



Vulnerable Groups and Covid-19

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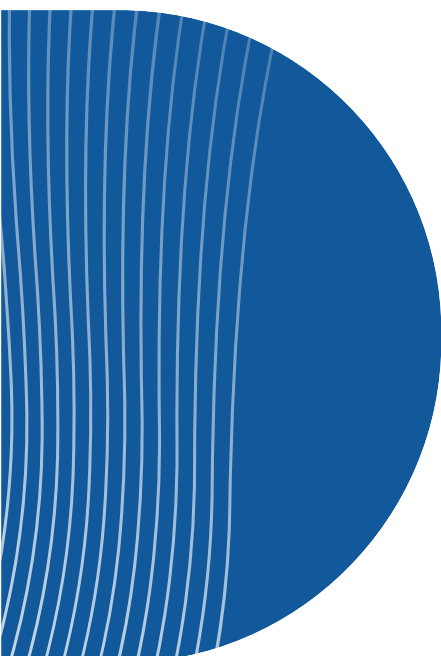
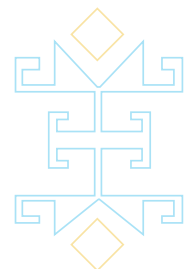


Introduction

Throughout the month of February, SEAN-CSO's campaign focused on the theme of Vulnerable Groups and COVID-19. It has been almost a year since the World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak a pandemic. In an instant, life as we knew it was replaced by lockdowns, mask-wearing, and overwhelming uncertainty about the future. With vaccine production picking up in areas around the world, there is hope that more countries will be able to safely reopen in the coming months.

However, from the beginning of the pandemic, society's most vulnerable groups have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. There has been a rise in anti-Asian sentiments and racist hate crimes, an increase in gender-based violence, and thousands of migrant workers have been laid off or are suffering from reduced/inconsistent wages and challenging work environments.

As the virus continues to run rampant throughout the world, it is crucial to be aware of the intersections between race, gender, and class and the ways in which already existing inequities have been magnified during this global health crisis. In these turbulent times, it is crucial that we come together, learn from each other, support and advocate for one another, and continue to strive for a more just world.





Interview

Diana Morelada and Maureen Lacuesta
International Alert Philippines



Diana Moraleda is the Senior Program Manager for Communications at International Alert Philippines. Before joining Alert in 2017, she worked as a communications officer for various NGOs and she also has a background in political science and multimedia journalism. Diana got involved in International Alert Philippines because she was interested in peacebuilding and wanted to enhance her skills in communications work.

Maureen Lacuesta or Mau, is a Senior Communications Officer. She has been with Alert since 2017 and began right after graduating university. She produces videos and infographics, manages our social media accounts, and engages in research as well. International Alert is a peacebuilding organization with offices in several countries in

Africa, Asia, and Europe. As highlighted on their website, International Alert's mission is "to break cycles of violence and to build sustainable peace by: working with people directly affected by violent conflict to find lasting solutions; shaping policies and practices to reduce and prevent violence, and to support sustainable peace; collaborating with all those striving for peace to strengthen our collective voice and impact."

International Alert's work in the Philippines began in 1988, when the organization assisted with the peace process between the Philippine government and the communist rebels. The country office was established in 2009. Since then, staff members have been involved in peace processes between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), the Moro National

Liberation Front (MNLF), and the national government before and after the signing of the Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014.

International Alert Philippines manages Conflict Alert, a conflict monitoring system that covers the five Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi. Conflict Alert is their flagship program and the only one of its kind in the Philippines. They gather all the police and media reports and validate them in the communities. From these reports, they log incidents of violent conflict and their causes,



actors, human costs, and manifestations. Every year an annual report is published which contains data and analysis of that particular year and the years prior. Due to Covid, the 2020 report, covering 2011-2019 was recently published in January 2021. The full report, which discusses clan feuding, land-related conflict, violence towards the Teduray-Lambangian indigenous peoples, and other tensions in the Bangsamoro, can be found here:

conflictalert.info/publication/enduring-wars/.

Conflict Alert has evolved into other important programs. Alert has a Critical Events Monitoring System (CEMS), a real time gathering of data through SMS and high frequency radio. The goal is to receive real-time data so that the Early Response Network (ERN), which consists of

people in various locations in the Bangsamoro, can respond to the tensions and violent conflict appropriately. There is collaboration with local governments, key agencies, the security sector, and religious and traditional leaders as well.

These interoperable platforms have been crucial to Alert's work during the pandemic as they provide the team with granular data. This ensures their work is always evidence based and conflict-sensitive, in other words, it will not exacerbate existing conflict nor lead to new conflicts. Mau explained that during the pandemic, the Muslim community has experienced discrimination as some of the government's response initiatives have not been culturally sensitive. She said, "at the onset of the pandemic last year, we started getting CEMS reports of incidents of cultural insensitivity, especially towards Muslims. In the Islamic faith, it is important that the deceased should be buried within 12 hours. However, at the beginning of the pandemic, when there was not much available information about Covid, there was a national policy that required the dead to be cremated. Cremation is against the Muslims' practice, so there was a lot of tension. Once we got these reports, we immediately coordinated with the national government, and the Department of Interior and Local Government sent out a memorandum mandating all local governments in the country to respect the cultural and religious practices of the Muslim community."

For a more thorough account of the impact of Covid on Muslim communities and other groups throughout the Philippines, please refer to Conflict Alert's "Special CEMS Bulletin On COVID-19 And Conflict:"

conflictalert.info/cems-bulletins2019/special-cems-bulletin-on-covid-19-and-conflict-1-february-17-april-2020/.

At the end of the interview, Diana and Mau shared what motivates them and their hopes for the future of Philippine society. Diana said, “what keeps me going is the belief that when you give people enough opportunities and help remove impediments to personal growth and development, then everyone can achieve their full potential and we would be in a better place. I see what we are doing in Alert as helping that process. It is not parachuting into communities. It is not assigning our own norms and our own values, but really working with people and reflecting with them on how they want their communities to run and then working together towards those goals.”

Mau closed with, “through development work, I have always carried this understanding that we have different realities. My reality is different from other people. I come from a particular background which can be vastly different from others. It is important that you do not impose your beliefs or knowledge on other people, because they may live a very different reality. It is important to be able to listen and understand other people. I hope that more Filipinos can do this. If we get to know others’ point of views, then we can be more understanding of one another in the future.”

To learn more about International Alert Philippines and the impactful work they do, check out their social media and website.

 @InternationalAlertPhilippines

 @intalert_ph

 www.international-alert.org/where-we-work/philippines





Research

Vulnerable Groups and Covid-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on the way humans live their lives. Lockdowns, quarantines, and restrictions have seemingly become routine and have taken a toll on everyone's overall well-being.

However, from the beginning of the pandemic, society's most vulnerable groups have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. We will highlight three demographics who are facing major issues during this pandemic.

● Anti Asian Sentiments



In several counties, but predominantly in Western nations, those of Asian descent have experienced backlash due to the coronavirus. In the last year, there has been a substantial increase in xenophobia and the number of racist hate crimes. In many countries around the world, individuals of Asian descent are being targeted and verbally taunted, shunned and blamed, and physically attacked and killed.

Viruses are not tied to any race or nationality. This overt blame, hostility, and violence toward those of Asian descent is disheartening and reflective of already existing racist, anti-immigrant, white supremacist and xenophobic sentiments that attack people who are or are perceived to be immigrants, refugees, and foreigners. In these times it is crucial to **raise awareness** about these hate crimes, and **defend and advocate** for these vulnerable groups.

● Gender-based Violence

There has been an increase in gender-based violence as people have been required to stay home and have been further away from public view. Many people in lockdown are not only stuck with abusive partners and family members, but often further disconnected from trusted relatives, friends, and resources. UN Women began sharing information about a Shadow Pandemic because of the overwhelming increase in violence against girls and women.



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Women who are **refugees** or **displaced individuals** are even **more vulnerable** because of **precarious living situations** and reduced or limited access to survivor services that can help them.

A study by UN Women's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) found that compared to men, women:

1. Have less access to COVID-19 related resources.
2. Experience longer wait times when seeking medical care.
3. Less likely to have health insurance in countries without universal healthcare.
4. Responsible for keeping up with the increasing amount of unpaid domestic and care work, including but not limited to: cleaning, cooking, and serving meals.

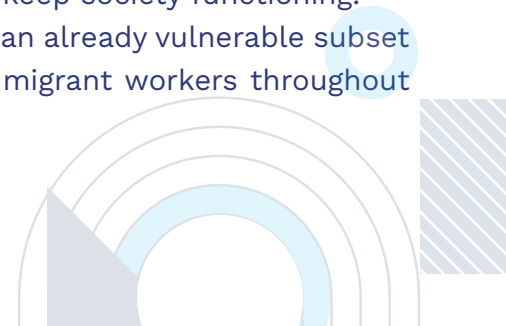
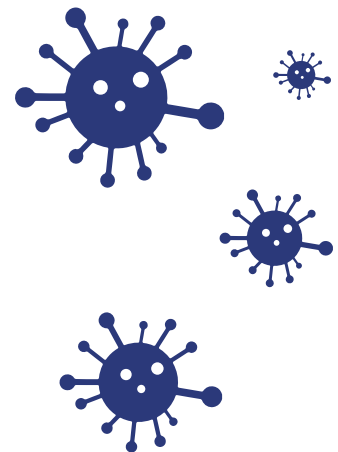
Women are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 in nearly all aspects of life. COVID-19 has made already limited options for victims of abuse, even more scarce. Some women are afraid to leave their homes and move in with a relative or friend due to the virus. Some countries have reallocated resources usually designated for efforts at protecting women from violence, and put them towards COVID-19 response efforts.

● Migrant Workers

Migrant workers are another section of the population that has been hit the hardest by COVID-19.

The pandemic has shed more light on the conditions low-income workers who work in construction, agriculture, delivery, and other essential services face.

Many of these jobs must be performed in person and are necessary to keep society functioning. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has worsened conditions for an already vulnerable subset of the population. In the following, we highlight three hardships that migrant workers throughout Asia have experienced in the last year:



1. Singapore: Sleeping in Kranji MRT Station

At the beginning of the pandemic, dozens of Malaysian migrant workers in Singapore had to sleep in front of Kranji MRT Station, due to travel restrictions that prevented them from making the commute between the two countries.

Source Awang, Nabilah. "With no place to stay, some Malaysian workers sleep SEAN rough near Kranji MRT Station." *Today Online*. March 19, 2020.



2. The Philippines: Crowded Stadium



Coordination between national agencies and local authorities has resulted in confusion and delays for migrant workers returning home. At one point thousands of people were stuck in a Manila baseball stadium as they awaited clearance to return to their home provinces.

Source Lopez, Eloisa. "Thousands of stranded Filipinos crammed into a baseball stadium amid coronavirus risks." *Reuters*. July 25, 2020.

3. Indonesia: Losing Thousand of Job



At the beginning of the pandemic, Bambang Soesatyo, the People's Consultative Assembly Speaker in Indonesia, petitioned the government for pandemic assistance to help migrant workers return home from Malaysia. Since then, thousands of workers who have lost their jobs have returned.

Source Wahyuni, Natasia Christy and Sihaloho, Markus Junianto. "Indonesia Repatriates Nearly 70,000 Migrant Workers From Malaysia." *Jakarta Globe*. April 30, 2020.

Aminuddin, M Faishal, Pallikadavath, Saseendran, et al. "Indonesian families struggle as pandemic cuts \$1.5bn from the money migrant workers send home." *The Conversation*. November 19, 2020.





We Appreciate Your Feedback

The Australian Multicultural Foundation (AMF) has been subcontracted by Deakin University to consult online with SEAN-CSO membership to assess the implementation success of SEAN-CSO strategies and develop a sustainable plan for SEAN-CSO for the future.

Please fill the survey below as we recognise that your input into the sustainability and future development of SEAN-CSO is paramount.

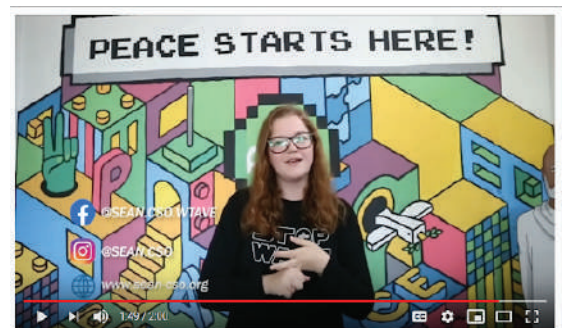
bit.ly/SEANCSO-StrategySurvey



How to make a self-recorded video:

Want to be exclusively featured on SEAN-CSO's Social Media? Send in your best video to us! We want to hear more from you, especially in these pandemic times. You can talk about interesting projects that you're currently involved in, how the pandemic has affected your work or organization in the field, or anything related to P/CVE issues.

Still don't know how to make a good video? Don't worry, we have got your back. We have created this simple 2-minute tutorial on how to make a decent self-recorded video in your own home. Stream it online on YouTube: bit.ly/SelfRecTutorial



How to Do Self-Recording Video at Home.



bit.ly/SelfRecTutorial

Updates

- SEAN-CSO currently *has*



126
members

- All SEAN-CSO social media is *followed by*

 **4,294** accounts

- SEAN-CSO posts focused on Vulnerable Groups and COVID-19 have received

 *an average*
3,850 likes

Funding Opportunity



- **SEAN-CSO Grant**

Protecting Civic Space in Asia-Pacific
<https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/Indo-Pacific-Small-Grants-Call-For-Proposals.pdf>

- **Act together for inclusion fund**

<https://equitas.org/where-we-work/internationally-act-together-for-inclusion-fund/call-for-proposals/>

- **Closing Justice Gap - A Legal Empowerment Research and Learning Agenda**

<https://www.idrc.ca/en/funding/call-proposals-closing-justice-gap-legal-empowerment-research-and-learning-agenda>

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Also check our website:

 sean-cso.org

Synergy in Harmony

Walk together for a better world



Would you like to be featured in the next SEAN-CSO Newsletter or in our upcoming social media campaign?

If you have stories, research, or programs focused on Preventing or Countering Violent Extremism, contact us at:

This update has been brought to you by SEAN-CSO in collaboration with Peace Generation Indonesia.

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