



TAO-PILIPINAS, INC.

eNEWSLETTER

January - February 2021

Rights of Nature PH movement gains traction as network holds general assembly

TAO-PILIPINAS JOINED THE 2020 GENERAL assembly of the Rights of Nature Philippines (RoN PH) network led by PMPI (renamed Partnership Mission for People's Initiative) last December. A week-long webinar series was held from December 8th to 11th which coincided with Human Rights Week, and aptly dubbed "Celebrating the Interconnected and Interdependence of Nature and People".



RoN PH, a young movement launched by PMPI with NASSA Caritas Philippines during the Salakyag Para sa Sangnilikha campaign in 2018, advocates for more robust legal protection for the environment by recognizing nature as a rights-bearing entity. The network asserts that legislating nature's rights can play a vital role in addressing our most pressing environmental crises. The general assembly also highlighted the movement's accomplishments in 2019, including the filing of RoN bills in the Senate (SB 1097) sponsored by Sen. Risa Hontiveros and in the House (HB 5603) sponsored by Cong. Kit Belmonte.

The RoN advocacy in the Philippines joins the expanding international movement to have ecosystems accorded legal personhood and to develop new frameworks for ethical and sustainable human-nature relations. Rights-of-nature thinking takes inspiration from earth-centered indigenous traditions as well as from Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si* (On Care for Our Common Home). See sidebar articles on page 2: "What is Rights of Nature?" and "Where natural entities have legal standing".

The RoN PH webinar series featured notable proponents of RoN who spoke of how a whole systems approach is needed to re-orient society from an anthropocentric earth-as-commodity perspective to an ecocentric earth-as-community worldview. Fr. Edwin 'Edu' Gariguez, executive secretary of the social action arm of Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, delivered the keynote address of the general assembly. Fr. Edu expounded on the need to "expand the level of ethics from human rights to

rights of nature" and to recognize the environment as functional to human survival.

On the first day of the webinar, leading expert on RoN and founder of the NGO Nature's Rights, Atty. Mumta Ito, gave a compelling presentation on RoN as a legal tool for social transformation. It espouses a nature's rights development paradigm, with RoN encoded in the legal system, to replace current sustainability models. She also notes that existing environmental laws are merely crisis management tools while RoN adapts to how ecosystems operate and is oriented towards regeneration.

READ MORE: PAGE 2

Masagana community evaluates DAP project

AS THE DIRECT AID PROGRAM 2019 (DAP) in Angat, Bulacan nears completion, TAO-Pilipinas conducted end-of-project evaluation activities with the Masagana homeowners association (HOA). Focus group discussions (FGD) were held in several sessions to comply with ongoing restrictions to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

The FGD sessions looked into changes in the community brought about by DAP project activities and outputs. They also discussed how Masagana may be able to sustain project benefits after two years of project implementation. Financial contributions

and remaining construction work to be done were laid out.

Two sessions took place on December 14, 2020, at the Community-Based Resource Center in the afternoon, and at the residence of the HOA president Juana Cavalida in the evening. The FGD sessions were the first face-to-face meetings conducted in the community during the pandemic. Therefore, precautionary measures and protocols were observed accordingly. The December 14 afternoon session had 19 household representatives

READ MORE: PAGE 3



Masagana leaders engage in a focus group discussion.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Rights of Nature PH general assembly
Masagana DAP project evaluation

2020 TAO Xmas giftgiving

NETWORK ARTICLES

PMC year-end meeting
ASMPH in Lupang Arenda

YP READING LIST & WEBINAR TAKEAWAYS

iSyudad
Architecture of Happiness

YP PULSE & YP REFLECTIONS

Realizations from online learning
Internship reflections
by Anna Rienton

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Student discount offer for
AITM & Battling Waves
Hiring: YP Team leader



Rights of Nature PH movement... CONTINUED FROM: PAGE 1

Another advocate for RoN spoke on the second day of the webinar, Dr. Michelle Maloney, co-founder of [Australian Earth Laws Alliance](#). Maloney discussed the concept of earth jurisprudence as a philosophy of law and governance which calls for nurturing the earth community. This legal framework views humans as resource users but in a regenerative way, and RoN as a catalyst for systemic change.

The third day of the webinar had Atty. Chuck O'Neal of the [Florida Rights of Nature Network](#) recounting how a RoN legislation was passed in Orange County, Florida with strong public support. Last November voters overwhelmingly approved a charter amendment, granting rights for two river systems to "flow and maintain a healthy ecosystem" and allowing citizens to sue on behalf of the rivers when polluted. O'Neal's talk provided encouraging takeaways for the Philippine's own RoN campaign efforts. This was followed by a similarly inspiring presentation of environmental planner Ken Artes who is also the city agriculturist of Bayawan City in Negros Oriental. Artes showcased the city's "mindful governance" approach and their successful environmental initiatives particularly the Bayawan integrated solid waste management program.

Rounding up the discussion on enacting a RoN legislation, environmental lawyer Galahad Pe Benito of the FEU Institute of Law outlined the elements that go into crafting a RoN ordinance. The session also provided an understanding of the basis for granting natural entities, such as the Manila Bay

or the Sierra Madre mountain range, a legal personality with human representatives as legal guardians.

The RoN PH movement also calls for a societal shift from a consumerist culture towards more sustainable and regenerative practices. The fourth day of the webinar series featured individuals and organizations practicing simple, healthy, and sufficient or "sapat" lifestyles and businesses consistent with the RoN concept.

Lastly, the general assembly continued on December 16 and held a special session with noted environmental attorney Cormac Cullinan who authored *Wild Law: A Manifesto for Earth Justice*, one of the influential books on rights of nature and earth jurisprudence. Cullinan's talk offered a deep appreciation of the philosophy of earth jurisprudence and a rich discussion on the challenges to legal enforcement. He likened the challenges to the process of decolonization wherein "un-learning, re-education and undoing centuries of brainwashing are needed". After the passage of a RoN law, among important actions are balancing of rights, training judges on ecology to guide their decisions, funding of cases, and introducing earth jurisprudence in university courses.

The RoN PH 2020 general assembly not only explored a new area in rights-based legal systems, but also brought into discussion a radical way of thinking about sustainable development that reframes our relationship with nature – one that is based on protection and harmony. (GRM)

What is Rights of Nature?

Rights of Nature is a concept that acknowledges species and ecosystems (e.g. forests, rivers, mountains) as living entities with legal rights, rather than merely property or resource for human use and exploitation. It is the holistic recognition that all life on the planet is interconnected, that human well-being is dependent on the well-being of the planet's ecosystems.

Giving rights to nature is seen as a pathway to combat the climate crisis and to protect and restore the environment for a mutually enhancing human-nature existence. According to [Rights of Nature PH](#), the push for rights-of-nature legislation "came from the experience that after decades of environmental protection laws, our modern political and legal systems have failed to prevent the increasingly grave threats of climate change, ecosystem degradation, and the growing displacement of humans and other species".

Where natural entities (other than humans) now have legal standing

Ecuador: In 2008, Ecuador was the first country to adopt rights of nature in its national constitution. Enshrined in the Ecuadorian Constitution are articles on the fundamental rights of "Pachamama" (Mother Nature) "to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles".
[READ: A new law of nature](#)

Bolivia: Law of the Rights of Mother Earth is a Bolivian law that gives nature legal rights, specifically the rights to life, regeneration, bio-diversity, water, clean air, balance, and restoration. It also considers humans as equal to all other living entities.
[READ: Bolivia enshrines natural world's rights with equal status for Mother Earth](#)

Colombia: Several judicial decisions have come out of Colombia declaring various forest and river ecosystems such as the Atrato, La Plata, Cauca, Paramo de Pisba, and the Colombian Amazon to be legal subjects with its own rights of protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration.
[READ: Colombia wins the Yellow Jersey for the Rights of Nature](#)

Aotearoa, New Zealand: Whanganui River became the first in the world to be considered a legal person. New Zealand's third-longest river could now be represented in court and had two guardians appointed to speak on its behalf.
[READ: This river in New Zealand is legally a person. Here's how it happened](#)

Uttarakhand, India: An Indian state court ordered that the Ganges and its main tributary, the Yamuna, be accorded the status of living entities, with the same legal rights as humans. This was short-lived, however. The order was overruled by India's Supreme Court and considered legally unsustainable.
[READ: India's sacred Ganges and Yamuna rivers granted same legal rights as humans](#)
[Read: India's Ganges and Yamuna rivers are 'not living entities'](#)

Victoria, Australia: The Yarra River Protection Act of 2017 is landmark legislation that treats the Yarra river system as one living, integrated natural entity to be protected, and recognizes the connection of the river and the aboriginal Wurundjeri people as its traditional owners.
[READ: New law finally gives voice to the Yarra River's traditional owners](#)

Bangladesh: In 2019, the Bangladeshi Supreme Court granted all of the country's rivers the same legal status as humans. The government agency National River Conservation Commission is appointed as the legal guardian of rivers.

[READ: This country gave all its rivers their own legal rights](#)

Ohio, USA: The city of Toledo, Ohio in 2019 passed the Lake Erie Ecosystem Bill of Rights, a law that grants Lake Erie legal rights and will allow people of Toledo to act as legal guardians for the 10,000 sq mile lake.
[READ: Ohio city votes to give Lake Erie personhood status over algae blooms](#)

Curridabat, Costa Rica: A suburb in Costa Rican capital San Jose re-imagines urban planning to benefit both people and urban wildlife, extending citizenship to pollinators, trees and native plants.
[READ: 'Sweet City': the Costa Rica suburb that gave citizenship to bees, plants and trees](#)

Compiled by Geraldine Matabang from online sources including [therightsofnature.org](#); [theguardian.com](#); [cnn.com](#); [reuters.com](#); [bbc.com](#); [vox.com](#); [lucn.org](#); and [theconversation.com](#)

Masagana community evaluates DAP... CONTINUED FROM: PAGE 1

in the program and were divided into two groups. In the evening session, five HOA officers were present. With members still living outside the Angat site, a virtual meeting was held via Zoom on the afternoon of December 18, 2020. All sessions were facilitated by Engr. Lorena Hernandez with the assistance of Dessica Salvador, both from TAO-Pilipinas.

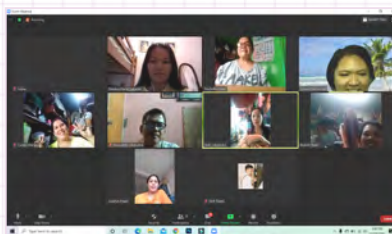
Community members articulated that the DAP project allowed Masagana to be acknowledged by neighboring barangays and changed outsiders' perception of their community as "squatters". Permaculture activities, which had households set up backyard gardens to grow plants and vegetables, also helped in augmenting income of some households. Others discovered gardening as a new hobby.

DAP brought improvements in Masagana with the small infrastructures built through the project. In the multi-purpose community facility, the HOA can now hold private meetings and store confidential documents in an office. They are now planning to use the kitchen area for community livelihood projects. Their initial plans include processing herbal medicine, rug-making, and producing moringa-pandesal.

The concreting of roads in Masagana had the most positive effect for the community members.

Parents now feel their children being safer when walking to and from school. They pointed out future economic benefits of having a developed road network in the site. Members also felt that Masagana is becoming more community-like and a decent resettlement area because of the site development.

Participants in the evaluation sessions committed to finishing the remaining construction work for DAP project completion. Members living outside Angat expressed willingness to help only when their schedules permit. HOA officers mentioned difficulties in organizing members for bayanihan activities but they were also committed to fulfilling their tasks as leaders of Masagana. (DMPS)



Screenshot of the Zoom meeting's participants



Participants of the first day afternoon session answer the end-of-project evaluation for DAP projects.



Masagana leaders engage in a focus group discussion.

TAO carries out Christmas gift-giving 2020

EACH YEAR, TAO-PILIPINAS ORGANIZES A Christmas gift-giving activity for the children of its partner communities to spread the holiday cheer. Closing out 2020 on a lighter note, TAO-Pilipinas prepared 140 gift packs containing art and school supplies through monetary and in-kind donations from TAO staff and board members, their families, friends, and relatives. Gift packs were given to 40 kids of People's Plan Ville Homeowners' Association (PPVHOA) in Binondo, Manila on December 24; 60 kids of Alliance of People's Organizations in Lupang Arenda (APOLA) in Taytay, Rizal on December 28; and 40 kids of Masagana of Angat HOA in Angat, Bulacan on December 29, 2020.

With the support of various donors, TAO-Pilipinas raised Php 25,000.00 in cash donations and Php 6,360.30 worth of in-kind donations, bringing the total amount to Php 31,360.30. PPVHOA, APOLA, and Masagana provided a list of children in their respective communities and the gift packs were assembled based on the children's ages. For the 130 school-age children (4 to 12 years old), each gift pack contained the following: a backpack, activity book or sketch pad, pad paper, notebook, writing board with marker (some with chalk and eraser), ballpen, pencils, sharpener, eraser, glue, ruler, watercolor, and crayons or colored pencils. For the 10 toddlers (1 to 3 years old), each gift pack contained a backpack, small towel, activity book, sketch pad, pencils, eraser, sharpener, and jumbo crayons.

In previous years, TAO-Pilipinas would usually hold a holiday get-together with the community, hosting games for the kids and culminating with the gift-giving activity. However, given the new normal of 2020, physical gatherings were avoided and logistical adjustments were made. Following safety protocols, the gift packs were delivered to the community leaders who volunteered to conduct house-to-house distribution in order to lessen unnecessary exposure of the children.

Despite the pandemic, TAO's annual Christmas gift-giving activity for 2020 was made possible through the support of TAO staff and board members, their family, friends, and relatives. TAO-Pilipinas and its partner communities would like to thank the following individuals: Brynn Jonsson Julia, Chit Julia, Benjamin Rosales, Irene Ng Cha-ching, Maria Antoinette Sioco, Geraldine Matabang, Monette Peraz-Goco, Arlene Christy Lusterio, Angelus Maria Sales, Gladys Faith Cortez, Rosalyn-Frances Veneracion, Rose Dapul, Christian Eroid Enriquez, Maria Faith Varona, Rhea Aguilar, Marianne Turiano, Voltaire Tila, Ma. Rosario Sales, Marie Edraline Belga-Casono, and Lorena Hernandez. (TRJ)



Children from TAO's partner communities—PPVHOA, APOLA, and Masagana—happily show their Christmas gifts.

TAO holds year-end meeting for PMC members

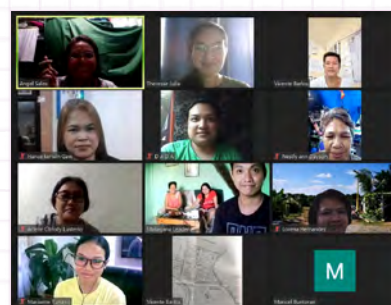
LAST DECEMBER 05, 2020, TAO CONDUCTED a year-end meeting for the Project Management Committee (PMC) members from Misereor partner communities. Present in the online meeting were the following partner communities: Juana Cavalida, Jimmy Hersano, Jr., and Maricel Alejandro of Masagana of Angat Homeowners Association; Edelyn Flores, Vicente Barlos, and Nicanor Berdigay of Alliance of People's Organizations in Lupang Arenda (APOLA); and Clair Fajardo, Anita Dayson, and Erwin Sauza of People's Plan Ville Homeowners Association (PPVHOA). One representative from Community Organizers Multiversity (COM), Ramon Espeña, was also present in the meeting. The meeting was facilitated by Angelus Sales of TAO-Pilipinas and was also attended by other TAO technical staff.

The PMC year-end meeting was only the second meeting for 2020. The supposed quarterly meeting was not followed due to the community quarantine imposed in the region. Due to the limitations brought on by the pandemic, the year-end meeting was held virtually using Zoom as the video conferencing platform. The main agenda of the meeting was to hear project updates from the various partner communities, introduce PPVHOA as the new Misereor partner community, logistics of annual Christmas gift giving, and schedule upcoming activities for 2021. Each partner community was given at least twenty minutes to present their project updates.

Representatives from Masagana HOA talked about the ongoing Direct Aid Program (DAP) activities funded by the Australian Embassy. They narrated their bayanihan activities to construct their multi-purpose community facility and concrete road. These activities mostly occupied the entire 2020 of Masagana HOA leaders. For Lupang Arenda, their 2020 consisted of their ongoing lobby to obtain security of tenure for their land proclamation. Before the community quarantine was imposed, APOLA leaders were consistent on following up the paper works for their land proclamation. They have also conducted their structures survey but all these came to a halt because of the pandemic. They resumed following up pertinent government agencies such as DENR and DHSUD in July. PPVHOA, on the other hand, recounted the involvement of TAO-Pilipinas with their organization. They narrated the workshops they underwent in 2019 and how the technical plans are being finalized in 2020. They also mentioned that they are preparing all the necessary requirements for Phase 2 of their community mortgage program (CMP) application for their high-density housing project.

After the project updates of each partner community, discussion about the logistics of the annual TAO Christmas gift-giving activity followed. Ar. Sales asked the community leaders for any suggestions on the distribution of gifts and they responded that house to house distribution by the leaders is the best way to lessen exposure of the children.

The discussion then moved on to the upcoming community assessment to be done during the end of January 2021. Only APOLA agreed to the January 30 proposed schedule while the rest of the partner communities will have to talk to the rest of their members. The last part of the discussion was a review of the goals and objectives of the Misereor project and if the partner communities will be able to meet the goals and objectives given the remaining time period for the implementation of the project. The PMC meeting ended with a promise for each area team leader to meet with their respective partner communities to firm up the activities that will be implemented in 2021. (AMPS)



The PMC meeting was conducted virtually through video conferencing platform Zoom.

ASMPH students distribute COVID-19 primer to kids in Lupang Arenda

by Gerwin Rodriguez



Coverage of the activity book distributed to the children which creatively explains the pandemic.



AKBAI HOA president Edelyn Flores receives the activity books from ASMPH student Jill Bangayan.



Purok 5 beneficiaries pose for a photo during the distribution of activity books from ASMPH students. (Photo credit: Edelyn Flores)

Gerwin is one of the seven Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health (ASMPH) students—along with Jill Bangayan, Veronica Ching, Adrian Dofitas, Marian Jimenez, Kitkat Nitorreda, and Nikki Roque—who organized the project to distribute the activity book titled "Nay, ano po ang COVID-19?" to children in Purok 5 of Lupang Arenda. They coordinated with AKBAI HOA president Edelyn Flores to hand out 30 copies of the activity book on December 19, 2020. The group initiated the project under ASMPH's Learning Experiences in Communities (LEC) program.

THE YEAR 2020 MAY HAVE BEEN THE toughest for most of us, but somehow a glimmer of hope was felt last Christmas. While communities are struggling to get back to near-normal, students from the Ateneo School of Medicine and Public Health (ASMPH) played the role of Santa with Christmas presents to kids of Lupang Arenda.

ASMPH's newly established partnership with Alliance of People's Organizations in Lupang Arenda (APOLA) which started only in 2019 has already seen milestones since its conception. The first major engagement was the solid waste management workshop ([See YP eNewsletter February – September 2020 Issue](#)). Last December, the focus was on the effects

of the ongoing pandemic to the community, especially to kids who have been of less priority in tackling COVID-19 issues. The team, together with ASMPH Center for Research and Innovation (ACRI), made a coloring workbook that features kid-friendly activities to help them understand the whats and whys of the complexity of this pandemic. Thirty copies were distributed to chosen children 4 to 12 years old with the help of APOLA community officers. Also included in the packets are coloring materials and some goodies for the kids to enjoy. Activities like proper hand-washing technique were also organized by the same community officers following the current health restrictions, to better engage the kids in the community.

Indeed, it takes a village to raise a child. Children are part and parcel of any community, an integral group to define the norms of the future generation. TAO-Pilipinas' role in community-building does not stop on roads and gutters. We also work with different groups and enrich these alliances to learn from each other, employing different approaches, but achieving the same goal.

Title: **iSyudad: Selected Community Narratives of HPFPI in Asserting Their Right to the City**

Editor: **Technical Assistance Movement for People and Environment, Inc. (TAMPEI)**

Publisher: **TAMPEI (2019)**

Homeless People's Federation Philippines Inc. (HPFPI) has been working with urban and rural poor communities for almost 20 years. Their extensive experience has been documented in the book, iSyudad. The book shares the experiences of selected member communities of HPFPI in Metro Manila, Iloilo, and Davao City in their struggles to improve their community. The book is divided into three chapters for the three areas mentioned above. Each chapter showcases narratives from selected partner communities of HPFPI. Writeshops were organized by TAMPEI together with the rest of the Philippine Alliance to get stories from their partner communities as well as capacitate their partner communities to be able to document the different processes they have undergone for their community development. The result of that writeshop is the selected narratives shown in the book.

The narratives highlight the strength that HPFPI is known for and that is community savings. For each of the narratives, the importance of community savings as one of the driving forces for community development has always been mentioned. The selected narratives provide insights to the difficulties as well as the successes experienced by poor communities in their journey to attain security of tenure and improve their way of life. The book is a good read for those who are unaware of the processes organized communities must undergo if

they wish to have security of tenure. From stories of urban poor communities in Metro Manila along railways and danger zones to the innovative bamboo bridge construction in Matina in Davao City to the struggles of acquiring their own land for the communities in Iloilo City, each of the selected communities uniquely showcased the different challenges faced by these communities and how they overcame these challenges.

Aside from the narratives taken directly from HPFPI community members and volunteers, the book is also a good reference for recent development on the housing sector. With statistics inserted in all of the chapters, the book is also a good starting point for researchers who are unfamiliar with the housing sector for urban and rural poor communities. The book in a few pages also visually relays the technical processes undergone by communities as they do participatory community planning and development.



Overall, the content of the book is relevant and should be read by anyone who wishes to work with marginalized communities in their dream of achieving their own housing and improving the built environment of their communities. The book is a tangible manifestation that if communities step out from the shadow of invisibility and become visible in the decision making process for their communities, no goal is unachievable. (Angelus Maria Sales)



Title: **The Architecture of Happiness**

Editor: **Alain De Botton**

Publisher: **Vintage International (2006)**

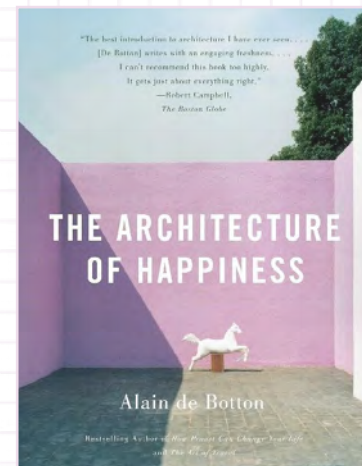
When 19th century French writer Stendhal visited the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence, Italy, he was overcome with a profound emotion which he described as "a sort of ecstasy". The affliction, later known as Stendhal Syndrome, is allegedly experienced by individuals exposed to anything of great beauty. Inspired by Stendhal's motto "beauty is the promise of happiness", Alain De Botton in his book The Architecture of Happiness reflects on the ideals of beauty and how its manifestation in our built environment speaks to us on a very primal level.

The book deals with concepts of beauty and why certain styles of architecture appeal to us. De Botton describes how our surroundings, including architecture, can affect and influence us. He also discusses how standards of architectural beauty have changed over time while gracefully moving through historical periods, from the Classical Style to the

Modern Contemporary, taking his readers to a visual walking tour. One of the engaging chapters reflects on the virtues of architecture.

The author argues that buildings embody social values, and that our preference of what is beautiful is a reflection of our virtues as humans. The book may come across as pompous; this does not discredit however the point the author tries to convey. The book is generously illustrated as well, making it easier for the readers to understand the author's stories better.

The Architecture of Happiness is a thoughtful piece of work. It challenges its readers to pay closer attention and be more understanding of their surroundings. It also reminds modern day architects to uphold the noble profession without betraying its very purpose and the Creation. (Marianne Turiano)



Title: **Mainstreaming Bio-diversity in the Infrastructure Sector**

Organized by: DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau | November 5, 19, and 26, 2020

In the context of mapping out a more resilient post-Covid environment, the biodiversity management bureau of the DENR held a 4-part webinar series tackling the integration of biodiversity protection in city development. Anchored on sustainable development goal 9 (innovation and infrastructure) and goal 11 (sustainable cities), the webinar series featured several presentations by urban planning and biodiversity experts. Investing



in green infrastructure in cities was a common theme of the presentations. Noteworthy learning points include green building design applications, stakeholder engagement in urban biodiversity management, introduction of green building rating systems, and green-grey engineering interventions to recover open spaces and restore vegetation.

A thorny take away from the webinar that was uprooting an ecosystem then getting biodiversity points for conserving another is considered green

and sustainable. Apart from a brief presentation on nature-based solutions, there was inadequate discussion on good practices that would actually mitigate environmental degradation. For policy-making and development planning, it would have been helpful to learn more of interventions that are based on the sound understanding of the ecology of an area. (Geraldine Matabang)



Title: **Housing Strategies: Facing New Challenges and Transformations**

Organized by: Department of Human Settlements and Housing Framework | December 3, 2020

As urbanization continues to be a global trend, it is only befitting to expect an urban future ahead of us. The continuing urban shift entails effects on various facets in our society to which existing issues will be carried over, and even multiply, in the years to come without sustainable strategy and effective management, specifically on peoples' housing.

This webinar is part of a (webinar) series by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development about the National Urban Development and Housing Framework. Atty. Avelino Tolentino III of the National Housing Authority pointed out the inevitability of an urban future which will motivate greater housing demand. To address the challenges accompanied with the growing housing demand, Attorney Tolentino shared pointers for the development of successful housing strategies which begins with the contextualization of housing needs based on past, present, local and international experiences. Furthermore, a model for analytical approach is advisable to evaluate given housing data and parameters to assess the effectiveness of a housing strategy being developed like the Housing Ecosystem approach.

The webinar provides a great insight for various professionals on how to develop housing strategies and projects with a methodological approach and processes. (Min-Roselle Malunhao)



Title: **Working with Women against Gender-based Violence in Urban Poor Communities**

Organized by: Partnership of Philippine Support Service Agencies (PHILSSA) | December 8, 2020

The seminar featured Atty. Kristine Rosary E. Yuzon-Chaves of Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), Dr. Mary Racelis of the Institute of Philippine Culture and Ateneo de Manila University, and Luz Divina Anung of Tambayan Center for Children's Rights.

Notable keypoints from the seminar were lecture points from Atty. Yuzon-Chaves regarding several ordinances that have already been enacted to protect women and children and protect desks that have been established in police stations and even selected DOH-retained hospitals. She highlighted achievements

made to further protect women and children but in spite of all these accomplishments, gender based violence is still rampant.

Another interesting highlight from the seminar was the interviews done by Dr. Mary Racelis in urban poor communities. According to her women respondents, women victims only sometimes report to their barangay captains. Among those interviewed, most male barangay captains did not pay attention to their complaints and only one barangay captain paid heed to the complaint and that lone barangay captain is female.

Ms. Anung shared the experiences of their organization in dealing with children in-conflict with the law (CICL). According to their experience, it takes an organized group with proper training to bring reform to CICL. They should be handled sensitively and should not be treated the same way as adult offenders. Trainings should be given to police officers who deal with CICL.

Overall, the webinar provided a good preview of the many gender issues still being experienced by women and children in urban poor communities. That in spite of all the advances made to further protect women and children's rights, gender-based violence is still prevalent in these communities. (Angelus Maria Sales)



Title:

Learning Sessions on Enhancing Anti-Sexual Harassment Policies of NGOs

Organized by:

Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN)
| December 4, 2020



This webinar facilitated by SALIGAN (Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal) updates NGOs on sexual harassment laws. It particularly discussed RA 11313 or the Safe Spaces Act of 2019 which amends the Anti-sexual Harassment Act of 1995. Speakers shared how provisions of both laws are to

implemented especially in the workplace. The learning session focused on the implementing rules of the Safe Spaces Act and how NGOs should observe the law in practically all spaces and engagements, whether in our own offices, in the field or community sites, in training areas, or even in our interactions with partner NGOs. An important takeaway from the session is that sexual harassment laws should be made mandatory internal policy for organizations to be

guided on how to handle and respond to cases of sexual harassment. NGOs that have already adopted anti-sexual harassment policies should incorporate the rules of the Safe Spaces Act as it protects both the employer and employee, and any individuals we are engaging with. (Cecilia Del Rosario)



Title:

Rights of Nature PH General Assembly 2020

Organized by: Partnership Mission for People's Initiative (PMPI); December 8-11, 2020

Rights of Nature Development Paradigm

Rights of Nature PH General Assembly 2020 (Day 1)

This webinar presents an insightful discussion on the basis of rights of nature and emphasizes that legal, political, and economic systems must address the current state of the environment. In his discussion, Fr. Edwin Gariguez posits that our anthropocentric views have affected the way we relate with and treat the environment; the way people see it as a commodity has led to the abuse of nature's provisions. Fr. Gariguez imparts the importance of appreciating and establishing our sacred relationship with nature in order for us to be better stewards of it. Atty. Mumta Ito explained the flaw in the current system rooted in the commodification of nature and how it stands in contrast with an ideal systems approach that recognizes nature with inalienable rights.

The webinar highlights the need to change our policies and the system to create a sustainable future, which can ultimately be achieved by changing the very fabric of our moral and ethical consciousness. (Marianne Turiano)

Ushering in a New Legal Framework for Environmental Protection

Rights of Nature PH General Assembly 2020 (Day 2)

This webinar offers understanding about Earth Jurisprudence and an introduction of the Rights of Nature Bill in the Philippines. Dr. Michelle Maloney presents Earth Jurisprudence as a response to the current ecological crisis that threatens us and the future generation. This principle advocates for earth-centered policies and governance towards political and economic systems that upholds the rights of nature. She also discusses the works of the Australian Earth Laws Alliance (AELA) for the community and their core themes rooted in Earth Jurisprudence. Atty. Juancho Torevillas discusses the

need for legal intervention surrounding the issues of environmental harm and presents the Rights of Nature Bill that seeks to recognize natural ecosystems as legal entities. Lastly, Atty. Mackie Maderazo presents the considerations and challenges to the Rights of Nature journey in the Philippines.

The webinar brings to light the significance of utilizing laws and policies as tools for social transformation as well as the challenges of making these issues be heard and understood by the legal sector. (Marianne Turiano)

Mainstreaming Local Rights of Nature Initiatives and Practices on Environmental Protection

Rights of Nature PH General Assembly 2020 (Day 3)

This webinar features inspiring accounts from speakers as they share their experience with programs and initiatives that aims for the integrity and protection of the environment. Environmental advocate Chuck O'neal discusses the citizen's initiative in Orange County, Florida that seeks to protect its waters plagued with pollution. He also expounded on the procedures and challenges of holding such campaigns. Engr. Kenneth Artes on the other hand presented the programs implemented in Bayawan City, and how mindful local governance and involving the community in the development processes offer a promising path towards successful policies. For the last part of the session, Atty. Galahad R.A. Pe Benito discussed the importance of local ordinances and the people's initiative. He also presented the petition they filed in 2013 to the City Council of Manila to ban the reclamation of Manila Bay.

The discussions were empowering as the speakers highlight on their talks the power of the people to make a contribution for their communities in upholding the rights of nature. (Marianne Turiano)

SAPAT Lifestyle: An Expression of Rights of Nature

Rights of Nature PH General Assembly 2020 (Day 4)

In this webinar, the speakers share their stories on how they promote environmental awareness and apply the lessons they learned to their lifestyles, communities, and businesses. Mimo and Aubrey Perez. talked about their experience in environmentally-conscious living and their efforts to expanding their consciousness to further improve their choices. Sarah Queblatin shared her involvement in different communities working alongside with the indigenous people. She also discussed the contribution of the indigenous people in providing traditional ecological knowledge to enable and nurture the existing ecosystems of the place. Lastly, Noli Mercader presented their ventures in Lola Sayong Ecosurf Camp as a start-up business and their initiatives for the community and the environment towards sustainability.

The webinar offers practical ways to living the sustainable lifestyle and inspires how the small steps each one of us take in the quest to make a difference can make an impact to help the environment. (Marianne Turiano)





As a teacher, student, or parent – what are your realizations on education and learning after experiencing online classes during the pandemic?

Online classes/remote learning is a process of learning and unlearning. I am a product of face to face learning and the sudden shift in the learning methodology is a challenge to someone who is new in teaching. The remote learning forced me to rethink my teaching strategies and calibrate course objectives that will be shared to students who are also facing various challenges in their courses and in their immediate learning environment. The current set-up taught me to be virtually present with the students and also increase my patience and understanding to the various challenges.

Ana Teresa Prondosa, 34, UP
CSWCD instructor

For one, I'd say it definitely tested my resolve to finish graduate school. The stress and anxiety due to the increasing COVID-19 cases, confusing public advisories, worries about sensibility of the plans laid out by officials, and overall uncertainty about the future was an additional burden for me. Online classes also made it easier to feel detached from school and learning was not entirely guaranteed either. Ironically though, for those in the field of disaster management, this is the best time to learn—especially on risk governance. I am optimistic that decision makers would learn a thing or two and keep our plans updated and more comprehensive.

Ma. Lorena Hernandez, 27, civil engineer

As a parent of a child in elementary, you realize that online school is possible, but there are certain limitations on how a teacher can explain a topic and measure if the child has learned the subject or topic. There are also instances when the class has to be cancelled or rescheduled because there is a problem with the internet, or the pupil cannot participate well because there is a problem with his equipment or its settings. There is feedback that in certain schools kids learn less from modules, there is also feedback that some wish there will be set boundaries on the amount of homework given offline, some posted at night or during weekends. I feel for the kids who wish to be with their teachers and classmates again. But who can argue with the fact that safety of the kids and everyone comes first?

Irene Joyce Ng Cha-ching, 45, architect

As a grad student when the pandemic started, I was forced to adapt to alternative learning methodologies which I had not paid much attention to in the past. It took a while to get used to, but the flexibility they afford provided a convenient learning experience overall. I do realize, however, that the necessary services, facilities, and infrastructure need to be in place for it to be a universal experience.

Brynn Jonsson Julia, 31, training
and development specialist

As someone who experienced both being a student and a lecturer during this pandemic, it made me realize that yes online learning is doable but it can never replace face to face learning. As a lecturer, I miss the instant feedback that I get when I teach a concept or an idea. You can easily see from the faces of your students if they are bored or did not understand what you're saying. As a student, I miss the physical interaction with classmates which no virtual platform can ever simulate or replicate. The simple face to face sharing of experiences is one that I missed the most whether I'm the lecturer or the student.

Angelus Maria Sales, 38,
architect

As a law student, this online education setting made me appreciate the school setting even more. There are less references for law students online and as we mainly use socratic method during recitation, the terrible internet connection affects our recitation grades. In addition, law students take midterms and final examinations similar to the BAR setting, which is through Essay, timed and in a setting which would be impossible for us to cheat. As most law students and professors are aged between 25-60, it is difficult for some to adapt to online sharing, online presentations, screensharing and so on. Online education is possible for High School and College students as they mainly use the internet and they can adapt, but I would not advise it for Graduate School, Law School, Medicine and those courses which would need further studies.

Maria Karol Hernandez, 28, law student

YP Internship Reflection

by Anna Larraine B. Rienton



For UST's Apprenticeship program, I interned in TAO-Pilipinas from June to September 2019. I learned about the YP program a few years ago through a talk held by former TAO interns in my second year. Back then, it was impressive how the students get to be involved in the projects and how they come out learning so much from the experience. When it was my time to apprentice, I applied to TAO-Pilipinas.

During my four weeks interning, it was an immediate reality-check that there is a stark difference between designing for actual projects and conceptualization and theories in school. This experience showed how design doesn't always have to be

complicated as you have to consider the financial situation especially in a housing project. Interacting with the community of MASAGANA in Bulacan was a good learning experience in better social consciousness and compassion, interacting with people and the hard reality of housing organizations. The site visits reinforced my interest in urban planning and how it could directly affect communities and the residents living in it.

Being a student places you in a bubble where the main goals are finishing the next design plate or assignments. Working in TAO burst that bubble and showed a glimpse of what it's like to be working

as a future architect. The experiences I gained helped in cultivating a better sense of community and that it should be carried into future projects. Indirectly, this realization is partly how I developed my thesis proposal, the Redevelopment of the Port of Cebu Domestic Passenger Terminals. The port project stemmed from my desire to improve the seaside experience in my hometown in Quezon province.

Interning in TAO-Pilipinas came at a vital point in my student career where I was exposed to these new experiences and in an environment where they are further nurtured and developed. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked with TAO-Pilipinas and I will continue to hone and treasure the wisdom they embarked into future projects and experiences.



YP intern Anna Rienton checks the depth of a footing during a construction monitoring visit in MASAGANA community.



Anna assists the participants during a site planning workshop in Tandang Sora.



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Project Team Leader for Young Professionals Formation (PTL-YPF)

[See Terms of Reference here.](#)

To apply, e-mail us at: hr@tao-pilipinas.org



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If you would like to be contacted for job (full/part-time*) or volunteer opportunities, you may sign up to our [Young Professionals Volunteers and Consultants Pool](#).

*For part-time services, we usually require the following: CAD drafting and rendering, model-making, graphic design, documentation

STUDENT PROMO

ON TAO PUBLICATIONS



TAO-Pilipinas

architects in the margins

BATTLING WAVES

Lessons in Humanitarian Shelter Response in the Small Islands of Marikina and Marikina, Eastern Samar and Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) in Northern Samar

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One time, limited supply offer: @taopilipinasinc offers student discount for 20 print copies of **TAO-Pilipinas: architects in the margins** and **Battling Waves**, originally priced at PHP1500 each. Students may avail of the books at 20% discount, limited to 1 unit per book per student. Discounted price is **PHP1200 per book**, exclusive of shipping/delivery charges. This offer runs for a month, from **January 20 to February 21 only** and until supplies last.

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SHELTER NEEDS ASSESSMENT CONDUCTED WITH TAO'S COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Notes from the Field Learning from Taiwan's Disaster Risk Reduction Efforts

TAO-Pilipinas recently conducted a shelter needs assessment in partnership with TAO's community partners, the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Health (DOH). The assessment was conducted in the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines in November 2013. The assessment aimed to identify the shelter needs of affected communities and provide recommendations for disaster risk reduction efforts.

PO FEDERATIONS ATTEND SESSIONS ON SOIL ANALYSIS, BP 220

TAO-Pilipinas recently conducted a series of sessions on soil analysis and BP 220 for PO federations. The sessions were held in partnership with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The sessions aimed to provide PO federations with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct soil analysis and implement BP 220 in their communities.

TAO featured in Philippine Pavilion for Venice Architecture Biennale

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January - February 2018

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March - May 2018

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August - September 2018

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TAO LECTURE SERIES LAUNCHED AS ACCREDITED CPD PROGRAM

TAO-Pilipinas recently launched its lecture series as an accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program. The lecture series is a series of lectures on disaster risk reduction and community development. The lectures are accredited by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) and are intended to provide professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to advance their careers.

Co-Design Project begins implementation

TAO-Pilipinas recently began the implementation of its Co-Design Project. The project is a partnership between TAO-Pilipinas and the Department of Social Services (DSS). The project aims to provide communities with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct disaster risk reduction assessments and develop disaster risk reduction plans.

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October - December 2018

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TECHNICAL STUDENT VOLUNTEERS VISIT LUPANG AYENDA FOR CO-DESIGN PROJECT

TAO-Pilipinas recently hosted technical student volunteers for a Co-Design Project. The project is a partnership between TAO-Pilipinas and the Department of Social Services (DSS). The project aims to provide communities with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct disaster risk reduction assessments and develop disaster risk reduction plans.

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January - March 2019

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PVYVGA lives up to its name; creates "People's Plan"

PVYVGA (People's Voice in Youth Voice in Governance) recently created a "People's Plan". The plan is a series of recommendations for the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of Health (DOH). The plan aims to provide communities with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct disaster risk reduction assessments and develop disaster risk reduction plans.

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April - June 2019

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TAO partners with the Commission on Human Rights in its 18th

TAO-Pilipinas recently partnered with the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) in its 18th session. The session was held in Manila, Philippines, and was a major international event. TAO-Pilipinas presented its work in disaster risk reduction and community development to the commission.

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July - September 2019

TAO-PILIPINAS, INC.
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Work on DAP project continues amid COVID-19 pandemic

TAO-Pilipinas continues its work on the Disaster Preparedness and Response (DAP) project despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The project is a partnership between TAO-Pilipinas and the Department of Social Services (DSS). The project aims to provide communities with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct disaster risk reduction assessments and develop disaster risk reduction plans.

TAO looks back at year of disaster project completion

TAO-Pilipinas recently looked back at its achievements in disaster risk reduction and community development over the past year. The year was a challenging one, but TAO-Pilipinas was able to complete several major projects and make significant progress in disaster risk reduction and community development.

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February - September 2020

TAO-PILIPINAS, INC.
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Ecotourism in Masagana: an alternative building material

TAO-Pilipinas recently explored the use of ecotourism as an alternative building material. The project is a partnership between TAO-Pilipinas and the Department of Social Services (DSS). The project aims to provide communities with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct disaster risk reduction assessments and develop disaster risk reduction plans.

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October - December 2020

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