

2020

ANNUAL REPORT



SALIGAN



2020 in Retrospect

SALIGAN commenced the implementation of its three-year strategic plans for 2020-2022, working on four core programs: rights of workers, gender equality, children's rights, and people's participation in governance. In addition, specialized programs on housing rights, indigenous peoples, peace, environment, and human rights were identified. SALIGAN has maintained its strategies, operations and offices.

While the implementation of SALIGAN's programs was well under way, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, with the Philippine government responding by declaring various levels of community quarantine or lockdowns by mid-March.

The pandemic further highlighted the social injustices experienced by the marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors. Since the initial response of the government has been military-led, the focus has been more about implementing the quarantine measures and arresting violators, many of whom were only trying to earn a living or access basic essential services.

Many workers found themselves without jobs, stranded at their work sites, and without the means to get home safely.

Others were asked by employers to stay at their workplaces to perform their duties and not to go home at all for the duration of the quarantine. Some workers who refused had to resign or lost their jobs. Some were left to find alternative means to feed their families when mobility had been severely restricted and the contagion barely contained. Among them and amidst all these, women were expected to not only keep their households running as usual but also care for everyone made to stay at home all day. The latest data show that around 4.5 million workers have lost their jobs.

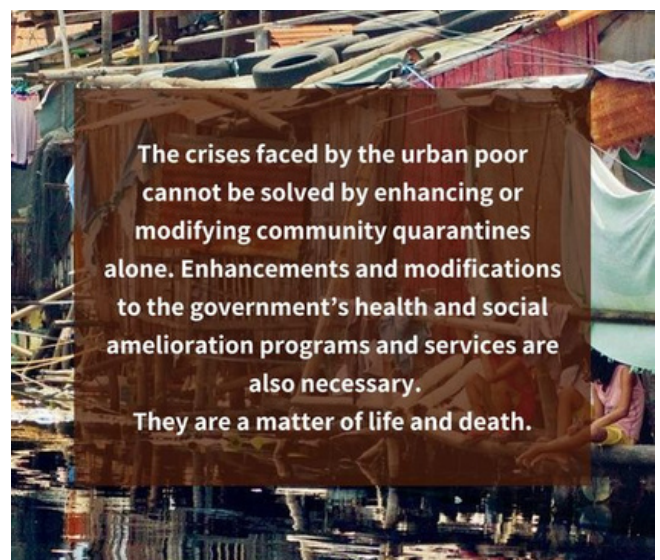
Classes were suspended and, after a period of confusion until the last quarter of 2020, shifted to an online mode of learning. Students who have no access to technology and conducive learning environments had difficulty coping.

Adding to this, children below 15 years of age were not allowed outside of their homes for most of the year. These decisions were made by the government without consulting children, further disregarding their psychosocial needs. The pandemic also increased the vulnerability of women and children to abuse as there was an increase of cases of online sexual exploitation of children and domestic violence. While its policy focused on ordering people to stay at home, the government failed to acknowledge that not all homes are safe. Further, access to services of women and children victim-survivors of violence have been hampered by the limitation in movement and resources available. It became apparent that responses to VAWC are considered secondary in importance by the authorities, who focused on responding to hunger and livelihood.

The plight of informal settler families worsened. While the government asked everyone to stay at home, eviction and demolition activities continued pursuant to the government's road clearing operations. Worse, local government units, in addition to being at the forefront of providing basic services to their constituents, were threatened with administrative cases for failure to comply with the directives to clear the streets. Further, in order to lessen the number of people in Metro Manila, the government, without consultation and preparation, implemented the Balik Probinsya Program. The short-term program provided beneficiaries transportation, cash assistance of PhP15,000 per family and a promise of livelihood assistance in their destination. The program was implemented with neither a clear plan nor coordination with receiving LGUs. Some reports say this caused the spread of COVID-19 in provinces.

The government responded to the situation mainly through the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act and the subsequent Bayanihan to Recover as One Act, wherein cash assistance to the poor and workers who lost their jobs were provided. Clearly, the cash assistance was not enough as the pandemic dragged throughout 2020. The year ended with the country under varying community quarantines or lockdowns.

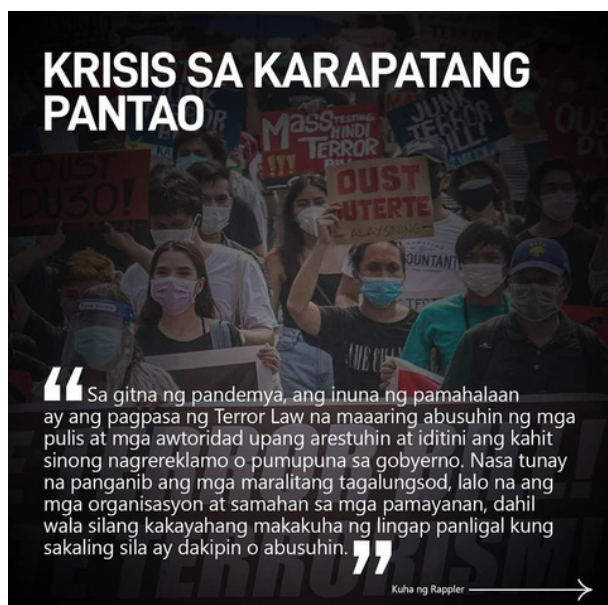
Metro Manila and its neighboring provinces still has to fully open economic activities with no clear vaccination plan in place.



In addition, while most of Mindanao was recovering from multiple destructive earthquakes towards the end of 2019, typhoons and flashfloods took place in the second half of 2020 further devastating several areas. Taal volcano erupted in January 2020, which displaced residents and workers in Batangas and Cavite, and also affected Metro Manila. Metro Manila, its neighboring provinces, and the Bicol region have been hit by at least three strong typhoons in the last quarter of 2020, displacing a number of people and causing services like water and electricity to be unavailable to several provinces until early 2021. The typhoon and flooding temporarily displaced residents in relocation sites while dealing with the effects of the pandemic and the possible spread of COVID-19 in evacuation centers.

Strategies and participation of social movements have been affected by the implementation of community quarantines and lockdowns. Added to that are the risks brought about by the enactment of the Anti-Terrorism Law and the continuous implementation of E.O. 70, as many groups that manifested dissent to government policies are red-tagged. This is specifically apparent among IP communities in Mindanao. Participation in government processes, both national and local, were affected by the limited access of members of the basic sectors to technology. Reliable news and information especially in places where there is no internet has been affected by the closure of ABS-CBN. Advocacy work was generally limited to social media campaigns. Access to the judicial system and service providers were also limited by the lockdown.

The situation did not diminish the grit of the target groups. Instead, it ignited their passion for change. As soon as they were able to adjust to the limitations brought about by the pandemic, they were able to realign advocacies to address the social issues during the pandemic, including access to resources, security of tenure, and the right to participation in decision-making processes.



The online conduct of legislative hearings and agency consultations provided an opportunity for the target sectors to have more participants. However, in some of these online engagements, they were muted. While online platforms may have worked to some extent for those in urban areas, it was not the same for those in the provinces, specifically the partner communities in the Bicol region and Mindanao, since access to technology is limited, if not totally lacking. The normalization and transition phase in BARMM continued with the residents generally hopeful despite the hardships brought about by the pandemic, and children being particularly pleased being engaged in consultation sessions. By the end of the year, there was a discussion on extending the term of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority.

SALIGAN ensured the continuation of its programs despite the pandemic and the limitations in mobility. Several mechanisms and protocols were adopted to balance health and security concerns and the need to address the needs of marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors.

Online legal consultations, learning sessions, and consultations were put in place and further strengthened. Work from home policy was implemented from March 15, 2020 until June 30, 2020. Thereafter, SALIGAN implemented an alternative work arrangement within the team so that the three offices continued to be open and operational.

Legal Education

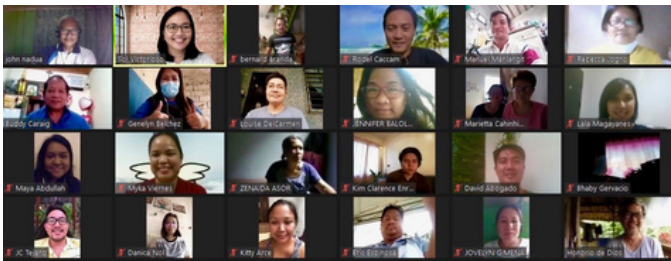
75 individuals participated in SALIGAN's paralegal formation program. The pandemic has limited the continuation of the program among indigenous peoples in CARAGA implemented by SALIGAN-Mindanao and women's rights advocates in Sipocot, Camarines Sur implemented by SALIGAN-Bicol. SALIGAN-Mindanao was able to conduct the advanced module a week before the COVID-19 lockdown was declared in March 2020, but wasn't able to complete it until the thematic module.

SALIGAN-Bicol conducted the advanced module in December 2020, when the mobility restriction was relaxed and electricity in Camarines Sur was restored following the onslaught of typhoons.



Couples seeking to avail of barangay Calauag's program in Naga City for mass wedding had to undergo a series of learning sessions on marriage and family life. Shyla Dumlasa of SALIGAN-Bicol facilitated the session on R.A. 9262 on February 28, 2020.

SALIGAN-Manila launched the full online paralegal formation program among members of the urban poor sector from Pasay City, Naic in Cavite and Tanay in Rizal in September 2020. The three groups will complete the program in the first quarter of 2021, and will be followed by legal clinics and monitoring conferences.



The Paralegal Formation on Housing and Local Policy Advocacy among urban poor communities of Naic in Cavite, Tanay in Rizal, and Pasay City is the first fully online paralegal formation program in 33 years. The paralegal training ran from September 2020 to March 2021 which included a shift in the module design and methodology, provision of health and sanitation kits, food packs and mobile credits for online learning, among others. A total of 19 community leaders and SCP BURST area coordinators participated in and completed the training. They braved the odds that hampered their online learning, from the poor internet connectivity, access to electricity, new learning platforms, granular community lockdowns and even the several typhoons that hit the country, in order to acquire the legal knowledge and skills needed to participate in the development process at the national and local levels. The paralegals sacrificed their weekends just so they can participate in the online sessions. They also have to go to the barangay halls, outposts and schools to have electricity access, and PisoNet establishments for internet access.

43 legal literacy sessions were conducted, directly reaching 6,822 individuals who are members marginalized and disadvantaged groups, service providers, and other stakeholders. 88% of the sessions were conducted online. While online learning sessions reached a wider audience, SALIGAN was conscious to acknowledge that access to facilities necessary for online learning is limited, especially among the marginalized and disadvantaged groups in the provinces. SALIGAN-Bicol and SALIGAN-Mindanao continued to use the traditional face-to-face mode of learning, whenever possible.



SALIGAN-Mindanao's Ian Genciano was one of the speakers in Access to Justice Capacity Building Training organized by the Ateneo Human Rights Center in Dinagat Islands on February 19-21, 2021.

Litigation

SALIGAN lawyers represented the marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors in 69 cases in 2020. 72 individuals were able to access legal consultation services across the country, 80% of which were facilitated online. 9 legal jamming sessions were conducted with several communities and partners on various issues concerning them. SALIGAN's online legal consultation mechanisms and protocols enabled SALIGAN to continue giving legal assistance despite the pandemic.



In partnership with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) Camarines Sur Chapter, SALIGAN-Bicol traveled to Buhi, Camarines Sur for a legal jamming session with the Agtas on February 8, 2021. More than 50 indigenous peoples were able to access legal advice and assistance on various matters.



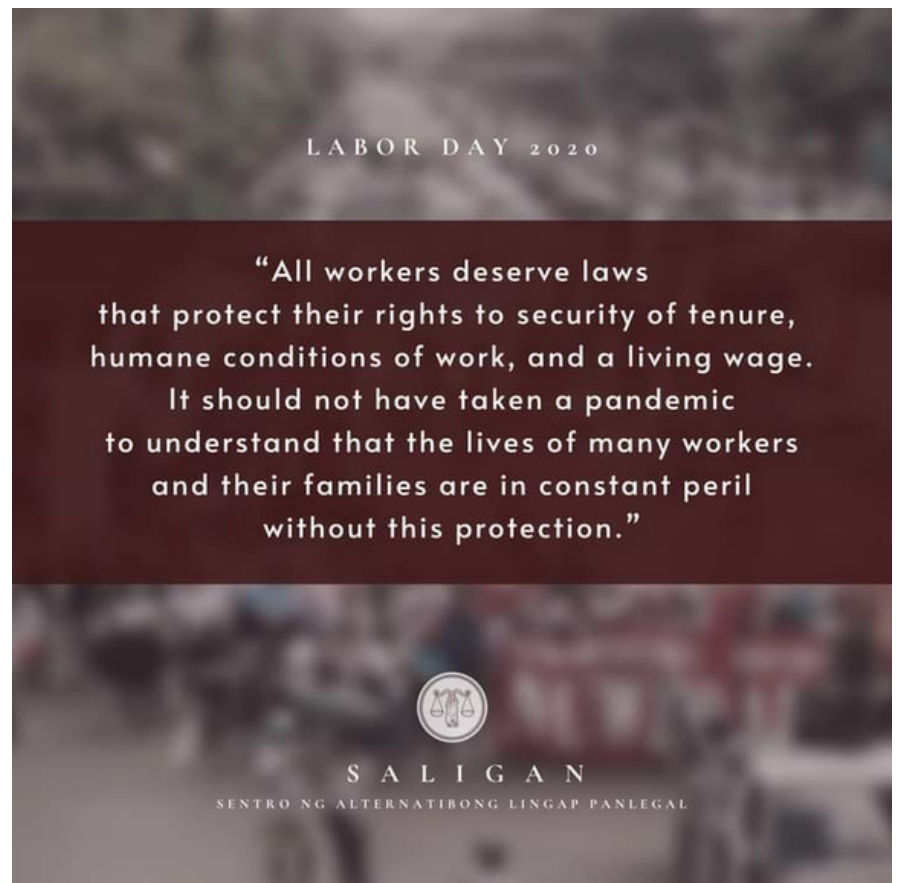
The Alternative Law Groups, Inc., to which SALIGAN is one of the oldest and biggest members, files a Petition assailing the constitutionality of the Anti-Terrorism Law on June 23, 2021. SALIGAN lawyers joined other alternative lawyers in representing ALG.



A virtual legal jamming session was conducted with Panaghiusa Alang Sa Kaugalingnan Ug Kalingkawasan (PASAKK), an IP community in Bunawan, Agusan del Sur, upon the community's request due to a number of human rights violations happening on the ground.

Policy Advocacy

SALIGAN continued work on national and local policy advocacies affecting the marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors. 3 national advocacy teams on women and children, workers' rights and housing rights strengthened their participation in legislative and executive policy making processes. Specifically, SALIGAN issued statements on the issues confronting workers and informal settlers during the pandemic.



SALIGAN highlighted the plight of the workers during the pandemic in its Labor Day Statement



The Housing Rights Advocacy Team (HRAT) put up the Karapatan ang Tahanan Facebook Page, a platform devoted to issues on urban development and housing.

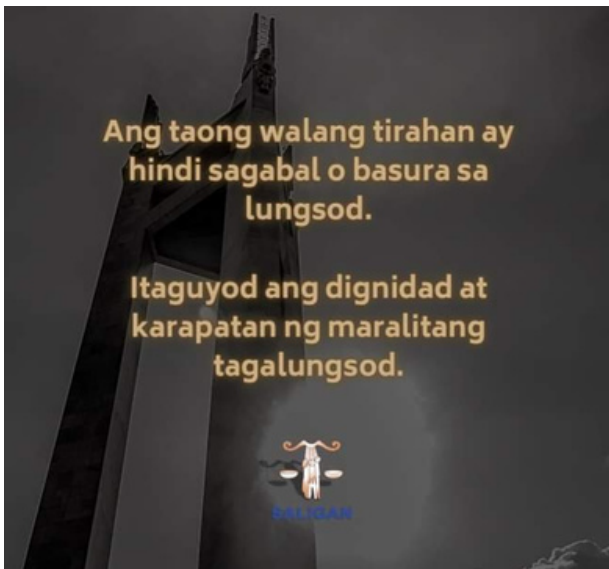


SALIGAN worked with the DILG, the PCW and PLAN International on the localization of the Safe Spaces Act. SALIGAN provided its expertise in the drafting, conduct of consultations, and finalization of DILG-PCW JMC No. 2020-01, which was signed on December 7, 2020.

Policy Advocacy

At the local levels, SALIGAN-Bicol continued working with the gender and development and children advocacy teams. SALIGAN-Mindanao commenced its engagement with the children's advocacy team in BARMM, in addition to continuously working with the EPIRA advocacy group in Davao City. Workshops, focus group discussions and public consultations were conducted in Basilan and Tawi-Tawi on the Proposed Magna Carta of Children in BARMM.

SALIGAN remained a member of the Regional Tripartite Industrial Peace Council (RTIPC) of the National Capital Region as a representative of the women sector. SALIGAN is also an NGO representative to the Quezon City Local Housing Board.



In a statement issued in November 2020, SALIGAN called out the Quezon City Government on its obvious error in its social media post on road clearing operations which treated homeless persons and ISFs as no different from garbage. The Quezon City Government replied to the statement within two days after posting.



Consultation on the draft Magna Carta of Children in BARMM

SALIGAN Bicol remained a member and officer of the Naga City People's Council (NCPC), the Naga City Council for Women (NCCW), and the Naga City Council for the Welfare and Protection of Children (NCCWPC). It also remained a member of the Naga City Urban Development and Housing Board (NCUDHB).

SALIGAN Mindanao has cooperated with various organizations in crafting policies in BARMM. It has also been active in local campaigns on women, the environment and human rights defenders.

SALIGAN continued to participate in fora, consultations and meetings relevant to its work and the issues of its target sectors. SALIGAN participated in an online discussion of NAMATI on the effect of the pandemic on the urban poor sector. It also participated in the UN Responsible Business and Human Rights Forum for Asia and the Pacific as well as other local and international webinars affecting the urban poor, women and children, and labor.

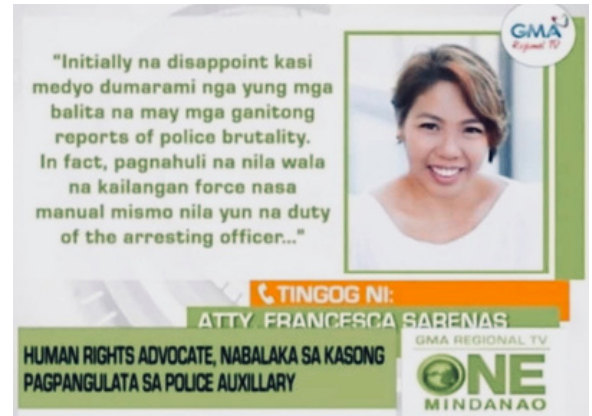
Research and Publication

Together with Save the Children Philippines, SALIGAN worked on a research paper entitled "The Missing Voices in the Fight Against Pandemic: A Review of Policy Responses to the Pandemic." The findings and recommendations were presented in a forum organized by SCP in November 2020.

While the website is still being enhanced, SALIGAN used its official Facebook page to publish at least 26 articles, statements, social media cards, legal remedies and jurisprudence affecting the marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors. It has specifically published social media cards on COVID-19 issuances of the government on workers, housing, and women. SALIGAN also used the platform to provide popular materials on the Safe Spaces Act, and information on the minimum age of sexual consent.

In addition, SALIGAN continued working on its manuals and primers to adapt to online publication. These materials will be available in 2021.

To reach a wider audience, SALIGAN made regular appearances on online talk shows and One Mindanao local TV program by GMA Regional TV to talk about gender equality, human rights and the Anti-Terrorism Law.



SALIGAN-Mindanao's Kix Sarenas reacts to an incident of police brutality in Davao City. The (voice) interview was aired on One Mindanao, a GMA Regional TV program, on June 26, 2020.

Internship

SALIGAN conducted Alternative Lawyering Forums among law students of the University of the Philippines and Xavier University. It also partnered with the Ateneo Human Rights Center in their internship program. SALIGAN provided its expertise in workers' rights and labor laws during AHRC's Basic Orientation Seminar. SALIGAN hosted 4 law student-interns in 2020.

Although the period of internship with SALIGAN is considerably shorter than planned due to the pandemic, the four-week program immersed the law students to various issues. In particular, the interns worked on minimum age of sexual consent and the government's responses to the pandemic in relation to the marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors.

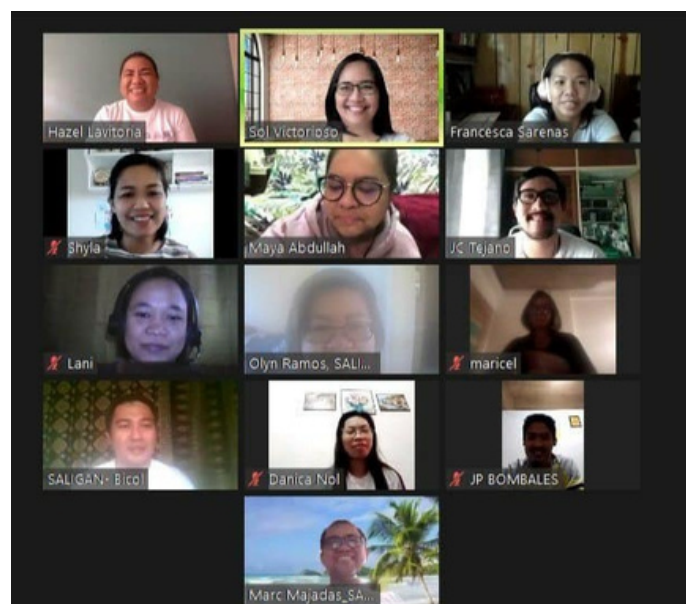
Development Partners

SALIGAN continued its partnership with various grassroots and civil society organizations in pursuance of its goal of legal empowerment and genuine social change. It maintained its active membership in the Alternative Law Groups, Inc., Partnership Mission for People's Initiatives, NGOs for Fisheries Reform, and the Partnership of Philippine Support Agencies.

Misereor and Save the Children Philippines continued its support to SALIGAN's work. It has also entered into several consultancy agreements with several organizations such as PLAN International, Verite SEA, ALG, and SCP's BARMM and CRG Programs. Towards the end of 2020, it has entered into agreements with PHILSSA and the Asia Democracy Network for community legal empowerment programs in various localities.

SALIGAN Team

SALIGAN continued its work with its team working from Metro Manila, the Bicol region and Mindanao. Three staff severed employment, while two new members joined the team.



1st row, L-R: Hazel Lavitoria, Sol Victorioso, Kix Sarenas. 2nd row, L-R: Shyla Dumlasa, Maya Abdullah (joined 2020), JC Tejado. 3rd row, L-R: Lani Cabanig, Olyn Ramos, Maricel Erlano. 4th row, L-R: Dave Abogado, Danica Nol (joined 2020), JP Bombales. 5th row: Marc Majadas. Not in photo: Levy Ang**, Alex Tejerero**, and Ian Genciano** who all left SALIGAN in 2020.

Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees met twice in 2020. In November 2020, SALIGAN's incorporator, former Executive Director, and then-BOT Vice-President and Treasurer, Joy Casis, passed away. SALIGAN declared 3 vacancies in the Board and an election was scheduled in January 2021.



In the election last January 2021, the following were elected to the BOT: Gettie Sandoval (President), Tony Salvador (Vice-President), Hazel Lavitoria (Secretary), Aya De Leon (Treasurer), Nandy Aldaba, Marlon Manuel, and Aubrey Albo-Perez.

2021 Preview



2021 is the last year of the current Legal Empowerment and Assistance Program with Misereor. SALIGAN will propose for its continuation. SALIGAN was also given the opportunity by SCP to be one of its core support partners in 2021, continuing the Bida ang Bata project with an added opportunity to strengthen SALIGAN's operations.

Community legal empowerment focused on WICL and COVID-19 government response will be commenced by first quarter. SALIGAN's enhanced website will be relaunched on February 25, 2021, providing more access to legal resources. Together with advocacy teams and networks across the country, SALIGAN will continue to work on the advocacies of the marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited sectors, both in the national and local levels.

www.saligan.org