

Republic of the Philippines  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Diliman, Quezon City

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**HUMAN RIGHTS CENTERS MANAGEMENT OFFICE**  
*Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights*

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CGEWHR 30F-2021-01

**MEMORANDUM**

**FOR : THE COMMISSION EN BANC**

**THRU : KAREN GOMEZ-DUMPIT**  
**Focal Commissioner on Women**



**: THE COMMISSION SECRETARY**

**DR. RENANTE A. BASAS**  
Director, HRCMO



**FROM : ATTY. KRISSI SHAFFINA TWYLA A. RUBIN**  
OIC, CGEWHR

**SUBJECT : ADDITIONAL GEWHRC REPORTS/SITUATIONERS**  
**FOR APPROVAL**

**DATE : 10 October 2021**

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The Center submits the following situationers and reports for the approval of the Commission en Banc. These reports have been previously submitted but has been subjected to editing prior to submission to the en Banc. For consideration

**1. Community Based Peer Monitoring of WWDs (2020)** - This is the edited version of report previously submitted first quarter of this year. It presents the results of the Community Based peer monitoring of women with disabilities. These results have been validated and presented already to key agencies like DSWD, DILG and NCDA.

**Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pqA1VeOHETXwr\\_oEHxs9bbMMc6FXeK1ZhQzDxyyc7dw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1pqA1VeOHETXwr_oEHxs9bbMMc6FXeK1ZhQzDxyyc7dw/edit?usp=sharing)

**2 Kwentong Krisis at Bahaghari: Stigma and Resilience of LGBTIQI During the Pandemic and the New Normal** - This is a compilation of submitted narratives from

LGBTQI individuals showing the impact of the pandemic in the LGBTQI community and organizations, the continuing experience of stigma and discrimination, and stories of resilience. It renders visible experiences of LGBTQI persons and organizations during the pandemic and new normal. These narratives have been published as social media cards last Pride 2020 in the Commission's website.

**Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1\\_3pvHoD2aY\\_M7pQRtXOUzfSQbtdnA9rXlpxTvO0RjTI/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1_3pvHoD2aY_M7pQRtXOUzfSQbtdnA9rXlpxTvO0RjTI/edit?usp=sharing)

**3. Bearing of COVID-19 Pandemic on women vis-a-vis the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 (2020)** - This is a CHR-GEWHRC Commissioned research surveying the bearing of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals number #5 on Gender Equality. The rich desk review ends with proposed areas for research and actions for government agencies.

**Link:**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PF8xSSo3urNDRsQfJBvvQG6EJyEd5944PB5f3BSmEig/edit?usp=sharing>

**4. Gender Ombud Situationer 2020** - This updates the 2nd and 3rd Q report and consolidated data for the entire year. It includes updated data on GBV from the reporting portal as well as comparison of GBV data from the PNP.

**Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jQjKZeE1URV3tBYdw\\_\\_c\\_9Nd2Gs6zwBzIBM2bxtCSHM/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jQjKZeE1URV3tBYdw__c_9Nd2Gs6zwBzIBM2bxtCSHM/edit?usp=sharing)

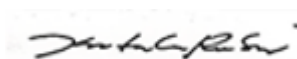
**5. Gender Ombud Situationer First Semester of 2021** - This situationer provides an analysis of continuing gender issues with the continuing onslaught of the pandemic in 2021. It updates and builds on the 2020 report and incorporates some of the submissions from regional offices,

**Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V8mWZNkLy3k0JfzprNxRw5\\_2TMDLj1Npqv85LoV3aqY/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V8mWZNkLy3k0JfzprNxRw5_2TMDLj1Npqv85LoV3aqY/edit?usp=sharing)

The Center looks forward to the favorable consideration of these submission to the En Banc. Lastly, the Center requests that should there be edits and comments, we request as much as possible that they be directly inserted in the document either as corrections or comments.

We also would like to follow up on the Status of the approval of the National Inquiry Report on the RH of Women with Disabilities, submitted by the Center way back.



**Krissi Shaffina Twyla A. Rubin**



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES  
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

**RESOLUTION**  
**CHR (V) No. POL2022-005**

The Commission **RESOLVES** to **ADOPT** the following reports, submitted by the Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights Center, Human Rights Centers Management Office:

1. Community Based Peer Monitoring of WWDs (2020);
2. Kwentong Krisis at Bahaghari: Stigma and Resilience of LGBTQI During the Pandemic and the New Normal;
3. Bearing of COVID-19 Pandemic on women vis-a-vis the Achievement of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 (2020);
4. Gender Ombud Situationer 2020; and
5. 1<sup>st</sup> Semester 2021 Gender Ombud Report.

**SO RESOLVED.**

Done this 12<sup>th</sup> day of January 2022, Quezon City, Philippines.

  
**KAREN S. GOMEZ DUMPIT**  
Commissioner

  
**GWENDOLYN LL. PIMENTEL-GANA**  
Commissioner

  
**LEAH C. TANODRA-ARMAMENTO**  
Commissioner

  
**ROBERTO EUGENIO T. CADIZ**  
Commissioner

ATTESTED BY:

  
**MARIA ASUNCION I. MARIANO-MARAVILLA**  
Commission Secretary

***CHR: Dignity of all***



**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**CHR Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights Center**

*Stigma and Resilience of LGBTQI During the Pandemic and the New Normal:*  
**Kwentong Krisis at Bahaghari**

Compilation of Stories for the Project for Pride 2020

**June 2020**

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**RHOM DELA ROSA**

**“JUAN”** (JUAN SPARK YOUTH LEADERS)

**“SUSHMITA”**

**“TRICIA”**

#### **IV. *Rainbow Stories: Resilience and Solidarity***

**REYEL XAVIER INOCENCIO**

(PIONEER FILIPINO TRANSGENDER MEN MOVEMENT)

**GALANG (PHILIPPINES)**

**MACKY RIVERA** (LGBTQI+ CITY OF MALOLOS)

**“REB-REB”** (BULSU BAHAGHARI)

**RYAN MIGUEL D. RIVERA** (THE INITIATIVE PH - DEPARTMENT OF SOGIE RIGHTS)

**RO ALONDAY “RO BOAT”**

**LOVEYOURSELF, INC.**

**JOSEPHINE BAUTISTA**

## **Message from the Focal Commissioner**

It is such a pleasure for the Commission, as Gender Ombud, to present this collection - rainbow stories on the impact of the pandemic on the LGBTQI community. This collection highlights not only stories of stigma and discrimination, they also include stories of resilience and solidarity of the LGBTQI community. As a collection, it is aptly titled ***“Kwentong Krisis at Bahaghari: Stigma and Resilience of LGBTQI During the Pandemic and the New Normal.”***

As a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) and as Gender Ombud, the Commission is fully committed towards advocating for the full protection and respect for the human rights of LGBTQI persons. We have consistently supported the passage of Anti-Discrimination legislations including the SOGIE Equality Bill. From our experience in working alongside CSOs and fellow advocates in pushing for the passage of the bill, legislators have always asked for data and research to justify the passage of the law. They always asked the Commission either for reports or cases investigated or provided legal assistance. Knowing this, and further knowing that LGBTQI individuals are among those who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic - the Commission has undertaken this effort of documenting the impact of the pandemic on the community. This collection, submitted and shared by members of the LGBTQI individuals and LGBTQI organization provides accounts from the ground. They render visible the impact of the pandemic - one narrative at a time- and also highlight stories of courage, of solidarity and of resilience. Surely, they will support our advocacy for the passage of the SOGIE Equality Bill, and more importantly, they

call into account our State duty bearers to ensure that COVID-19 response and interventions, take into account the experiences of the community.

I thank all individuals and organizations who responded to our call for submissions. Thank you for your trust and thank you for sharing your stories with us. Together, with this collection, we are able to respond to the call of the Independent Experts in their joint statement for IDAHOTB of 2020- *that we should take steps in order to render visible the suffering and resilience of LGBT persons*. Lastly, we thank our coordinator for this collection, Reyel Inocencio, a member of the LGBTQI community and a proud member of Pioneer Filipino Transgender Men Movement; and Rosanne Aldeguer, also a member of the LGBTQI community who volunteered to illustrate our social media cards for Krisis at Bahaghari.

*Sa gitna ng krisis, may bahaghari pa rin, at tuloy tuloy ang ating laban.*

**Karen Gomez-Dumpit**

## **Introduction**

As Gender Ombud, and in observance of Pride 2020, the Commission on Human Rights partnered with LGBTQI individuals, organizations, and communities in gathering stories of stigma and resilience during the COVID-19 Pandemic and the new normal. We called this project *“Krisis at Bahaghari: Stories of Stigma and resilience of the LGBTQI community during pandemic and the new normal”*

Telling stories is important, especially stories from the community as they navigate and continue to navigate the challenges brought upon by the current pandemic. Last International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia 2020, the Commission partnered with UNDP and Lagablab in holding a webinar that focused on the Situation of the LGBTQI Community during the COVID-19 pandemic.



During the webinar, the Commission, through Commissioner Karen Gomez-Dumpit, has then stressed how different studies have already highlighted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic to the LGBTQI community. LGBT foundation for instance highlighted how LGBTQI people are more likely to be isolated and lacking support during enforced quarantine periods; how they are more likely to experience domestic abuse as a result of containment/social isolation measures; how some trans and non-binary individuals would have experienced suspension of hormone replacement therapy (HRTs) and surgeries; and how they would more likely to have poor mental health.

Outright international, in their research covering 60 interviews in 38 countries also highlighted how the pandemic amplified the vulnerabilities of the LGBTQI community. It focused on seven impact areas: in the devastation of livelihoods and means of income/economic stability of LGBTQI; disruptions in accessing needed healthcare; Elevated risk of domestic and family violence; social isolation and increased anxiety; scapegoating and societal discrimination – where in some countries members of the community are blamed for the pandemic; abuse of state as a result of containment measures; and lastly, the impact of the crisis on LGBTQI organizations.

During the webinar on LGBTQI Filipinos during pandemic, speakers from Galang, Lagablab, Curls (Cebu), and LGBT Mujer Inc. (Zamboanga) further highlighted the disproportionate impact of the pandemic to members of the LGBTQI community in the country, including economic impact, the rising stigma discrimination and violence, as well as stories of solidarity and resilience.

Considering the continuing stories of stigma, discrimination, and yet also of resilience and solidarity, the Commission sought to continue the effort through *Krisis and Bahaghari*. An open call for submission of stories was made and LGBTQI individuals, not necessarily organized, were given the chance to submit stories and given the choice to remain anonymous. Consent for the publication of stories and use of images were also duly obtained. During Pride Month, some of the stories were published in the Commission's facebook page, and continued to be published in time for the celebration of UP Pride in October 2020.

Through this project, the Commission as Gender Ombud, did not only gather stories, it was also able to enhance partnership with LGBTQI organizations all over the country and render issues and voices of the community visible and heard. In this collection, we have gathered the responses of individuals to these questions:

1. Impact: As a member of the LGBTQI community, how has the COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal affected you? How about the LGBTQI community?
2. Stigma and Discrimination. Would you like to share an experience of stigma and discrimination against LGBTQI during this crisis and the ensuing new normal? How did you respond to this?
3. Resilience and Solidarity. How has the LGBTQI community shown resilience and solidarity during the crisis and the ensuing new normal?

It is the Commission's hope that through this collection of responses and stories, the Commission responds to the challenge posed by UN Independent Experts in their joint statement for IDAHOTB ---- of rendering visible the suffering and resilience of LGBT persons. The Commission further hopes to respond to their call to exert all efforts necessary, including research, legislations, etc to ensure that this public health emergency will neither exacerbate existing inequalities and stigma nor lead to more violence and their message to recognize the experience of the LGBT community as one of resilience and hope, and the call for State authorities to listen to the particular concerns of LGBT persons, and respect their expertise over their own lives and communities.

***Rainbow Stories: Impact of the pandemic on LGBTQI community***

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates pre-existing inequalities, and its disproportionate impact on marginalized groups has been well documented. In this section, we share the submissions - the stories of LGBTQI individuals and organizations as they share

how the pandemic affected them as individuals and as organizations advocating for the rights of LGBTQI.

We thank members of Pinoy FTM, Galang, Love Yourself, The Initiative Ph, BuSu Bahaghari and the individuals who contributed to this section. While we know of the impact of the pandemic to the LGBTQI community, including loss of income and employment, impact on health, increased risk of violence and mental health issues during lockdowns - the accounts of individuals and organizations in this section - their stories, render these more concrete.

In this section, we will read personal accounts of members of the LGBTI community as they share how the pandemic affected them on multiple fronts, how it compounded pre-existing challenges and made daily existence even more difficult. Particularly, stories shared the impact of the pandemic on LGBTQI persons' employment, their ability to earn and contribute to the family expense, their access to health services including access to hormone therapies, and impact to their mental health and the increased risk/fear of family violence. Insights from organizations and individual advocates also highlight how the pandemic has changed and challenged traditional ways of organizing and advocating. They also show how the militaristic approach to the pandemic threaten LGBTQI organizations in their right to organize and freely express grievance against the government. Accounts of organizations also highlight the challenges and the ways that they have creatively and collectively coped and responded - including the need to recognize and respond to the needs of the community, and to find creative ways to continue connecting amidst the digital divide.

I

**KC**

**Transgender man**

**Pioneer Filipino Transgender men Movement (PFTM)**

Ako si KC, isang transgender man at ito po ang aking istorya. Ako po ay isang government contractual employee. Nakatira po ako kasama ang aking girlfriend at ang aming anak. Lubos akong naapektuhan ng COVID-19 Pandemic at ang aking pamilya.

Sa ngayon po ay lubog kami sa daming utang dahil hindi ako nakatanggap ng pinansyal na ayuda galing sa aming barangay. Kakarampot lang ang aking sahod sa trabaho at hindi nagkakasya sa amin ng aking gf, dahil sa ako lang sa aming dalawa ang nakakapagtrabaho. May nakasanla rin sya kaya ako lang ang sumasapo ng gastusin sa bahay, kuryente, at tubig.

Nung nakaraang buwan ay namatay ang aking lola. Dahil sa hirap ay hindi namin sya agad nakuha sa freezer at lumubo ang kanyang katawan. Hirap na hirap ang aming pamilya para lamang maiburol nang maayos ang lola ko. Dahil sa pag-aasikaso sa labi ng lola ko, nabangga pa ng kotse ang aking nanay. Hindi biro ang pag aayos namin dahil sa kawalan din ng masasakyan, kaya nagrenta na lang ng kotse ang nanay ko

Ngayon, nagkaroon ng 11 positibo sa COVID19 sa aming barangay. Kaya napailalim ang pamilya ko sa hard lockdown. Magkakasama roon ang aking mga magulang, kapatid, pinsan, at mga pamangkin. Hindi ako pwedeng sumama sa kanila dahil inaasahan din nila ako na makapasok sa trabaho, dahil no work no pay kami. Dagdag pa nito, kapag nalalaman na sa barangay na kami na yun nakatira, pinandirihan kami ng mga tao at iniisip na may COVID-19 na rin kami.

Buti na lang ay nagagamit ko ang motor ng aking pinsan upang pumasok sa trabaho at ibili sila ng grocery dahil simula ng sunday ay 14 days pa silang nakalockdown. Sa opisina may mga mabubuting loob na nagbibigay ng baon para makakain ako.

## II

### **ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC)**

ASC conducted a rapid assessment involving LGBTIQ groups from 8 countries in ASEAN. We were saddened with the findings because fellow LGBTIQ groups and activists are facing serious challenges. Not all groups are resilient to withstand the crisis. Many faced economic demands to respond to the financial or material needs of their constituents. Many groups who rely on short-term or project-based funding had little resources to stretch. LGBTIQ activists who themselves faced economic woes and mental health issues are also pressed to work for the well-being of fellow LGBTIQ folks. We also found the strong demand to shift activism into on-line spaces, which requires new skills, resources and adequate technology. We cannot just say move everything on-line; we have to be mindful of the digital divide within our community.

If there is hope, that will be the continuous acts of solidarity among LGBTIQ organizations. We should find ways to ensure that fellow LGBTIQ folks have jobs or access to livelihood, remain safe and secure from domestic violence and from aggressions by state forces, have access to inclusive health and well-being programs, and remain energized as we continuously call for government's human rights accountability. Collectively, we shall survive.

**III.**

**Austin**  
**Homosexual cis-gender man**  
**BuSU Bahaghari**

Sa patuloy pa ring paglobo ng bilang ng COVID19 cases, talamak pa rin ang patuloy na pagreredtag sa mga progresibong aktibistang mag-aaral. Ako si Austin, isang homosexual cis-gender man ay nasa kolehiyo na at kumukuhang Bachelor of Arts in Broadcasting. Pangarap ko kasing maging isang mamamahayag balang araw. Hindi dahil trip ko lang bagkus ito ang gusto ko.

Bago pa man naglockdown ang Pilipinas, nakalipad na mula Hong Kong ang aking tito na OFW. Suportado niya ang aking pamilya pati na rin ang aking pag-aaral. Kung tutuusin, tinuturing agad ako na bread winner sa amin.

Subalit ng isang araw, kinausap ako ng aking tito tungkol sa aking pagiging aktibista. Nais nya akong patigilin, hindi sa pag-aaral, kundi sa pagiging aktibista/rallyista. Ano raw ang makukuha ko sa pagpoprotesta... Matalino raw ako subalit hindi ko raw ako nag-iisip. Na 'brain wash na raw ako ng aking sinalihang grupong ito, dagdag pa nya. Nagalit daw kasi ng makita nya ang mga Facebook posts and shares ko tungkol sa Activism.

Habang pinagalitan at pinagsabihan ako ng aking tito, hindi man lang nya pinakinggan ang aking paliwanag.

Pagkatapos akong kausapin, naiyak ako, dinamdam ko ang mga binatang salita sa'kin. Hindi nag online sa social media, na depressed at muntik mag suicide.

Simula ng araw na pinagsabihan ako ng aking tito, itinigil ko na ang pagpopost at pagshe'share sa Facebook na may kinalaman sa Activism, sabi ko isip ko, 'kung kailan Pride Month doon pa ako hindi makakapag-ingay sa Social Media?' subalit ko naman sa sarili kailan man ay hindi tutuldukan ang aking pagiging aktibista sapagkat walang mali sa paglaban, may mali kaya tayo lumalaban.

Bilang isang future media practitioner at bilang isang miyembro ng LGBTQ+, hangga't may karapatang pantao na inaabuso, hangga't may karapatan tayong pilit na ipinagkakait, huwag tayong manahimik bagkus atin itong isulat at ihayag ang bulok na sistemang nangyayari sa bansa. Sulong! Huwag patinag!

## **IV**

**Mier dela Cruz**

**The Initiative Philippines - Department of SOGIE Rights**

As a member and an ally of the LGBTQIA+, community, I, for instance, face hindrances that prevent me to cope in the new normal brought by the pandemic.

My school has been my second home. It is where I found a community that has opened its arms for members of the LGBTQIA+ individuals like me. There I met people whom I can call my shelter whenever I face gender-based discrimination in my own home. In school, I am also much more comfortable in showing my “true colors” – a persona that I can proudly say “this is me”.

However, now that universities and academic institutions are prohibiting physical classes and are instead promoting online learning, I am now physically disconnected with the home where I can bring out my true persona without judgements and discrimination. Sadly, for LGBTQIA+ members like me who take shelter in communities within academic institutions, the new normal cut our physical ties with our second home where we feel safe, connected, and accepted.

**V**

**Rustom Licuanan**  
**Transgender man**  
**Pioneer Filipino Transgender man Movement**

Ako si Rustom, isang transgender man. Simula noong lockdown noong March, hindi na ko makauwing Cavite. Pahirapan ng makukuha ng masasakyan, napakamahal pa ng pamasaha. Kaya ngayon naabutan kami ng asawa ko ng lockdown sa dito sa Mandaluyong kung saan nangungupahan lang kami. Naubos na ang advance deposit namin kaya eto, nangutang kami sa kapatid ko para sa upa namin ngayong June.

Ngayon, hindi ako nakakapasok sa trabaho dahil sa health conditions ko. Dahil isa ako sa mga vulnerable ngayon sa pandemyang ito. Kung kaya't ang asawa ko muna ang nagtataguyod sa aming dalawa.

Mahirap kasi bukod sa pang araw-araw naming gastusin, kasama pa sa gastos namin ang mga gamot ko. Gusto ko mang pumasok na sa trabaho, hanggang ngayon hindi pa rin ako nabibigyan ng schedule sa pagpasok ko. Dagdag pa nila kaya hindi pa nila ako nabibigyan ng schedule, ay dahil may mga *health protocols* silang sinusunod sa ngayon. Hindi rin naman ako makapag *Work From Home* dahil hindi naman ito applicable sa aming company, *production* ang nature ng aming trabaho.



Gusto ko ring subukang mag *online job* pero wala naman akong magamit na computer o laptop para run. Kaya ang asawa ko na lang ang natitira naming pag-asa sa araw-araw. Hindi sumasapat sa aming dalawa kung ang asawa ko lang ang naghahanap buhay.

Hindi ko alam ang gagawin sakín ng kumpanya ko. Hindi nila ko mabigyang linaw kung papasok pa ba ko o tatanggalin na nila ko. Nung bago pa lang maglockdown, gusto ko nang mag early retirement gawa ng aking sakit. Kaso napag abutan ako nitong sakuna.

Wala rin kaming natanggap na tulong o ayuda mula sa gobyerno, kaya hanggang ngayon lumalaban kami para mabuhay, araw-araw.

## **VI**

### **Yham Escleto Transgender man**

Ang pangalan ko ay Yham Escleto, ito ang storya ko bilang isang transgender man sa panahon ng COVID-19.

Malaki ang pasasalamat ko sa Diyos na kahit kami ay naghihikahos ngayon ay pinapatnubayan pa rin kami ng Panginoon at ang pamilya ko ay ligtas, malusog, lalo na sa panahon ng nakamamatay na virus na ito.

Noong simula noong lockdown nung March 15, tumigil ako sa pamamasada ng tricycle. Nangangamba ako sa kakainin naming pamilya. Lalo na, sa kasawiang palad ay hindi kami natanggap sa ayudang SAP mula sa DSWD.

Buti na lamang ay noong mag GCQ na ay pinabalik na ulit kami sa kalsada upang maghanap buhay. Mahirap dahil may pangaba ako lagi sa kalusugan ko dahil lagi akong nasa labas. Bukod pa rito ay kakarampot lamang ang naiuuwi ko ngayon sa pamilya ko, nasa

halagang 150 pesos lang kada araw. Sabi ko sa sarili ko, kailangan kong tiyagain, kailangan kong pag tiisan para lang may maihain ako sa hapag kainan.

Sampu kaming magkakapatid, karamihan sa kanila may mga asawa't pamilya na rin. Mga senior citizen na rin ang mga magulang ko kaya't nakasalalay din sila sa kin. Dahil sa pandemya, hindi pa rin naman kami araw-araw na nakakapamasada. Kaya puro utang na lang ako sa mga kaibigan ko, pakapalan ng mukha para sa sikmurang kumakalam.

Kinakabahan din ako. Dahil sa pagbabanat ng buto, humihina ang resistensya ko. Mabilis ako magkasipon. Kaya araw-araw kong dasal sa Diyos na wag naman sana ako ang tamaan. Papaano na ang pamilya ko. Meron din akong sariling pamilya, ang girlfriend ko at ang tatlo nyang anak. Sinusuportahan ko rin ang dalawa sa mga kapatid ko. Kaya hindi ako dapat magkasakit. Nag eexercise rin ako para lumakas kahit papano.

Pinasok ko na rin ang pag gugupit ng buhok. Dahil sa nakaraang lockdown, maraming nagpapaservice sa akin. Kaya pasalamat ako may dagdag na budget ito para samin, dahil hindi kami mabubuhay sa pamamasada ko lang ngayon ng tricycle.

Hindi ko na rin maisingit sa bundok ng bayarin ang T shot ko. Dapat nga ay nakaschedule ako magpa laboratory test, pero dahil din sa kakapusan, wala, di ko pa napapasa sa doctor ko. Nanghihiram pa ko sa ng pera para lang makabili ako ng shot.

Kailangan kong tibayan pa lalo ang aking puso at maging matatag. Dahil maraming umaasa sa akin. Sila ang nagbibigay ng inspirasyon at lakas upang gawin ko ang lahat ng aking makakaya, mabigyan lang ng magandang buhay ang aking pamilya. Gabayan sana nawa ako lagi ng Panginoon.

## **VII**

**Cai De Leon**

**Queer**

**Juan Spark Youth Leaders**

Ako si Cai De Leon, and I'm Queer, at ito ang aking pananaw sa *Impact* ng Pandemya sa LGBTQI+ community.

Nang dahil sa pandemiyang ito, kanselado ang taunang Pride March--- ito ang pinaka-highlight ng Pride Month para sa aming mga miyembro ng LGBTQ+ community sapagkat nagsasama-sama ang lahat ng mga kasapi at mga ally sa isang pangmalakihang protesta para sa pantay-pantay na karapatan, pagtigil sa diskriminasyon at karahasan na hinaharap

namin araw-araw. Nang dahil din sa pandemiya, online na lang namin idinaan ang aming mga hinanaing. Ngunit, nagkaroon pa rin ng mga programa itinatag ng Metro Manila Pride.

## **VIII**

### **Love Yourself, Inc.**

LoveYourself is a community-based non-profit organization that caters to sexual health, trans health, and mental wellness initiatives. Our clients are mostly members of the LGBTQIA+ community because HIV is often attached to the community. As a known service

provider for HIV-related services, the organization has to respond as fast as possible to the challenges posed by the "new normal" situation. In the wake of two pandemics – HIV and COVID-19, our resilience and passion have prevailed by innovating programs to continue serving our clients. We quickly shifted our services online. This way, every client can properly observe COVID-19 pre-assessment and physical distancing while ensuring safe engagements with our friendly volunteers and staff for their needs.

At the onset of the community quarantine, LoveYourself launched Xpress for medicine refills, iCON for consultation, acXess for ambulatory services, SelfCare for introducing HIV self-screening, and Booking for an online appointment system. We see these recent hurdles as opportunities for us to grow and go the extra mile for and with our stakeholders and partners because addressing HIV does not stop even with COVID-19. We cannot let our community, especially our largest supporter - the LGBTQIA+ community, build their anxieties, fears, and doubts just because COVID happened. We are mostly concerned for our people living with HIV (PLHIV) clients, some of whom are LGBTQIA members. Because of their immunocompromised condition, they needed extra care. Now more than ever, they needed our support.

## **II. Rainbow Stories: Stigma and Discrimination**

COVID 19 exacerbates pre-existing stigma and discrimination. Persistence of stigma and discrimination also impact access of LGBTQI individuals to much needed relief, social protection, health and other services. Research by Outright, for instance has highlighted how the pandemic amplified vulnerabilities of LGBTQI community, and that this included experiences of scapegoating and societal discrimination. This is also shown in the report by Curls of Cebu during a webinar conducted by the Commission - Curls shared how in one community in Cebu, members of the LGBTQI were blamed for the COVID-19 virus. Monitoring of the Commission itself also revealed discriminatory punishment meted out against members of the LGBTQI community. All these attest to persistence of stigma and discrimination amidst the pandemic.

In this section, we highlight stories and accounts of stigma and discrimination. We read of members of the community experiencing challenges in accessing needed hormone therapy, we read stories of exclusion from government provided social amelioration programs, we read of violence and discrimination in online spaces, and of the mental health impact of the pandemic.

As part of the Commission's response to the pandemic, we highlighted the need to ensure gender-responsive and intersectional interventions to the COVID-19 Pandemic. To ensure that this is mainstreamed in other government agencies, the Commission partnered with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) in the issuance of a Joint Memorandum Circular to such effect. This is important as we can see in the stories and accounts of LGBTQI individuals and organizations - that members of the community face distinct risks and vulnerabilities - these include possible exclusion as beneficiaries due to the stigma on the basis of SOGIESC, these could also include heightened risk to GBV. If responses are not intersectional, many members of the LGBTQI community will be left behind. Accounts shared in this section attest to the need to ensure such gender-responsive interventions, one that renders visible and responds to the specific experiences and vulnerabilities of members of the LGBTQI community.

I

**Ghem Laquindanum**  
**Transgender man**  
**Pioneer Filipino Transgender men Movement**

Ako po si Gem Laquindanum, isang transgender man, dahil sa COVID-19 Pandemic, itinigil ko ang pagtatake ng testosterone.

Bilang simula ng lockdown, bahay at palengke lang po talaga ako. Wala akong trabaho at nakaasa lamang ako sa aming tatay na breadwinner ng pamilya. Sa ayuda lang ng barangay kami nakakakuha ng bigas para makain. Dahil sa kakapusan ng pera, hininto ko na ang pagtatake ng testosterone.

Dahil dito nararamdaman kong nag *fefeminize* na ang katawan ko dahil hindi na nasusundan ng tamang dosage at turok ng T. Lagi akong may pangamba na babalik na ang *sumpa* (menstration). Minsan kapag namamalengke ako at nakabike, minsan pumapasok sa isip ko na baka may tagos ako at hindi ko pa alam. Sobrang nakakatakot at nakakahiya.

Dagdag pa nito na hindi ako suportado ng aking pamilya sa aking HRT simula pa lamang na una akong nagturok nito. Nakakalungkot dahil sa araw-araw mas nararamdaman kong unti-unting hindi ko na nakikita kung sino ako. Nakakadagdag ng *body dysphoria* lalo ito sa akin, hindi ko na nagugustuhan ang repleksyon ko sa salamin.

## II

### **GALANG (PHILIPPINES)**

At the onset of the ECQ last March, several members of GALANG's partner LBT people's organizations (LPO) were excluded in the listing of beneficiaries of government aid. In one of the barangays, personnel/volunteers in-charge of identifying and listing households in the community explicitly stated that LGBT couples/households are not considered as a family since they cannot be categorized as a family—only heterosexual couples with a child/children are considered as such. The LPO members themselves and GALANG's local community organizers discussed this with the gender and development focal persons in the said barangay but no action was taken. Fortunately, we were able to reach out to a group of LGBT individuals who gave relief assistance/food packs to the affected LBT couples/households for several weeks.

In another barangay, a similar incident happened but this time the barangay was more progressive and open, and changed their system to include LBT couples/households as beneficiaries.

### III

**Maya Sabundayo**

**The Initiative PH: Department of SOGIE Rights**

**Story:**

Even as a safe space, online platforms serve as a medium for intolerable beings to discriminate against the LGBTQI community. Using the very same level of anonymity members of the community use to protect themselves, others can take advantage of this and spread damaging stigmas and stereotypes on social media. This perpetuates an environment where homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of bigotry can be viewed by younger audiences and where they can feel invalidated for their own sexualities. Even in the efforts of the LGBTQI community to forward their advocacy in the duration of Pride Month, many still persist to counter the validity of our rights and the need for universal acceptance.

As mentioned, homes can also become a terrible environment for members and allies of the community, as conservative values can get in the way recognizing the existence of LGBTQI. Older generations can find it hard to keep an open and progressive mindset in regards to this topic, which puts younger members at risk of experiencing microaggressions to outright ignorance. Being forced to stay in this type of household due to quarantine can severely damage the mental health of a member.

In a national view: despite the effects of COVID-19 on a physical Pride March, other



members of the community have taken initiative to have their own protest while following social distancing guidelines. The #FreePride20 tag trended as a response to the cruel and illegal arrest of 20 members of the LGBTQI community who were commemorating Pride Month. This not only shows the disregard of our right to protest, but also the reality of a country that only extends its “tolerance” of the LGBTQI community to a minimum.

#### IV

##### **Rhom dela Rosa Transgender man**

Ako si Rhom dela Rosa, ito ang naranasan ko bilang trans man sa panahon ng COVID-19.

Bago pa man magsimula ang lockdown, mayroon kaming mumunting kainan ng aking kinakasama. Dito kami kumukuha ng pang gastos at pantaguyod sa pamilya namin araw-araw. Sa awa naman ng Diyos nakakaraos naman. Kaso nung nagkaroon nitong COVID-19 at nagkaroon ng lockdown nagsimula nang magbago ang lahat.

Hindi kami nabigyan ng ayuda mula sa pamahalaan. Hindi raw kami masasabing pamilya. Hindi kami pamilya ng girlfriend ko at ang kanya mga anak. Hindi raw kami pasok sa sinasabi nilang requirement para masabing pamilya kami.

Kinausap ko ang aming purok lider, kung kami ba ay *straight* couple, makakasama ba kami sa mga bibigyan? Kasi yung mga live-in na *straight* couple na walang anak nakatanggap ng ayuda. Dahil lang ba sa pagiging iba ko, hindi na kami masasabing nagsasama bilang

partner? Masakit sa aming pamilya, dahil sa lockdown nagsara muna ang kainan namin. Wala kaming pagkukunan. Paano kami kakain? Paano kami mabubuhay?

Kahit na ang girlfriend ko na single mom, hindi rin naman napagbigyan ng barangay namin kahit kakarampot na tulong mula sa gobyerno. Nakakasama ng loob, marami kaming mas dapat pagtuunan ng pansin at tulongan; pero bakit yung iba sa isang bahay lima pa ang nakatanggap ng ayuda mula sa SAP. Nagtatanong lang din ako, nagtataka. Nakakadismaya, ramdam na ramdam ko ang discrimination sa aming mga LGBTQI, paano pala kung hindi ako ganito?

Sa ngayon kumukuha kami ng budget sa mga natipid namin galing sa karinderya namin. Hindi na rin ito sasapat sa mga susunod pang mga araw. Dagdag pa nito na nadisgrasya ako, nabubog ang paa ko kaya ilang araw din akong hindi nakalakad. Feeling ko pabigat na ba ko?

Kaya lubos ang pasasalamat ko sa CHR, salamat sa pagdulog sa aming mga problema. Sana mapakinggan kami ng gobyerno at matulungan. Dahil tao rin kami, tao ang mga miyembro ng LGBTQI. Karapatan din naming mabuhay nang maayos at marangal. Tao kami.

**V**

**“Juan” Devon M. Garcia**

**Gay**

**Juan Spark Youth Leaders**

**Story:**

Ako si “Juan”, ako ay isang gay man at ito ang aking storya.

Araw-araw ay nabubuhay ako sa takot na malaman ng mga magulang ko kung ano nga ba talaga ako. Pakiramdam ko naman ay may mga paghihinala na sila pero hindi lang talaga nila kayang tanggapin ang pagkatao ko. Alam ko na kapag dumating ang sitwasyon na umamin ako sa kanila o hindi naman kaya’y may mag-sumbong na iba, ay wala na akong

tahanang uuwian pa. Sa dinami-dami ng mga bagay na tinuro nila sa akin, ay hindi ko rin maiwasan isipin kung *normal* nga ba talaga ako o kung may mali sa akin.

Katulad ng karanasan kong ito ay ang milyon-milyong kaso ng diskriminasyon laban sa LGBTQI community na nangyayari sa loob ng tahanan. At ang mga kasong ay hindi biro sapagkat ang kawalan ng seguridad at pagtanggap mula sa sarili mong pamilya ay nagkakaroon ng malaking epekto sa pamumuhay ng isang tao.

Hanggang ngayon ay hindi ko pa rin alam kung paano ko ito rerespondehan. Ngunit alam ko na sa munting pagpapakalat ng tamang impormasyon at adbokasiya ay nakakatulong ako sa iba. Patuloy na muna akong mabubuhay sa mundong ginawa ko na malayo sa kanila at haharapin ito pagdating ng oras na ako'y handa na.

**VI.**

**“Sushmita”**

**Queer**

Sushmita, 25

I go by pansexual or queer, but I'm usually more attracted to women. As far as LGBT people go, I acknowledge that I'm more privileged than the vast majority. I'm a law student, I have a car, and I have a girlfriend of five months. Still, there's a catch:

I'm a closeted girl with mental health issues in a conservative family.

How conservative? We had many fights and meltdowns about my political posts on facebook. I was an activist in college; I'm not as active in the movement anymore but I still hold the same sentiments. A leftist through and through.

My girlfriend is a nurse in a government agency, and we have met each other (for the entire time we've known each other) for a total of three times: twice in February, before the lockdowns, and once this July. It's been really tough not being with her in person, especially as my mental health had been really suffering because of the pandemic. I'm stuck at home with my family; only my sister knows I'm gay and that I'm in a relationship.

Staying in contact with her is a struggle. You see, I can't have overly long video calls with her as my mom would tend to hover around me and ask me who it is, what we're talking about, etc. Why am I so apprehensive about coming out, you might ask?

TW: Violence

My mom discovered that I had a girlfriend in high school after rummaging through my stuff. She found a letter that my then-girlfriend gave me for our "monthsary" and she lost her sh\*t. She called me names, pulled my hair, slapped me, until I was an ugly, sobbing mess. Obviously, she was incensed. She said she was afraid for me, to what my dad (Indian guy in his late 60's) might do if he ever found out.

For context, we're my dad's second family. He came home one day to find his (legal) wife in bed with the woman they let into their home, who she claimed to be her niece. He was so mad, he gave an ultimatum to his wife: the woman or him. His wife proceeded to kick him out of their house. That is the story of how my dad came to hate gay women.

My mother, knowing this, was so scared that she beat me up. It's messed up, and 10 years later, I'm still reeling from the trauma. She is so loving and caring outside of that event, that I still feel guilty for wanting to keep secrets for her. But what can I do, I've been traumatized.

With that kind of family setting, I've been stuck at home due to the lockdowns. I couldn't be myself, I couldn't keep contact with my girlfriend without the fear of them finding out; I couldn't even call my best friend for fear that I might let slip some secrets while they're

eavesdropping on my conversations. I have no privacy at all because I don't have my own room. All I have going for me is that I'm a law student on the verge of graduating. I keep trying to remind myself that I can come out once I become a lawyer, because I wouldn't be financially dependent on them anymore and they can't threaten to cut me off then.

My girlfriend has been supportive, but I know it's been grating on her. Her family knows me and accepts me as her partner, but my family barely even knows her. It hurts me everytime she jokes about how I'm a princess (due to how strict my mom is), but I can't do anything about it because she's right. It hurts that I hurt her, and it hurts that she has had to support me for the entire duration of our relationship while being a frontliner at the same time. She knows that I have depression, anxiety, and ADHD (a dangerous combo for law students), and has been acting as my pillar while she has her own mental health problems to battle with. Having to be taken care of really guilts the hell out of me, as she needs to be cared for, too, especially in her line of work.

This pandemic came at the worst time, since if all goes well, this would be my last semester in law school. I was really looking forward to moving to Manila for review classes with my bestfriend, and it would be easier for my girlfriend to visit me (or me to visit her). A little more and I can be financially independent and live without fear of the consequences of being disowned. Now everything has been put off for a later time, and I've been suffering silently at home. I could only wish for a clearer mind and a calmer heart to get me through this, so I can finally repay all the good my girlfriend and my best friend have done for me, as well as to finally become a lawyer of the people and for the people.

## VII

### “Tricia” Lesbian

Ako si Tricia, isang lesbiyana. Lumaki ako sa isang environment, sa bahay man o sa paaralan, kung saan bilang babae, pinakita at pinaramdam saking dapat ako mahumaling sa mga lalaki. Kapag kausap ko ang mga kaibigan ko, laging nasa usapan ang "dream house," "dream wedding," at "dream husband" at somehow parati akong may sagot kahit na wala naman akong pinangarap alin man doon. Kahit ganun, may alam din naman ako tungkol sa mga bakla at lesbiyana, ngunit hindi pa buo ang konseptong ito sa isip ko. Kaya naman sa early elementary days ko ay nagkagusto ako sa mga lalaki kong kaklase out of pressure ng mga kaibigan ko. Hanggang ang una kong babaeng nagustuhan ay noong tumungtong ako ng grade 7.

Lahat ng naging kaibigan ko ay mga babae. Hindi na rin siguro nakakabigla na ang unang babaeng nagpatibok ng puso ko ay sarili kong best friend. Sa pagkagusto ko sa kaniya ay doon ko lamang naintindihan ang mga konseptong gaya ng gender identity at sexual orientation. Doon ko naintindihan na hindi masamang magkagusto ako sa kapwa ko babae. Doon ko rin naunawaang hindi ako matatanggap ng magulang ko kailanman.

Incoming first year college na ko sa pasukan, at hanggang ngayon ay walang alam ang magulang ko tungkol saakin. Hindi nila alam na nakahalikan ko ang best friend ko sa cubicle ng building namin sa school, sa labas ng classroom namin, sa loob ng classroom namin habang patay ang ilaw, at pati na sa bahay ng isang kaibigan. Hindi nila alam na ang anak nila ay marami nang nakilalang babae sa internet sa loob ng maraming taon dahil akala nila ay marami akong manliligaw na hindi ko lang pinapansin. Hindi nila alam na halos mabaliw ako sa isang babaeng tinuring kong ate na inabot ako ng isang buong taon bago pa ako maka-move on sa kaniya kahit hindi naman niya binalik ang nararamdaman ko para sa kaniya. Hindi nila alam na ang anak nila ay may girlfriend na ngayon.

Minsan ay natatakot ako. Nakakatakot na biglang malaman nila yung relasyon namin ng girlfriend ko at bigla na lang akong palayasin o paghigpitan sa kalagitnaan ng pandemya. Nakakatakot isiping hindi ako matanggap ng sarili kong pamilyang nagpalaki saakin at nag-aruga saakin sa loob ng maraming taon. Nakakatakot dahil hindi ko alam ang magiging reaksiyon nila bilang mga manipulative at guilt-tripping na mga magulang kapag umamin akong may girlfriend ako. Nakakatakot minsan dahil naiisip ko kung anong mangyayari sa mata nilang ngayo'y puno ng pagmamahal at pag-aaruga para sa akin, kapag ako ay nabuking na.

Pareho kami ng girlfriend kong hindi out sa pamilya kaya naiintindihan naming hindi pa ngayon ang panahon. Parehong alam ng mga kapatid namin at pareho naman silang tahimik tungkol dito. Noong mga unang buwan ay sobra akong nahirapan. Bukod sa kailangan naming itago relasyon namin sa pamilya namin, nahirapan ako dahil isang linggo ko pa lang siyang girlfriend noong biglang nag-lockdown. Nag-aaral kami sa iisang paaralan bago ang lockdown pero magkalayo ang bahay namin.

Hindi pa man kami ay siya na ang pinaghuhugutan ko ng lakas kapag may problema ako. Magkaibigan pa lang kami ay nasanay na kong napapakalma niya ako sa pamamagitan lang ng yakap niya. Nahirapan ako dahil nasanay akong parati ko siyang hawak, parati ko siyang kayakap, at parating magkadikit ang aming mga labi. Iba yung pakiramdam ko noong nag-lockdown na at inabot ng ilang buwan, dahil siya ang "safe space" ko. Ang bumalik sa bahay naming may internalized homophobia ang lahat ng taong nakapaligid saakin ay masyadong mabigat.

Mas kaya ko na ngayon kumpara noong mga unang buwan ngunit madalas ko pa ring naiisip kung kailan ako aamin. Sa totoo lang, ayaw ko na sanang dumaan dun. Minsan sumasagi sa isip ko na hahayaan ko na lang mamatay ang magulang kong hindi nila alam ang parteng to ng buhay ko. Hindi ko rin naman gugustuhing ang mga huling taon ng magulang ko sa mundo ay sasayangin nila na kinadidirian ako. Mabait ang mga magulang ko at matulungin sa kapwa, at tanggap nila ang mga bakla at lesbiyanang nagtatrabaho para sa amin, ngunit alam kong pagdating sa sarili nilang anak ay isusuka nila.

Kahit ganun, may support system naman ako. Out ako sa halos lahat ng kaibigan ko. Out din ako sa ate at isa kong pinsan, na parehong bisexual. Mahirap magtago pero ilang taon ko na rin naman itinatago mula sa kanila. Wala pa akong magawa dahil alam kong hindi pa ito ang panahon. Hindi pa pwede.

## V. Rainbow Stories: Resilience and Solidarity

As stressed by Independent experts in their statement during IDAHOTB of 2020, the history of LGBTQI persons has been one of suffering, endurance and hope - a vital struggle for freedom and equality in the face of singular adversity. Even prior to the pandemic, LGBTQI persons already experienced persistent stigma and discrimination. The previous section highlighted the how the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities. They also showed in part how measures and interventions to address the pandemic have been unresponsive to the realities and needs of LGBTQI on the ground. Worse- some of the measures taken to address the pandemic exacerbated inequalities and discrimination. Nevertheless, as before, LGBTQI individuals and organizations have shown hope, resilience, and solidarity amidst this crisis.

The rainbow stories submitted to the Commission not only highlighted the impact of the pandemic and of continuing stigma and discrimination, they also showed how individual LGBTQI members take steps to reach out to peers, to provide psychosocial support and health advises, and to provide much needed assistance and relief. They also show stories of LGBTQI organizations adopting their ways of organizing and advocating - to fit the new normal - supporting needs of community on the ground, and also highlighting the impact of the pandemic on the advocacy.

In this section, it is inspiring how the community rises above the crisis, through solidarity and collective work. We hear stories of *bayanihan* among community members and organizations - in providing much needed financial support, technical assistance, medical and hormone therapy advise, psychosocial support, and even ensuring access to needed ARVs for those living with HIV. We are also able to read accounts of resilience of



individuals and communities. Nevertheless, as one account, in reflection mentions - there is solidarity and collective support within the community and yet the realities of discrimination and stigma remains. While the community has shown its solidarity and resilience, resilience itself must not be romanticized, but must be a continuing call for State duty bearers to address the situation of LGBTQI persons and to ensure fulfillment of rights.

I.

**Reyel Xavier B. Inocencio**  
**Trans masculine**  
**Pioneer Filipino Transgender man Movement**

Ako si Reyel Xavier B. Inocencio, miyembro ng Pioneer Filipino Transgender man Movement, isa akong transgender man.

Lubha rin akong naapektuhan ng COVID-19 Pandemic. Bilang kasama ako sa mga taong pinaka vulnerable sa sakit na ito. Mula noong ako ay bata pa, hikain na ko. Noong 2019 ako naman ay nadiagnose ng hypertension. Pinanganak akong premature, 7 months lang. Kaya mahinang-mahina ang immune system ko.

Nagtatrabaho ako sa isang sangay ng gobyerno. Ngunit noong Hunyo ay pinapapasok na nila ko sa opisina. Humingi ako ng request sa kanila kasama na ang medical certificate mula sa doktor ko mula pagkabata. Na hindi ako maaring pumasok dahil mas madali akong dapuan ng pandemya. Ngunit di nila ito tinanggap. Sumulat din ako ng query sa CSC ukol dito ngunit hanggang ngayon ay wala pang tugon. Hanggang sa pinadalhan na ako ng liham ng opisina; Kung hindi ako papasok ay papatawan nila ako ng disciplinary action o sa madaling salita kakasuhan nila ko sa di ko pagpasok.

Napilitan akong mag bitiw sa aking trabaho sa panahon ng pandemya, sa panahong hindi ko alam saan at kung makukuha ako ng trabaho. Iniintidi kung paano ko mababayaran ang utang ko sa law school ngayong semestre. Natatakot na maging pabigat na naman ako sa pamilya.

Dahil sa isa kong mabubuting kaibigan sa adbokasiya, nagkaroon ako ng tsansa upang makapagtrabaho rito sa proyektong ito ng CHR. Sa munti kong trabaho na ito ay maipapakita ko at maipapamalas ang katatagan ng mga kapatid kong LGBTQIA+. Dito ko napagtanto na ako ay napakasarwerte. May pribilehiyo pa rin akong tinatamasa; kung kaya't gusto kong ibuhos ang aking lakas at kagalingan upang maitaas ng pamumuhay ng aking mga kapatid.

Hindi natatapos ang karera ko dahil lang sa umalis ako sa tanggapan na iyon. Naniniwala akong mas nababagay ang galing at ang puso ko para sa Komisyon ng Karapatang Pantao lalo na ako ay isang transgender man; isa sa mga miyembro ng tinuturing nilang mababang uri sa lipunan.

Susulong, lalaban, at titindig ako para sa karapatan ng bawat isang LGBTQIA+ para sa kanilang karapatang mabuhay ng marangal at pantay na karapatan!

## **II.**

### **GALANG**

When ECQ in NCR began, GALANG opted to give relief goods/food assistance to the members of our partner LPOs in several barangays. Given our limited funding, we were only able to provide assistance for two (2) months.

In May, we helped our partner LPOs come up with their respective livelihood projects which they could implement within their communities or even at home. The aim was for them to earn a living without compromising their health and safety. The income from these livelihood projects will go directly to the LPOs' funds which they could use to help their members, particularly those who were not able to return to work or were laid off from work, or do not have any source of income at all. After a few weeks in operation, we are quite happy that their chosen livelihood projects are earning somehow. We hope that they will be able to sustain themselves.

During the pandemic, we had to put off our organizing work in the communities. However, our partner LPOs and LCOs have begun reaching out to the LBTs and revived recruitment via various online/social media platforms. We are hopeful that we would be able to maximize the digital world to continue our community organizing work and be able to strengthen the LPOs in the communities

### **III**

#### **GALANG**

In April, one of our partner LPOs—Lesbian Organization Against Violence and inEquality (LOVE)— submitted a proposal to Outright Action International for emergency funding, which was approved a few weeks after. The emergency funding was used to procure food supplies and medicines, and distribute minimal financial aid to help the 53 LOVE members in paying house rental and other utilities. They also donated milk to several individuals/families who had no means to buy milk for their child/children. Despite the current crisis, we deem this as a milestone of our partner LPO because they were able to mobilize to

seek opportunities to be able to help their members and alleviate the difficulties that urban poor LBTs are experiencing. Also, we deem this as a positive outcome of our efforts in capacitating our partner LPOs in proposal writing, project planning and management.

**IV.**

.

**Macky Rivera**

**Transgender woman**

## **LGBTQI+ City of Malolos**

Ako si 'Macky', isa akong transgender woman, at ang kasalukuyang City Federation President ng sektor ng LGBTQ+ sa Lungsod ng Malolos, ay bumabati po sa ating lahat.

Nais ko lamang mag lahad ng maikling kwento patungkol sa aking karanasan pati n rin ng buong panguluhan sa patuloy nating pakikipag laban sa pandemya, na sana ay matapos na sa lalong madaling panahon.

Alam naman po natin na tayong lahat ay apektado ng COVID-19. Ang daming miyembro ng LGBTQ+ sa aming lungsod ang nahirapan kung paano kukuha ng pantawid gutom sa araw-araw sapagkat hindi makapag hanap buhay, nariyan ang mga parlorista na sumingil lamang ng 40-50 pesos para sa gupit ay hindi makapag gupit. Ang mga make up artist na nag puhunan ng mga bagong make up para sa nalalapit na graduation at Flores De Mayo ay hindi rin kumita.

Ang mga fashion designer at gown rentals na malakas dapat sa buwan ng Mayo ay kinailangan din mag sara,at marami pang iba ang hindi nakapag trabaho tulad din ng mga taong hindi nabibilang sa sektor ng LGBTQ+, ngunit karamihan ng hinanaing na aking narinig bilang Pangulo ay 'Bakit walang budget ang Gobyerno Para sa atin?'. Opo nakatanggap po kami ng mga relief Goods bilang mamamayan ng Lungsod, ngunit ito po ay kulang, sapagkat patuloy pa rin umuusad ang mga bayarin kahit kami ay hindi nakapag trabaho. nakakalungkot mang sabihin pero kapag eleksyon pinag aagawan ang sektor ng LGBTQ+ ng mga nais umupo, pero pagkatapos ay dedma na.

Kaya bilang Pangulo,pinangunahan ko ang maglikom ng Goods sa pamamagitan ng pag hingi ng tulong sa mga nakaupo sa pwesto sa Munisipyo at Kapitolyo, na kung saan nakatanggap pa ako ng mga katagang 'Bakit pa kayo hihingi ng tulong eh nag Mass distribution na kami sa inyong lugar', ngunit naipaglaban naman natin ang ating karapatan na kaya humihingi nang tulong ay dahil nangangailangan at sa awa ng Diyos ang isyu na iyan ay naresolbahan at humingi sila ng tawad sa sa mga nangyari.Humingi rin po ako ng tulong sa LGBTQ+ members na nakaka angat at nakakatuwa naman na yung ibang mga hindi myembro ng aming sektor ay nagpaabot din ng kanilang tulong. Kaya ako at ang aking mga officers bagamat my konting takot na mag ikot sa buong lungsod dahil sa Virus ay naglakas ng loob na makapag distribute ng relief Goods sa mga Myembro ng LGBTQ+ na mas nangangailangan. At sa Pagmamahal ng Panginoon nagkaroon pa ng 2nd wave ang pag didistribute sa tulong ng LGBTQ+ Bulacan Federation.

V.

**Rebreb**

**Bisexual cis-gender woman**

**BuISU Bahaghari**

I am Rebreb, and I am a bisexual cis-gender woman, staying at home 24/7 gives me anxiety because of stress. I am used to going outside when stressed, to breathe and talk to my friends. ECQ really gave me a hard time and kept on giving me anxiety attacks. Most of the time I am deactivating my social media accounts to breathe in the middle of organization or acad works and go back only when I'm sure I can handle the stress again.

Life inside a house where you can't breathe properly is really hard, I know it is not just me who experience this and there are other queer people who experience more than what I do.

I am very lucky to be one of the people who joined *queerantime sessions* with PANTAY. It is a LGBTQ+ support group during pandemic, once a week there is a session where we talk, and support everyone on our own ways. It is not the only initiative queer community and allies do for the community there are also projects where they give free consultations for the members of LGBTQ+ community.

Initiatives like these really help especially during this pandemic where we are all at home and some of us are not safe and continuously experiencing discriminations and hear words we never want to hear from our own family for being who we are.

I hope these initiatives will not just stop during this pandemic and pride month because we still have our brothers and sisters who are experiencing emotional problems even before this pandemic and after this pandemic. Happy pride and stay strong everyone! Laban!

## VI.

### **Ryan Miguel D. Rivera** **The Initiative PH - Department of SOGIE Rights**

Ngayong naging patok ang pagdiriwang ng *Pride* kumpara noong nakaraan, umuusbong ang iba't ibang inisyatibo para sa pagpapatatag ng puwesto ng LGBTQIA+ *community* tungo sa pangkalahatang pagkatanggap nito at sa pagkamit nito ng pantay na karapatan sa ating lipunan. Marami sa mga inisyatibong ito ay inilulunsad ng sektor ng kabataan, tulad ng mga samahang pang-advokasiya.

Ika nga nila, "*Pride is a protest.*" Tahasang nilalabanan ng makabagong henerasyon ang kulturang kontra-babae at kontra-LGBTQIA+ na naging laganap sa ating konserbatibong lipunan nang napakaraming dekada. Bagama't marami pa ring tao ang gumagamit ng relihiyon bilang sandata para tutulan ang pagkakaroon ng iba pang seksuwalidad bukod sa pagiging *straight*, hindi na ito hinahayaan ng mga miyembro ng LGBTQIA+ na maging dahilan para ipagkait sa kanila ang nararapat nilang makuhang respeto bilang mga miyembro rin ng lipunan.

At sa konteksto ng isang pandemya, iisa lamang ang naging kalabasan ng ganitong determinasyon: ang pagkakaisa. Noong buwan ng Hunyo, kasabay ng buong mundo, tumungo sa mga platapormang *online* ang kilusang *Pride* para magpatuloy ito nang makaiwas sa hawaan.

Hindi man natuloy ang malawakang selebrasyon ng *Pride Parade* tulad noong mga nakaraang taon, umusbong naman ang iba't ibang organisasyon na naglunsad ng mga gawaing nagpakilala sa LGBTQIA+ *community* sa mas malawakna lipunan sa pamamagitan ng mga *webinar*, *educational discussion*, *infographic*, *art showcase*, at marami pang iba.

Gayundin, nagpatuloy naman ang mga kilos-protesta ng sektor ng LGBTQIA+ laban sa patuloy na paglapit sa pasismo at paglabag ng mga karapatang pantao. Naging bokal ang komunidad matapos makulong ang 20 miyembro ng Bahaghari noong *Pride March* nang walang maibigay na dahilan, hanggang sa sila ay mapalaya muli. Sumatutal, limitado mang paggalaw ang naging bunsod ng COVID-19, ipinakita ng LGBTQIA+ ang pagkamaparaan nito para malampasan ang lahat ng mga limitasyong ito sa pagpapahayag ng advokasiya.

## VII

### **Ro Boat Transgender man The T in Listen (Support Group)**

Ako si Ro Boat, isang transgender man, at ito ang aking storya sa panahon ngayon ng pandemya.

Isa akong content creator sa Youtube, ang mga content na ginagawa ko ay mainly focused on transgender men's health and wellness. My aim is to educate our transgender brothers about basic SOGIESC and also the proper and safe way to undergo Hormone Reinforcement Therapy (HRT).

During this pandemic, a lot of our trans brothers felt hopeless about their transition. I feel for them because this is very personal to them, it is their dream, of being their true self. Kaya naman I decided to really focus on their issues and concerns. I created videos on how they will be able to have their consultations online via Victoria by Loveyourself.

Also I experienced the true hearts of our trans brothers, their resilience during this unthinkable crisis. Some of my trans brothers recommended and shared trans-friendly doctors that we can ask for consultations. It made me really realize that proper information for transition is very necessary for my trans brothers; because I believe that *little information is a dangerous thing*.

Nagpapasalamat din ako sa bumubuo ng PFTM ang aking mga kuya, dahil sa kanila ako natuto ng mga naiishare ko sa aking youtube platform. Their insights are comforting for me, because napapagtalunan ko ang aking anxiousness about the things I didn't know before I joined this organization like top surgeries and the likes.

Hindi na ko nakabalik ng trabaho. Kung kaya I tried to focus on my online selling business, I sell transgender men related stuff such as tapes and beard growers. Pero yun nga dahil mahina ang demand, mahina rin ang benta. It feels so depressing to be in this situation that I really felt hopeless.



That's why I push myself to create more and more content, to fight back these thoughts. I believe na mas kaya kong tumulong sa panahon na ito through social media literacy kahit na mahal ang load para sa data.

I really wanted to take this opportunity to thank two of my trans brothers, who helped me to go from Pampanga to Cavite (where I worked) during the GCQ. It really warms my heart kasi kahit nakilala lang nila ako online, they let me ride their car, to stay in one of their houses, to sleep and eat. At hinatid pa ako sa boarding. Sobrang nakakataba ng puso. Without their help, hindi ako nakakapag-apply ngayon ulit ng work. Even during pandemic, they trusted someone like me, what if I am a carrier of the virus too, because there are asymptomatic patients. But they showed compassion and empathy to me.

This is why I believe that we can fight through this virus. I really felt the resilience of these transgender men during these trying times. I want to thank my PFTM family and The T in Listen Facebook group, and to all the people who cared to check on me. We will continue and in fighting the good fight.

## **VIII.**

### **Love Yourself, Inc.**

LoveYourself is volunteer-driven and has partner community-based organizations around the country. During the pandemic, volunteers were utilized to create online shows to continue spreading awareness of sexual health and mental wellness initiatives. These infotainment activities enable our organization to link awareness with action to access our services, which continue to operate for the community even with COVID-19.

In April, we held the Rise As One: An Online Concert where we, together with our partner Champion Community Centers, and movers in the HIV advocacy, including Miss Universe Titleholders Pia Wurtzbach and Catriona Gray, have banded together to send a message of hope and love amidst the pandemic. In the concert, we highlighted protecting the rights and the health of all people can, in fact, help control the virus. We urge people to act with compassion, not stigma, and discrimination. We informed the viewers that great strides were made to suppress the spread of HIV and save more people from it because it's not a death sentence anymore. By taking your medications regularly, one can live a full life even with HIV. We also stressed the availability of HIV combination prevention methods in the country, such as condoms and lubricants, Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) or a pill an HIV negative person takes before being potentially exposed to HIV, Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) or a pill an HIV negative person can take right after a potential exposure to HIV, and adherence to treatment of PLHIV that can result in undetectable viral load status or a condition where the HIV can no longer be transmitted to another person.

In May, we, together with our partner The Project Red Ribbon, conducted the Light Up concert, an online commemorative celebration of the Philippine International AIDS Candlelight Memorial (PIACM). This event gave tribute to the meaningful lives of our friends who expired from HIV and sparked a light of hope to people currently living with HIV in the Philippines. Despite the ongoing COVID-19 situation, the event aimed at continuing the fight against HIV and AIDS, and for communities to live beyond the existence of two pandemics victoriously. Government institutions and celebrities and government also joined the celebration.

In June, we celebrated Pride Month with our campaign theme ATBPride. The phrase "at iba pa (atbp.)" is a Filipino abbreviation for 'and others' and can also mean variety. The **ATBPride campaign** embraced and celebrated the community's 'otherness' as something special. The campaign highlighted the importance of the community's contributions to society. It serves as a beacon of hope, love, and care, especially for those marginalized by merely being the "other." This campaign highlighted inclusivity in diversity, making its tagline: **"Iba-iba pero sama-sama."** Various activities were slated for this month, including Usapang ATBPride, an online talk show series explaining different SOGIEs. We also had two episodes of The LoveYourselfTV's The Universe Speaks, headlining Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach and Boy Abunda, and Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray together with various allies and members of the community. Both online shows were geared towards highlighting the importance of being an ally of the community.

Despite the COVID-19 situation, this July 2020 we are bringing the Philippines safer from HIV by holding the first-ever **Philippine National HIV Prevention Month (NHPM)**. The Philippine NHPM is set every July of every year. This initiative supports the Presidential Proclamation No. 971, which was signed last June 23, declaring the second week of July as Infection Prevention and Control Week. This year's NHPM theme is **"SaferNow,"** following the new HIV combination prevention concept, which includes innovative and effective ways to prevent HIV: condoms and lubricants, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), and antiretroviral treatment as prevention (TasP). The NHPM is spearheaded by the Sustainability of HIV Services for Key Populations in Asia Program and the Champion Community Centers network with LoveYourself as its lead implementor and is supported by UNAIDS Philippines, AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Pilipinas Shell Foundation, Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations, and APCOM. Also, community-based organizations (CBOs) around the country, catering to HIV-related services focusing on the LGBTQIA community, will conduct parallel activities to support this national event.

**IX.**

**Josephine Bautista**  
**Transgender woman**

I've always hoped and wished for a supportive environment: To have a person known as family supporting you 'being' trans, talking about opportunities and wishes, goals and ideas, perspectives, hopes, and dreams. In the lack of that, there was no barrier deciding to be the person doing it, other than feeling as if there was a standard to meet, being uncertain about it; I focused on seizing the means of my own communication. Being myself is not at all brave as it is not at all different from many people exploring themselves in their lives--I was not

attacked because I am trans, I was attacked because of what other people thought and concluded about that, commonly before and without my input. Our current society is built to comfort cis people over trans people. Me being discriminated was intensified moreso from knowing that there was a lack of societal support for when I would be vulnerable afterwards. The hardship of healing came alongside thinking about options. There are no laws protecting us nationwide from discrimination, when there is no real barrier stopping these from existing than decisions made from discrimination through an intentional lack of both action and depth of description.

I couldn't go through this alone. I realized that I didn't have to go through this alone. Even without laws, there were always people, even if there seemed none in my current social reach. Stigma seemed consistent against me, because I would keep meeting it--I had to respond through solidarity, and I found that in the LGBTQIA+ community. I was still reeling from emotional abuse a month after until the present. I had to explore for my own safety, physically and mentally. I've noticed that hatred can come from lacking the capability to describe what is positive of what is discriminated or the concept being worked with. Shifting positions outside of comparison, I found answers in changing from a transactional perspective to one built on consideration. There is discriminatory anger, and there is righteous anger--the feeling of standing against harm, for your own protection, not necessarily escalating tension, but pushing for motivation—that something must be done.

It takes a sense of personal competence to choose, through traumatic experiences, to be better and more ethical than the society you grow up in. It takes opportunities to heal from trauma, and opportunities commonly favor those with privilege; in the lack of opportunities, I've learned that they can be made: Inasmuch as I carried my stories in memory, I could also play the role as their writer, and carry them through my trauma.

I can't move out. I can't distance myself from those who emotionally abuse me. I can work with my narrative in mind, and in the place of abuse, commit healing onto myself by accepting that I can be healed, and push outside this conceptual vacuum that only trauma can leave behind. This motivation helped me reach out to others--inasmuch as it took me 5+ years to find my first LGBT+ group in the Cordilleras, the years feel like distant yet distinct seconds when living the reality afterwards: Organizing and connecting with more than a handful of people who can understand very well how to comfort trauma because of facing similar feelings themselves; away from needless cultural barriers perpetuating ignorance of our truth.

Friendships save lives. Friendships saved lives in epidemics and crises in the past, they're saving lives in the pandemic at present. The LGBT+ community is inherently resilient--a sea of stories building upon each other--practicing collective-care in facing the lack of potential self-care, with a goal to return what is into collective memory, than what was prescribed and dictated by colonial memory. I've seen my abuse perpetuated as a result of collective forgetfulness--replaced by doubt through shallow depictions and beliefs. A lot of my connections in the community are scholars, motivated to being well-read on history and social issues. I never pictured myself writing stories at all because of trauma, much less sharing them for others, until I learned that stories are carried in life, and lived throughout. Stories help against trauma, because they are personal conversations.

I've seen and read many stories before writing my own, and it bears repeating that we make our future from our present. When people care about things that don't affect them, they can make society better.

Resilience is never to be romanticized--much like social issues are predominantly artificial, current issues can become better when people are given avenues to work with. My community has long kept loss in mind when facing issues--they know that providing comfort when vulnerabilities are shared helps emotional development. I could only face my issues from a position of strength than a position of vulnerability, as these needed communications.

Now, only finding safe spaces and feeling like actually living my life after college, I can see that there is a lot out there--still hard to reach because of social media or divided by barriers of distance and social connections--but a lot exists to support people.

Forwards from birth, we reflect what exists, internally or otherwise. I remember how long I couldn't smile, through elementary and high school onwards--I was afraid because the issues affecting me were never acknowledged. Because I am accepted is the reason why I can finally smile.