

# NARRATIVE REPORT

# 2024







## INTRODUCTION

2024 saw sweeping developments in the digital space with emergent technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning evolving at a rapid pace. This accelerated growth brought both opportunities and challenges. When its popularity rose in 2023, both the public and private sectors explored its potential to streamline decision-making processes. However, this pursuit quickly revealed significant concerns around accountability, privacy, and ethics.

Despite these challenges, AI's impact on societies became increasingly tangible as it radically reshaped how information is generated, consumed, and governed. Its influence grew, so did the urgency of calls to regulate its development and deployment.

To keep pace with these changes, the Foundation for Media Alternatives (FMA) deepened its engagement with digital

rights issues and looked into emerging technologies' impact on our democracy. Through research, public education, and activities, FMA committed to raising awareness and action on pressing digital rights concerns, such as privacy, internet freedom, and gender rights. The organization also emphasized the importance of digital inclusion and literacy in safeguarding the public interest in the face of rapid technological advancement.



# INTERNET FREEDOM

## Initiative for Media Freedom Project

In the last stretch of the Initiative for Media Freedom (IMF) project, FMA successfully organized activities and produced materials that fostered dialogue on the vital role of a free press and a healthy information ecosystem in sustaining a democracy. In partnership with filmmaker Michael Lacanilao, FMA was able to produce a short documentary on how disinformation is created and distributed. As the director behind the viral short film, the Escherian Stairwell, Lacanilao walked viewers through how he made an architecturally impossible staircase seem possible through fabricated articles that lent credence to the illusion. Lacanilao is also part of

FMA’s Digital Rights Coalition, a group of digital rights advocates who took part in Digital Rights Camps, another activity supported by the IMF project.

Building on previous efforts to counter disinformation, FMA published the game app Choices I Make which features scenarios exploring how to engage with false information. FMA also mounted the Drawing Dissent exhibit for the fourth time in Arete. The exhibit covers the various forms of disinformation, both mundane and insidious, that we encounter in online and offline spaces.

In March 2024, in celebration of the

30th anniversary of the Philippine Internet, FMA hosted the two-day Digital Rights Conference in Ateneo de Manila University. The event gathered digital rights experts, journalists, artists, and civil society groups to discuss pressing digital rights issues and explore ways to collectively uphold our rights in the online space. The event was headlined by Filipino Internet pioneers who looked back on the momentous time when the Philippines first connected to the Internet in 1984. A short documentary of the Philippine Internet history was also made and published online.

On the last day of the conference,



After the plenary sessions, participants attended various breakout sessions to participate in discussions on digital rights

FMA launched the second iteration of the Philippine Internet Declaration on Internet Rights and Principles. Expanding on the first version, which was published in 2015, the latest document presents a “evolve a vision of the internet--then already a site of much contestation--that aligns with shared values and principles, ever cognizant of the impact on rights and responsibilities of citizens and communities.” The Declaration, which covered issues from disinformation to the climate crisis, was consulted with groups in Davao and Cebu. Its draft was also presented before the National

Privacy Commission. In the same month, FMA conducted a training of trainers on digital safety and security, which was done in partnership with Lights Institute and the ADMU Data Privacy Office. The event was attended by 40 people of various backgrounds, from media work to academe and advocacy work.

To close the project, FMA joined in the culminating activity held by the Internews Philippines in Clark, Pampanga.

## Countering Internet Fragmentation Project

For this project, FMA engaged in meetings and knowledge exchanges with project partners in preparation for the Internet Engineering Task Force and the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly. Jessamine Pacis represented FMA at both events. FMA also participated in the Online Workshop: Strategies and Tools to Prepare for Standards Meetings. Additionally, FMA organized a regional roundtable for the Asia-Pacific on internet fragmentation.





Sam Del Castillo participated in the panel on data protection governance in Southeast Asia during the DRAAPAC2024

## Greater Internet Freedom Project

Similarly with the IMF project, the Greater Internet Freedom (GIF), which focused on enhancing digital security and fostering engagement in internet governance, was in its final stages in 2024. In line with the first goal of the project, FMA conducted a series of training on digital security with an at-risk organization and communities in Davao. In August, FMA held an event for digital rights and security advocates to share their best practices in protecting themselves and their communities online.

To increase awareness of media and civil society groups on digital rights, FMA translated the Primer on the PhilSys Act to Filipino and published it

online. FMA also organized a roundtable discussion on e-voting for OFWs, which was attended by representatives from the National Citizens' Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), Commission on Elections (COMELEC), House of Representatives, and civil society. This engagement resulted in a collaboration with the COMELEC in distributing information materials on online voting and voters registration; and together with NAMFREL, a short study on Voters' Digital Rights.

The GIF Project, through EngageMedia, invited FMA to join a training on digital rights and security in Bali, Indonesia.

Through this activity, Thina Lopez and Sam Del Castillo, the gender project officer and communication specialist for FMA, respectively, were also able to attend the Digital Rights Asia Pacific (DRAPAC) as fellows.





Thina Lopez, FMA's gender project officer, at one of the sessions during the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum

only generate difficult conversation on violence against women, but also created a platform for victim-survivors to speak out and seek support.

In 2024, FMA also worked on the POWERUP project which aims to empower women and girls in combating gender-based violence. For this initiative, the Gender program conducted a focused group discussions with LGBTQIA+ members, indigenous women, youth and people working on addressing sexual harassment in universities and communities.

Apart from producing content to raise awareness on women's rights online, the Gender Program also participated as a resource and plenary speaker in various events in the Philippines and abroad. Among the key events FMA took part in were the Asia Pacific Regional Internet Governance Forum, Digital Rights Asia-Pacific, and the Beijing Platform for Action +30 Anniversary. These engagements

granted FMA opportunities to contribute meaningfully to broader conversations on gender and digital rights across local and international platforms. It also allowed FMA to connect with like-minded organizations, many of whom later became partners in advancing shared advocacy goals.

On top of these initiatives, the Gender Program continued its legislative monitoring and engagement by tracking relevant bills and conducting consultations with lawmakers. In preparation for the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), FMA co-organized a civil society consultation alongside the Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau and the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights.

Lastly, to promote digital security for minority groups, the Gender program also organized digital security training sessions with partner organizations and communities.

## GENDER

In 2024, the Gender Program continued its efforts to examine the intersection of ICT and women's rights through research and publication. Among the papers that FMA co-authored or produced were the [OGBV Yearend Report](#) and two CEDAW Shadow Reports focusing on the rights of [marginalized women](#) and [children](#). The program also mentored interns who contributed valuable research of their own. Two Canadian interns explored the role of [artificial intelligence in perpetuating gender-based violence online](#), while interns from UP Tacloban produced a range of papers on [LGBTQIA+ experiences](#), [reproductive health rights](#), and [women's leadership](#).

In partnership with the Women's Legal Bureau, Commission on Human Rights and Dentsu Creative, FMA helped launch the [Face of Courage campaign on TikTok](#)—a series of AI-generated videos that shed light on sensitive cases of domestic violence. The campaign did not



FMA was joined by fellow women's rights advocates in a CSO Consultation for the 68th CSW



Atty. Jam Jacob discussing the privacy concerns surrounding superapps in a DRAPAC 2024 session



## PRIVACY

In 2024, FMA’s Privacy program published two research outputs. In September, as part of the GIF project, the Privacy program worked on translating the primer on the PhilSys Act. A month later, the program released a [FAQ sheet on CCTVs](#) and data protection. FMA’s Privacy program also co-authored a [study on digital governance and transformation in Papua New Guinea](#). This research was supported by the Center for International Private Enterprise.

The Privacy Program also remained active in capacity-building initiatives, participating in various conferences, workshops, and training sessions to

discuss developments on data privacy and protection. In DRAPAC, Atty. Jamael Jacob, legal counsel of FMA, talked about privacy concerns on government super-apps and AI governance. Meanwhile, for the regional training for the GIF project, Atty. Jacob discussed data protection in cross-border data transfers. Atty. Jacob also continued Mandatory Continuing Legal Education talks in UP Law School.

The Privacy program served as a resource person for media articles and interviews as well. Amid the rising cases of deep-fakes, Atty. Jacob offered his insights on how AI can be used during the upcoming election season.

## COMMUNICATIONS

In 2024, FMA continued producing and distributing advocacy materials to promote digital rights, including newsletters, social media cards, and other digital content. These efforts helped the organization maintain its online presence, engage its audience, and amplify key messages on digital rights. FMA also released its annual [Digital Rights Report](#) which tracked the latest developments on privacy, internet freedom, and gender rights online.

Beyond content creation, FMA’s Communications team actively participated in speaking engagements, particularly on disinformation and press freedom. In partnership with Rappler, FMA joined several chat sessions on creative activism and disinformation, and also took part in training sessions focused on artificial intelligence. FMA was likewise present at the Social Good Summit, further expanding its advocacy reach through dialogue and collaboration.

## NETWORKING AND PARTNERSHIPS

As with other movements, building relationships is essential to harnessing

the collective power needed to achieve shared goals. FMA’s accomplishments in 2024 would not be possible without the support and guidance of partner organizations. Through various engagements and activities, FMA is grateful to have been able to build new partnerships and strengthen existing ones.

In January 2024, Liza Garcia, Executive Director of FMA, participated in the ARISE retreat on platform accountability in Kenya, which led to the formation of a new network that FMA now actively engages with. Similarly, the MATA SEA network emerged from a follow-up meeting of a Southeast Asia OGBV gathering held in Malaysia in June. MATA SEA is a transnational feminist tech collective focused on addressing OGBV issues in the region.

The South East Asia Collaborative Policy Network (SEA CPN), a regional network focused on engaging with ICT companies to promote internet freedom, held various meetings, both in-person and online, with its member organizations from South Korea, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Myanmar. The FMA held the secretariat position in the collective for 2024. In an activity held in Cebu, Philippines, member groups got together to plan and review existing

policies for the coalition. During the Digital Rights Asia Pacific, SEA CPN organized a meeting with Google and Meta to discuss possible collaboration with them. In solidarity with other CSOs, the network also supported other organizations’ initiatives by signing joint statements.

Additionally, FMA earned fellowships at regional conferences such as DRAPAC, APRIGF, IETF, and WTSa, where the organization had the opportunity to physically connect with and engage partner organizations. FMA also co-organized events with partners, such as the 8th FreeXP.Con organized by Human Rights Online-Philippines.



Sam Del Castillo joined the panel on online activism during the FreeXP.con





**SEA CPN members doing cultural immersion during their in-person meeting in Cebu**

## WHAT'S NEXT FOR FMA

While 2025 began with various challenges—including funding uncertainties brought about by Trump’s fund freeze—FMA remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing digital rights in the country and beyond. Sustaining initiatives with limited resources may be difficult, but we are encouraged by the continued support of our partners, allies, and communities who share in our mission.

In the wake of emerging technologies such as AI, conversations on digital rights have grown louder and more urgent. FMA will continue to adapt its initiatives and sharpen its focus to help build a rights-respecting space in today’s fast-paced digital world.