

# Campfire Conversations on Human Rights and Development

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SEAMEO INNOTECH – Soriano Hall  
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Hosted by Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation's Project DEFEND  
In partnership with the Civil Society in Development (CISU) and Nunca Más



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## Programme

### Opening Message

Ms. Loreine B. Dela Cruz, *Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation, Inc.*

### Global Situationer on Civil Society Space and Human Rights

Dr. Jan Ole Haagenen, *Nunca Más*

### National Challenges and Critical Facilities to Uphold Public Participation

Atty. Maria Sol Taule, *Peoro Taule & Associates*

### Kindling and Firewood: Campfire Sharing on Burning Issues

-on-

**Community Organizing** – *Community Organizers Multiversity*

**Peace-Building** – *The Asia Foundation, Inc.*

**Human Rights** – *House of Shareware and LAPIS*

**Community-based DRRM** – *ACCORD*

**Climate Crisis and Governance** – *Global Resilience Academy*

**DRRM Policy Advocacy** – *AGAP Banta*

### Torch of Hope: Call to Action and Solidarity

*Ways forward: What can we do individually we can do better together*

*De la Salle University – The Center for Social Concern and Action*

### Next Steps

*Disaster Risk Reduction Network Philippines*

## Walkthrough

(12:00 p.m.) Opening luncheon

(1:00 p.m.) Participants will gather around for the discussions. Everyone will be welcomed by the Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation, Inc. Executive Director, Ms. Loreine B. Dela Cruz. The first input will be shared by Dr. Haagensen for the global situationer to be followed by Atty. Maria Sol Taule. After the inputs, the facilitator will open the “campfire” and provide the participants with “kindling” and “firewood”.

*Kindling* and *firewood* are emerging issues and concerns based on the participants' advocacies. *Kindling*, issues and concerns that can lead to bigger, more complicated problems or risks (*firewood*).

(2:10 p.m.) The participants will bring these *kindling* and *firewood* in the designated *bonfire* (not a real bonfire but an art installation to hold the issues at the center of the activity area). Each thematic issue will be opened by the fire starters. The participants can share issues, challenges, as well as interventions based on the *burning issues* per theme. They will be given a kindling, where these issues in written metacards will be attached, and will be placed on the bonfire.

The *Torch of Hope* or the bonfire will be “lighted” and the facilitator for this section will also share their campfire stories, as well as facilitate the ritual that will wrap up the discussions.

(4:50 p.m.) Finally, to officially close, Disaster Risk Reduction Network Philippines will share where the results of this very important conversation will be shared in the coming months, as well as other succeeding collaborations to sustain the fire that was lit and serve as guide for a more improved solidarity, collaboration, and partnerships among civil society, various sectors, and other stakeholders.

## Target Output

Results of the conversations can be used by CSO networks for policy recommendations to the national and international bodies to address:

- The high risks faced by civil society, community-based organizations, and local humanitarian actors and rights defenders in the Philippines;
- The need to nurture and enable community-led innovations, development of solutions, and accountability mechanisms; and
- The need to uphold and implement a more inclusive process in formulating development plans, programs, and policies amid shrinking civic space.

### Welcome Remarks

Ms. Loreine B. Dela Cruz

*Executive Director*

*Center for Disaster Preparedness Foundation, Inc.*



***The Campfire Conversations will involve discussions on burning issues on community organizing, peace-building, human rights, community-based disaster risk reduction and management, climate crisis governance, and National Disaster Risk Reduction (NDRRM) policy and advocacy.***

The Campfire Conversations is apt as Human Rights Day will be celebrated on December 10, the day that the United Nations General Assembly adopted in 1948 the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) that serves as a milestone document which proclaims the inalienable rights of which everyone is entitled as human beings regardless of race, color, religion, language, gender, political or other opinion, social origin,

property, or other status.

The event reinforces the need for solidarity among countries and diverse stakeholders in facing global challenges, new and on-going, either pandemics, conflicts, exploding inequalities, morally bankrupt global financial systems, and climate change. The bodies and rights enshrined in the UDHR will also serve as a great proof for collective actions leaving no one behind.

The discussion on the global situationer on civil society space and human rights and the national challenges and critical facilities to uphold public participation will be better understood with the sharing of the burning issues and concerns based on the participants' advocacies or sectors. Towards the end of the session, the Torch of Hope will shed light on greater solidarity and cooperation among stakeholders on the basis of each other's strengths and capacities.

***The Campfire Conversations highlight the crucial role of civil society in amplifying the voices of the most vulnerable sectors.***

The role of the civil society in the Philippines has been very crucial. From extending development programs to least-served and geographically isolated communities to augment government services to ensuring that national policies reflect the challenges and learning experienced by the most vulnerable sectors who are otherwise voiceless in policy-making.

## Global Situationer on Civil Society Space and Human Rights

Dr. Jan Ole Haagensen, *Nunca Más*

**Dr. Jan Ole Haagensen** is the Founding Board Member and Chairperson of *Nunca Mas*, an international network for human rights and psychosocial interventions based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Dr. Haagensen is a social scientist with more than 20 years of leadership experience in human rights and environmental issues working with international organizations, cooperatives, NGOs, private foundations, government agencies, and research institutions.



### ***Neoliberal agenda and the emergence of civil society organizations***

Since the 1990s, there has been a big interest in coming up with a strong civil society that could take part in the development of countries. Democracies came up stronger and just about everywhere with the end of dictatorships in Latin America and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, democracy, human rights, and social development became commonplace.

However, as the neoliberal agenda paved for an open economy, not everyone gained from this so-called free trade. A lot of countries, mostly developing countries, did not gain from it, as well as the citizens inside those countries who lost their jobs or had cheap labor. There's also the international elite coming from different countries, talking to each other about the said issues. While around the world, there are people who got poor and poor and wanted decent change. And for that reason, there was this sentiment in relation to this open economy. And then in many countries there are strong people who say they can solve all the problems. And when they win and when they have power, they're using the power in order to limit democracy in order to stay in power.

***Political freedoms are not luxuries in the democratic states. They are necessities. Democratic societies cannot be preserved if freedom of assembly and freedom of association are not guaranteed, encouraged and respected. These political freedoms are key building blocks of democratic society and this is said in relation to civil society and the importance of having a strong civil society.***

In Denmark, there was a time when the Parliament invited civil society organizations when crafting laws that are deemed strong, sustainable and acceptable to the people. It has been part of the political system. In addition, external support for civil society has always been very strong. However, in 2001, there happened a shrinking of the democratic space of civil societies. Funding and support for developing countries remain visible but in

varying degrees and that they were mostly channeled to very few organizations. For the last 20 years, the Danish government has been investing in development systems, yet, a small chunk of it went to civil societies in the Global South. Nunca Mas is working on human rights and on social response. But the government is questioning why so many organizations conduct activities that are not altruistic. There appears to be a situation of the monopolization of development assistance for nations and societies.

### ***Politicization or control of civil societies by governments***

Restrictions by the government precludes a civil society activist from conversing with officials from other countries in order to advocate or lobby various agenda such as human rights, development, and social response. Politicization or control of civil societies by governments is also evident as in the case in Zimbabwe. The government takeover of organizations impairs the autonomy and independence of civil society organizations. The former's poor management of the crisis led to more vulnerabilities and human rights abuses. CSOs are needed to continue working and defending people's rights in an enabling operating environment.

### ***The challenge is to raise awareness on human rights and mobilize the civil society organizations and the people in taking part in democratic actions.***

Political experiences in the Americas show that power indeed corrupts and that is regardless of one's political leanings. War and aggression in some parts of the world (i.e. Russian invasion of Ukraine) threatens not just peace and security but the existence of civil society organizations. The economic competition between the US and China also affects not just the market landscape but the civil society space in general. The challenge is to intensify and sustain human rights awareness and capacitate communities in mobilizing CSOs and the people in taking democratic actions. In addition, countries in the Global North are expected to show support. In Denmark, discussions regarding policy change which tends to support the Global South.

**Fire starter for Community Organizing**

Ms. Luz Malibiran

*Executive Director, Community Organizers Multiversity****Addressing eviction issues in the context of multiple disasters – development aggression and climate change.***

The organization works in urban poor areas where people have no land tenure or security. Massive infrastructure projects are being implemented to the detriment of urban poor communities. As such, they are always affected and threatened by illegal eviction. Oftentimes, the government's solution is to have them relocated in places where they cannot gain meaningful employment, quality housing, or unsafe environments. In addition, the vulnerability of urban poor communities is amplified by the occurrence of natural hazards. Incidentally, the climate change phenomenon is being used by the present administration to evict urban poor communities in various areas.

***As an organization working for human rights and community organizing, we are often confronted and misinterpreted by the government as anti-government or anti-development.***

It is a continuing challenge not to be branded by the government as anti-government or anti-development. The organization's honest-to-goodness human rights and community organizing approach is central to its purpose. It is crucial for the government to know that what the organization advocates is a development without displacement where people take part in genuine development. Moreover, the Anti-Terror Law puts negative pressure among development workers and community organizers making them vulnerable to attacks.

***Through community organizing in the context of people's issues, we are always guided by the principle that "people will act if they are affected". People should articulate the issue in order to be able to present an option to the government.***

The people's plan is an alternative to the government's plan because it is community-based which has been consulted and studied. Even if the urban poor do not have technical knowledge, there are a lot of technical groups who are willing to support these communities to study those risks and coming from the community's experience, it should be understood together so that the development is not removed from the experience of the communities.



For instance, advocacy for in-city relocation is an important assertion of the urban poor community's land and housing rights. Our organization together with other technical groups or networks have helped urban poor communities to assess their own conditions in a scientific manner. The organization's partnerships with other networks is critical in capacitating the urban poor communities with technical knowledge which is essential in making informed decisions regarding resettlements.

***The organization is not the spokesperson of the urban poor communities. It only organizes people so they can speak for themselves, raise their own issues, and communicate or propose their own options or solutions to the government.***

It is vital to note that the organization does not intend to be the spokesperson of urban poor communities. And in organizing them, it seeks to capacitate communities by identifying risks and options regarding relocation or resettlement. For instance, to whether the community prefers near-site or in-city relocation, such a conclusion must have a scientific or technical basis.

***Development without displacement is the option put forth by urban poor communities. Community organizing is the strategy for urban poor communities to be able to communicate their housing options to the government.***

Part of the agenda of asserting people's plan, the organization seeks to capacitate communities to advocate their own plan, which is in-city relocation and not off-site, to the executive and legislative branches of the government. This goal was achieved in some areas. For the urban poor communities, it is the kind of development without displacement and through community organizing, they are able to articulate their own housing options to the government.

***Sharing of Mr. Ping Fampulme, National Convenor of the Aksyon sa Kahandaan sa Kalamidad at Klima (AKKMA)***



***At the heart of Community Organizing is the treatment of the communities as partners in development within the humanitarian perspective.***

Community organizing is about intersectionality and solidarity among and within the community itself. Whether it is a rights-based, nature-based or evidence-based organizing, people in the community, regardless of gender, class and other

conditions, must be united within the campaigns, advocacy programs and services, and in their own decision-making process.

**Fire starter for Human Rights**

Mr. Gary Granada

*Executive Director, House of Shareware and LAPIS*



***Introducing human rights in its basic form is key in upholding and strengthening Human Rights Education on the ground.***

At the height of the extrajudicial killings during the Duterte administration, an assessment was made within the human rights community and it concluded that there is a need to strengthen Human Rights Education. The challenge was to explain quickly, easily, clearly, and substantially to a typical student what Human Rights is all

about.

As such, our organization created a one-hour video about human rights. In this way, the organization aims not just to reach out to as many audiences as it can but to make the very topic of human rights understandable by all kinds of individuals or groups.

***Highlights of the first two minutes of the [1hr.org](https://www.1hr.org) video lecture on Human Rights.***

35 years ago, in 1986, Filipinos hogged the world's political centerstage in a People Power Revolution that spectacularly dismantled a dictatorship patently notorious for human rights excesses. For instance, Human Rights groups cite more than 3,000 extrajudicial killings under martial law over the ten-year period 1975 to 1986. Fast forward 30 years since Marcos fled the country, history repeats itself. This time around, the Filipino people cheer behind ten times as many state instigated murders, and approvingly laugh at their president's rape jokes. In all fairness, Filipinos do not have a global monopoly on lack of appreciation for human rights.

An international survey, done by the private market research company IPSOS, showed that as high as 40% of the world's population admit they know next to nothing about human rights. And by the way, it doesn't stop at 40. In the first quarter of last year alone, the Philippines recorded roughly 270,000 births and 170,000 deaths further upping the country's population by another 100,000. How do you propose to instruct half a million new arrivals every year, on top of it 50 million Human Rights zombies already in circulation? With the end game in mind that hopefully two, three generations after ours; or 50, 60 years from now, there will be enough citizens to turn the wheel the other way. 900,000 teachers handling 30 million students in 42,000 barangays. That is the scale of the challenge that we face today.

The video proposes four things: **clarify** the meaning, **simplify** the teaching, **qualify** the issues in the hope that all three can come together nicely in order to pass the knowledge quickly enough onto an ample **quantity**.

***The organization is cooperating with the Center for Disaster Preparedness on its Human Rights Education campaign.***

Through the organization's partnership with the Center for Disaster Preparedness, it was able to integrate Human Rights principles with disaster preparedness. Recently, it conducted a human rights training among student leaders in Rizal High School at Pasig City. In addition, the organization also developed apps for access to information regarding human rights.

***Sharing of Ms. Minet Aguisanda, Executive Director at Leyte Center for Development Inc. and Chairperson of Citizens Disaster Response Network***



***Human Rights is part and parcel of development and humanitarian work.***

The Leyte Center for Development is a non-government organization based in Samar and Leyte provinces in Eastern Visayas doing Disaster Risk Reduction for poor and vulnerable communities. Being a disaster risk reduction humanitarian and development worker for the past forty (40) years, Ms. Aguisanda shared that human rights is part and parcel of development and humanitarian work. Upholding the right to a dignified life, political rights, right to food sufficiency and sovereignty is essential in ensuring genuine humanitarian and development work.

***Human rights should be a mass movement.***

Human rights advocacy must reach not just the urban areas but more importantly, the rural and armed-conflict areas. Human-induced disasters exacerbate dire situations among poor and vulnerable communities and it is a must to defend communities, teach them about Human Rights, connect them with agencies such as the Commission on Human Rights and other NGOs working for human rights causes.

***It is imperative to be vocal about human rights despite receiving threats and being subject to attacks.***

Ms. Aguisanda shared her decades of human rights, development, and humanitarian work with communities and government partners as well as the national and international awards she and her organization have received for the critical engagements and

endeavors they have done for the most vulnerable sectors and communities. Despite these efforts, Ms. Aguisanda and her organization became subject of threats, attacks, and harassment from the government through the military and the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) subjecting her and the organization as terrorists. Their baseless accusations negatively impact the organization's relief and response operations during disaster situations in that the government puts them in a bad light (i.e. perceiving them as aiding rebels).

It is imperative to be vocal about human rights despite receiving threats being subject to attacks.

*"We have to be strong more than ever. Our people need us. We need all the courage we can muster. It is scary, but fear has two meanings. The first is to forget everything and run or face everything and rise. And we must always choose to face everything and rise because we only have one life. And this life is so precious. So, we must choose the most meaningful path."*

### **Sharing of Clar from the Philippine Normal University (PNU).**

***Even future teachers who are studying in state universities and colleges like us are prone to red-tagging. There is a need to extend human rights advocacy within and outside the campus.***



Because of the work that teachers do, there are false accusations that future teachers like us are breeders of the New People's Army (NPA). To avert these baseless accusations, social science majors are aiming to extend human rights advocacy through linking student organizations within the university. On Human Rights Day on December 10, the student organization will kick off human rights education activities within the university. Bootcamps will be set up with regards to sharing information of what human rights is all about. The student organization is also reaching out to students in other colleges or universities in this endeavor of extending human rights advocacy.

As teachers, it is essential to integrate human rights education in all subjects, not just in *Araling Panlipunan*. As such, the student organization will seek to collaborate with CSOs and NGOs for this future endeavor.

## National Challenges and Critical Facilities to Uphold Public Participation

Atty. Maria Sol Taule

*Human Rights Lawyer, Peoro Taule & Associates*

Atty. Maria Sol Taule is a legal counsel of *Karapatan Alliance Philippines*, a non-government organization. The network has documented cases of Human Rights violations in the Philippines, in particular, violations of civil rights. Atty. Taule is also a partner of the Center for Disaster Preparedness, Inc. and of the Peoro Taule & Associates.



### ***The Human Rights Situation in the Philippines***

Since 2016, the Karapatan Alliance Philippines has documented various cases of human rights violations all over the country. As of December 2021, there have been 427 cases of extrajudicial killings. This data, however, do not include cases involving killings related to the War on Drugs. These killings pertain to individuals who were tagged as either terrorists, communists, and supporters in far-flung areas in the provinces where communities were forcibly evacuated and militarization of said areas occur. There are also 19 cases of enforced disappearances and 226 cases of torture incidences.

During the implementation of former President Duterte's War on Drugs policy, the government reported that there were about 6,000 extrajudicial killings in relation to the war on drugs. However, media reports indicate there are 30,000 killings. But even if it's just 6,000, one life is one too many. This is the reason why President Duterte was charged by the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2021. The ICC orders a full-blown investigation on the drug war after judges said that he could be liable for a crime against humanity. Consequently, President Marcos, Jr. did not pick any categorical statement that his administration will stop the War on Drugs. In fact, it's continuing. The policies related to the War on Drugs are still up until today. And President Marcos, in the elections, also said that he will not rejoin the ICC, the Rome Statute.

There's also an attempt in November 2021 to defer the ICC investigation by the Philippine ambassador to the Netherlands, Eduardo Malaya. They had requested the ICC for a deferral, saying the Philippines was keen on ensuring the successful prosecution of cases that have been filed or may be filed before the Philippine National Police members and others in the Philippines' jurisdiction. But in reality, that is not the case.

There's one conviction that happened a few days ago. It involves the killing of this 14-year-old boy in 2017. There's a low-ranking police officer who was convicted for violation of the Anti-Torture Law. But that's about it. There is no superior officer who's been indicted for violating various laws in relation to Human Rights. If you think about it, this low-ranking officer would not have acted if not for the order of his bosses. But the bosses are free and having fun and all they do is put the blame on the poor policeman.

This is just one of the many, many quotes of President Duterte when he was still the president. And he said, “*I will never, never apologize for the deaths of those bastards. Patayin mo ako. Kulungin mo ako. I’ll never apologize. Ano ang pangako ko? Law and order. Drugs, sabi ko, mag-focus ako sa drugs.*”

And President Duterte, at that time, when he says something, it cascades down the communities. When he ordered for all the *tambay* (bystanders) to be arrested, the day after *tambays* were arrested. That’s how dangerous policies, official or unofficial, that came from the mouth of Duterte were. The president is the highest officer of the land.

As of June 2022, there are 800 political prisoners in the Philippines. More than half of that number were arrested during the time of President Duterte. Most of these cases are illegal possession of firearms and explosives. Why? Because it’s easier to plant evidence like guns, bombs, and grenades while one is sleeping in our home. There are political prisoners who are doctors, Human Rights workers, and mothers. Very young activists are also currently detained.

Some of the people who are engaged in the Peace Talks in the Philippines were also detained and killed. Instead of the government addressing the root causes why armed conflicts happen in the Philippines, what they do is arrest the people who are advocating to address the root causes of armed conflicts.

***The sector which is most affected by all of the counter-insurgency operations by the government are the peasants and the indigenous people.***

The reason being is that they are fighting for the right to self-determination and genuine agrarian reform in the rural areas. Forced evacuation of *Lumad* communities in Mindanao was a terrible attack among IP communities. In one case, two young indigenous peoples were thrown in the pit, gaslit their bodies, and burned by the Philippine military. The soldiers thought they were already dead, but the two boys managed to escape. The alliance assisted them to file with the Commission in 2017 after President Duterte assumed office.

***Red-tagging is not something harmless. It is not just something libelous or defamatory. In the Philippines, if you are red-tagged or terrorist-tagged, oftentimes it leads to graver human rights violations. It makes you open to attacks. And what kinds of attacks? The worst, be killed or you can get abducted. You can disappear. You can be charged by various trumped-up charges or fabricated cases. You can rot in jail for non-bailable charges.***

What is red-tagging? A phenomenon of implicating progressive civil group leaders to heinous crimes. Citing the report of the former UN Special Rapporteur Philip Alston, Justice Leonen said that redbaiting is the ‘vilification,’ ‘labeling,’ or guilt by association” of various democratic organizations. Who among us have been red-tagged? Me and many of my colleagues in the Human Rights community. We’re all in this together.

Red-tagging is not something new. It happened before the Duterte administration. But what makes the Duterte administration different is that it has well-oiled machinery and institutions that are specifically tasked to red-rag or vilify people. This is the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC). The budget for NTF-ELCAC is huge. So instead of giving the budget for social services, they're using it to attack civilians. Not just people like us are working in the development community, the Human Rights community, even celebrities are being red-tagged in the Philippines such as Liza Soberano and Angel Locsin.

Red-tagging is being done online and offline. Online, there's a lot of trolls on the internet, faceless on the internet, saying that our work is something bad, that we are enemies of the state. It's really ironic, because in the Philippines if you are doing something good, you will be tagged as a communist. The problem is it comes with danger. But of course, it is a grave concern because colleagues are already attacked. I have a lawyer colleague, Mr. Benjamin Ramos, who was killed in 2017. One of my colleagues in Iloilio, Angelo Guillen, while voting, was stabbed with a screwdriver on his temple. Luckily, he survived. That puts us in a very vulnerable situation.

But in the provinces, there's no better example. This was released by the NTF-ELCAC in 2021 saying that I am a part of the Oplan Delta that aims to overthrow the government. I don't know where they get this information. Three weeks ago, while I'm at home, I received the news from the NTF-ELCAC, particularly by Lorraine Badoy, that I sat down with officers of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and took part in the drafting of the decision of one of the judges in Manila. It's Judge Malagar. This is not true, of course. I have never seen Judge Malagar. I don't know her. I haven't talked to her. So, you would see how government officials concoct stories to spread not just hate but deliberate lies to attack people like us.

Offline attacks are often seen in areas where community workers are working. Some people in towns are on tarpaulins and bond papers as high ranking officers in whatever organization. It endangers human rights and development work. Instead of going around to provide services in our communities, there were deliberate targets of the state forces against workers. With the Anti-Terrorism Law, legal organizations are subject of attacks. The Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, a non-government organization's bank accounts were frozen by the Anti-Money Laundering Council, for allegations of financing terrorism. According to them, the nuns are financing terrorists.

A photo of members of civil society organizations who filed for the Writ of Amparo was shared. The Writ of Amparo is an extraordinary writ that can be availed before the Supreme Court. This is a remedy to avail protection from human rights workers and organizations who are red-tagged by the government.

One of the witnesses in the petition for the Writ of Amparo, Ryan Hubila, was a member of the LGBTQ community. He's supposed to stand as a witness of the Writ of Amparo case that Karapatan filed against certain government officers. A month after, he was killed with Nelly Bagasala. He now cannot possibly testify.

Another photo was shared labeling an innocent person as a personality of the Communist Party of the Philippines. A few months later, he was killed point-blank one night. Until now, nobody knows who the gunman is.

A photo of Dr. Mary Rose Sancelan was also shown. She is from Negros. And written on that paper is her name. She was red-tagged many times in her community as a supporter of the CPP and the NPA. One day, while she was going home with her husband, they were shot. Dr. Sancelan is one of the few doctors who stayed in her community to serve the people there.

A photo of Dr. Maria Lourdes Tangco was also shown. She was also killed at the height of the pandemic. She was red-tagged, and she was killed inside of her house when the AFP and the PNP went to her house.

This is Bernardino Catigas, Sr. was also presented. He was also killed on board a motorcycle. He is a Martial Law survivor. He is a survivor of the Escalante massacre in Negros. And even though he is a survivor, he continued working in the Human Rights Committee up until he was killed. And he was receiving a lot of threats back then. But he was very staunch in his principles and his work as a Human Rights defender.

The Bloody Sunday killings on March 7, 2021 happened where there were 9 IPs from Rizal who were simultaneously killed in the Calabarzon area. Most of them were served with search warrants issued by the Manila and Quezon City courts. They alleged these people as criminals, but these people are members of civil society organizations. Until now, there's no justice for the victims of the Bloody Sunday killings. Apart from those killings, there are many people who were arrested that day on the same allegation. These are the dangers of being an activist in the Philippines.

***Ways Forward – exhaust all possible avenues to exact accountability and strengthen the people's movement into national and international solidarity***

What can we do after hearing all the devastating stories about the situation of Human Rights in the Philippines? It is vital to continue to push for international accountability mechanisms with the UN Human Rights Council and the International Criminal Court. Justice in the Philippines is elusive. It's hard and expensive. As such, there is a need to exhaust all possible avenues to exact accountability. In addition, there is a need to junk the Anti-Terror Law and to abolish the NTF-ELCAC still on their red-tagging spree, day in and day out.

The duty of development and Human Rights workers is to strengthen the people's movement into international solidarity and organize communities from the grassroots, mobilizing them in taking action. As long as there's counterinsurgency operations and NTF-ELCAC that will keep calling people in the communities as communists or terrorists, we will always be endangered.



***The grave human rights situation in the Philippines should not disheartened development, humanitarian, and human rights workers.***

As a collective body pursuing shared aspirations, our solidarity breeds security – secured in the fight against human rights violations.

## Fire starter for Policy Advocacy for Disaster Risk Reduction and Management

Ms. Kriszia Lorrain Enriquez  
Advocacy Convener, AGAP BANTA



Ms. Kriszia Lorrain Enriquez is the Advocacy Convener of *Agap Banta*, a policy advocacy initiative which constitutes a network of DRR experts, practitioners, and former government workers.

### ***Agap Banta's advocacy***

Agap Banta is a policy advocacy initiative. It's a Filipino phrase which means be alert and ready for any threats and risks. It is an open coalition of NGOs and practitioners working in DRRM. It is supported by The Asia Foundation Coalitions for Change program in the Philippines. It advocates for policies that direct investments for high risk local government units (LGUs) and dealing with disasters amidst our COVID-19 pandemic.

Consultations started in 2020 emphasized the need for safe evacuation as a critical disaster preparedness measure in the Philippines. The overlapping nature of disasters is increasing the magnitude of disasters, and together with COVID-19, there is a need for permanent, fit for purpose, and durable evacuation centers.

One of Agap Banta's advocacy work is called "*Kaligtasan para sa mga Bakwit*" or Safety for our Evacuees. This is in response to increasing magnitude of disasters experienced in previous calamities such as the Typhoon Odette to the detriment of the most vulnerable communities. In Siargao Island, a multipurpose covered court used as an evacuation center was destroyed by Typhoon Odette. Based on the government data, the structures being used as evacuation centers for disaster preparedness include the schools, barangay community centers, daycare centers, churches. The evacuation center or permanent evacuation centers that are made fit for purpose are just 3% of the overall list of evacuation centers that are being used. It is a long way to go especially for high risk areas.

One of the advocacy initiatives we are doing is similar to crowd-sourcing on the existing evacuation centers in our own communities. The organization examines or inspects evacuation centers and informs LGUs about the situation of our evacuation centers including its conditions. In this way, we can amplify local voices if we together are able to communicate to government leaders that this is the situation they are facing and this can be improved.

***On the matter of policies, transformative change in our society lies in working with the government and in consultation with the people.***

Strengthening the implementation of the DRRM of the Republic Act 10121 has been on the forefront of the organization's advocacy. Early Warning Systems, evacuation centers, management construction have been emphasized in existing laws. It's just a matter of how to strengthen the implementation of this and how to shift investments towards areas which need it the most. With regard to the policy advocacies based on consultations with the national and local governments and communities, evacuation centers are really needed for that infrastructure. The management, the systems, guidelines have been there, but it's a matter of really providing that needed infrastructure so that the people can be able to evacuate on time and can be able to stay in safe areas during and after disasters.

Systems, procedures, improvement to enhance implementation of DRRM laws such as the guidelines on evacuation center construction and management especially for high-risk LGUs must be in place. We couldn't emphasize the messaging and dissemination of early warning especially for high-risk communities and their LGUs. It is very important that communities are informed of their risks and the LGUs also since disasters have been increasing in magnitude and in occurrences. Damages have been also increasing not only with our infrastructure, but more importantly our livelihood and our source of living.

***There is a need to maximize local DRR funds and other local government resources.***

There is a need to maximize the local DRR funds utilization and other local government resources in order to increase investments for highly vulnerable people or communities to keep them safe and informed.

***What can CSOs and communities do for DRRM?***

Infrastructure is a big investment that the government needs to forge greater protection for local communities. But together, we can disseminate information pertaining to risks (i.e. the value of early warning systems) and to conduct profiling of high-risk communities. Such information is vital for LGU DRR interventions and/or response. In addition, constant coordination especially among local government units and sources, and stakeholders, especially at a community level, is very important.

Relevant technical information from national agencies such as PAG-ASA or PHIVOLCS or local government units must be cascaded to partner communities. It is important to relay their information in such a manner that is understandable by the localities.

## **Sharing by Mr. Ferdinand Escobar**



### ***Disaster Risk Reduction from the lens of a person with disability (PWD)***

Persons with disabilities is a term used to apply to persons with disabilities including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society with others on an equal basis.

On the topic of disaster, we are considered as one of the vulnerable sectors because of the different disabilities that we have. In terms of DRR, in the context of evacuation centers and comfort rooms, it's important to look at the accessibility of these infrastructures. Some of us are bedridden. Disability inclusiveness of early warning systems must be observed.

On the whole scope of DRR, what's important is how the sector is viewed as a priority. Often, we only become the priority in queues. But in terms of response, there are instances that PWDs are not the priority.

### ***Gaps in community organizing and in implementing relevant laws***

In community organizing, it is rare for PWDs in the provinces and in Metro Manila to be organized. It's important that there is a law protecting PWDs such as the Republic Act of 7277 or the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons. However, this law only focuses on the registration of PWDs, providing IDs and wheelchairs. There is a need to deepen the understanding of the needs of the PWDs and at the same time, strengthen their capacities so they can also contribute to the DRR work.

### ***An enabling system or environment is needed for the full realization of PWDs' right to education and health.***

Teaching and learning methods function in a way that is difficult for the sector. There is a need to strengthen inclusive education so that quality learning may be achieved by PWDs. In terms of health, PWDs availing the service of a psychiatrist or a neurologist is costly or expensive. Such systems or environments impede PWDs' access to education and health.

### ***Government intervention is necessary to empower PWDs.***

As the most vulnerable sector, there remain areas where the government is unable to provide services for PWDs especially those living in rural and poor communities. The government must take some initiative to reach out to the PWD sector and implement actions or interventions necessary to empower them.

## Fire starter for Community-based DRRM

Ms. Ma. Bernadette Uy

Communications and Information Coordinator, ACCORD

### ***About the organization***

ACCORD is a national NGO and building resilient communities is its main advocacy. In our project, we always go by the framework of rights-based approach and community-based Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. It means that all our projects and implementations see the community in the middle. There must be an enabling environment for the communities, especially those who are most vulnerable to engage and to have meaningful participation. Everything that the community deserves to have safe and dignified space is their right. It's part of their Human Rights.



### ***Community-based DRR in the context of public health emergencies.***

For the past three years, everything has changed because of the pandemic. The pandemic has introduced the practice of community-based DRR in the context of public health emergencies. As such, there's a need to adapt and adjust project implementations in order to ensure a safe community participation and engagement.

### ***Engaging the communities in a creative manner***

Certain creativity is required for workers to effectively engage communities in vulnerable areas. And this would have been hard if we didn't have an established relationship with the LGUs.

There are different scenarios in the urban and rural areas. In urban areas, restrictions are stricter in terms of mobility or not being able to go out. How do you expect communities to be engaged in trying to combat or to address the pandemic if they themselves cannot participate in the policy-making and community planning? On the other hand, there are different kinds of scenarios in the rural areas where the restrictions are not that enforced.

### ***Pandemic and its impact on community management and engagement***

In a way, with different kinds of guidelines, we also experienced some limitations with regard to the participation of the CSOs in defining and finalizing COVID-19 guidelines. The pandemic was treated as a sole health issue, and often, its impact towards community management and engagement is neglected.

In the same respect, the security issues were also a hurdle in engaging with communities. Even if the organization was not red-tagged, authorities asked, "Where are you coming from? What do you do?" Whenever you try to extend assistance as a humanitarian

worker, those in authority or security forces will still be suspicious about the organization's independence and legality. Hence, there is a need to strengthen engagements with communities and local governments.

***Ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers is also a must.***

Working with the most vulnerable communities, with the indigenous people in rural and far-flung areas, also posed a risk to our staff. But it was incomparable to the risks that the community, especially the IP community face every day.

***Mainstreaming community-based disaster risk reduction in response to recovery phases***

Lastly, on the component of emergency response, we always try to mainstream community-based disaster risk reduction (CBDRRM) in response to recovery phases. But there are times when the priorities of the local government are not really at par with how we try to implement our projects. For example, the emergency response includes a livelihood component for the community. But due to ecosystem protection, the communities, composed of farmers, are not allowed to engage. Those are hurdles when it comes to emergency response.

***Challenges in implementing CBDRRM in the time of COVID-19***

The combination of the pandemic and the complex emergency for the past years somewhat started to limit organizations to engage with the community. But of course, this reality has not been a complete deterrent. It's not just a question of not being allowed to engage with communities but do they have the time and the capacity to engage with organizations especially now with a pandemic. The budget of the local government for pandemic response is depleted. As such, there are times when the budget for local disaster risk reduction is being used to augment costs for pandemic response. So, how a local government and the community themselves are given the chance or the time and the capacity to respond to something like the pandemic and other disasters is complex.

***We think that a safe and secure and dignified society, one that is free and can respond to natural and human-induced hazards, must always recognize the importance of an enabling environment that encourages meaningful participation, particularly of the most vulnerable.***

**Break: Campfire songs**



*“Kawayanan”* originally by Ericson Acosta was sung by CDP’s Advocacy Officer. It was shared that the story of the song revolves around a family living in a farming community who are facing financial difficulties and are experiencing various vulnerabilities.



Mr. Gary Granada sang *“A Pair of Voices”* encouraging practitioners, students, and activists in strengthening their commitment, efforts, and dedication towards the cause of human rights.

### Activity Proper: Kindling and Firewood

The participants brought the *kindling* and *firewood* in the designated *bonfire*. The participants shared issues, challenges, and interventions based on the *burning* issues per theme. They are given a kindling, where the issues, inputs and solutions for different thematic concerns such as risks (white), human rights (pink), DRR (green), peacebuilding (blue), and community organizing (orange) are in written metacards. They were attached and placed to the bonfire.

INPUTS				
RISKS	HUMAN RIGHTS	DRR	PEACEBUILDING	COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development aggression (multiple DRR, eviction, etc.)</li> <li>Natural hazards (volcanic eruption, flood, typhoon, earthquake)</li> <li>Fear to bring virus to people plus participation of CSOs in refinement of guidelines</li> <li>The pandemic lessens the involvement of people (community-based planning).</li> <li>Evacuation centers are just 3% of the total</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Linkage to other NGOs working for Human Rights</li> <li>Establishing linkages nationally and internationally (stakeholders)</li> <li>Promulgate Human Rights Laws for the oppressed!</li> <li>Localized, contextualized Human Rights education</li> <li>Promote early childhood education on Human Rights.</li> <li>Abolish NTF-ELCAC.</li> <li>There must be a mass movement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stop romanticizing Filipino resiliency.</li> <li>Evacuation Center Bill.</li> <li>Sense of Urgency.</li> <li>Provide an early warning system and risk information at the community level.</li> <li>Inform on EW and other information, education, and communication (IEC) materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The choice is yours.</li> <li>Include peacebuilding advocacy in the unpaid work of women (at home and in the community)</li> <li>Resume GRR-NDP peace talks over NTF-ELCAC</li> <li>Space for Dialogue</li> <li>Bottom-up support approach to suppress anti-insurgency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We must teach them to stand their ground backed with science and evidence.</li> <li>Government attacks are reactions to the people's initiatives in organizing themselves.</li> <li>Highlight the importance of community organizers to attain sustainable development goals, esp. in the academe.</li> <li>Science-based environmentally-centered community organizing</li> <li>Unity of the people will end the threat to the community.</li> </ul>



<p>population of evacuees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Illegal eviction</li> <li>● Less priority on PWDs during response.</li> <li>● Military interrogation of the community workers</li> <li>● Violation of dignity</li> <li>● Less participation of PWD in organizing</li> <li>● Lack of capacity building for PWDs</li> <li>● Peace is hard to find, especially in the fringes of society.</li> <li>● Lack of health support to PWDs</li> <li>● The government does not go to the PWDs.</li> <li>● Data from the government on the building structure of the evacuation centers are not receiving good response in terms of implementation.</li> <li>● Schools and other learning facilities are still being used as evacuation centers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Protect and defend Human Rights defenders and organizers.</li> <li>● Incorporate Human Rights with disaster preparedness.</li> <li>● Continuous peace talks with the armed struggle</li> <li>● Capacity development for existing Human Rights Development Network and support for locally-led</li> <li>● Prioritizing civic education</li> <li>● Expose, oppose, and propose.</li> <li>● Extend advocacy work outside of the university.</li> <li>● Reach out to students (integrating HR education).</li> <li>● PNU chapter on Human Rights</li> <li>● Utilize social media platforms to reach wider audiences.</li> <li>● Hold the NTF-ELCAC officials accountable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community-based: Approach the community in the middle.</li> <li>● Policy Advocacy Initiatives on DRRM</li> <li>● Shift investments to areas where it is needed the most based on the studies of the government and CSOs.</li> <li>● Safe evacuation amidst the pandemic</li> <li>● Construction of evacuation centers for the most vulnerable sectors</li> <li>● Capacity building for the PWD on the DRRM and Human Rights concerns</li> <li>● Make a clear policy for PWDs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Break utilitarianism.</li> <li>● Peace talks and recognition of the ICC</li> <li>● Inclusion of marginalized sectors in peace talks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development without displacement (e.g. in-city relocation)</li> <li>● Consolidate change.</li> <li>● Nationalist, democratic, mass-oriented approaches</li> <li>● Break the culture of fear and silence.</li> <li>● Community organizing conversation with the stakeholders</li> <li>● Intersectionality and solidarity “no class whatsoever”</li> <li>● Equal treatment of people and community</li> <li>● Organizing the urban poor in high-risk areas without land</li> <li>● People’s plan is an alternative plan to the government’s plan.</li> <li>● Democracy, freedom, and Human Rights are now under siege. Now more than ever, we need a strong movement and regulate it.</li> <li>● Climate issues are community issues.</li> <li>● Organize the community.</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Anti-Terrorism Act is a misinterpretation of the government.</li> <li>● Not everyone is aware of Human Rights</li> <li>● Increasing magnitude of disasters with Covid-19</li> <li>● Failure of Human Rights Education</li> <li>● Red-tagging for development workers</li> <li>● Government constructed a self-made river.</li> <li>● Threats of harassment of CSOs (in all forms)</li> <li>● CSOs don't have an audience.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Red-tagging policy within university</li> <li>● Undergraduate Student Government</li> <li>● Embed the truth in the education system and promote critical thinking of the students (Development of Martial Law and Human Rights elective).</li> <li>● Respect and promote workers' freedom of association.</li> <li>● Junk Executive Order 70.</li> <li>● Abolish NTF-ELCAC &amp; JIPCO/AIPPO.</li> <li>● International Labor Organization High-Level Mission in PH</li> <li>● Pass the Anti-Union Interference Bill.</li> <li>● Create accountability system mechanisms in the UN platform.</li> <li>● Strengthen and fight for Human Rights.</li> <li>● Partnership with other organizations: a</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Integrate social services and climate change.</li> <li>● Inclusivity for all</li> <li>● Integrate Gender and Development and Evacuation (e.g. provide kits for women).</li> <li>● More inclusive and indiscriminating disaster response</li> <li>● Policy Advocacy Initiatives Correction</li> <li>● Disaster response should not be a burden to the individual.</li> <li>● Strengthen community-based disaster management to increase community resilience.</li> <li>● There is peace if there is freedom and equality.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strengthening and capacitating PWD through community organizing</li> <li>● Access to safety, security, and protection</li> <li>● Resources pool</li> </ul>
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Human Rights patterned to Catholic social teaching for conducting social transformation with students

- Dialogue for Nation Building and ongoing conversations among students, faculty, and staff within university regarding social issues
- Human Rights education (online videos)
- Include technical people in the community in doing the IEC materials.

- Communicate in laymanized form.





**Firewood Activity Proper**

**In photos: Participants during the Kindling and**

**Feedback**

***Bern from the BPO Industry Employees' Network***



Human rights when integrated across various policies and programs will be beneficial for the Filipino people in general, and for the oppressed and marginalized sectors in particular.

As a pre-service teacher, this conversation will help us provide liberal, quality, and transformative human rights education towards the holistic development of not just ourselves but also to our future students.

***Chael, a PNU student***



***Ms. Kamille Deligente from the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights***



We, from a labor NGO, document and receive daily reports of labor organizers being hounded house to house by state forces. It remains a struggle to provide psychosocial services and legal support. This activity is a chance for us to connect with other organizations and learn from their strategies.

**Ms. Minet Aguisanda**



The most important thing to do is to continue giving our dedication and commitment as we encourage others in doing what is right. It is for the poor and the oppressed who compose the majority of the Filipino people and even the world. It is also important that we network with international organizations who share the same vision and mission.

It is important to develop new blood or generations of humanitarian and development workers. It is necessary for the sustainability of projects and organizations.

**Ms. Jessica, human rights activist**

What is our rallying point where we can all unite to address one obstacle?

How can we continue our DRR work when there are human rights violations happening?



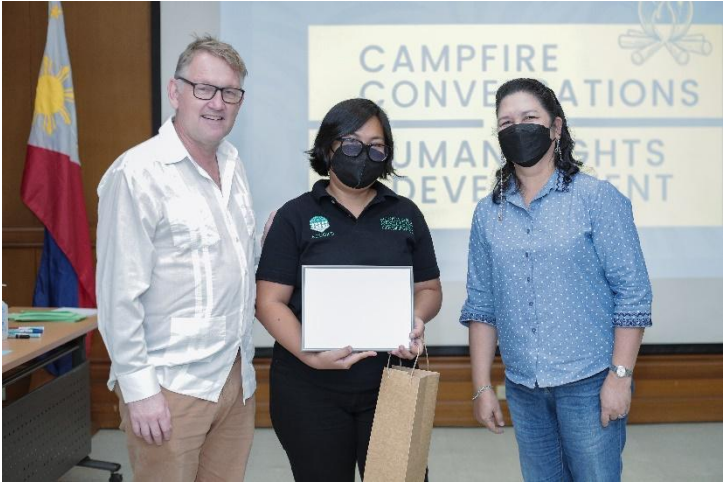
**Mr. Ping Fampulme, National Convenor of the Aksyon sa Kahandaan sa Kalamidad at Klima (AKKMA)**



Burning issues are cross-cutting issues. We cannot talk about human rights without discussing peace. We cannot work political interventions without talking about community organizing.

**Tokens of Appreciation**

The tokens of appreciation were handed to the fire starters and the gifts to the foreign partners were also given.





## Message of Goodwill

Mr. Erik Wendt

Asian Legal Resource Centre/ Asian Human Rights Commission



This is the first time I've been in a Campfire Conversation, and it's been really inspiring for us.

The famous long jumper Bob Beamon, when he won in Mexico City said, "whatever I do, I never only do it half-way". And I think what I hear from you, some of you who have worked for 40 years in human rights and trying to help urban poor, rural poor in so many ways. I think that is really, really encouraging and very inspiring.