility and adaptability. Dealing with ambiguity and teaching employees to deal with different scenarios is also imperative, with an emphasis on soft skills.



With the world increasingly being in a state of VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity), it is important to stimulate, disseminate, improve and reinforce the policies of diversity, inclusion and belonging. Enhance the "collective eye" by teaching/improving appropriate conflict management techniques and stimulate the development of communication skills. Encourage the participation of all hierarchical levels in decisions and decision-making (when possible), culture and experience sharing committees. Stimulate wellbeing activities, as well as highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in relationships.

Dominican Republic: Asociación Dominicana de Administradores de Gestión Humana (ADOARH)

As of April 20th, 2020, the Dominican Republic has had 4,984 confirmed cases and 235 deaths. The Government of the Dominican Republic has taken different measures to restrain the spread of COVID-19 in the country, hereby we present a summary of the measures with a higher impact in the population:

- State of emergency from March 19th to April 30th.
- National curfew during 5:00 pm to 6:00 pm until April 30th
- Commercial activities suspension from March 17th to April 30th, except related to basic needs.
- Restaurants can only offer service of take out or delivery.
- Mandatory use of masks.

The measures established by the Government have impacted workforce provisions, in addition to companies taking further initiatives to preserve jobs and financial health at the same time as actions such as:

Immigration

- Border closure (air, sea and land).

Workforce provisions:

- Schedule flexibilization in order to have less employees working together.
- Recommendations to offer paid leave to employees, if available.
- Isolation of employees vulnerable or over 60 years old.
- Presidential Decree 143-20 create FASE program, with following subsidies:
 - RD\$8,500/US\$160 for employees suspended due to closure of activities.
 - RD\$5,000/US\$94 for non-suspended employees working in companies authorized to continue operating. (Some types of companies are excluded)

Healthcare

- During the first days of quarantine, health service was uncertain, as there were no available guidelines on health insurance coverage, with the majority having a clause that excluded pandemics from coverage. Employees with symptoms were paying for healthcare and others had limited access to health care services.
- Other issues that complicated the situation in DR was the lack of PCR tests, as these were totally controlled and administrated by the Government. The first private laboratory that was approved to apply to PCR had a high price that could not be covered by the majority of the population.
- Nowadays, as we all have been learned, health insurers are covering COVID-19 tests and also the healthcare of the disease. This has been encouraged by the following measures from DR:

Government:

- PCR and COVID-19 related costs covered by health insurances.
- Availability of quick tests for COVID-19
- In a recent press conference given by our Minister of Health, he was demanding to establish stricter measures to have a real restraint of COVID-19 spread in DR. The forecast with current indicators is that DR could stay until June with the same level of daily infections.

As part of financial measures, the Government ordered banks to eliminate the monthly minimum balance payments on credit card debt and late fees. Additionally, the majority of Dominican banks has offered additional facilities to their customers, as postpone payment of loan fees, among others. Employees have been accepting bank notes in order to preserve their savings in case they become unemployed in the future. Also, some initiatives are being taken, such as reprogram investments, home savings through reductions in contact services, among others. The situation is more difficult for those with informal jobs.

In dealing with the challenges posed by COVID-19 and social distancing, the Dominican Republic (DR) has gone through a slowdown, and stress among citizens has risen. Resilience, confidence and patience are the new competencies that we have to developed. It is important to become effective again, especially as new technologies arise and begin substituting certain jobs.

Some best practices HR professionals can follow to better prepare their organizations for future unexpected crises include implementing teleworking for all of the employee in the administrative staff and implementing temporary paid leave for other employees whose jobs are operational. Depending on how this crisis develops, organizations and businesses are preparing to attend and be ready for any of the possible scenarios, in alignment with local decrees. Before the quarantine declaration, we arranged home offices for our most vulnerable people, to include those in vulnerable situations, people over 60 and people with health conditions to protect them and avoid anxiety about coming in contact with the virus.

The HR communication strategy has been focused on contingency actions, awareness, and containment with the objective of controlling and reducing the impact of COVID-19 on the employees. The Association has developed virtual courses, training, webinars, and open panel discussion on different topics, especially soft skills themes. Furthermore, we have organized virtual talks with recognized facilitators on topics such as: Resilience in times of crisis, the Role of the Leader in difficult times and Leading virtual team. Also, there have been similar events on important subject matter issues as the Dominican government has implemented different programs. In order to maintain fluid communication between leaders and staff, organizations have also continuously sent messages and videos of encouragement.

Panama: Asociación Nacional de Profesionales de Recursos Humanos de Panama (ANREH)

One of the most important strengths of Panama is its connectivity and transit, 10 days after the news were publicized in China, Panama held the 1st official preparation meeting. One week later (January 22, 2020), the Gorgas Institute for Health Studies began the case research. On March 13th the Government declared a national emergency, allocating \$1MM to prepare the country

and implement the checks on travelers and sifting tests.

On March 22nd, Panama closed its borders, determined social distancing measurements, no alcohol consumption and started a total quarantine. This included strict transit schedule per gender, in which on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays are the days designated for women to transit for two hours according to the termination of their personal ID. Meanwhile, men can transit on Tuesdays and Thursday. On Sundays, everyone must remain confined to their home—so far, the measures seem to be paying off.

Recently, the number of patients recovered, exceeded the number of people in intensive care. The contagion rate (RT) is below 1 and the case duplication time is 16 days. These numbers should be maintained for 10 to 14 days to initiate the gradual and planned opening of the country's economic and social activity.

There have been no new arrivals or immigration due to the closure of borders. Several humanitarian flights were set up to assist with the cooperation of the United Nations; especially for those who were trapped in transit and illegal migrants who came in very vulnerable conditions. There have been Labor Regulations established in order to manage the social distancing and responsible closure of companies. The Ministry of Labor has presented several decrees authorizing companies, suspension of contracts temporarily for 1 to 2 months, reduction of working hours up to a maximum of 50% per shift, forced vacation periods even of 2021 period, and the implementation of Telework and on-call work.

The government has established a program of Gift Certificates and food bags for people who have been impacted with suspension of labor agreements or no income. The distribution method is still under review since it has gotten many complaints. In addition, laws have been implemented to apply a moratorium on Bank loans, utility bills and housing rental payments so that the Certificates help to purchase food and medicines.

The private sector has shown great solidarity through bonuses to its employees, important donations and other creative initiatives with the intention of guaranteeing some income to people. There was a message announced by the President of Panama, Laurentino Cortizo, asking the public sector to "donate" a percentage of his salary on a voluntary basis. This will need to be reported to their Human Resources Department in the following days. In the case, these employees do not voluntarily cooperate, then he will take further decisions next week. He did not explain any further.

We have learned during this short period of time (a month to be exact), about the challenges presented by Covid-19 and social distancing. Companies immediately looked for ways to implement Telework programs, and things that used to take months for implementation have

now been exponentially accelerated to days or even hours—this response time has set us up for the digital era. The new ways of communicating were automated to “no paper,” it is all being done via email, chat, and technology tools such as Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, Electronic Signatures programs, among others.

Furthermore, identifying whether an employee is suffering from mental illness or not, has been critical, and action plans have been implemented to advise Human Resources Professionals and Managers to identify these situations relatively immediately.



In Panama, the National Association of Human Resources has organized several Webinars, which have been of great value to our membership, with the participation of more than 130 people in each. This significantly exceeds the Monthly Meetings where we were able to gather 80-90 people for breakfast meeting. On the other hand, we have also coordinated an Emotional Support Network for ANREH membership, where we provide counseling on 12 different topics of Emotional Intelligence, Coaching and how to recover after Covid19. We have called this program ANREH Solidarity.

For future crises, it is important that HR professionals consider and define:

1. Clear Occupational Health and Internal Communication Committees to manage in crises.
2. Telework policy and subsidies from the company when the modality exceeds more than 1 month of working from home.
3. Establish a private Emergency Hotline in case of mental illness, anxiety and depression.
4. In case of a pandemic or any other national emergency, both the company and the employee have ways of communication, apart from the tools of work. This in case the Internet service or local lines collapse.

Peru: Asociación Peruana de Recursos Humanos (APERHU)

On 15 March 2020, President [Martín Vizcarra](#) announced a [country-wide lockdown](#), closing borders, restricting [domestic travel](#), and forbidding nonessential business operations—excluding [health facilities](#), [food vendors](#), [pharmacies](#), and [financial institutions](#). Quarantine measures and border closures will continue through April 26.

The creation of a COVID-19 Operational Taskforce comprised by health, military and police authorities. This taskforce will manage all available resources and take operational decisions towards a more efficient response to the pandemic. On March 15, 2020, the Peruvian

Government ordered that public and private employers should grant paid leave to their staff or modify the place of provision of their services in order to do telework.

On April 13, a new law allowing furloughs for a maximum of 90-days was approved. Employees on furlough will be allowed to withdraw some of the pension fund (AFP) and as well as their "Compensation por Tiempos de Servicio (CTS) a fund into which employers pay for each employee, normally used to cover periods of unemployment, in order to help them through the period without wages.

In response to the Coronavirus, the government has launched a \$26 billion relief package, equivalent to 12 percent of GDP, including direct payments to individuals, including:

- A bonus of 380 soles (USD\$108), which will double in April, for 3.5 million poor households in the country.
- Measures to speed up the operability of Fondo Crecer (Grow Fund), which has S/800 million (around USD\$226.95 million), and has launched a new fund, the Business Support Fund worth S/300 million (about US\$84.84 million) in order to inject liquidity to micro, small and medium-sized companies in the country.
- Measures to enable financial institutions to reschedule payments of debts amounting to S/12 billion (around USD\$3.404 billion) incurred by people and companies. The National Superintendence of Customs and Tax Administration (Sunat) has also adopted measures within its sector.
- 35% subsidy for the [companies' payroll](#) aimed at employees with wages of up to S/1,500 (about USD\$446).

Some of the immediate lessons learned from the current pandemic relate to the important role of technology, in maintaining business continuity during adverse situations. We have learned that communication is key in keeping people engaged and connected during the quarantine. To ensure this we have called all employees in quarantine and family members in order to listen to their needs and provide information on all the prevention measures implemented in our mining camp and those that families must implement at home.

One valuable lesson has been to question the face-to-face work model and risk implementing new forms of work to create flexibility, increase job performance and people's quality of life. Another valuable lesson we have learnt has been in regard to mental health, how our employees deal with their mental health and how crucial it is especially in this difficult situation. To ensure that they feel supported we are providing psychological assistance for all employees, contractors, and family members who may require it. Furthermore, we have shared various yoga and meditation materials in order to reduce stress, increase morale, cultivate positive thinking, respond to pressure and uncertainty taking into account the scenario we are experiencing. All of these activities have led to creating a more open culture when talking about mental health.

When a company hires a person, it also enters into a tacit contract with their family, and acknowledges the company is therefore responsible for them. This is why we have considered family members in the measures that we have taken. It is important to always have a business continuity plan in force, defining processes and critical personnel.

We have implemented telework for all of our employees whose jobs allowed them to do it. For other employees whose jobs are operative we have temporarily implemented paid leave. According to how this crisis develops, we are preparing different simulations of possible scenarios. Before the declaration of the quarantine, we arranged home office for our most vulnerable people to protect them and avoid anxiety about coming in contact with the virus.

The situation caused the outpatient medical services to be closed, to give our people peace of mind in the face of this difficulty, an ad hoc medical service at home was implemented. We have implemented clinical screening in the entry points of the mine, as well as random daily clinical monitoring in the mine to detect quickly any suspected case. This is aimed at improving the perception of safety and avoiding the stress of our people of a possible contact with the virus.

Our communication strategy has been focused on contingency actions, awareness, and containment with the objective of controlling and reducing the impact of Covid-19 on our employees. We have provided them with informative material such as guides on preventive measure against Covid-19, on mental health, guide of telework, advice for families and children, etc. We have implemented online training and are developing virtual courses on different topics. Furthermore, we have organized virtual talks with recognized facilitators on topics such as: Resilience in times of crisis, the Role of the Leader in difficult times and Leading virtual team.

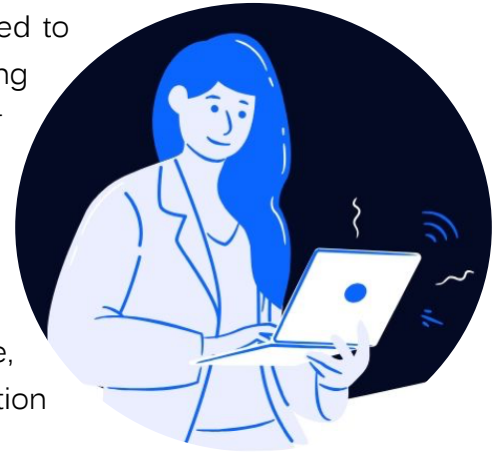
In order to maintain the connection of our leaders and our employees, they have been sending messages and videos of encouragement. We have arranged live Q&As with the HR vice-president to answer all of our employees' questions and worries regarding the company, their jobs, medical advice, and mental health, and industry decisions. We understand the different issues our employees are facing, and we must ensure empathy and understanding. We also ensure that leaders are connecting with their teams and keeping them updated.

The relationship between the entities that represent the mining industry and the government have been crucial in promoting the wellbeing of our employees, e.g. supporting the mobilization of employees returning home from the mining camp.

Costa Rica: Asociación Costarricense de Gestores de Recursos Humanos (ACGRH)

Costa Rica is in voluntary quarantine, there are vehicle restriction in connection to number of plate, borders are closed, tourism rate is in 0%, and many companies have had massive layoffs, thus there has been an important economic impact, the investment and people's purchasing capacity has decreased and the financial context has slowed down.

The Ministry of Health has issued health measures, related to social distancing, coughing and sneezing protocols, washing hands, the authority has encouraged people to seek for medical assistance if they have the symptoms, and companies that provide service to public are allowed to have a capacity of 50% of people in order to prevent the spread. Also, Ministry is closing all businesses that are not complying with these measures. From a labor perspective, work from home has been encouraged as vacation time as well to prevent such spread.



From an immigration perspective, borders are closed, if a resident with permit to stay leaves Costa Rica, the individual will lose their status, so we have strengthened the measures. Regarding workforce provisions, the Labor Code provides the possibility to suspend employment contracts when there is force majeure. A recent law provides the possibility to reduce work shifts and salary between 50%- 75% when there is between a 20%-60% of financial detriment in the gross income or if any other financial detriment could be demonstrated based on COVID-19. For both possibilities (suspension and reduction), the Labor Ministry must approve it.

Also, it is possible to send employees to enjoy vacation when they have accrued days, if not employer can agree with employees' vacation in advance. We have seen many layoffs in the last weeks and maybe the number will rise. Healthcare service has responded to the cases in Costa Rica, luckily, we do not have collapsed the system.

Government and other authorities has taken measure in order to help people that have had detriments on their labor conditions because of dismissals, suspension of employment contracts or reduce of work shifts, such as providing the "Bono Proteger" or "Protect Bonus", that provides an amount between US\$ 125 to US\$ 250 dollars, also, Congress passed a bill that allows people to withdrawn the labor capital fund, which is an indemnification contributed by the employer during employment and paid at the end of employment, but in cases of suspension and work shift reduction it could be withdrawn by the employee.

Banks in the public and private sector have adjusted the payment conditions related to loans, credit cards, mortgages, among others. Employers are trying to avoid layoffs, by suspension of employment contract or reduction of work shift or making work more flexible through work from home.

We have learned that we need to diversify the different work methods, and make them more flexible, take care of employees and their health and integrity, establish better ways of communication with the employees in order to know if something wrong is happening with them, so they could be helped. Having procedures and guidelines to make work more flexible, such as work from home, use all technology resources to be communicated, also trying to pay more attention on employee's needs, to have occupational health commissions, among others measures.

Bolivia: Asociación Boliviana de Gestión Humana (ASOBOGH)

The coronavirus crisis has strongly affected our country. A quarantine with suspension of all activities has been enacted since March 22, as a measure to stop the spread of the virus. to date we have 1110 infected people in the country. The measures of closure and suspension of activities have been radical and as an effect we already have a quite notable economic crisis, this due to the fact that 70% or more of the population is self-employed and many of them in activities that just depend on daily trade, public transport, others.

In that sense, the impact has been hard, with people in poverty now needing help to feed themselves daily. In the business sphere, the impact has also been noticeable because the suspension of productive activities has strongly affected industries such as restaurants, airlines, hotels. Likewise, the impact has reached all companies due to the lack of income, but having to comply with salary, contribution and tax obligations.

The government has defined new decrees in this regard to prevent companies from firing personnel, although the reality that companies are not in a position to continue in the same way is very clear for employers and employees.

At the government policy level, there have been small payments for families to offset the economic impact. At the company level, biosecurity measures have been taken for those who have remained working. Also, approximately 50% of employees have been working through the telework and home office. One of the biggest challenges for HR has been to implement all measures quickly even with the uncertainty of many aspects and the lack of clear communication of the guidelines. To date, we continue in a strict and total quarantine.

The impact on labor force issues has so far been one of the largest that companies have had to face. Many foreign people have migrated to their countries, also many Bolivian people who worked in Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Peru, the United States and Spain have mainly returned to the country, this will impact unemployment levels. On the other hand, our pre-crisis labor law was very paternalistic and employee-oriented and considers paid leave, absences for many paid reasons. In the absence of activities, many companies took the opportunity to make people take vacations that are easily accumulated in personal with more than 10 years old, it was a way of reducing vacation days. As explained in point 1, the government regulated employment more strongly and prohibited layoffs. Also, due to government policies, the workday was reduced to 5 or 6 hours a day.

A lot of things were really learned. The corona virus has completely changed the way of living and working. As HR we have learned:

1. Many inefficiencies, redundancies and, on the other hand, gaps in the processes of companies and human management came to light.
2. The need for technology and its role in companies, which was postponed for years, had to be implemented inopportunely and begin to be used as the main working tool.
3. The isolation that had to be lived was shocking, making us see that something that is taken for granted and normal, such as interaction and work with people, could have such a strong
4. impact on the way of working and required immediate changes.
5. The way of leading was also one of the issues that had to be addressed: in terms of style, presence and impact on people despite the uncertainty.
6. We learned that from this experience we will never take anything for granted. Everything can change and not through a process but, overnight and we must be clear about it.
7. The culture of both the organization and the country is an aspect that can determine the success or failure in managing change, the lack of alignment, the absence of shared beliefs and values or the presence of these but that do not promote change They could paralyze people or promote the position for change.7) We had left many details of comprehensive health care, the physical, the emotions as a fundamental part of an HR management.

This has encouraged HR to be closer to the business: mastering the processes and their impact on people, being closer to the client, work climate surveys are not enough, but deep work in creating resilient cultures, creating the competencies that They help in coping with change, in the versatility and flexibility of work and in rapid learning. Be seated at the top management table, defining issues, considering changes in law and direction minute by minute, giving feedback to the company on practices at the level of other companies. One of the fundamental practices has been to provide help and emotional contentment to employees and their families, through live events or videos by psychologists or specialists. Train all employees in technologies.

Guatemala: Asociación de Gestión Humana (AGH)

In Guatemala, the government only had 100 days in office following its inauguration, with most of its time being marked by the worldwide sanitary emergency of COVID-19. Last March 5, 2020, through Government Decree 5-2020, the President and the Ministers Council decreed "Emergency Status" in the country due to the COVID 19. The objective of the emergency status is to avoid a major sanitary consequence within the country, this status is set to last for 30 days. Decree 5-2020 also restricted the constitutional rights of action, movement, meeting and demonstration, as well as strikes.

This provoked a reduction in investment, reduction in consumers' expenses and the closure of small and medium businesses which is starting, additionally, the impact in the informal economy which is 60% of the Guatemalan households (as per the National System in its 2019 report, showed that the informal economy represented the 22% of the gross domestic product in 2019 and is the most affected sector during this worldwide crisis.

The government decreed the following support plan:

- The Fondo de Bono Familiar was created to give a monthly 1,000 quetzales to 2 million families during the months of April, May and June. The Ministry of Social Development is in charge of administering this bonus.
- A daily 75 quetzales stipend to private sector workers that had their contract suspended due to the emergency. For which, the fund or employment protection was created, releasing 2,000 million quetzales. This fund will be executed by the National Mortgage Credit (CHN), under the directive of the Ministry of Finance in coordination with the Ministry of Employment and Social Security.
- Will grant soft credit to small and medium business, traders and individual professionals with a top amount of 250,000 quetzales. With the objective of this credit being to "finance working capital and the continuity of the operations". For this loan, the Working Capital Credit Fund was created, releasing 3,000 million quetzales, the execution will be under the National Mortgage Credit (CHN).
- The actions established under this plan for the economic recovery require an extension of 11,000 million quetzales of the National Budget. The government will resort to public debt.

Regarding *labor and migration* matters:

- The Ministry of Public Health has develop "a prevention plan, restraint and response of the cases of COVID-19in Guatemala" that should be honored and implemented, it has been recommended to all companies and institutions thru it Human Resources Department, to get information on this plan to execute its internal measures in accordance with the directives given by the Government of Guatemala.

- The committees of Health and Labor Security take relevance with the objective of establish the preventive measures to adopt as soon as the first case of COVID-19 appeared.
- At this moment the figure of teleworking is relevant even our labor legislation doesn't establishes as it is, it is an emergent figure that supports the incorporation of new ways of working demonstrating its functionality.
- On March 16, the entrance of foreign nationals to Guatemala was banned thru all borders.
- At the same time all borders were closed (airports, land and sea) with the exception of Guatemalan citizens, legal residents and diplomats assigned to Guatemala. In any of the exception cases, there will be mandatory quarantine upon entry.
- On March 17, the presidential mandates were issued, including the suspension of all public and private activities and exceptions, to include any exceptions there is an application in order to continue operations.
- Starting March 14th, all classes were suspended for 21 days from pre-school to college levels. Starting March 16th, all public and private events, religious, sports events, fairs, or meetings of more than 100 persons, including concerts and spectacles will be cancelled.

In the case of employers, it is evident that the COVID-19 has brought big challenges, as workplaces and offices can represent infection contagious spaces, with hygiene, health and sanitary measures increasing to extreme numbers, shifts have been re-structured, and in some cases, they have provided vacation time to avoid having to rescind contracts. Some have reported having to suspend contracts and others has closed operations.



The crisis created by this pandemic has proven the meaning of collaboration, alliance, sympathy, responsibility and ecosystem work. In the development of COVID-19, is it manifested what we have been talking about during the last years around VUCA, we are in the middle of a changing process, not predict will bring a change in paradigms that allow us to capitalize all learnings that this period will leave.

The first lesson to learn is that companies are alive, composed by persons in interaction, without interactive persons there is no organization. If equipment required attention within the organization process, the persons also, required attention, that is to say not only for the labor quality but for life quality and it is related to an outstanding performance that goes with the organizational productivity.

The second lesson is to learn that high performance is not reached with the perspective of control and physical presence. Companies had to "give in and accept" that all employees could

perform their functions through remote work—forcing them to "trust and believe" in the process. This has brought upon us a new reality, one that most companies were not prepared to deal with. From a cultural perspective, the situation has been hard, particularly for those without the tools and technologies readily available, and with most needing to react quickly and learn during in the process.

The third lesson is related to the employers, who had to learn to be more flexible. This worldwide reality has thought them that when is necessary, and within the organization's norms, rules, processes, regulations, and indicators, being flexible is of utmost importance during tough times.

In a study issued by KPMG in 2019, at least 74% of the HR executives in Latin America, recognized the need of transform the labor force and only 38% trusted in its capacity to do it and transform their own function. It is a reality that this worldwide crisis accelerates the plans and expectations related to this transformation.

In Guatemala, people are leading in a responsible manner during the crisis and the uncertainty of not knowing what's next. Collaborators are shoulder to shoulder with CEOs and General Directors, to devise strategies that work for all involved and secure the well-being and integrity of their employees, while guaranteeing business continuity. Talent managers, had to be more agile, be closer to employees, provide continuous communication, and facilitate the use of technologies and the implementation of creative practices to keep their teams connected, committed, and focused. It is evident that the future is now, and what we are experimenting is a deep transformation process, a process that will bring the best of us as human beings, we are all in the same process of intense training.

Venezuela: Asociación Venezolana de Gestión Humana (AVGH)

The current situation in Venezuela is not impacted, only, by the pandemic. It also responds to the strong political crisis that has prevailed for the last two decades. This does not diminish the importance of deepening the fall of economic and public policies.

The behavior of the relative inflation of certain items after the arrival of the pandemic, in the sectors of "Health" and "Food and non-alcoholic beverages" increased significantly (32.0% and 29.1%, respectively), as people supplied themselves with goods of this type. This has helped to maintain the exchange rate with a small weekly growth (by Venezuelan standards) of 7.1% in the last three weeks of this month, but this trend will surely change. In this sense, as long as the uncertainty regarding quarantine and the virus in general remains, there will be greater volatility in this indicator. The effects on government measures will also be directly reflected in both inflation and the exchange rate.

The government will return to fiscal indiscipline, something it has tried to correct since last year. The expenses that the National Executive plans to make, such as the payment of payroll and direct transfers, imply a strong monetary injection that will have repercussions in the exchange market. This could translate into greater acquisition of foreign currency by agents to generate coverage, which will put upward pressure on the exchange rate. In this sense, the price of the foreign currency is expected to increase or grow with greater momentum in the coming months, more clearly, for the remainder of the first half of the year. In addition, taking into account the low income in foreign currency that the government will have during the year, due to the multiple restrictions (local and global) that it faces, it will affect both the uncertainty and the volatility of the exchange rate.



The pandemic has caused many Venezuelans to return to the country, since the countries where they live have reduced jobs and they do not have the resources or income to support themselves in those countries.

The company reports indicate a wide range of policies implemented: many have decided to reduce benefits, send people on vacation or days with pay at monthly basic salary, suspension of monthly or semi-annual bonuses, so as not to have to reduce the workforce. However, others have had to do so in order to maintain business continuity. Interestingly, there are some reports of small groups of companies that have increased their staff, in order to meet the current demands. The health benefit has not been affected, and it is now a priority.

Most relevant *government measures in labor matters*:

1. Authorization to bank debtors to request restructuring of payments (capital and interest) for financing (except consumer credit).
2. Local banks should prioritize lending to companies and services in the agri-food, pharmaceutical, and hygiene product manufacturers employed to mitigate the local spread of COVID-19.
3. Prohibition on the cut of telecommunication services due to a moratorium of payments during the next six months, lease collection of commercial real estate, and of those employees using it as main residence.
4. Extension of labor immobility until the end of 2020.
5. Special credit plan for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
6. Payment plan for six months of the payroll of private companies through the Homeland System.
7. Special direct transfers for informal and private sector workers through the Homeland System.

8. The State will be responsible for the payment of payroll for small and medium-sized companies for a period of six months.
9. Exemption from the payment of taxes, fees and duty payments for imports from the agribusiness sector and the pharmaceutical industry
10. Inter-annual inflation is 3,365% and the accumulated inflation for the first quarter of this year is 145.3%. The item with the highest price variation was services, which increased 101.1%. Regarding the food basket, for a family of 5 people, it is stipulated that the cost of it is VES 19,769,266, which is equivalent to 79 minimum wages (VES 250,000)
11. The payment of income tax (in the form of a tax credit for the next fiscal year) for individuals with wages below USD 10.0 was exempted, in addition to the unification of the legal banking reserve in a single 93% requirement of bank obligations, along with a reduction of close to USD 216 MM in legal reserves.

Companies affiliated to AVGH: Report of our client and related companies:

1. The companies that have the responsibility to work have had serious operational problems to carry out their tasks, however, in general, they have fulfilled their tasks.
2. No decrease in the workforce or layoffs are reported.
3. Payroll payments will run at the end of the month, mostly as planned but, there are also no-payroll cases, just basic wages and fixed benefits. They also reported variable mirror payments from the previous month.

Immobility Employment protection is currently a useful and necessary tool worldwide. In Venezuela it is not a new measure, but its effectiveness in itself will be of little impact, since Venezuelan companies that were still operating, were at the lower limits of their necessary workforce (companies operate with that number of people or they close). All of which will result to the closure of companies.

State subsidy to payrolls:

Government grants are a worldwide practice as a useful and necessary tool. Conceptually it could be said that we already went through this in August 2018, however, this time it is operationally reverse. In 2018, the state subsidy raised income to new lows, that is, the state completed a deficit payment. This time, the earnings of private sector workers are well above these benchmarks. The payment offered could be expected to be up to \$ 20 per month.

Based on our survey analysis in Venezuela (March 2020), companies that worked remotely had their main difficulties in:

1. Internet connectivity
2. Availability of equipment for remote work

The survey showed that in 41% of the jobs, teleworking is possible. Companies of Mass Consumption, Production and Manufacturing, Logistics and Construction, showed that 19% teleworking is possible. At the senior management level, teleworking is possible in 63%, in 11% it is inapplicable and in 26% it was possible, but expensive.

Senior management opinion on the application of telework in companies said that they:

- Completely agree
- It is an option that could be evaluated with the necessary equipment for the company's employees
- Due to the current situation, the administrative areas, bosses and managers are working from their homes, and are open to evaluate the advantages that this option offers.
- Telecommuting is the way to maintain business operations
- They are open to implement it, since it produces a decrease in transportation and dining expenses
- They agree, but there are technological difficulties
- Uncertain because it is a company that is driven by people and needs face-to-face leadership
- They accept it, but prefer face-to-face
- Unlikely due to organizational culture
- They are a type of management who feel that if they do not watch the staff, they will not work

About 44% of companies agree that they can apply telework, the operation of the company could be continued only with them, and 56% cannot operate. Answers of the survey carried out included:

- Currently working in this way
- Teleworking applies in the company, but you could not operate with just that
- There should be a cultural change in the client and in the workers
- It could be done, but it would decrease the productivity and profitability of the company
- They do not have the equipment and personnel to implement telework
- No, we have a plan for continuous work
- No, it would cease to exist

What do you think is the main weakness that the telework initiative could have in your company?

- Quality of services (electricity and internet connection)
- Lack of defined processes and knowledge of platforms for teleworking
- Availability and cost of equipment
- Poor quality of software technicians
- Lack of remote work culture

- Lack of discipline
- Lack of experience
- Proper supervision of the employee's work
- Segmentation of the work team

Additional comments:

- From now on it should be the object of study of companies, not only as a contingency, but even to minimize costs
- It is an excellent option, although we enter it by obligation, without being prepared
- It is viable and we must evaluate all the options to implement at the corresponding levels
- It could generate new compensation methods
- We must sponsor the options that support, not only the continuity of operations, but also the safeguarding of jobs
- The option of teleworking is what the new generation is aiming for
- Culturally, Venezuela is not prepared for this type of work
- Difficult, in Venezuela where there is a lot of inefficient work, teleworking will increase inefficiency
- Implementing telework as a policy requires an investment in infrastructure that we had not anticipated
- We are not prepared to face this challenge
- Most companies are not culturally prepared for flexible working hours, much less for teleworking

Our recommendations for Human Resources Actions immediately include:

1. Operational continuity, job security and structural adaptation of the workforce support in operational continuity, design and control of guards, presence and permanence, closely linked to the health of the worker will be a priority. Most of our companies are prepared to face this challenge.
2. Information management and support to the supervisory levels to reduce uncertainty. The company will experience a high demand for information, control of communications, unexpected messages, hot decisions. There will be a major challenge. Emotionality will be a daily stressor. Identify and anticipate supports in this matter.
3. Compensation expertise for scenarios of new payment levels and controlled costs. This will be a delicate subject in the immediate term. The subsidy will not reach the traditional payment levels in the private sector. Internal tensions are generated in the company, expertise in compensation and costs will be vital—and building scenarios, at different levels of negotiation, identify and request early help.

Each company will be a unique case, it will need operational knowledge and technical expertise. Income and cost scenarios must be prepared. In 2002, we lived a similar circumstance, but in a better general economic situation. Payment and cost options within the same amount of manpower complying with the financial viability of the company.

Argentina: Asociación De Recursos Humanos de la Argentina (ADRHA)

At the time the COVID-19 arrived in our country, it was a scenario of economic crisis: after 2 years of recession and with inflation of + 50%, 20% of companies in the private sector were already going through a delicate financial situation. On the other hand, the State had to honor important maturities of its sovereign debt with a delicate fiscal situation.

The sensible sanitary measures adopted by the Government had a reasonable progression (social distancing, safeguarding of populations at risk, suspension of public performances, etc.). Approximately 41 days ago, the Mandatory Preventive Social Isolation was ordered. From the outset, this measure excluded the provision of essential activities and services and allowed the pandemic curve to be managed with reasonable success, taking other international experiences as a reference. However, it slowed down the economy sharply until it left approximately 60% of the productive sector without activity, another 20% with very limited activities -all of them- with the obligation to hold the head count and its payroll since dismissals were prohibited for 60 days.

In this scenario of tension, the State is focused on the task of maintaining an effective health behavior while trying to help companies in the payment of wages (more than 70% have requested help), alleviate tax burdens, promote negotiation with Unions to establish suspension wages, among others. These actions seek to maintain a delicate balance between the Health and Economic Emergencies, trying to harmonize both for the benefit of the community.

Exceptional normative guidelines have been established before the COVID-19 pandemic, and an isolation for the entire population that included the recess of the National Congress and the fair in the administration of justice. The isolation was applied immediately and suddenly from 00:00 on March 20, closing the country all its borders and accesses by any means, and all employees from productive sectors and non-essential services and groups were exempted from working risk, receiving the same remuneration, with access to the health plan.

Both the granting of vacations, as well as the reduction of working hours, suspensions with financial assistance and other containment measures were enabled via collective bargaining or in their individual case, since the prohibition to dismiss or suspend for reasons of force majeure or decrease in work, for a term of 60 days.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic, the main measures adopted by the Argentine Government and Argentinean employers to mitigate the losses generated by the restrictions on the production and marketing of goods and services were the following:

By the ***Government:***

- Established an emergency family income of \$ 10,000 (pesos ten thousand) in favor of informal workers, male and female workers, and low-income workers—'Monotributistas' (taxpayers under the simplified tax system)
- Prohibition of dismissals without cause and for economic reasons and suspension for economic reasons for a period of 60 days
- Creation of an Emergency Assistance Program for Work and Production with social security benefits (postponement and / or partial reduction of employers' contributions to the State calculated on the salary) and on the payroll (complementary salary paid by the State to account of the sums to be paid by employers to their workers)
- Ratification of concerted suspensions between employers and unions and/or workers, paying them during a non-remunerative assignment with limited contributions to the State
- Creation for health workers of a special assignment in charge of the State for the months of April, May, June and July 2020
- Determination of COVID-19 as an occupational disease with benefits from the Work Risk Insurers program

By the ***Employer:***

- Concerted suspensions for those workers who do not provide services with payment of a non-remunerative allowance (% of salary)
- Telecommuting
- Reassignment of work shifts and tasks
- Reduction of working hours and wages
- Holiday advance
- Leave without pay or with reduced pay

The pandemic has placed people at the center of the scene: culture leaves its declarative side to be factual, measurable, affordable, and easily verifiable in each of the leaders' behaviors. Organizations must become empathetic to contain and manage uncertainty, understand the particular context of each employee and their family, take care of their physical and emotional health, and take actions that emphasize the employees' sense of care and belonging.

Thanks to ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), smart work becomes an undeniable reality, by virtue of constituting a key tool for the operational continuity of many organizations (which saw the need to redefine their way of working), prevails on their detractors,

providing a path that, after the storm ends, can allow teams to improve their management objectives and find suitable Work & Life Balance formulas. The 21st century finally takes us by storm with a delicate cross-section between generations: learning about ICTs and their environments is no longer optional.



The necessary increase in the frequency of our internal communications on platforms (generating a single voice that clears doubts about a multiplicity of data and meanings) the feasibility of "virtualizing" meetings between leaders with all employees of the organization, among others, are practical and became widespread in this emergency, as having a vocation for permanence given their decisive contribution in strengthening the relational muscle.

The trust and closeness of the medical service, the punctual attendance of knowledge management at their appointment with collaborators to work on predefined contents (preferably in the hands of technical references, internal trainers) adds value to collaborators and to the organization as a whole. Forming different teams, one that manages and leads the crisis and another that can focus on the future, this last team must anticipate what will come next week, next month and even next year to prepare the organization for the change in the new reality.

In a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous time like the one we live in, people and organizations must exercise new practices and new ways of relating. Some of the best practices that we can identify include:

1. *Information*: maintain a communication strategy with the different relationship groups: employees, unions, communities, etc., with the aim of providing clear, transparent, effective and timely information.
2. *Links*: develop actions that allow you to lead emotions, and much more the "enhanced emotions" that arise in times of crisis. It will be essential for containment and motivation.
3. *Leadership*: the constitution of a Strategic Crisis Committee should be foreseen in the organization, to make decisions on the new organizational steps, and an Operational one, to implement the defined actions.
4. *New skills*: enhance courage, the multidimensional view of reality, conflict resolution, flexibility, adaptability, creativity.
5. *Project work*: in addition to teamwork, promote work "in networks" and "opportunity projects." In times of crisis, move from connection to connectivity.
6. *Conflicts and opportunities*: in the face of crises, identify areas of conflict and new horizons to give effective and speedy responses.

7. *Learnings*: during crises, keep a log of lessons learned to help you build the “new normal”.

Asia Pacific Federation of Human Resource Management (APFHRM)

Thailand: Personnel Management Association of Thailand (PMAT)

In Thailand, 68 of 77 provinces have now reported laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19. The three provinces with the highest numbers of cases are Bangkok (1294), Phuket (176) and Nonthaburi (148). On the 12th of April 2020, 33 new cases of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 were announced by the Ministry of Public Health of Thailand, bringing the total number of cases to 2,551. Almost 50% (1,218) have recovered, 1% (38) have died, and about 53% (1,348) are receiving treatment. The majority of patients currently in hospitals have mild symptoms.

Various measures have been taken by the Thai Government, including:

- The screening of passengers arriving from China is ongoing at six airports, beginning on 3 January: Suvarnabhumi Airport, Don Mueang International Airport, Phuket International Airport, Chiang Mai International Airport and Krabi International Airport, with the addition of Chiang Rai International Airport since 24 January. A number of suspected cases have been found to have other common respiratory conditions
- On February 4th, the government announced that four products, namely surgical masks, polypropylene, alcohol-based hand sanitizers and wastepaper, are to be designated as controlled goods under the Price of Goods and Services Act, B.E. 2542 (1999) following a cabinet resolution
- On February 18th, the health authorities had extended COVID-19 screening to cover visitors from Japan and Singapore. Passengers from these countries were treated with the same method as passengers on flights from Mainland China. The Ministry of Public Health also raised measures against COVID-19 to level 3 in preparation for a surge in transmission. Every province must have at least one hospital capable of testing for COVID-19. The Department of Medical Sciences is currently developing a virus test kit that will deliver a result in five minutes, which is planned to be available within two months.
- On February 21th, the Ministry of Public Health announced a new screening criterion, with additional surveillance for visitors from Hong Kong, Macau, South Korea and Taiwan. People developing pneumonia due to unknown causes and living in eight provinces that were popular among Chinese tourists including Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chon Buri, Krabi, Phuket, Prachuap Khiri Khan and Samut Prakan, would be automatically considered as COVID-19 suspected cases.
- Bangkok partial lockdown. On 21 March, Bangkok City Hall authorities declared a wide-ranging shutdown of various businesses. Bangkok Governor Aswin Kwanmuang disclosed after the City Hall meeting that the board had passed a resolution to close establishments under Section 35 of the Communicable Diseases Act B.E. 2558 (2015), effective for a period of 22 days from 22 March to 12 April 2020. This was then extended from 12 April 2020 to 30

April 2020. Only supermarkets, pharmacies, and takeaway restaurants will be allowed to stay open at the malls.

- On April 3rd, the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand ordered that there would be a ban on all passenger's flights landing in Thailand from the morning of 4 April to the evening of the 6 April. On the evening of 6 April, the flight ban was further extended to 18 April.
- The Department of Health Service Support manages 1,040,000 Village Health Volunteers (VHVs) across the country and an additional 15,000 public health volunteers in Bangkok. VHVs conduct home visits, provide health education, deliver medicines, and make reports to public health authorities

The Thai government has announced many measures to deal with the COVID-19 outbreaks, including ordering the postponement of the Songkran holidays and the temporary shutdown of portions of the public and private sectors. Another announcement came from the Bangkok governor, who ordered the closure of various establishments and locations. These include:

- restaurants (except take-away services)
- shopping malls (except supermarkets and pharmacies)
- markets (except for fresh markets)
- exhibition halls
- schools and educational institutions
- barbers, beauty salons, and tattoo shops
- game and internet shops
- golf courses and sports clubs
- beauty and cosmetic clinics, spas, massage parlors, and saunas; theaters;
- boxing stadiums and schools and horse racing clubs
- other establishments similar to the above

Some of these private-sector businesses that have been temporarily shuttered by the Bangkok governor's announcement may consider this to be a situation that requires substantial changes to their working practices, including moving to a work-from-home model if possible. However, if the nature of the business cannot accommodate working from home, or if the employer does not have any work for the employees to do from home, the following options exist:

1. Employees are entitled to use their annual leave so that they can continue to get paid during this time.
2. If the employees do not have sufficient annual leave, then the employer can instruct them to take leave without pay. This is in accordance with the concept of "no work, no pay" as this situation is not the employer's fault. Nonetheless, many employers that are able to do so still choose to pay employees' full or partial salary during this shutdown period so that their employees will continue to have an income stream for their living expenses.
3. If an employee is actually sick during this shutdown period (regardless of whether the

illness is related to COVID-19), the employee can use sick leave with pay for up to 30 days, or more if the employer's sick leave policy allows it.

If an employer wishes to reduce an employee's salary by more than the 25% stipulated in section 75, they can only do so with the consent of the employee, as such a reduction would be considered a change in the conditions of employment. This is another option that is not related to section 75 but is based on a mutual agreement between employer and employee. In this instance, the employer is not required to provide proof of incapability to maintain normal business. In this current situation, some companies in the hospitality and travel industries have adopted this approach in dealing with this crisis.

The Cabinet approved the draft Ministerial Regulation and Notifications regarding the compensations and the relief measures for the employers and the employees who are registered with the Social Security Fund as follows:

- The employee who is unpaid due to COVID-19 (e.g. the employer does not provide the work to the employee) and have made contributions to the Social Security Fund for at least six months will receive 50% of their wage, capped at Baht 7,500, for up to 180 days.
- The employee who is unpaid due to the temporary closure of the business ordered by the government and have made contributions to the Social Security Fund for at least six months will receive 50% of their wage, capped at Baht 7,500, for up to 60 days.
- In case of the resignation, an eligible Social Security Fund employee will receive compensation at a new rate of 45% of their wage, capped at Baht 6,750, for up to 90 days. In case of the termination, an eligible Social Security Fund employee will receive compensation at a new rate of 70% of their wage, capped at Baht 10,500, for up to 200 days.
- The monthly contribution rate of the employer to the Social Security Fund will be reduced to 4%, and the monthly contribution rate of the employee will be reduced to 1% for two months (from March 2020 wage to May 2020 wage).
- The deadline of the monthly contributions for March, April and May will be delayed for three months. This means the deadline of the monthly contributions for March will be delayed to 15 July 2020, for April will be delayed to 15 August 2020, and for May will be delayed to 15 September 2020.

However, please note that the Ministerial Regulation and Notifications are pending the legal formality and could be subject to further changes. In addition, the Cabinet has also approved the relief measures which are, including but not limited to, as follows:

- The workers who are affected by COVID-19, but are not registered with the Social Security system, or those who are registered but have made contributions to the Social Security Fund less than six months, will receive Baht 5,000 per month for three months (April - June 2020)

- The workers who are affected by COVID-19 will be offered with soft loans, e.g. emergency loan of Baht 10,000 per person at 0.1% monthly interest (no collateral) and special loan of Baht 50,000 per person at 0.35% monthly interest (with collateral).
- The deadline for personal income tax filing will be delayed from 30 June 2020 to 31 August 2020.
- Health insurance premiums deduction will be increased to Baht 25,000 from Baht 15,000.
- The deadline for corporate income tax filing will be delayed to 31 August 2020 (Por. Ngor. Dor. 50) and 30 September 2020 (Por. Ngor. Dor. 51).
- The deadline for other taxes filling for affected business operators will be extended.
- The workers who are affected by COVID-19 will be provided with skill training.
- Tax exemption on risk payments will be offered to medical workers.

Similarly, the above measures are pending the legal formality and could be subject to further changes. There are many things to learn from dealing with the COVID19's consequences, the important ones are as follows:

1. The organization must be well-prepared in technology. Working with the help of technology is not for the future, but for now; this has to be always ready. The organization which still lacks the capacity in this area must speed up its development in equipment and technology and the people's capability to use technology must be ready since in the future many things would become "New Normal".
2. The first priority of the leaders is to play a key role in communicating to the employees on the situations and in making these employees understand how to take action and perform work in the whole organization to reducing panic. Also, there must be tangible plan to deal with the change, to reduce the friction, and to decrease the resistance from some employees.
3. The organization must have plan in case of the worst-case scenario so that the organization could still continue its activities in order to respond to stakeholders efficiently; for example, responding to the employees so that they could still maintain their motivation in working and still be confident in the organization, customers and partners could still believe that the organization can deliver goods and services efficiently; meaning that the organization must prepare for supporting plan in case the production capacity and labor decreases.

Besides dealing with the situations happening due to COVID-19 in the future, the HR people should have preventive plan and should develop measures to deal with potential risks due to emergency that might happen in the future, as follows:

- Improve healthcare and safety for the employees, manage to make people within the organization be aware of their health and behave in the way that would promote their health, and develop healthcare standard for the organization
- Prepare for emergency response protocols, understand the roles of HR people in the

emergency response team, and disseminate such understanding comprehensively in HR team so that the team could perform assigned task efficiently in the right time

- Establish plan for working remotely, by preparing for technology and by fostering a flexible mindset in the workplace, to be able to adjust quickly to the uncertain situations so that the work may continue.
- Applying agile and lean working principles and techniques such as split team and split location, in order to reduce the infection risk and in order for the business to continue.
- Prepare for workforce scenario plan to be consistent with the infection trend and with the business plan adjustment by identifying key roles, key activities, and critical skills. The redeployment and manpower should be planned to be consistent with the workload in each area workgroup. There may have to be an upskilling/cross-skilling plan so that employees who are assigned with different tasks from their previous job, would still be able to perform work.
- Prepare for recovery—spend time during the production capacity reduction to build potential and capability to the employees, plan for organization delayering and sizing so that the organization could have workplace flexibility, and with maximum efficiency as soon as the situation gets better.



Vietnam: Human Resources Association (HRA)

The official update as of 6:15 am, 10 April by Vietnam News and VTV: A total of 255 COVID-19 cases confirmed, no new cases, and 128 cases recovered with NO deaths recorded. Even before the first case was confirmed in January, various measures were taken, including:

- Proactive and Decisive Prevention. As of January 23, 2020, all schools have been closed. Wearing face masks, especially in public areas, and keeping 6-feet of distance with others is a requirement. As of March 22, domestic flights have been highly restricted. With no foreign citizens from or transited in stricken areas allowed to enter Vietnam. A combination of medics, police and the military are aggressively chasing down any possible cases as quickly as possible and testing, more often quarantining, those that may be prone to getting the virus. All passengers on flights from affected areas are put into 14-day centralized quarantine—with more than 50,000 people being quarantined so far with free food and health care. Field hospitals and quick test booths have been established, and non-essential services have been closed. Food is available on shops, markets and supermarkets, with public transportation being limited.

- b. National Unity and Good Will: The Vietnam Leading Communist Party, Government, the whole political and social system, including the army and medics, are taking actions which have been supported and trusted by everyone with the spirit and determination of fighting the pandemic as that of the enemies. On April 1, Vietnam applied an advanced shutdown with strict nationwide legal social-distancing. Food security and provision of and reliability of utilities are stable, and policies are being implemented to reduce the export of rice. Vietnam Government's big package and various voluntary funds have been created by Vietnamese artists, businessmen, enterprises and individuals including the underprivileged elderly women in deprived provinces, and effective and timely support for frontline fighters, the poor and the workers badly affected by the pandemic.
- c. National Communication: clear science-based preventive messages, updates on COVID-19 in Vietnam by the National Committee and the World, WHO declarations and recommendations appear on VTV at least 5 times per day since the Wuhan outbreak. Many new songs and poems have been composed, along with helpful video clips for the above purposes and posted for the public to enjoy and shared via social media channels to win people's support and commendation.

It negatively impacts all enterprises, workforce and people throughout Vietnam, especially the unemployed, workers with reduced income or no income, the disabled and the poor.

- a. Staff salaries in quarantine period: If quarantined by Company's request or by infection during working hours at a company: the company shall pay 100% of the costs incurred. If quarantined by an Authority's request, as a result of travel from epidemic areas/ countries, if home area is in quarantine, or if related to COVID-19 patients (F1, F2, F3, F4, F5). Agreements between employee and employer, were at least the Minimum Area Salary is paid. If quarantine by the request of an authority, or if sick by COVID-19 (F0), Social Insurance would pay 75% of their salary as Sick Leave. People in self-quarantine, as a result of travelling without informing Authorities or their Company, will have to cover expenses on their own.
- b. HR managers and directors work out different scenarios for Employers and Employees to balance the benefits for both, including, but not limited the following: Review the workload and revise the working roster and clearance for all in-lieu and annual leave. Work from home roster; After clear all in-lieu leave, annual leave, if still less activities, working roster with fewer working days is applied:
 - Priority for staff who want to get unpaid leave
 - Working Roster maximum 12 days/ month to keep Social Insurance benefit
- c. If the company has to close: Review and rearrange the workforce. Following laws and the government's and local authorities' instructions. If applying contract suspensions,

negotiation between Employer and Employee must occur, with at least the same or minimum salary following contract termination, with severance and unemployment allowance.

- d. Confirmed cases/people are treated free of charge in state hospitals (Paid by Government)
Some of the measures governments and employers have taken to mitigate these issues and financial losses include:
 - a. The Government developed an urgent package to aid those affected the most for three-months, with approximately 984,000 underprivileged and near-poverty households would receive VND1 million (US\$ 43) monthly from April to June, 2020. In addition, over 1 million contract laborers would get VND 1.8 million (US\$ 78) each in the next three months if their work contracts are suspended. Employers would be allowed to borrow money at zero percent interest rate to pay salaries for their employees. P.M. Phuc affirms and guarantees transparency and openness in the implementation of the package.
 - b. Tax exemption, tax and land rental delay, no interest loans policies are provided by the Government to assist businesses. This provides enterprises with an opportunity to move their operating systems to online with stronger technology investment, to enhance internal service quality, activate and promote cashless payments. Export of products in great demand outside of Vietnam is increasing.

The business community in Vietnam has applied various preventive measures to protect their businesses and their employees against negative impacts of the pandemic. From this experience, several lessons were learned from the HR perspectives, as follows:

- a. The company provides its employees with direction, confidence and resilience as soon as they can because employees rely on their leaders to take action and set the tone. In communications at all levels, it is important to pay attention to employee health and business sustainability. Regular communication with employees, with up-to-date information about the company's situation and policies has proven to be important.
- b. Provide early solutions for remote work including clear guidelines and solutions for going digital. Work-from-home looks different for each employee depending on their needs and those of their families. With unprecedented school closures, many employees must take on a double role as they support their children and families throughout the workday. Companies can meet employees' needs by empowering teams to adapt to their conflicting time demands.

- c. Employees' safety and health are fundamental. Companies should provide all possible preventive measures to assure the safety and health of its employees while still working in the office—such as providing face masks, hand sanitizer, body temperature thermometer, food safety, keeping appropriate distance while working and meeting.
- d. Make the best benefit for employees, even better than law and regulations, if temporary layoffs and furloughs are inevitable: (e) Continuity planning is vital as the COVID-19 pandemic may continue or may lead to additional negative effects to the business community over the next few months. Companies must prepare and be ready for the worst but hope for the best.

During the first weeks of the COVID-19 contagion, businesses redefined their business models and applied various measures to adapt to the new conditions. HR managers have taken many actions to help business survive, while protecting their workforce from possible losses from the pandemic. Below are some best practices:

- a. Restructure organizations: Aiming to maintain core staff for essential business functions, with a standby workforce for high time needs—
 - downsize the organization temporarily by combining departments and positions, re-arranging the workforce according to the new business process and business models. Digital transformation has been completed within 1 – 2 weeks, therefore the organization of work has also rapidly adapted.
- b. Help workforce to adapt with new business process, with unbelievable fast digital transformation, and aiming to work with staff that is flexible and adaptive, that can work independently, and that is ready to cope with challenges of Industry 4.0—
 - reducing staff numbers
 - re-scheduling staff working time to work from home and work remotely, has been set-up. The aim is to get staff able to work efficiently from home
 - rapid training on digital skills to meet new tasks to achieve the objective of having one person doing multi functions in a business process
- c. Dealing with crisis: combo of many actions has been taken in a time:
 - staff downsizing, and reducing salary
 - communicating with employees to create readiness to respond both health protection and skills development, spirit upholding,
 - negotiating with trade unions about wage reduction (contrary to the law) in force majeure situations
 - Inspire employees' spirit all the time

- d. Organizing actions of health care, protecting the community and company:
- buy Corona insurance packages, if and when available
 - issuing regulations for working alternatively and working from home, stipulating measures for social distancing, wear protections such as mask, and implement protective measures for business trips or transport to and from work

Singapore: Human Resources Association (HRA)

As of 15th April, Singapore has an infection rate of 4000+. The largest cluster of infection relates to migrant workers who live in dormitories. A total of 10 deaths have been reported to date and a total of 683 has recovered. On April 3rd, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong addressed the nation to say that the government is introducing new 'circuit breaker' measures in order to slow the community spread.

The population should only go out for daily essentials like takeout or groceries. We are allowed to leave the house to seek medical attention or other services, such as banking or the mailing of items. There are currently no limits as to how many times you may leave the house for essentials. It is now compulsory to wear a mask if you're out—with the only exception being for kids under two-years old or if doing strenuous exercises like running.

Recreational activities like going for a walk, run or a bike rides are permitted. Popular beaches such as East Coast Park, Changi Beach Park, Pasir Ris Park, Punggol Point Park, Sembawang Park and West Coast Park are closed until May 4.

As of April 7th, private social gatherings of any size, in homes or public spaces, are banned under the COVID-19 (Temporary Measures) Bill. Social gatherings with family or friends, especially if this includes grandparents and those who are more at risk are prohibited under the Infectious Diseases Act. However, we are allowed to help elderly parents or grandparents above 60 years old with their daily needs if necessary. People are also not allowed to drop off their children with family members.

In order to police and ensure the curve is flattened, failure to adhere to the rules will incur in a \$300 fine. If caught breaking safe distancing rules, such as not lining up at least 1m away from the people around you, and repeat offenders, will face stiffer penalties including prosecution in court. People could also be fined up to \$10,000 and face imprisonment for holding private or public social gatherings.

Sectors such as tourism and transport have been severely affected. Since China is an indispensable part of the global economy, other sectors such as manufacturing, retail and F&B can expect to be impacted too. A stabilization and Support package for workers and enterprises

is to be expected. The Government will support Singapore firms and workers in the coming months through a \$4 billion package.

A Jobs Support Scheme will help enterprises retain local workers, while an enhanced Wage Credit Scheme will support wage increases for Singaporean workers. To help firms with cash flow, a Corporate Income Tax rebate was announced for 2020, along with several tax breaks under the corporate tax system will be increased for a year. There will also be additional support provided to enterprises to access working capital more easily with the enhanced Enterprise Financing Scheme's Working Capital Loan component.

To support tenants and lessees of Government managed properties, options for more flexible rental payments will be introduced. Besides these measures, firms are also encouraged to diversify.

Support for the tourism sector

The Singapore Tourism Board earlier announced that the license fees for hotels, travel agents and tour guides will be waived as part of measures to help the tourism sector. A Temporary Bridging Loan Program will be introduced to provide more cash flow for enterprises in the tourism sector.



Support for the aviation sector

Rebates on aircraft landing and parking charges, assistance to ground handling agents, and rental rebates for shops and cargo agents at Changi Airport were announced in the 2020 Budget. There will also be a 15 percent Property Tax Rebate for Changi Airport.

Helping taxis and Private Hire Car drivers

A \$77-million package will help taxi and Private Hire Car drivers through this uncertain period. It's a co-funded package with the Government funding \$45 million, and taxi and private-hire companies paying for the rest. All main taxi hirers will receive \$20 in their hiring account each day. Active Private Hire Car drivers will also be eligible for this package. This benefits some 40,000 drivers in Singapore.

Support for F&B establishments

The National Environment Agency will be providing a full month of rental waiver to stallholders in NEA-managed hawker centers and markets.

Other Government agencies, like HDB, will provide half a month of rental waiver to its commercial tenants. Help for employers affected by Leave of Absence and Stay-Home Notices Since 23rd of March, Singapore residents and Long-term pass holders returning from Mainland China (outside of Hubei) are issued a Stay-Home Notice of 14 days. The Government acknowledges that such a requirement can cause inconvenience to Singapore companies. As such, eligible employers will be able to apply for the Leave of Absence Support Program. It gives the employer \$100 daily per affected worker for the duration of the LOA. From 18 Feb 2359hr, this will be extended to those affected by the Stay-Home Notice requirement.

Other than the government, corporate enterprises such as Capital and DBS and Temasek Holdings have come forward to support the greater community through waiving off late payment fees, reduction in rents etc., to ease off on the financial burden of business owners.

Through the various rebates that the government is providing, property owners must pass on these rebates to their tenants to prevent a cold start of the economy. Pockets of companies are also coming out to provide necessary financial support for migrant workers and others who have been badly affected. As the HR association here in Singapore, SHRI has collaborated with other agencies in broadcasting to its members on the various schemes from the authorities. It is imperative that as leaders of our organization, we check-in with our people, reassure them and keep them posted on what the organization is doing and how we are responding.

Other areas of concern are also work-related burnout, especially with the circuit breaker in place and for employees who have children the need to juggle being an employee, parent, caregiver all within the same space in one's home can add on to the pressure. It seems that we are working multiple jobs all at the same time! The lines between work and non-work is being blurred for many and, there is a tendency for employees to want to show loyalty and might take on themselves to drive into over gear. The mental health/burnt out rate is a concern here in Singapore given the social pressure/culture.

Being Virtual Means Being Available:

Working in a virtual world or remotely as compared to a face to face interaction is at times a lonely affair and the contextual cues and information about emotional states of others are much lesser. As such, it is vital that team leaders are in regular contact with their teams. Morning calls are great and team meetings are even better as it helps teammates remain connected and gets everyone into a rhythm, especially for those who are just starting out.

Professionalism, Productivity and Performance:

As in the normal workspace, we work towards the achievement of key outputs that have varying time horizon and this does not need to take a backseat when we telecommute. Telecommuting does not mean throwing away the rule book. For leaders, as such, it is imperative that one sets

the right expectations and it is important to put together a telecommuting policy that all can adhere. Being SILENT so as to be able to LISTEN.

As the opportunity for personal engagement might not be readily available, it is important to remain silent so as to be able to listen to the challengers that our teams might be facing and not jump into conclusions (i.e. lagging teams) during this period of time. Trust issues will be called to mind for many, it is imperative for employers not jump to conclusions.

Taiwan: Chinese Taipei-Chinese Human Resource Management Association (CHRMA)

Taiwan is currently under stay-home guidance and implementing a very strict entry policy, all overseas travelers need to be quarantined for 14 days upon arrival, but not considered lockdown. Other immediate mitigates are securing PPE (Personal portative Equipment) key resource control under central government as well as imposing new emergency production of medical masks within one month.

As time progressed, impacted industries such as tourism, transportation, food and beverage, and various manufacturers, it became evident that this was the result of the lack of demand, shortage of labor or key parts or supplies. The virus spread control measures included:

- 14-days home quarantine to control the spread
- Daily COVID-19 status communication announced by the Ministry of Health and Welfare
- COVID-19 public health trainings made available by medical doctors or healthcare professionals via different social media platforms.
- School (Senior high schools and below) extends their winter vacation to Feb. 25th, 2020 and the campus will be closed if there are 2 confirmed cases.
- Many schools also practice social distancing in classes.
- Nightclubs and other entertaining venues were suspended starting April 9th, 2020
- Crowd control or congregating guidelines are imposed at Tourist hotspots, night markets and temples starting April 10th, 2020.

Test, Track, and Treatment:

- Hospitals set SOPs for COVID-19 rapid test.
- Tracking those confirmed cases' travel and contact histories for disease control.
- Review medical resource allocation by central government for quarantine, mild or severe confirmed cases.

Due to the policy of 14-day home quarantine after return from overseas, most companies ban employees from overseas travel. To sustain business continuity, many companies implement either remote backup plan or work from home policy. Employees are divided into 2 groups to work at different places as backups to reduce risk of being infected with same function and at the same time. For highly impacted industry like airline companies, transportation, tourism, etc.,

companies encourage employees to take annual paid leaves, or unfortunately unpaid leave if necessary.

Mitigation measures include:

- Those under compulsory 14-day quarantine are entitled to apply to the NT\$1,000 (equivalent to US\$33) daily government subsidy
- If no wages were paid during the quarantine period remedy, it also applies to family members taking care of quarantined individuals.
- For employers granting employees paid quarantine leave, the Ministry of Finance announced tax deductions from corporate income tax for such paid wages in the quarantine period (doubled tax deduction amount of wages paid).
- The Ministry of Finance announced on April 1, that tax payer can apply for either extension to pay tax or to pay in installments. The extension can be up to 1-year and the installments up to 36 months.
- The Executive Yuan approved a total budget of NT\$1.05 Trillion (equivalent to US\$35 Billion) for economic bailout purpose on April 2.
- The Ministry of Transportation and Communications announced on April 10 to implement subsidy 2.0 plan toward airline industry, offering total loan amount of NT\$50 Billion (equivalent to US\$1.67 Billion).



We learned from dealing with COVID-19 and social distancing about the following six perspectives:

- ***Increased awareness of risk assessment***
 - BCP (Business Continuity Planning) is reinforced. For example, more supply chains or critical supplies are single location sourcing in China now suffered. Many are considering second sourcing precaution or transferred to other countries.
 - Crisis management for families and companies, People and companies will be more well-prepared for unexpected risks and crises by examining contingency resources readiness or work deployment or delegation
- ***Information transparency***
 - Spreading false information or fake news will cause panic and are subject to fine or punishment. This makes people trying to detect the truth more deeply.
 - Important info is delivered by government daily, in order to give faster and accurate information—for example, revealing the infected or risk areas and places.

- ***Timely support & stability***
 - Providing support (finance, tax reduction, payment delay) to affected people and companies.
 - Daily health training can build up proper understandings of the disease and reduce unnecessary panic.
- ***Central control of critical resource allocation***
 - Medical masks, Ethanol (disinfectant), thermometers are controlled by government upfront to ensure sufficient supply to those in need.
 - When people panicked, government released reserved goods and encouraged companies to produce more goods to reduce such worries, like food and toilet paper.
- ***Technology helps***
 - Electronic monitoring systems for quarantined people, this helped the Government to minimize the possibilities of spreading the virus.
 - Online purchase and pickup of medical masks at convenient stores, and a fair distribution can also stabilize societies accordingly.
- ***New social norms (from social distancing)***
 - Wearing masks has become a habit and etiquette for everyone no matter where we are, which is one of the best ways to control virus transmission.
 - E-payment is getting popular since the physical contact (money and changes) is reduced.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in January 2020, Taiwan has been alerted and prepared even during the Lunar New Year holidays. For many HR practitioners, balancing between meeting compliance and disease control is critical. Fortunately, or unfortunately, the experience of SARS in 2003 served a solid foundation in all protocols and practices in regarding three key aspects—information transparency and accuracy, products/services continuity, and physical and mental wellness of employees.

The first critical aspect is information transparency and accuracy. HR needs to ensure status updates are provided, or disease prevention, or latest announcements is timely and validated before sending to employees via line, email, company App, or other secured social media channels, especially during quarantine or during any sort of work from home (WFH), in order to ensure alignment in real-time. We also found that cellphones were widely accepted, and helped balancing information transparency, while protecting personal privacy. For tracking the contact and travel history of confirmed cases, the Taiwanese Government decided to release the hotspots where confirmed cases took place, to inform the public, and they can self-check via their cell phones or Google maps warnings. All while keeping personal information anonymous because the purpose is to prevent spreading.

The second aspect is to ensure products /services continuity. Common practices included: work from home, separation of groups with similar functions as back-up and by providing staggered work with different working hours or spaces, daily self-health monitoring, second source suppliers, banning business travels, daily sanitization protocols based on Taiwan CDC recommendations, alert and alarm mechanisms and contingency plans in case transmission is identified.

The last one, and perhaps one of the most important ones, is to ensure the physical and mental wellness of employees—"Mindless fear is greater than mindful fear." Other than physical health, mental wellness was of great concern among HR professionals. Employees can become overwhelmed with negative news or information, so Employers must take the initiative to promote positive workplace consistently during this tough times—perhaps through an open letter or video message from the CEO, the regular announcement of good news or achievements, offering helplines for assistance, extended care for employees' families, such as on-line health trainings, or personal protective equipment (PPE).

In coping with this unprecedented worldwide pandemic outbreak, HR has to pause and examine the current status and resources and reset operations with adjusted priorities. Resilience has been mentioned too many times before, but we remain confident that as HR professionals we will prevail, together.

African Human Resource Confederation (AHRC)

Mauritius: Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius (MAHRP)

Mauritius announced a lockdown lasting from March 19th to May 30th, 2020, with the Economic Growth Rate already revised to a negative 11 percent, and consumption patterns constantly changing. Production and distribution have also been disrupted, with low morale. HR has to show determination to raise morale, build trust and confidence.

The Covid-19 Bill 2020, recently legislated by the Government of Mauritius, has made several provisions to protect workers and businesses in general to cope with the impact of the pandemic. We have had the Wage Assistance Scheme and the Self-Employed Assistance Scheme for three months to protect employment and salaries.

The lockdown has brought up the work from home arrangement very strongly. Those who were resisting it before the lockdown have had to adapt. All have to be prepared to continue working remotely and from home. Yet, the Lancet Report shows that stressors of isolation affect psychological health and well-being. HR Professionals have to consider that this may influence work-related outcomes such as productivity and engagement as well as motivation. However, there are more positive aspects of this new work arrangement.

Provisions have also been made to enhance the wearing of masks, social distancing, and above all, to ensure that the public in general is moving around safely.

Remote working, wherever possible should be encouraged. This may mean training people in business-critical functions and being flexible—as some employees working from home may have additional caring responsibilities for kids or sick persons at home. The technology should be in place to support this work arrangement.

HR professionals need to continue providing open and clear communication channels. Employees want to know how the business is responding to the crisis, what are the measures taken to heighten security and health, and about the impact of the crisis on the business. Given the uncertain time and the gloomy perspectives, employees want to be kept informed. Similarly, employees deserve regular and transparent communication and business continuity. We have to remember that employees are ready to demonstrate the discretionary behavior and go the extra miles to support the business organization.

HR professionals should offer a period of adjustment. Adapting to a new work environment, to new methods of work or to new ways of organizing work—which is a gradual process. Offering employees with a period of adjustment can support normalization of a new environment. We have to facilitate this adaptation process by offering help, support and resources. We have an immense duty of care and this should inspire us to listen to employees and respond appropriately and timely to their issues.

As HR professionals we should see what can be done to improve the home working space, in terms of correct equipment, lighting, absence of hazards, furniture for correct posture and removal of distractions (such as poor connection, noise, etc.). The same is true for those who have to attend the office. We have to adhere strictly to all the recommendations of the competent authorities on all the measures to be taken to ensure that everyone is offered the maximum protection. This is definitely an area where we can show that we care, protect and facilitate. In doing so, we would ensure improved quality of work, productivity and psychological well-being.

Health and Safety is a foremost priority. The Health Eco-system and the Health sector will now be high on the global agenda. Businesses will have a more positive approach towards Health and Safety at the workplace, and company Doctors will become a must. The lessons learnt about personal hygiene will definitely remain with us. The fear of the pandemic will remain, and therefore, we should already be thinking and preparing for the next possible pandemic.

The Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius recognizes the fact that COVID-19 has had and will continue to have impacts of different magnitudes across different sectors of the economy.

It is now a widely accepted fact that the COVID-19 is a health, financial and economic crisis. Now, we have to realize that it will give rise to a psychological crisis. The risks of job losses are visible and financial concerns are palpable. We can already sense worries about a number of concerns: health problems, sanitary measures, social distancing, financial problems, job security, lack of clarity on few things, adjustments issues, etc. The World Economic Forum has warned that the “lockdown is the world’s biggest psychological experiment-and we will pay the price.” The World Health Organisation recommends protocols like R-TEP (Recent Traumatic Episode Control) and G-TEP (Group Traumatic Episode Control).

Now is the time for HR professionals to demonstrate how they can assist in mitigating the psychological impacts of the crisis and how they can help to cope with fear, anxiety and panic. We have to make sure that everyone understands that a psychological reaction is normal and that we are prepared to offer help. We may not have all the solutions, but everything that we can do to help will be of significant importance. There is no mystery or magic, we simply have to encourage people to be rational and see the longer-term perspectives. We have to build trust, provide reassurance and purpose so that we can all envision a brighter future. Let us together start finding positives in the face of the crisis. There are positives : we have an opportunity to reflect and consider what is really important in both our professional and personal lives; we have discovered the real meanings of belongingness of community and of solidarity; and we have a clearer environment and we value health and life more than anything else and more than ever before.

For the Millennials and the Generation Z, the Coronavirus crisis would bring them to learn the new realities of the world. In fact, this crisis would represent the greatest disruption they have had to face. They now have a better understanding of hard work, of the real value of money, of discipline and of the meaning of life. They will become more readily agreeable for sharing, learning and have a greater sense of solidarity. We will see more significance to belongingness. We will value more the fact that we belong to a community: The Mauritian Community, and more accepting of differences. This virus does not discriminate, and therefore, ethnic and other considerations will not be as before.

The pandemic has also given rise to “Mauritianism,” demonstrating our capacity to generously donate to the COVID-19 National Solidarity Fund. The sense of belongingness to a business organization will also have more significance.

A new leadership style will emerge. The co-leadership style will now have more appeal. The leaders with knowledge only will be listened to. Some leaders and their dominant style will no longer have much appeal. Caring leadership for the common good of the greater number will definitely be largely appreciated. The key word has been and will be "Discipline". People will pay more attention to knowledge based on facts. While we have learnt to be mindful about "fake news": Events will be analyzed as humanitarian challenge. Priority will be about lives and livelihoods. In businesses also, leaders will have to be inspirational and transformational.

The Association of Human Resource Professionals of Mauritius is now at center-stage. Business Leaders are expecting a more strategic role from HR Professionals who can effectively match capacity with competency. The crisis has been and will be a great opportunity for HR to demonstrate how they can effectively help businesses to survive and to thrive. HR can now more easily align business strategies with HR strategies.

COUNTRY SPECIFIC ISSUES



State of Emergency



Lockdown



Quarantine or National
Curfew



Suspension of Commercial
Activities



Unemployment increase



Home School



Insurance coverage



Immigration suspensions



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WFPMA

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Management Associations

LABOR SPECIFIC ISSUES



Layoffs



Furloughs



Decrease in working hours



Decrease in pay rates



Remote Work



On-Call



Collective vacations or
forced vacations



Workflex



Paid Leave



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LESSONS LEARNED

Communication

Communication is key in keeping
people engaged and connected

1

2

Culture

Culture can determine the success
or failure in managing change
and/or crises

Technology

Will play a major role in the New World of
Work, with Digital Skills becoming a must

3

4

Remote Work & Flexible Work Arrangements

Will become part of the New Normal

Business Continuity Planning

Establishing the risk profile of a business & the level
of vulnerability in terms of its impact on People,
Processes, Profits & Partnerships will help ensure
resilience

5