



UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
CENTER FOR
INTEGRATIVE AND
DEVELOPMENT
STUDIES

People-to-People Exchange Towards Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures

**Alternative Practices of LGBTQIA+,
Persons with Disabilities, and
Migrant Groups in the Philippines**

**Proceedings
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People-to-People Exchange towards Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures: Alternative Practices of LGBTQIA+, Persons with Disabilities, and Migrant Groups in the Philippines

Prepared by Jose Monfred C. Sy,¹ Rafael Vicente V. Dimalanta,² Ryan Joseph C. Martinez,³ Honey B. Tabiola,⁴ and Ananeza P. Aban⁵

Opening Session

Since 2022, the Program on Alternative Development (AltDev) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) has been working with its regional

-
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research partner, the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC), in organizing key activities for the Philippine implementation of the project Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures (FIFF). ASC is a regional organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals and groups in Southeast Asia. It led the FIFF program implementation in the Philippines. ASC is also a Steering Committee Member of the Movement for Alternatives and Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA).

FIFF is a joint program that aims to bolster intersectional movement-building in Asia, specifically Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, and Pakistan. The program is premised on the belief that intersectional movements are “key to developing transformative advocacy strategies that center the voices and lived experiences of diverse groups of marginalized women and that challenge multiple systems of oppression” (Voice Global, n.d.). Particularly, FIFF endeavors to (1) “[strengthen] collective understanding of intersectionality and intersectional feminism,” (2) develop “regional and national cross-movement roadmaps for joint advocacy,” and (3) “document good practices and strategies for applying an intersectional approach” (Voice Global, n.d.). It is led by the International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP Asia Pacific) and is steered by the following organizations and networks: ASC, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTAN), International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) Asia, and Asia Pacific Women with Disabilities United represented by Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP).

AltDev is committed to take part in this work to generate the diverse intersectional approaches on issues being done by these groups that create alternatives and cross-border solidarity building. These are gaps in the current research outputs of AltDev that can be the potential subject or themes in the forthcoming AltDev publications, especially on people-led regionalism.

In 2022, UP CIDS AltDev worked with ASC to help organize the People-to-People (P2P) Exchange titled “Partner Sharing: Existing

Practices of Intersectionality” under ASC’s FIFF Project. This P2P aimed to surface the existing practices of intersectionality and facilitate knowledge sharing among LGBTIQ, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and migrant organizations in the Philippines.

To surface the existing practices of intersectionality and facilitate knowledge sharing amongst FIFF-partner LGBTIQ organizations in the Philippines, ASC partnered with AltDev as the academic institutional partner of FIFF. They collaborated in planning and facilitating an online national level P2P Exchange titled “Partner Sharing: Existing Practices of Intersectionality.” The following are the representatives from eleven LGBTIQ, PWDs, and migrant organizations who participated in this P2P Exchange last 11 November 2022: Intersex Philippines, Kanlungan Center Foundation Inc., Iloilo Pride Team and Visayas LBQ Network, BDEV Child Protection Inc., Voice for Sexual Rights, Pinoy Deaf Rainbow Inc., Life Haven, IMGLAD, and LakanBini Advocates Pilipinas, Inc.

The session began with the main facilitator, UP CIDS AltDev Project Leader Assistant Professor Jose Monfred C. Sy, opening the session and introducing the agenda as well as its learning objectives. The facilitator then asked the participants to introduce themselves and describe their backgrounds. This was followed by a review of the previous session’s learning outcomes. The facilitator reintroduced important points on the theory of intersectionality, which were discussed in earlier sessions of FIFF, The facilitator then asked the participants to share their thoughts.

After the introduction, Dr. Eduardo C. Tandem, Convenor of UP CIDS AltDev, went on to discuss the concept of “alternatives” in relation to practices of gender and sexuality across Southeast Asia. Dr. Tadem explained that precolonial Southeast Asia was a region of various small principalities and a few empires, each with a highly complex social system. While Indian and Chinese influences had an impact on the region, scholars now pay more attention to the strength and importance of indigenous cultural traditions. Traditional Southeast Asian societies overemphasized the nuclear or individual family. Women

held a relatively favorable position in comparison with neighboring East or South Asian societies.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Southeast Asia represented “one extreme of human experience with women’s roles” (Reid 1988, 629), Dr. Tadem explained. While women were not equal to men, they “had different functions from men,” such as “transplanting and harvesting rice, weaving, and marketing” (Reid 1988, 629). Women’s “reproductive roles gave them magical and ritual powers,” which were “difficult for men to match” (Reid 1988, 629). These factors may explain why “the value of daughters was never questioned in Southeast Asia” (Reid 1988, 629). Monogamy was dominant, but divorce was relatively easy for both sides, as was premarital sexual activity.

Dr. Tadem emphasized that women played a vital role in trading, marketing, and commercial activities. Women were essential in agriculture and “had prominent roles in indigenous ritual” (Andaya 2023). They were envoys and diplomats, especially in peace-making processes. They were also warriors and bodyguards of kings. Female rulers and monarchs were not uncommon, and “kinship was traced through both maternal and paternal lines” (Andaya 2023). In addition, “a daughter was not a financial burden” due to “the widespread practice of bride price” (Andaya 2023). Also, “a married couple often lived with or near the wife’s parents” (Andaya 2023). The gradual strengthening of the influence of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Confucianism over the last four centuries has not eliminated this common pattern of relatively high female autonomy and economic importance.

Southeast Asia has a rich cross-cultural transgender history where transgender people have played crucial roles, Dr. Tadem explained. The *bugis bissu* of Sulawesi, the *sida-sida* of Malaysia, the *iban manang* of Borneo, the *basir* of the Ngaju Dayak, the *nat kadaw* of the Burmese, the transgender tradition of the Thai, the *mentefuwaley libun* and *mentefuwaley lagey* of the Teduray in Mindanao were all accepted naturally by their respective Southeast Asian societies, without any judgment accompanying such acceptance. In many cases, they were even accorded honors and a special place in the social structure.

Southeast Asian art and culture had a distinct development. For instance, certain art forms were not derived from India or China but were indigenous and widespread. Examples of Southeast Asian art forms that enjoy popularity include “batik textiles, gamelan orchestras, and the *wayang* puppet theatre” (Rawson and Glass 2023). “Wet-rice (or *padi*) agriculture, metallurgy, navigation, ancestor cults, and worship associated with mountains” were also “widespread” (Rawson and Glass 2023). Scholars now argue that the peoples of mainland Southeast Asia were cultivating plants, making pottery, and working in bronze around the same time the peoples of the ancient Middle East did. This suggests that civilization spread from mainland Southeast Asia to China and India.

Predominant cultural themes and practices in Southeast Asia include religion and national history. However, Dr. Tadem pointed out that religion was treated in a nondoctrinal manner. Thus, it focused on the lives and personalities of the gods, such as Buddha. Individual lives were also important, and the community had a role in ensuring that everyone was provided for.

Dr. Tadem concluded that traditional Southeast Asian societies held women in high regard and had a rich cross-cultural transgender history. Indigenous cultural traditions were important and continue to be so in the present day. The workshop “Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures” served as a platform to explore these cultural practices and their relevance in a modern, intersectional feminist context.

The discussion on alternatives in Southeast Asia was followed by the main program, the People-to-People Exchange. Participants were divided into breakout rooms where they had the opportunity to share their work and environment, photos of activities, websites, and other materials. The participants were also encouraged to share their best practices of organizing. The breakout session was divided into three broad questions:

1. **Organizing work and advocacy:** *Ano ang layunin at mga adbokasiya ng inyong organisasyon, at paano niyo ito naisasagawa? Sino ang nakikinabang dito?* (What are the goals and advocacies

of your organization, and how do you accomplish them? Who benefits from them?)

2. **Intersectionality in activities:** *Naimplementa niyo na ba ang “intersectionality” sa inyong mga aktibidad? Paano lumilitaw ang usapin ng iba’t ibang mga identidad sa mga adbokasiya at garwain ninyo?* (Have you implemented “intersectionality” in your activities? How do different identities come into play in your advocacy work?)
3. **Enabling conditions and challenges:** *Aling mga institusyon, grupo, o polisiya ang nakatulong sa pagsasagawa ng mga aktibidad na ito? Alin naman ang naging hadlang?* (Which institutions, groups, or policies help in carrying out these activities? Which ones are hindering?)

Assistant Professor Sy encouraged participants to relate their own activities to what was discussed. Whenever participants mentioned a government institution or policy in the discussion, they were asked about what they thought must be changed in that institution or policy. Participants were also enjoined to think of each other as enabling conditions and to collaborate in the future for work on intersectional projects.

The groupings of the P2P Exchange are as follows:

Group 1

Rose Bayan, Kanlungan Center Foundation Inc.
Liesel Callueng, Intersex Philippines
Irish Inoceto

Group 2

Maria, Voice of Sexual Rights
Disney Aguila, formerly Pinoy Deaf Rainbow
Tina Lomoljo, BDEV Child Protection, Inc.

Group 3

Elena Felix, Association of Positive Women Advocates Inc.
(APWAI)

Arjhay Puod, Pioneer Filipino Transgender Men Movement (PFTM)

Group 4

Mary Ann Dao, Life Haven

RJ Juarez Neyra and Rey Francis Badoc, IMGLAD

UP CIDS AltDev Staff Rafael Dimalanta, Ryan Martinez, Hans Tabiola, and Angging Aban served as facilitators for the breakout groups.

Rose Bayan and Liezel Callueng represented Kanlungan Center Foundation, Intersex Philippines, respectively. Irish Inoceto also joined this session.

GROUP 1

Rose Bayan

Kanlungan Center Foundation⁶

In her sharing, Rose introduced her organization and their work with migrant workers. According to her, the Kanlungan Center Foundation's main focus is on addressing the issues of migrant workers, with a priority on assisting and supporting women. Historically, labor migration has been associated with the feminization of labor. She cited that in a study they conducted in 1996, around 70 to 80 percent of women are in skilled and semiskilled work. One of the most troubling findings is that many migrant workers leave not just because they lack employment opportunities but also because they want to escape domestic violence. This is particularly challenging for female migrant workers who might experience abuse from their spouses and family members.

6 Kanlungan Center Foundation is a nonprofit nongovernment organization (NGO) engaged in international campaigning and policy advocacy of migrant workers.

This situation has led the organization to focus on crisis intervention in the early stages, as many migrant workers return home with mental and psychological distress.

While the organization does not have international offices, it utilizes its informal networks and linkages abroad (mostly church-based groups and other social justice organizations) to reach out to victimized migrant workers and provide assistance.

The organization also recognizes the need to cater to the families of migrant workers, as they need to be prepared for the eventualities of repatriation or deployment overseas. In some cases, families are not even informed when their loved ones are repatriated. This results in distressing situations in which the returning migrant worker may exhibit changed behaviors or attitudes. She emphasized the need for comprehensive support for both migrant workers and their families.

According to Rose, the organization believes that its advocacy is not only addressing the problems faced by migrant workers but also raising awareness on issues related to the feminization of labor and labor migration. Understanding the root causes of labor migration, the feminization of labor, and the impact on families is essential for creating meaningful change.

She also shared that the work of the Kanlungan Center Foundation recently integrated raising awareness on the effects of climate change. The organization deals with how climate change exacerbates the living conditions of migrant workers and fuels labor migration in the country.

Liezel Callueng

Intersex Philippines⁷

Liezel Callueng from Intersex Philippines shared the organization's journey during the meeting. Intersex Philippines started as an informal online group chat for intersex individuals to communicate and share their stories and experiences. It served as a support group for intersex individuals who were struggling with coming out due to fear of discrimination and prejudice. Eventually, the organization was registered as a nongovernment organization (NGO) in April 2019, and it held its first Intersex National Forum in Manila, which intersex individuals attended. Liezel was one of the pioneers who attended the forum, and it was the first time they met face to face. This forum helped improve communication and visibility within the organization.

She explained that *intersex* is an umbrella term that includes various physical variations that do not fit into the binary concept of male or female. There are over 40 variations of intersex in the Philippines. Despite the differences in experiences, the organization shares the same goals of spreading awareness and improving the visibility of intersex issues to combat misinformation and oppression from society.

Intersex Philippines has been involved in various activities, including national forums, strategic plannings, team buildings, and youth empowerment events. However, organizing activities has been challenging due to the limited availability of active members, who are all volunteers with limited finances. She also mentioned that the organization has been seeking funds and grants, including collaboration with Intersex Asia, to fund expenses related to their activities.

Liezel noted that Intersex Philippines has faced challenges such as receiving negative comments and hate speech as they advocate

7 Intersex Philippines is a collective of advocates that provides a safe space for discourse of intersex issues in society. They provide online counseling and community for discussing the body, health, sexual orientation, and visibility of Intersex individuals in the country.

for intersex rights more publicly. However, they choose to focus on spreading positivity and constructive advocacy efforts. Intersex Philippines also links with other LGBTQIA+, with “A” standing for asexual and all other identities, organizations, and allies of the community. In addition, the organization is now considering policy and legal advocacy for legal gender recognition, citing the example of one of the cofounders of Intersex Philippines, who became the first person to legally change their name and gender in the Philippines.

While the work of Intersex Philippines is challenging, Liezel emphasized that they are committed to pushing for change and taking action, even though it may take time. She mentioned that one of their current advocacy efforts is to streamline the process of changing one’s legal gender in the Philippines because the current process is cumbersome. Intersex Philippines is actively working towards becoming more active and engaged in its advocacy efforts.

Irish Inoceto

Irish first shared how Pride-related groups in Iloilo which advocated for LGBTIQ rights started in 2015. The focus of the organization is LGBTIQ rights and, more broadly, human rights. She explained that the organization aims to create a safe space for the LGBTIQ in Iloilo and to advocate for their rights. The groups have since engaged in the activities of their allied organizations, other LGBTIQ organizations, and the local government of Iloilo to advocate for LGBTIQ rights and combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity. They also participate in conferences and forums, conduct research about the LGBTIQ community, and organize events that serve as platforms for advocacy such as Pride Marches, film festivals, art exhibits, and other activities. Since 2015, the organization has been conducting yearly Pride Marches (except during the pandemic). According to the Irish, marchers started at only 200 but have since grown to at least 2,500 in the most recent Pride March.

In the past, the organization also advocated for queer theology, collaborating with the National Council of Churches of the Philippines

(NCCP) as many LGBTIQ Filipinos are spiritual and are accepted by progressive religious formations.

Irish emphasized that intersectionality is a key part of their advocacy work, recognizing that LGBTIQ people are present in other sectors such as the urban poor, the workers, and other marginalized sectors.

While they have faced challenges such as being red-tagged for their progressive views and activism, they continue to be resolute in advancing LGBTIQ rights and participating in other social justice causes tangent to the struggles of the members of the LGBTIQ community. Irish emphasized that through their work, they have demonstrated how the LGBTIQ, together with the other marginalized sectors, has the capacity to contribute to social change.

GROUP 2

Maria, Disney Aguila, and Tina Lomoljo represented Voice of Sexual Rights, Pinoy Deaf Rainbow, and BDEV Child Protection, Inc., respectively.

Tina Lomoljo

BDEV Child Protection, Inc.⁸

Tina shared BDEV Child Protection, Inc.'s best practices for conducting activities in the community, specifically in providing psychosocial support and emotional recovery sessions for individuals

8 BDEV Child Protection, Inc is an NGO that provides psychosocial support and engages in child rights promotion in Mindanao.

affected by different disasters. One of its best practices is to match the gender of the facilitators with that of the participants, whether male or female, to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. It also made sure to welcome and not discriminate against LGBTIQ youth who may participate in the activities. In fact, it has LGBTIQ facilitators to handle such cases. Also, BDEV has facilitators from the LGBTIQ community who can work with mixed-gender groups.

Additionally, before conducting any activity in the community, the organization provides refresher courses and lays down the rules that should be observed during sessions to ensure the quality of their service.

Tina then mentioned that in BDEV, there is no discrimination against the participant's identity, including gender. It makes sure to acknowledge the different genders that participate in their sessions. The speaker also mentioned that it provides HIV/AIDS orientation to its facilitators, including those who identify as gay. BDEV is a member of ALAGAD Mindanao, which gives the organization access to other related activities regarding the health of their LGBTIQ members, including the facilitators. Additionally, the organization provides capacity-building activities to their staff, including an orientation on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE), to improve their conduct when facing the participants in the community.

During the discussion, Tina raised the challenges faced in promoting gender-related advocacy, especially for the LGBTIQ community in Mindanao. They pointed out that while there are LGBTIQ groups in Iligan City, the groups are limited in number and not as active in advocacy work. The speaker noted that there have been Pride March activities in nearby Cagayan de Oro, but there is a need for more LGBTIQ advocacy groups in Iligan. They also shared that the city government is open and welcoming to CSOs, which makes it easier for them to lobby for related campaigns and activities.

However, Tina highlighted that at the barangay level, there are still unwelcoming attitudes towards LGBTIQ issues. Some barangays

even refuse to acknowledge the presence of LGBTIQ individuals. The speaker recognized that promoting intersectionality in advocacy is challenging, and there is a need to consider multiple factors in pushing for change. Overall, the discussion highlighted the importance of creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for the LGBTIQ community in Mindanao.

Maria

Voice of Sexual Rights⁹

During the discussion, Maria mentioned that Voice of Sexual Rights (VSR) provides opportunities for sex workers and their allies to attend seminars. The organization has leaders who attend and conduct different activities, such as encouraging members to undergo HIV testing and offering pap smear checks for the medical needs of sex workers. She emphasized that these efforts aim to promote sexual health and rights for sex workers and their allies.

According to Maria, VSR practices intersectionality in many ways. It had a case where a man who had experienced rape or forced sex was disregarded, not being acknowledged, particularly among transgender women. The convention is that when they engage in sex work, they enjoy it, so the concept of including heterosexual males or transgender gays in discussions about rape is disregarded or covered up. However, VSR implements intersectionality, particularly in this case involving a heterosexual male. The organization took action and reported the scenario themselves to help him.

Maria also mentioned that the members of VSR are HIV advocates and case managers. Their organization has well-harmonized intersectionality, catering to everyone regardless of their gender and status.

9 Voice of Sexual Rights is an emerging organization working with sex workers towards decriminalizing sex work.

During the discussion, Maria emphasized that it would be helpful to highlight the separation of state and church not only for their organization but for the general public as well. This would provide a clearer understanding of standards that are based on the law which should be followed. The participants acknowledged that there is still a long way to go before they can achieve their goals. For instance, accessing government services can be a challenge for some individuals due to various reasons, such as required background checks. For example, a person was identified as a sex worker, which prevented her from accessing the services she needed.

The speaker suggests that the community should redefine their champions to help push for the organization's goals. These champions can also serve as allies in promoting inclusivity of intersectionality. Additionally, Maria hopes for collaboration among the audience in the webinar to promote this advocacy through one channel.

Disney Aguila

Pinoy Deaf Rainbow¹⁰

Disney explained that Pinoy Deaf Rainbow's advocacy work is not only focused on the deaf community but also includes the LGBTQIA+ community. It conducts activities such as raising awareness about HIV and providing education about transgender individuals. It also offers accessibility and training, as well as conducts discussions to address the needs of the community. Disney emphasized that their goal is to provide what is necessary for the community they serve.

Disney shared their organization's approach to advocacy for the rights of the deaf community and the LGBTQIA+ community. They emphasized that Pinoy Deaf Rainbow does not force or pressure people,

¹⁰ Pinoy Deaf Rainbow is a nonprofit organization established in 2010 as Deaf Pink Club. Their main advocacy is to educate, empower, and uplift lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and more (LGBTQIA+) individuals with hearing loss, which address the broader issue of double discrimination in the country.

but rather encourages and educates them about their rights, privileges, and requirements. It provides background information and orientation on identity and rights, but it does not require people to accept its approach since the level of acceptance varies from person to person. The speaker also acknowledged the different levels of acceptance within the deaf community and the need to adjust their approach based on the person's willingness.

Furthermore, Disney highlighted that discrimination is prevalent in the deaf community, especially with religious beliefs. While there are varying perspectives, most discrimination stems from religious beliefs. Despite this, the speaker and their advocacy group continue to advocate for the rights of the deaf community based on their experiences. They emphasized the importance of respect and stated that they would continue their advocacy efforts.

In terms of religion, what Pinoy Deaf Rainbow does is just give others a brief introduction to its advocacy. Disney knows that when it comes to religion, most people have closed minds and do not accept anything, even just a little introduction. That's why they show others their perspective through their actions. It is not just about talking, but also about doing. Others see it and because of their actions, others become a bit more accepting of what they don't want to hear. Definitely, others accept Pinoy Deaf Rainbow's perspective to some extent.

GROUP 3

Elena Felix and Arjhay Puod represented the Association of Positive Women Advocates Inc. and Pioneer Filipino Transgender Men Movement, respectively.

Elena Felix

Association of Positive Women Advocates Inc. (APWAI)¹¹

Elena Felix, a founding member of the Association of Positive Women Advocates, Inc. (APWAI), introduced her organization as a support group for women living with HIV. APWAI has HIV-positive members, nonpositive volunteers, and board advisers. Members of APWAI also have members who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (LBT). They also have members coming from rural areas as well as urban poor communities.

Established in 2017, APWAI's objectives are to strengthen the capacities of women living with HIV, provide a space for sharing experiences and life skills, and empower its members. APWAI conducts group learning sessions and training seminars to share knowledge and information on topics relevant to women, ranging from SOGIE to women's rights. APWAI also organizes informal gatherings for members to connect. They also engage in policy advocacy, particularly in (1) lobbying the government for changes in the HIV/AIDS legislation and reproductive health rights; (2) advocating for the rights and welfare of women living with HIV; and (3) promoting the rights of women, children, and the youth.

¹¹ Association of Positive Women Advocates Inc. (APWAI) is a support and advocacy group for women living with HIV. They offer both health and nonhealth support, such as counseling and referrals, through their network of trained peer educators and community-based screening motivators.

Elena recently attended a conference in Cambodia as a representative of women migrants and women living with HIV, highlighting intersectionality within their organization. Elena concluded her introduction by offering to answer any further questions, and encouraging other participants to share.

Arjhay Puod

Pioneer Filipino Transgender Men Movement (PFTM)¹²

Arjhay, from the Pioneer Filipino Transgender Men Movement (PFTM), introduces himself as the current sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) officer. He explains that PFTM initially started as a support group for Filipino transgender men, guiding them with safe transitioning and resources such as doctors who specialize in hormone therapy. The organization was officially founded in 2011.

The main goal of PFTM is to provide support and resources to transgender men across the country. They also address human rights issues faced by transgender individuals as their rights are often overlooked and marginalized. PFTM conducts sessions and educational programs to raise awareness about sexual orientations, gender identity, and characteristics. Its members educate individuals on gender sensitivity and help them understand their own identities, especially those who may be confused.

PFTM's services include face-to-face sessions for education on gender sensitivity and best practices for safe transitioning. They also offer one-on-one sessions where individuals can share their experiences and receive support. PFTM goes beyond supporting transgender men alone. It invites friends and family members who may struggle to

¹² Pioneer Filipino Transgender Men Movement (PFTM) is a Filipino transgender men organization established in 2011. It aims to promote awareness on topics relevant to advancing gender equality and the human rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals and their families.

understand or accept the experiences of their transgender relatives and friends. The organization engages in conversations and assists with these orientations.

Currently, PFTM has around 240 members. In the organization, they have accumulated resources and knowledge through their experiences. For instance, they compile a list of doctors, clinics, and hospitals that are transgender-friendly to assist members in finding healthcare providers who understand their situations. They also work with organizations like LoveYourself to access hormone level checks and other necessary services, especially for those who are unemployed or students without access to healthcare.

The organization also deals with intersectionality, particularly concerning students who are transitioning. It encounters issues such as school uniforms that align with their assigned sex at birth rather than their gender identity. In these cases, it reaches out to schools, sending letters or offering to conduct education sessions and conversations to advocate for gender inclusivity in schools and address such concerns.

Migration is another area of intersectionality PFTM addresses, especially for members interested in working abroad. PFTM guides members on carrying hormones and navigating legalities, especially in Middle Eastern countries where homosexuality may still be illegal. They share best practices to prevent deportation or legal issues.

Partners of PFTM members also have their own support groups where they discuss challenges and strategies for supporting their partners in transitioning. The organization maintains confidentiality within, allowing for open and secure conversations.

Arjhay concludes by offering to answer any further questions from the participants.

GROUP 4

Mary Ann Dao represented Life Haven, while RJ Juarez Neyra and Rey Francis Badoc both spoke for IMGLAD.

Mary Ann Dao

Life Haven¹³

In her sharing, Mary Ann Dao highlighted the organization's advocacy to promote inclusivity in society. She shed light on the manifold challenges and discrimination faced by PWDs, especially those from marginalized groups, including rural areas, urban poor communities, and the LGBTQIA+ community.

For instance, children with disabilities, especially those coming from marginalized groups, struggle even further to access quality education due to the lack of proper government facilities, transport infrastructure, and educational institutions that adequately cater to the needs of PWDs. She emphasized that intersecting identities often compound the difficulties that PWDs encounter in their daily lives.

To support the empowerment of PWDs, Life Haven carries out activities for awareness-raising, rights education, capacity-building, and psychosocial support services (e.g., peer counseling, support group formations, etcetera). These peer-counseling sessions include children and rural communities. According to Mary Ann, Life Haven also engages in policy advocacy on inclusivity, nondiscrimination, and disability

¹³ Life Haven is a nonprofit and service-oriented organization for and by persons with disabilities (PWDs), located in Valenzuela City, Philippines. It envisions an inclusive community where all persons PWDs live with dignity and independently on an equal basis with others. It supports the empowerment of PWDs, their respective organizations, (OPDs) and other relevant stakeholders.

support, such as but not limited to medicines and basic essentials. She explained that they are in the process of lobbying for financial support for PWDs for their necessary medications, health services, and other essential needs. Additional allowance will significantly alleviate the burden on PWDs and reduce their reliance on family members for financial assistance.

Mary Ann also underscored the importance of cooperation and unity among organizations sharing similar advocacy goals, recognizing the significance of building partnerships and collaborations to strengthen advocacy efforts.

Rey Francis Bado and RJ Juarez Neyra

IMGLAD¹⁴

Rey shared that IMGLAD's main goal is to promote a safe, equitable, and inclusive Mindanao to help eradicate discrimination against LGBTQIA+ members based on their gender identity and sexual orientation. Rey discussed IMGLAD's efforts in consolidating the LGBTQIA+ community in Mindanao, focusing on fostering a space for their political participation. He explained their three main strategies: (1) "Unfurling the Pride," which focuses on raising awareness among the members of the LGBTQIA+ community about human rights, issues, and concerns of the community; (2) "Living the Pride," which focuses on capacitating LGBTQIA+ community in leadership skills and organizational development; and (3) "Marching the Pride," which focuses on fostering relationships, connections, and solidarity with LGBTQIA+ organizations in Mindanao. This strategy also includes networking with the local government units (LGUs). He also emphasized the importance of enjoining those outside of the community in promoting the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community.

14 IMGLAD (Initiatives and Movement for Gender Liberation against Discrimination) is a pioneering LGBTQIA+ organization in Mindanao that hopes to contribute in shaping the region into an equitable, free, and safe society wherein rights and dignity of the LGBTQIA+ community are protected.

The organization also recognizes the significance and centrality of intersectionality in their advocacy, given the multiple dimensions of oppression and other forms of discrimination that LGBTQIA+ individuals in Mindanao face. These concerns include gender-based discrimination, living with HIV, being part of the indigenous peoples' communities, or practicing Islam. Currently, he says that IMGLAD is operating in Iligan City, Cotabato City, and communities in the province of Lanao del Norte and Maguindanao.

RJ further expounded that IMGLAD is a movement that aims to amplify the "Tri-people Pride" in Mindanao (comprising representations from the Lumad, the Bangsamoro, and migrant communities) through chapter formations at the local and grassroots level. He explains that identities may overlap and may compound the difficulties faced by LGBTQIA+ people. Thus, he highlighted the need to strengthen the voices of the LGBTQIA+ community in Mindanao, including their stories and narratives. He noted that there are relatively few strong voices of LGBTQIA+ members in the region and they are rarely visible.

RJ emphasized that while intersectionality is inherent in their advocacy work, it has recently been added as one of core principles of their organization. IMGLAD acknowledges the importance of intersectionality and the need to identify and address intersecting layers of oppression and struggles. He shared that the organization is in the process of identifying intersectional issues during community assemblies and chapter building.

RJ noted that IMGLAD faces numerous challenges in advancing its advocacy in Mindanao. As civic spaces shrink and the rise of authoritarianism continues, an antidiscrimination law remains absent. More alarmingly, a "heterosexual bill" is being pushed in Congress that will only reinforce gender-based discrimination and violence. He explained that the vilification of human rights advocacy poses serious challenges for the LGBTQIA+. IMGLAD recognizes that its movement is rooted in the promotion of human rights. Rey added that the little to none support of religious institutions, which often leads to hateful narratives, also contributes to the discrimination against LGBTQIA+ individuals.

In concluding their sharing, RJ emphasized the important role of allies, networks, and donors that support IMGLAD’s advocacy work. The valuable support they provide helps strengthen the organization’s capacity through knowledge-sharing and information exchange. This support also provides material aid for the implementation of their activities.

Both Life Haven and IMGLAD underscored that in pushing for intersectionality, it is important to engage with groups with similar advocacy. Moreover, it is important to build deeper solidarities with them, through ASC for instance. The way to move forward is through the conduct of exchanges, where everyone learns collectively through sharing information, techniques, and strategies. The practice of peer counseling (*ka-peer, pakikipag-usap sa kagaya ko*), or the productive conversation between people who share diverse experiences but common struggles, remains relevant in order to understand, appreciate, and relate to the work of one another. Doing this already builds connections and people-to-people solidarities.

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