

SOLIDARITY MESSAGE

LAUNCH OF *ANGPANGAKO.NET*
Foundation for Media Alternatives
20 April 2018 / PARDEC A

CHITO GASCON
Chair, Commission on Human Rights

Good morning to everyone, and welcome once again to the CHR.

As you can see as you are now here in one of our newest facilities within our offices (this renovated PARDEC Building), CHR is going through some needed changes—we are refurbishing and renovating, building and rebuilding, and opening up new spaces so that the Commission can be more responsive to the needs of Human Rights defenders in the current conjuncture. PARDEC, the building where we are, and all our other new facilities are part of this effort, and we are always happy when these facilities are being used by the broad HR community.

Changes at the CHR

But CHR's refurbishing and renovating, building and rebuilding, and opening up of space goes beyond merely the physical. We would like to think that we are also doing this on a much deeper level as well. In a very real sense, we are trying to effect and manage institutional change within this 30-year old agency to make it more responsive to the challenges of the time. We are also renewing—*pagbanyuhay*, if you will—our core HR work at a time when human rights is being existentially challenged. And this includes getting into new areas where Human Rights must be fought.

One of these new areas is the arena of **data and technology**, and that is why we are very happy to host this activity of FMA, which has been at the forefront of activism and policy development in these areas of data and technology, which is at the core of AngPangako.net.

CHR-FMA Partnerships

FMA has been an active partner of the CHR since before—I remember that FMA partnered with the Commission on a secure open source HR violation reporting tool via the Martus Project (with tech company Benetech and the Asia Foundation) way back in 2008. This partnership has been leveled up especially when the current 5th Commission came in two years ago under my Chairmanship.

- FMA reached out to me very early to help push the Right to Privacy at a time when the Data Privacy Act of 2012 had still not been implemented. We subsequently reached out to FMA to jumpstart the Commission's own Working Group on Data Protection, and to help our Policy unit mainstream Privacy Rights into our

workplans

(We are now looking at 21st century issues such as: cyberstalking/cyberbullying, mandatory SIM card registration, national ID system, unlawful surveillance, social media regulation, etc.)

- We were aware of—and fully supported—the twin submissions of FMA to the country’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Third Cycle last year: on the Right to Privacy, and on Human Rights in Digital Environments, both groundbreaking submissions from a Philippine CSO to the UN HR process.
- We are also particularly thankful to FMA for working with our Gender Rights Center to highlight issues of digital exploitation of women and sexual minorities, as well as gender violence in online spaces (i.e., electronic Violence Against Women or eVAW), and for also conducting pilot digital security trainings for women, including our own CHR staff.
- In 2016 we started a conversation with FMA on how “HUMAN RIGHTS in DIGITAL ENVIRONMENTS” could be developed as a core work area within the Commission. *(Their former Executive Director who first proposed this to me is now working with us at the CHR, and this is one area where we hope to utilize his knowledge and experience.)*
- We have even extended FMA’s core advocacy on “Human Rights and the Internet” to our counterpart National Human Rights Institutions in Southeast Asia, when as Chair of the SouthEast Asia NHRI Forum (SEANF) in 2017, we invited FMA and its international partners to conduct a learning session on at the SEANF Annual Meeting last November, which was attended by five (5) other NHRIs around the region. As a result of that, “Internet and Human Rights” is now on the 2018 work agenda of the SEANF.

Role of Data and Technology

Today’s launch of AngPangako.net is another milestone—not only in our partnership with FMA—but in CHR’s own development, and the “refurbishing/rebuilding/renewing” of our work and our strategies. We live in times where technology now pervades our lives, and where data is now an invaluable resource. Human Rights Defenders have embraced the role of data and technology in ways where you are way ahead of the Commission. And we know we need to catch up; and with the help of all of you here, we are confident we will.

The way we can do this is to show how data and technology will enhance our traditional mandate, and our core mission: which is HR fact-finding and investigation. This is our HR PROTECTION MANDATE, which we support with our other mandates: HR PROMOTIONS AND HR POLICY DEVELOPMENT.

We have recently made organizational changes in incubating an ANALYSIS UNIT, which will be our spearhead as we utilize data for stronger evidence-based HR work. We also are using our EU-funded GoJust Project to open up some resources for new areas, including setting up a sub-program in “DATA and DOCUMENTATION (D&D) for HUMAN RIGHTS” *(with people who you know as we recruited them from civil society: Dodo Macasaet and Marie Madamba-Nunez)*. And for those of you who are not aware, the priority area that both the Analysis Unit and the D&D Sub-Program of GoJust are applying themselves are in the areas of the so-called “War on Drugs”, the rampant Extra Judicial Killings (EJKs) now bedeviling our country, and the culture of impunity that enables all of this.

We see AngPangako.net as a crucial plank in the technology-enabled data and documentation work that will lead to sound analysis of the current Human Rights crisis we are in. We pledge full support to AngPangako.net and encourage everyone to contribute to this effort. We look to FMA to help guide us in parallel efforts where data and technology can further inform our work, and serve the cause of human rights.

I personally will ensure that this effort and similar ones find fertile ground within the Commission, and I am sure that with everyone’s support, our already globally recognized human rights community in the country becomes an example again of good practice for doing Human Rights in the 21st Century.

Maraming salamat po at MABUHAY!

###

cos.chrp/042018