



**Strengthening Human Rights in the Philippines 1 & 2**

**QUARTERLY REPORT FROM THE ASIA FOUNDATION  
TO THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
01 JANUARY– 31 MARCH 2010**

**COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT NOS. 492-A-00-07-00016-00 and 492-A-00-09-00027-00**

## The Asia Foundation

### Strengthening Human Rights in the Philippines 1 & 2 (Cooperative Agreement Nos. 492-A-00-07-00016-00 and 492-A-00-09-00027-00)

January 1, 2010 – March 31, 2010

#### SUMMARY

This quarterly report covers activities from January 1, 2010 to March 31, 2010 under The Asia Foundation's two programs: Strengthening Human Rights in the Philippines (SHRP 1) and its extension and expansion, Strengthening Human Rights in the Philippines 2 (SHRP 2). The programs are funded through separate Cooperative Agreements with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). SHRP 1 runs from October 1, 2007 to September 30, 2010, while SHRP 2 runs from October 1, 2009 to September 30, 2011. Both programs aim to introduce substantial and durable measures that will strengthen enforcement of human rights and rule of law in the Philippines through a three-pronged strategy to:

- (1) Promote respect for human rights and freedoms and progressively secure their effective recognition and observance;
- (2) Protect human rights of citizens in law and reality through improved monitoring of violations; and
- (3) Prosecute human rights violations through capacity-building for better investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of cases.

In **SHRP 1**, the Foundation focused its efforts on the timely and successful completion of planned projects, and initial consolidation of program gains. In particular, the Foundation accomplished the following SHRP 1 activities this quarter:

- To **promote** respect for human rights, the UP Institute of Human Rights and the local government styling committees finalized the wording and format of the Human Rights Actions Plans of Calapan City and Naga City in preparation for their public launch.
- For the **protection** of human rights component, the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR) continued to monitor the case of 31 journalists killed in the 23 November massacre in Ampatuan town in Maguindanao,<sup>1</sup> as well as of a recent media killing. Meanwhile, members of the Commission on Human Rights' (CHR)

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<sup>1</sup> On November 23, 2009, at least 57 individuals including pregnant women, lawyers, and journalists in Maguindanao were found brutally murdered in Ampatuan town, Maguindanao. ([http://www.cmfr-phil.org/map/index\\_inline.html](http://www.cmfr-phil.org/map/index_inline.html) for the CMFR webpage on the Ampatuans; Also, <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/177821/the-ampatuan-massacre-a-map-and-timeline>)

Information System and Management Office completed a training course on the Pentaho application system to enable them to generate statistical reports and charts from the Martus-Based Executive Information System (MAREIS). Specifications for enhancements and for enabling non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to report violations directly to the MAREIS were also completed this quarter.

- Towards **prosecution** of violators, government and civil society human rights stakeholders in Mindoro Oriental formed the fourth Multi-Sectoral Quick Reaction Team (MSQRT). MSQRTs in the provinces of Northern Samar, Albay, and Leyte heightened their activities to respond to reported violations and organize human rights trainings for their members and partner communities. With other NGOs, selected MSQRT members participated in the Training on Human Rights Investigation and Documentation that the Foundation organized in partnership with the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines. With the Medical Action Group, the Foundation developed a training program for Municipal Health Officers on the examination and documentation of torture injuries. The Philippine Judicial Academy conducted preliminary research and identified writers for the Human Rights Guidebook that it will publish. Additional copies of “Anino ng Batas,” a comic book on the writs of *amparo*, *habeas data*, and *habeas corpus* were reprinted and translated into English during this reporting period.

To complement initiatives under SHRP 1, the Foundation embarked on the following activities under **SHRP 2**:

- To **promote** respect for human rights, the Foundation and the University of the Philippines Institute of Human Rights prepared to replicate the development of a local human rights action plan in Samar.
- For the **protection** of human rights component, the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility conducted a roundtable discussion on media safety for journalists. In collaboration with a consultant new media expert, the Foundation commenced a training needs assessment to prepare a training module on digital activism for human rights NGOs. To expand its capacity to respond to victims of human rights abuses, the CHR sealed a partnership with the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates to deputize trained and accredited NGO workers as CHR representatives. The CHR and the Department of Justice continued to meet and coordinate, this time with human rights NGOs to convene the Steering Committee that will draft the Anti-Torture Law Implementing Rules and Regulations.
- Towards **prosecution** of violators, the Foundation initiated efforts to galvanize public support for human rights protection. With a public relations expert, the Foundation organized a preliminary workshop to identify existing communication strategies employed by its partners. The workshop output will feed into to Communications Plan that the Foundation is developing for SHRP 2. The Foundation, in partnership with the Ateneo Human Rights Center, coordinated with

schools and human rights organizations to plan the University Road Shows on Human Rights. Preparations for the human rights radio program in collaboration with the Batas Barangay Development Foundation, and the roundtable discussion among human rights lawyers in partnership with the Lawyers League for Liberty continued this quarter.

This report presents the foregoing activities under separate chapters: Chapter I highlights activities and plans under SHRP 1, while Chapter II covers those for SHRP 2. This report also mentions some relevant human rights –related activities in which the Foundation participated (outside of SHRP 1 or 2). Challenges in implementing the two programs conclude this report.

**CHAPTER I**  
**Strengthening Human Rights in the Philippines 1**  
**Cooperative Agreement No. 492-A-00-07-00016-00**

**HIGHLIGHTS AND OUTCOMES OF SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES**

***I. Promoting respect for human rights***

**Development of Local Human Rights Action Plans.** After conducting a series of consultations and consolidating inputs from stakeholders, the University of the Philippines Institute of Human Rights (UP IHR), the Foundation's implementing partner for this project, convened local government representatives in Naga City and Calapan City to serve as the styling committee of their respective action plans. The styling committees finalized the language, structure, and format of the action plans.

The draft Calapan City action plan includes local-government led initiatives to: provide human rights trainings for the local police and civilian volunteer organizations; conduct public information and education campaigns on the right to life; form multi-sectoral mechanisms and establish phone or text brigade systems to respond to human rights violations; and create a special committee within the *Sangguniang Panglunsod* (city legislative body) to look into cases of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture.

The UP IHR is closely coordinating with the concerned local governments to schedule the launch of the action plans before the May 2010 elections.

***II. Protecting human rights of citizens***

**Updating of the CMFR Database on the Killings of Journalists.** CMFR continued to update its online database of slain journalists ([http://www.cmfr-phil.org/map/index\\_inline.html](http://www.cmfr-phil.org/map/index_inline.html)). During this quarter, CMFR documented the March 8, 2010 killing of Chito Abuzo, a radio block timer who was beaten to death in General Santos City. Investigation is ongoing to determine the motive behind the incident. If work-related, Abuzo's death will be the 77<sup>th</sup> media killing since 2001.

CMFR likewise continued to monitor the case of the 31 journalists killed in the 23 November massacre in Maguindanao. A section in their website dubbed as the

“Ampatuan Watch” posts regular (<http://cmfr-phil.org/ampatuanwatch/>) updates about related murder charges filed in court.<sup>2</sup>

CMFR’s online database is a comprehensive and an oft-cited resource on media killings in the Philippines. The Committee for the Protection of Journalists (CPJ), an international organization that defends press freedom, refers to CMFR’s data in preparing its worldwide impunity index report.<sup>3</sup> In 2009, the Philippines ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the impunity index. But after the 23 November massacre in Maguindanao, CPJ’s 2010 report ranked the Philippines as the third deadliest nation for journalists, closely following Iraq and Somalia<sup>4</sup>.

**Martus-based Executive Information System (MAREIS).** To strengthen the CHR’s in-house capability to operate the MAREIS, a consultant from the US-based Pentaho Intelligence Systems, Inc. conducted a five-day training for the technical staff of the Information Systems Management Office (ISMO).<sup>5</sup> The consultant trained ISMO staff on the functionalities of the Pentaho application to allow them to effectively present selected MAREIS data for public viewing. ISMO staff are already applying what they learned as they rework CHR’s online map of human rights violations to make it more user-friendly.<sup>6</sup>

During this reporting period, ISMO and a software developer consultant designed upgrades for the MAREIS to enable human rights NGOs to directly report and monitor human rights violations through the MAREIS, as well as to improve user security and address interruptions in the system. The software developer will be working closely with a verification consultant who will validate the codes, system design, and manuals to be submitted to the CHR.

### ***III. Prosecuting human rights violations***

**Establishment of Multi-Sectoral Quick Reaction Teams (MSQRTs).** Government and civil society human rights stakeholders from Mindoro Oriental met in Calapan City on February 4, 2010 and agreed to form an MSQRT.<sup>7</sup> They noted that although

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<sup>2</sup> On April 17, 2010, the Department of Justice Secretary dropped murder charges against key suspects -- Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Governor Zaldy Ampatuan Zaldy and Mamasapano Mayor Datu Akmad Ampatuan. <http://www.cmfr-phil.org/>

<sup>3</sup> CPJ’s Impunity Index calculates the number of unsolved journalist murders as a percentage of each country’s population.

<sup>4</sup> The complete report can be viewed at <http://cpj.org/reports/2010/04/cpj-2010-impunity-index-getting-away-with-murder.php>

<sup>5</sup> The Pentaho BI Platform is an enterprise-class business intelligence platform that supports Pentaho’s end-user reporting, analysis, and dashboard capabilities with back-end security, integration, scheduling, auditing, and more. See <http://www.pentaho.com/products/biplatform/>

<sup>6</sup> The site is currently under maintenance.

<sup>7</sup> Officers of the City Government of Calapan, Oriental Mindoro Provincial Government, Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office, National Council for Indigenous Peoples, and Congressman

extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances declined after a high-ranking military official left their province, a multi-sectoral effort is necessary to address human rights violations in their area. The Mindoro Oriental team is the fourth multi-sectoral group organized by the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) under this program. As with previously formed MSQRTS in Northern Samar, Albay, and Leyte, the local Catholic Church's Social Action Center will serve as the MSQRT secretariat in Oriental Mindoro. The group will plan its public launch and other activities after May 2010 since most of its members are involved in election-related work.

The MSQRTs in Northern Samar, Albay, and Leyte accomplished the following activities this quarter:

- *Albay MSQRT*. The Albay MSQRT called *Andurog kan Derechos* (which means assistance through or for rights in Bicolano) conducted a training on January 11, 2010 to familiarize its members with laws and investigation procedures for cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. The team likewise discussed actual cases that the MSQRT can handle. Members of the Bicol Consortium for Peace Education and Development (BCPED), the Commission on Human Rights Region V Office, and the AHRC served as resource persons.<sup>8</sup> A total of 30 participants attended, including other NGOs and social action centers from the province of Albay.

Two *Andurog* members participated in the Basic and Advanced Trainings on Human Rights Investigation and Documentation for Civil Society that the Foundation organized with the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) in Cebu City (March 16-19, 2010) and Tagaytay City (March 9-12, 2010). The training involved discussions on human rights concepts, affidavit-making, and crime scene photography, among others. (Please refer to discussion in Chapter II for details of the training.) The *Andurog* participants immediately applied what they learned by organizing an echo training held in Bacacay, Albay on March 24-26, 2010 for 40 *Andurog* members and participants from partner barangays.

- *Samar MSQRT*. The MSQRT in Northern Samar called *Darangpan* (a Waray word that means sanctuary) was formally launched on March 1, 2010 in Mondragon, Northern Samar.<sup>9</sup> Local stakeholders from various sectors including

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Rodolfo Valencia represented the government. Members of the Provincial CARE Council, Calapan Diocese Social Action Center, Mangyan Mission, Mindoro Assistance for Human Advancement thru Linkages, Saint Augustine Seminary Alumni Association, and Alangan Mangyan represented civil society.

<sup>8</sup> BCPED is multi-sectoral coalition advocating peace and human rights. BCPED and the CHR Region V are *Andurog* members.

<sup>9</sup> <http://shiftrscj.org/index.php/2010/headline/northern-samar-launches-msqrt-to-address-elks-and-eds/>;  
<http://www.pia.gov.ph/?m=12&fi=p100226.htm&no=80>

the Bishop of the Catarman Diocese attended the activity.<sup>10</sup> Among the event's highlights were the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding among *Darangpan* members and a candle-lighting ceremony to symbolize the stakeholders' commitment to support the MSQRT.

Right after the launch, *Darangpan* conducted a two-day training for around 30 participants from its member organizations. The Foundation, through the CHR and AHRC, distributed the comics "Anino ng Batas" (Shadow of the Law) to help the participants understand the writs of *habeas corpus*, *habeas data*, and writ of *amparo*. The group invited a Regional Trial Court Judge, a prosecutor, and a regional CHR official as resource persons.

*Darangpan* is currently working on the case of Father Cecilio Lucero, an active peace and human rights advocate who was gunned down by unknown assailants in 2009. A representative from *Darangpan* monitored the preliminary investigation of Father Lucero's case on March 12, 2010 to ensure its prompt and proper resolution.

Three members of *Darangpan* participated in the Basic Training on Human Rights Investigation and Documentation for Civil Society that the Foundation organized with TFDP on March 16-19, 2010 in Cebu City.

- *Leyte MSQRT*. Members of the Leyte MSQRT met on February 18, 2010 to finalize its protocol for responding to extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances, and plan its public launch.<sup>11</sup> During the meeting, its members agreed to also address incidents of harassment and violence committed against land reform beneficiaries. Members noted that these cases are prevalent in the area and often escalate into incidents of summary killings and abductions. The Leyte MSQRT is assisting its member, BRAMO or *Benepisyaryo sa Repormang Agraryo ng mga Mag-uuma sa Ormoc* (Farmer Beneficiaries of Land Reform in Ormoc) document the strafing of a family of farmers in Barangay Mahayag, Ormoc Leyte on March 9, 2010.

Four members of the Leyte MSQRT participated in the Basic Training on Human Rights Investigation and Documentation for Civil Society that the Foundation organized with TFDP on March 16-19, 2010 in Cebu City.

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<sup>10</sup> Sectors represented in the launch were the church and religious congregations, local law enforcement agencies, the provincial government, academe, business sector, local media, students and the youth, environment conservation groups, and other civil society organizations.

<sup>11</sup> Members include the Commission on Human Rights Region VIII Office, Provincial Government of Leyte, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Agrarian Reform, Provincial Prosecutor's Office, Social Action Center of Palo, *Benepisyaryo sa Repormang Agraryo ng mga Mag-uuma sa Ormoc* (BRAMO), *Kahugpungan sa Mag-uumang Ormocanon* (KAMAO), and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, among others.

**Training on Human Rights Investigation and Documentation for Civil Society.** The Foundation partnered with the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) and a consultant Filipino lawyer with expertise and international experience on human rights to conduct a series of trainings on human rights investigation and documentation for NGOs. The concept of the training came from the focus group discussion (FGD) that the Foundation organized in the previous quarter among nine human rights NGOs. The FGD validated trends in the Philippine human rights situation and the perceived capacity-building needs of human rights NGOs.

With the consultant human rights lawyer, the Foundation conducted two additional rounds of training needs assessment among target NGOs to develop a suitable training design. The first round consisted of a survey questionnaire that delved on the kind of human rights work that the organizations engage in. More than 70 human rights workers completed the survey. In partnership with TFDP, the Foundation facilitated a second round of assessment for a more extensive discussion of the NGO’s training needs. For this purpose, TFDP organized separate FGDs in Cebu, Davao, and Manila on February 23 and 25, and March 1, 2010, respectively. Around seven human rights organizations from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao attended the FGDs and shared the difficulties they encounter in recording and reporting abuses. They also identified skill-sets that can be improved to make them more effective human rights defenders. The training needs assessment revealed the varying degrees of experience, exposure, and skills that NGOs from various parts of the country have. Manila-based NGOs and groups that have been established since Martial Law have more sophisticated skills for gathering information and evidence about violations, and for paralegal work. Newly formed organizations, especially those working in Visayas and Mindanao, however expressed greater need for step-by-step procedures on how to record information, draft affidavits, and coordinate with authorities. The FGDs likewise highlighted the conflict-ridden context within which most human rights violations in Mindanao occur.

Based on the results of the training needs assessment, TFDP and the consultant lawyer organized three types of capacity-building activities for NGOs as follows:

<b>Level of Training on Human Rights Investigation and Documentation</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Number of participants<sup>12</sup></b>
Advanced training	March 9-12, 2010	Tagaytay City	25
Basic training	March 16-19, 2010	Mactan, Cebu	29

<sup>12</sup> Training participants were a mixture of documentation officers, advocacy and field staff, and community coordinators of human rights NGOs. Each training type had participants from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Out of the 82 total participants, 29 were from Luzon, 16 from Visayas, and 37 were from Mindanao. The participants represented a total 41 organizations, networks, and agencies including regional offices of the Commission on Human Rights that work with the MSQRTs and personnel of the House of Representatives’ Committee on Human Rights. Mindanao-based human rights workers comprised almost 40% of the participants.

Basic training with emphasis on conflict-affected areas	March 23-26, 2010	Cagayan de Oro City	28
<b>Total number of participants</b>			<b>82</b>

The trainings aimed to enable participants to understand existing and future human rights challenges in the Philippines; to provide clarity and level off understanding of human rights concepts and substantive human rights principles; to attain a firmer grasp of domestic standards and available legal remedies with a view to utilizing relevant knowledge and techniques; and to strengthen attitude, knowledge and skills needed to investigate and document human rights violations. The basic training included fundamental aspects of these topics, including affidavit-making. The advanced course on the other hand focused on case studies and application workshops. In Mindanao, discussions, workshops and presentations were made in light of continued militarization of communities and the internal displacement of residents in conflict-affected areas. To encourage the participants to apply their newly acquired knowledge, participants documented a simulated crime scene and conducted a mock interview of a witness.

Apart from the consultant human rights lawyer who served as lead trainer, a prosecutor, a local human rights worker, an internationally trained forensic pathologist, and a crime scene photographer served as resource persons.

The post-training evaluation among participants revealed an increase in knowledge and skills to determine the legality of a search, arrest, or seizure; on photo documentation; and on the use and preservation of forensic evidence. Another positive result of the activity was the network of contacts that the participants have established in the course of the four-day training. While there are already a number of existing coalitions or networks of human rights organizations, human rights defenders on the field particularly in Visayas and Mindanao are still unfamiliar with other organizations and their work. Although the participants do not intend to form another formal alliance of human rights groups, they created an e-group through which they can continue exchanges and develop linkages for coordination, collaboration, and even mentoring.

**Training of Municipal Health Officers.** Prosecution of violators can prosper only with accurate and credible evidence of human rights abuses. Documentation of violations is therefore an important step towards combating impunity. Since witness testimony is not always available and reliable, forensic evidence is crucial to prosecute perpetrators of torture and other human rights violations. Unfortunately, the Philippines has a limited number of forensic doctors from hospitals, the National Bureau of Investigation, and the Commission on Human Rights. These doctors are often unavailable especially outside Metro Manila. In their absence, the task of examining torture victims or conducting autopsies falls on the hands of Municipal Health Officers (MHOs) who are mostly

general medical practitioners without specific training on documentation of human rights abuses.<sup>13</sup>

Given the MHOs' important role, the Foundation partnered with the Medical Action Group to build the capacity of selected MHOs to examine and document victims of torture and other human rights violations.<sup>14</sup> During this reporting period, MAG developed a program to train MHOs on international protocols for examining dead and living torture victims, autopsy, psychological evaluation, exhumation, and on the preparation of medical reports. The program will include lectures from forensic experts and guided fieldwork exercises. In the next quarter, MAG will conduct three MHO trainings in Bicol (Albay and Sorsogon), Quezon, and Leyte where torture and other human rights violations are rampant.

**Development of a Guidebook on Human Rights.** During this reporting period, the Philippine Judicial Academy (PhilJA) gathered research materials on human rights, including the summary of issues raised during the series of Multi-Sectoral Seminars on Extra-Legal Killings and Enforced Disappearances that the Foundation supported in the previous quarters. Writers will use these materials to draft the guidebook. Guidebook writers and editors that the PhilJA selected include a CHR Commissioner, a law professor, the PhilJA Chancellor, and human rights lawyers.<sup>15</sup>

**Reprinting of “Anino ng Batas,” a comics on the Writs of *Amparo*, *Habeas Corpus*, and *Habeas Data*.** The Commission on Human Rights and human rights NGOs in various parts of the country found the comics to be an effective material for educating Barangay Human Rights Action Officers (BHRAOs) and the general public about remedies for human rights violations. In response to their request for additional copies, the Upholding Life and Nature (ULAN), the Foundation's partner in developing the komiks, reprinted an additional 6,000 copies of the comics' Tagalog version. ULAN also translated the comics in English (*Shadow of the Law*) to broaden the base of local readers who are not familiar with Tagalog. In the next quarter, ULAN will print the English translation along with the remaining copies of the Tagalog version. Copies will be distributed to Barangay Human Rights Action Centers (BHRACs) across the country and through the Foundation's wide network of partner organizations and stakeholders.

## PLANS FOR THE NEXT PERIOD (SHRP 1)

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<sup>13</sup> Under the Local Government Code of 1991, MHOs are appointed by the local chief executive to manage the local health office and serve as a frontliner in the provision of medical services. The Sanitation Code of the Philippines provides that apart from medical doctors from accredited hospitals and law enforcement agencies, MHOs can conduct official autopsies.

<sup>14</sup> MAG is an organization of health professionals that provides medical and psycho-social services to victims of torture and political detention, and documents torture incidences.

<sup>15</sup> PhilJA will pay for the honoraria of writers and editors employed with the government (e.g. CHR Commissioner, PhilJA Chancellor) as counterpart.

As the Foundation enters into the final stretch of SHRP 1's implementation, the next two quarters will be devoted to culminating and wrapping up activities. As before, the Foundation will heighten its efforts toward the timely and successful completion of projects.

To **promote respect for human rights**, the University of the Philippine Institute of Human Rights, in partnership with local stakeholders, will launch the human rights actions plans of Calapan City and Naga City.

On **protecting human rights**, the software development consultant will upgrade the Martus-based Executive Information System to enable NGO access and to improve system performance. The Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility will continue to monitor and document media killings.

Breaking the pattern of impunity and **prosecution of human rights violations** will remain a priority. Multi-Sectoral Quick Reaction Teams (MSQRTs) organized in Albay, Leyte, Northern Samar, and Mindoro Oriental will continue to respond to human rights violations. MSQRTs will be expanded to cover two additional areas in Luzon and Mindanao. As Philippine Judicial Academy writers draft the Guidebook on Human Rights, the Foundation will publish and launch two other human rights tools – The Manual on Civil and Administrative Remedies as Instruments of Accountability for Violations of Human Rights Abuses, and The Human Rights Manual for Private Lawyers and Public Prosecutors.<sup>16</sup> The Upholding Life and Nature will print and distribute more comics on the protective writs. To complete the capacity-building initiatives planned under SHRP 1, the Medical Action Group will train Municipal Health Officers on the examination and documentation of torture and other human rights violations, while the De La Salle College of Law will train human rights lawyers and paralegals on the use of civil and administrative remedies.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Strengthening Human Rights in the Philippines II**

#### **Cooperative Agreement Nos. 492-A-00-09-00027-00**

#### ***I. Promoting respect for human rights***

**Development of Local Human Rights Action Plans in Visayas and Mindanao.** The Foundation held discussions with the University of the Philippines Institute of Human Rights (UP IHR) to identify two provincial hotspots (one in Visayas and another in

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<sup>16</sup> Consultant human rights lawyers developed these manuals under the program. The first manual consists of a study entitled *Civil and Administrative Remedies as Instruments of Accountability for Violations of Human Rights* and an accompanying *Paralegal Training Manual*. The second manual is the redesigned and expanded version of Special Section on Human Rights of the Revised Manual for Prosecutors, which was likewise developed under this program.

Mindanao) that will formulate local human rights action plans. Given the active membership of the Multi-Sectoral Quick Reaction Team in Samar, the UP IHR is exploring the possibility of working with local government and civil society stakeholders in the area to develop a human rights agenda.

The UP IHR is conducting scoping inquiries and research to identify a pilot area in Mindanao. While groundwork for developing the action plans is underway, project implementation will commence after May 2010 when new local officials are elected.

## ***II. Protecting human rights of citizens***

**Roundtable Discussion on Media Safety.** With the surge in the number of journalists killed in the line of duty as a result of the 23 November massacre in Maguindanao, media workers have raised serious concerns regarding their security. While several media-oriented NGOs provide safety training, few owners and managers are involved in setting up internal or community-based operational systems to protect their employee reporters from threats, attacks, and physical violence. To address this gap, the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility organized a Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on Media Safety on March 5, 2010. Around 18 owners and news managers, of both big and small media organizations in Metro Manila and select cities, attended to discuss strategies to enhance the safety of their workers.<sup>17</sup> To remind owners about reporting protocols, the Free Legal Assistance Group presented legal do's and don'ts of news coverage. Another safety strategy discussed was the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to track and monitor the location of journalists assigned in difficult areas.

During the RTD, CMFR presented an online map of “hotspots” or areas most dangerous for journalists. While the program did not fund the development of this map, the idea came from the suggestions raised during the trainings on human rights reporting that CMFR conducted under SHRP 1. CMFR identified the hotspots based on reports submitted by participants from the trainings as well as on information from the Commission on Elections and the Philippine National Police.

CMFR organized the RTD in collaboration with the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists<sup>18</sup> and with co-funding from the Open Society Institute.

**Training Needs Assessment for Training on Digital Activism.** The Foundation collaborated with a multi-awarded blogger/new media expert to design and implement a training program on digital activism for human rights organizations. Slated for the next

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<sup>17</sup> Among the media organizations represented were The Philippine Daily Inquirer, Sunstar Cebu, Leyte Samar Daily Express, Manila Broadcasting Network, ABC 5, National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, Center for Community Journalism and Development, Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas, Philippine Press Institute, and the Freedom Fund for Filipino Journalists.

<sup>18</sup> FFFJ is a network of press organizations that provides support for cases of media killings and engages in public advocacy for the protection of journalists. CMFR acts as FFFJ Secretariat.

reporting period, the training aims to enable NGOs to effectively use online platforms and internet tools for human rights advocacy.

This quarter, the consultant developed and disseminated an online survey questionnaire to at least 60 human rights workers nationwide.<sup>19</sup> The survey sought to identify how NGOs utilize websites, Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, Flickr, and other online tools in their work. Based on the survey results, the consultant will design a two-day new media training for human rights NGOs.

**Deputization of NGO Human Rights Defenders as CHR Representatives.** While there is renewed enthusiasm and commitment within the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to effectively respond to actual and perceived violations of human rights, the CHR is constrained by limited personnel and resources. Given the CHR's limited capacity, the Foundation partnered with the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA), a national network of human rights NGOs, to train and accredit civil society human rights workers as CHR representatives who can assist victims of human rights violations whenever CHR personnel are unavailable.

O January 21, 2010, the CHR *en banc* approved PAHRA's proposal to designate NGO human rights defenders as CHR deputies. In a subsequent meeting on January 25, 2010, the CHR and PAHRA discussed possible situations where the intervention of deputies would be necessary. These include instances when civilians face the risk of being deprived of their liberty, need temporary counsel, and need the CHR's presence to ensure that proper procedures and safeguards are followed in instances of arrest, search, or seizure.

**Drafting of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Anti-Torture Law of 2009.** Human rights advocates' 22 years of hard work bore fruit when the President signed Republic Act No. 9745 or the Anti-Torture Act of 2009 on November 10, 2009. The new law defines what constitutes acts of torture, including its various forms, and provides penalties therefore. The next task is to formulate its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) to ensure the law's proper and effective implementation. Recognizing the crucial role of both government and civil society in addressing the issue, the law mandated the CHR and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to formulate the IRR with the active participation of human rights NGOs.

During this quarter, the CHR and the DOJ held two dialogues to discuss initial steps for the formulation of the IRR. On March 15, 2010, the CHR and the DOJ convened the Steering Committee that will oversee the drafting of the rules. The Steering Committee is composed of two representatives each from the CHR and the DOJ, as well as representatives of four human rights NGOs that have been actively assisting victims of torture -- the Medical Action Group, Balay Rehabilitation Center, Philippine Alliance of

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<sup>19</sup> The form may be accessed through this link:  
<http://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dE1uVTVSektfZTJUUVGRHZ2c1NGcFE6MA>

Human Rights Advocates, and Philippine Network Against Torture. Members of the Steering Committee agreed to provide initial inputs to come up with the first working draft of the IRR, and to subsequently conduct six island group consultations to gather stakeholder inputs to the draft. The IRR will be launched and finalized in time for the Human Rights Day celebration in December 2010.

### **III. Prosecuting human rights violations**

**Development of a Communications Plan.** To effectively gather public support for the fight against impunity and to tie in the program’s overall media efforts with milestones and successes of other activities, the Foundation engaged a consultant public relations expert to design a Communications Plan for the program. The plan will identify key messages, the target audience, communicators, strategies, and appropriate media that the Foundation and its partners can use.

On February 19, 2010, the Foundation held a half-day workshop to map out the baseline of existing communication strategies, messages, and tools utilized by the Foundation’s project partners. The Foundation’s two consultants – the public relations expert and new media expert - participated in the preliminary workshop to help identify inputs to the Communications Plan. A more intensive communications planning workshop will follow this activity in the next reporting period.

**University Road Shows on Human Rights.** In order to raise the awareness of students about issues of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture, the Foundation partnered with the Ateneo Human Rights Center (AHRC) to organize road shows on human rights in different universities across the country. The road shows are multi-media fora for presenting catchy discussions of international and domestic legal remedies for human rights violations as well as current initiatives to combat impunity. Video excerpts of the monologue about *desparecidos* entitled “Mrs. B” will be shown during the road shows.<sup>20</sup>

This quarter, AHRC identified the 60 schools that will host the road shows. It also convened other project partners such as the Commission on Human Rights, the Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, and the National Federation of Centers for Human Rights Education to plan the shows’ standard program.

**Human Rights Radio Show.** Recognizing the power of broadcast media to reach out to the public, the Foundation partnered with the Batas Barangay Development Foundation (BBDF) to air a weekly one-hour radio program on human rights over DZRH (Khz 666). The program will run for one year using free airtime provided by BBDF. The program

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<sup>20</sup> In partnership with the Free Jonas Burgos Movement, the Foundation supported the re-staging and video production of “Mrs. B” using its own funds.

will consist of a dramatization of a human rights case and live interactive discussions of human rights concepts, laws, and remedies by invited resource persons.

During this reporting period, the Foundation and BBDF outlined the activities to produce the radio show. BBDF conducted initial research on human rights laws and cases and is preparing for a workshop among its creative and production staff to design the final program content and format of the show.

**Roundtable Discussions among Human Rights Lawyers.** Private lawyers play a crucial role in defending the rights of victims. In fact, almost all human rights cases that resulted in convictions progressed with the help of private prosecutors. In view of this, the Foundation partnered with the Lawyers' League for Liberty (Libertas) to organize a series of roundtable discussions among human rights lawyers. The discussions aim to provide a venue for law practitioners to share best practices and challenges encountered in handling human rights cases.

During this reporting period, Libertas conducted initial research about human rights cases and identified lawyers who can be invited to attend the discussions. Next quarter, Libertas will organize the first of the three roundtable discussions.

#### **IV. Grants Management Seminar**

On February 16-19, 2010, Foundation organized a Grants Management Seminar for its project partners. Around 60 participants, consisting of program and finance officers of different organizations and government agencies attended. The seminar introduced them to the Foundation and its programs, and provided an overview of SHRP 1 and 2. The seminar allowed the partners to see how each individual project falls within the overall framework of the program and to understand the financial rules and regulations applicable to their grants. The program's Agreement Officer's Technical Representative from USAID, Mr. Gerardo Porta made a presentation on monitoring and evaluating project performance.

#### **PLANS FOR THE NEXT PERIOD (SHRP 2)**

To **promote respect for human rights**, the Foundation and the University of the Philippines Institute of Human Rights will identify final pilot areas in Visayas and Mindanao, and start the development of local human rights action after the May 2010 elections. With the newly elected administration, the Foundation will commence initial discussions regarding the national human rights action plan.

On **protecting human rights**, the Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility will begin production work for a video on the human rights situation in the Philippines. Human rights NGOs will learn more about new media tools in a hands-on training on

digital activism. In partnership with the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates, the Foundation will closely work with the Commission on Human Rights to develop parameters for designating NGO workers as CHR deputies. The Steering Committee that will formulate the Anti-Torture Law rules and regulations will develop the initial draft, hold writeshops, and prepare for regional consultations to gather stakeholder inputs.

The Foundation will galvanize public support for the **prosecution of violators** starting with a workshop to develop the program's Communication Plan. Based on this plan, the Foundation will undertake other activities to increase public awareness on extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture. To prepare for the university road shows that will kick off in June 2010, the Ateneo Human Rights Center will hold a speakers' training among Commission on Human Rights regional officials and other human rights advocates. A live and informative discussion of human rights issues will hit the airwaves next quarter as the Batas Barangay Development Foundation launches the human rights radio show. To discuss best practices and challenges in handling human rights cases, the Lawyers' League for Liberty will organize a roundtable discussion for human rights lawyers from Luzon.

## **PARTICIPATION IN OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES**

To keep itself and USAID abreast of developments in the Philippine human rights scene, the Foundation participated in related activities sponsored by fellow donor agencies, partners, and other stakeholders.

Using the Foundation's General Grant Funds and in partnership with the Free Jonas Burgos Movement, the Foundation restaged ten shows of the monologue "Mrs. B" in February 2010.<sup>21</sup> The play depicted the emotional journey of a mother searching for her son, missing activist Jonas Burgos. A multi-awarded film/television actress and a scriptwriter/director alternately played the role of Jonas' mother.<sup>22</sup>

On March 3, 2010, the Foundation met with development partners involved in the multi-donor facility for funding innovative human rights projects or KaSaMa (Karapatan sa Malikhain Paraan).<sup>23</sup> During the meeting, the donors assessed how the first round went and discussed the possibility of another call for proposals. Despite some challenges due to the short preparation time, the donors were satisfied with the final outcome of KaSaMa. They agreed to hold another round, the schedule details of which will be

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<sup>21</sup> The Foundation's support for "Mrs. B" is part of its commitment in the KaSaMa or Karapatan sa Malikhain Paraan: The 2009 Search for Philippine Human Rights Initiatives, a multi-donor mechanism to fund innovative projects on human rights. "Mrs. B" is among the 12 winners of KaSaMa.

<sup>22</sup> Media coverage of the event included the following: Inquirer: <http://www.gmanews.tv/story/183753/mrs-b-and-her-search-for-jonas-burgos>, ABS-CBN <http://news.abs-cbn.com/entertainment/02/05/10/free-jonas-burgos-artists-restage-mrs-b>, and Ellen Tordesillas: <http://www.ellentordesillas.com/?p=9154>

<sup>23</sup> The Australian Agency for International Development, British Embassy, European Union, Netherlands Embassy, New Zealand Embassy, and the Spanish Embassy participated in the first round of KaSaMa.

discussed after holding a knowledge-sharing forum in July 2010 to showcase select KaSaMa projects. Through funding support from USAID and the Dutch Embassy, the Foundation served as the Secretariat of the first round of KaSaMa.

On March 16, 2010, the Foundation attended the launch of the Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates' (PAHRA) alternative report on the Philippines compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Torture. During the launch, PAHRA shared how the government has been remiss in its duty to prevent and punish torture, despite the enactment of the Anti-Torture Law.

In February 2010, the European Union (EU) formally launched the EU-Philippines Justice Programme (EPJUST), which like SHRP 1 and 2 seeks to address issues of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances. To ensure that EPJUST activities will complement and not duplicate the Foundation's ongoing initiatives, the Foundation has been coordinating with the EPJUST team. On March 9, 2010 the Foundation attended a stakeholders meeting to know more about the framework and activities of EPJUST. Foundation staff likewise participated in EPJUST's seminar on crime scene investigation on March 24, 2010. This seminar demonstrated how EPJUST is providing technical assistance on human rights investigation to the Philippine National Police. This is a welcome initiative given that SHRP 1 and 2 cannot support activities with law enforcement agents.

## **CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE PROGRAMS**

Despite the enactment of the Anti-Torture Law in the previous quarter, serious allegations of torture alarmed the human rights community with the arrest and detention of 43 medical doctors, nurses, midwives, and community health workers in Morong Rizal on February 6, 2010. Suspected to be members of the New People's Army, the health workers (known as the "Morong 43") alleged that they endured physical and mental torture, and as well as cruel and inhumane treatment in the hands of state agents.<sup>24</sup> Cases such as the Morong 43 confirm that despite the apparent decline in incidents of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances this quarter, other forms of human rights violations like torture continue to be committed with impunity. The Foundation will therefore intensify its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of the Anti-Torture Law through supporting the formulation of its implementing rule, educating judges, Municipal Health Officers, human rights defenders, and the general public about its provisions.

As foreseen in the previous reporting periods, the upcoming May 2010 polls has pre-occupied government and civil society partners with election work. Given the highly volatile peace and order situation during election period, human rights organizations are closely monitoring and undertaking preparations to respond quickly to reports of

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<sup>24</sup> <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/inquirerheadlines/nation/view/20100304-256562/CHR-summons-AFP-PNP-over-Morong-43-torture>

election-related human rights violations. To ensure stakeholder participation in its activities, the Foundation accordingly moved major events such as the communications planning workshop and digital activism training to the latter part of May 2010. From April to mid-May, the Foundation will focus on program coordination activities and will closely monitor developments in the socio-political arena that can impact its human rights programming.

After the elections, the Foundation will prepare itself for a new leadership in the national government, its line agencies, and local governments. As these changes may affect the composition of Multi-Sectoral Quick Reaction Teams, the development and implementation of human rights action plans, and other project activities, the Foundation will schedule courtesy calls and meetings with newly-elected and appointed officials to introduce the programs and buy-in support.