



AS IT IS

How Singapore Flattened the COVID Curve Among Migrants

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Foreign worker Yulia Endang says she is saddened by the quick growth of COVID-19 cases among foreigners in Singapore. The increase started in April.

Endang says she believes poor housing conditions where foreign workers live likely led to the increase. But she hopes the bad news will warn the island nation of dangers ahead.

“I hope the attention is not just attention but a signal that outside, there are more people **aware** of how actually migrant workers' life [is] like,” she said.

At one point, Singapore had the most COVID-19 cases in Southeast Asia, even with its small population. It worked hard to flatten the curve. But later there was a surprising increase, mostly in **dormitory** rooms that house foreign workers.

The rise was a reminder to Singaporeans that the wealth of their state depends, in part, on foreign laborers who often live in very poor conditions.

How has Singapore responded?

In April, Singapore was reporting as many as 1,400 COVID-19 cases a day. It is now reporting as few as 200 new daily cases. Singapore acted to change the living conditions that increased the spread. The city-state announced a **quarantine** on foreign dormitories and tested every single person who lived in them.

Singapore also plans to expand health services for foreign workers. And it plans to build more housing to lower the number of people living in each dormitory. Some foreign workers have already been moved into new buildings. Plans include eight new buildings by the end of the year.

Non NIMBY cartoons

Singaporeans are looking for social change to help correct what has historically been a place divided by class and wealth.

One group is fighting against the “not in my backyard” **attitude**, often called “NIMBY.” It is an attitude that prevents new housing for the poor from being built in wealthier areas. Some Singaporeans have organized to change the attitude – and expression -- to “Welcome In My Backyard,” or WIMBY.

The WIMBY group was formed after the COVID increases. It hopes to create relationships with foreign workers and others in Singapore.

The WIMBY group wrote on Facebook: “We must not be **comfortable** with the idea of riding on the...**livelihoods** of others for the success of the economy.”

I’m Susan Shand.

The Voice of America reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

Words in This Story

aware - *adj.* to be conscious of something or someone

dormitory - *n.* a building with small rooms and a lot of beds for students or workers

quarantine - *n.* to force someone in to isolation because he is carrying an infectious disease

attitude - *n.* a way of looking at people or ideas

comfortable - *adj.* at ease, relaxed

livelihood - *n.* the way one make's a living, a job or profession

