

FORGE 2018 Consolidated Report

As FORGE entered its thirty-first (31st) year of organizational existence, it went through a challenging yet most productive year in the context of fast-changing and highly uncertain social, political and economic milieu of the country.

Context of Our Work

Change of Chief Justices twice in less than a year

The Supreme Court went through major changes beginning with the removal of Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno from office. What would have been an 18-year term from her appointment by President Benigno Aquino III abruptly ended after the Court *en banc* on May 11, 2018, voted 8-6, to grant a the petition for quo warranto filed by the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) to declare her appointment as void from the beginning. The reason cited is her failure to comply with the mandatory legal requirements for her appointment in 2012.¹ However, Sereno alleged that the real issue behind is her decision to apply for the Chief Justice post which resulted to the break of tradition of seniority in the appointment of Chief Justices.²

Chief Justice Teresita Leonardo-de Castro replaced Sereno but served as chief magistrate for only less than two months before she retired from public service. Chief Justice Lucas Bersamin succeeded Leonardo-de Castro and will sit for a term of only a year before he will reach the mandatory retirement age. These changes were marred with controversy and criticisms. Leonardo-de Castro's appointment was seen as a "reward" for her testifying against then-Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno who was publicly disfavored by President Duterte and eventually voting in favor of Sereno's ouster.³ Malacanang justified her appointment as based on seniority. Lucas Bersamin, on the other hand, is only the third of the most senior among his batch of applicants for the Supreme Court Chief Justice, with Justice Antonio Carpio as the most senior but has stood up against the stance of the President in the West Philippine Sea issue against China. However, his appointment was justified with Malacanang's new definition of seniority which is based on years of service, instead of age. Bersamin's voting record shows him voting in favor of all cases of interest to President Rodrigo Duterte.⁴

¹ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057643>

² <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/981208/i-will-never-forgive-you-for-accepting-the-chief-justiceship>

³ https://www.rappler.com/nation/210455-malacanang-denies-teresita-de-castro-supreme-court-chief-justice-reward#cxrecs_s

⁴ https://www.rappler.com/nation/218112-bersamin-will-not-apologize-for-appointment#cxrecs_s

TRAIN on its 1st year of implementation⁵

The first package of the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program (CTRP) that cut workers' tax rates and increased the level of tax-free annual income to Php250,000 has been fully implemented this year. To offset the impact of said measures to government revenue, excise taxes on fuel were increased and new ones were introduced for sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) and on vehicles. Notable economists like IHS Markit Asia Pacific Chief Economist Rajiv Biswas noted that while TRAIN 1 reforms are expected to help boost government revenues in over 2018-2020, the tax measures, on the other hand, have "contributed to a spike in headline inflation during 2018". Rate of price increases peaked at 6.7 percent last September-October, a nearly 10-year high level, due mainly to faster inflation rate of food and non-alcoholic beverages as well as oil products.

Sandiganbayan disposes of high-profile cases⁶

The Sandiganbayan 5th Division found Imelda Marcos, now Ilocos Norte congressional representative, guilty of seven counts of graft cases in connection with her alleged "financial interests" when she was still with the government of Metro Manila. The guilty verdict proved that Marcos has "financial interest" in some private enterprises and had sentenced her "to suffer the penalty of imprisonment of from six years and one month as minimum, up to 11 years as maximum for each count of the graft case filed against her" with "penalty of perpetual disqualification from holding any public post." Marcos has been granted bail pending appeal of the decision to the Supreme Court.

On the other hand, the Sandiganbayan acquitted former senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. of plunder case in connection with his alleged involvement in the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) or "pork barrel" fund scam, citing failure by the prosecution to present sufficient evidence to prove the graft case against Revilla. The Ombudsman accused Revilla of allegedly amassing Php224.5 million in "kickbacks" for channeling his PDAF to businesswoman Janet Lim Napoles.

Bangsamoro Basic Law⁷

The most significant measure that was passed by the Senate this year was the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BOL) which President Duterte signed on July 26, 2018. It is the result of decades-long peace negotiations between the government and rebel groups in Mindanao, particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). It is expected to finally put an end to armed conflict in Mindanao. Comelec has set the plebiscite for the BOL on Jan. 21, 2019.

⁵ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057618>

⁶ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1056786>

⁷ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057225>

Leadership change in the Senate and House of Representatives

Senate President Vicente Sotto III replaced Senator Aquilino Pimentel III in a leadership change on May 21, months ahead of President Duterte's third State of the Nation Address (SONA). Pimentel is the president of the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino-Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) party. He relinquished the Senate leadership to "focus on preparing the ruling party for its participation nationwide in the 2019 mid-term elections" and nominated Sotto, who was then the Senate Majority Leader, to be his successor.⁸

The change of leadership at the House of Representatives, on the other hand, was marred with controversy. Former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo replaced Davao Del Norte Rep. Pantaleon Alvarez as the House Speaker in a situation that delayed the State of the Nation Address of the President for an hour. Just minutes before President Duterte was supposed to deliver his third SONA on July 23, former president and Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo took her oath as new Speaker of the House of Representatives. The replacement happened through a manifesto of support to endorse her as House Speaker circulated on Monday morning and a controversial voting process that was initiated with former president taking over the rostrum, minutes before Alvarez was seen welcoming Duterte at the House. Duterte's allies said the ouster move against Alvarez has the support of the President's daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio, who earlier had a spat with Alvarez that started when he called the Davao City mayor as part of the opposition after she formed the regional political party, Hugpong ng Pagbabago.⁹

4.1-M indigents benefit from 4Ps¹⁰

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) has served more than 4 million beneficiaries under its Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) this year with its implementation in 143 cities and 1,489 municipalities in 81 provinces nationwide. The program covers a total of 4,178,985 active household beneficiaries. Of these, 3,950,012 are covered by the regular Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program while 228,973 are covered by the Modified Conditional Cash Transfer (MCCT).

PRRD's federalism push in full-swing¹¹

The campaign for Federalism, as one of the President's major campaign promises during the 2016 elections, went full-swing in 2018.

The President appointed members of the Consultative Committee (ConCom) to review the 1987 Constitution with former Chief Justice Reynato Puno as chairman. Aside from Puno, Justices, ex-legislators, lawyers, academics, among other experts comprise Duterte's ConCom. Four months after it convened, the 22-member ConCom approved

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <https://ptvnews.ph/house-leadership-change-delays-dutertes-3rd-sona/>

¹⁰ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1056665>

¹¹ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057469>

unanimously, in an en banc session on July 3 this year, the proposed federal charter which has 22 articles compared to the 1987 Constitution's 18 articles.

Among the ConCom's federal charter's provisions include a ban on political dynasties and political turncoatism; a ban on monopolies and oligopolies that lessen competition; additional powers for the Ombudsman and Commission on Audit among others; the inclusion of socio-economic rights in the Bill of Rights; and the establishment of a permanent and indissoluble nation. The draft federal Constitution, identified 18 federated regions composed of 16 symmetrical regions-- existing regions plus Negrosanon Federated Region and two asymmetrical regions -- Bangsamoro and Cordillera. Bangsamoro and Cordillera have different designs from other regions because of their "identity-based demands." A massive information dissemination campaign on the proposed federal charter and its plebiscite is yet to be scheduled.

Meanwhile, House Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has drafted and filed on September 19, a proposed constitution different from the draft constitution submitted by President Rodrigo Duterte's 22-member Consultative Committee.¹² The draft has quickly hurdled the committee level. Criticisms over it arose with the fact that stipulations under the Section 4, Article XVII, on the Transitory Provisions puts the Senate President – not Vice President Leni Robredo – as next in line should President Rodrigo Duterte is unable to preside over the country's transition to the new system of government.¹³ The draft also seeks to create a federal system of government.¹⁴

The anti-drug war campaign continues¹⁵

At least 9,503 out of the 42,044 barangays (villages) in the country have been declared drug-cleared as of November 30 by the Philippine National Police (PNP). A total of 303,533 drug surrenderers have graduated from the Recovery and Wellness Program (RWP), undertaken both by the government and the private sector across the country as part of the administration's campaign to holistically address the illegal drug problem. The figure can be broken down into 151,385 surrenderers who graduated from the RWP initiated by the PNP and 152,148 from supported community centers from July 1, 2016 to November 3, 2018.

In relation to this, Human Rights Watch 2018 reports:

“President Rodrigo Duterte has plunged the Philippines into its worst human rights crisis since the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and 1980s. His “war on drugs,”

¹² <https://www.rappler.com/nation/213759-house-committee-recommends-arroyo-draft-constitution-plenary>

¹³ Sec.4 - In case a vacancy arises by reason of removal, resignation, permanent incapacity or death of the incumbent President, the incumbent Senate President shall act as President until a President shall have been chosen and qualified.

¹⁴ <https://www.rappler.com/nation/213826-arroyo-draft-constitution-skips-vice-president-transition-federal-government>

¹⁵ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057353>

launched after he took office in June 2016, has claimed an estimated 12,000 lives of primarily poor urban dwellers, including children.”¹⁶

Cebu politics gets interesting ahead of 2019 polls¹⁷

At the local scene, the electoral campaign machineries functioned early. Bando Osmena Pundok Kauswagan (BOPK) which used to be allied with the Liberal Party and supported then presidential candidate Manuel Roxas II in the 2016 elections has declared, before the filing of the certificate of candidacy last October, that it has struck an alliance with the Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino. The LDP leadership has not issued a statement to back this claim. Its opposing party is Barug - Partido Demokratiko Pilipino -Lakas ng Bayan (Barug PDP-Laban).

In the province of Cebu, Governor Hilario Davide III, son of former Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr., has slid down and filed for the vice mayoralty while Vice Governor Agnes Magpale is the Liberal Party’s standard bearer for governor. Magpale will face her former ally, now Cebu’s 3rd District Rep. Gwendolyn Garcia, daughter of former governor and constitutionalist, Pablo Garcia. Garcia’s tandem is Daphne Salimbangon, daughter of incumbent 5th District Congressman Benhur Salimbangon.

28K Pinoys barred from leaving PH in anti-trafficking drive¹⁸

A total of 28,467 passengers were barred from leaving the country by the Bureau of Immigration during the first 10 months of the year after they were found to be non-compliant with requirements for overseas-bound passengers. This was done to prevent departure of victims of human trafficking and illegal recruitment. The action was based on the Guidelines on Departure Formalities for International-Bound Passengers set by the Department of Justice (DOJ). The measure resulted to some notable interceptions for the year which included the 151 minor and under-aged females bound for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who misrepresented their ages.

¹⁶ <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2018/country-chapters/philippines>

¹⁷ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057264>

¹⁸ <http://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1057053>

FORGE Accomplishment Report

FORGE's work in 2018 engaged largely with local government units (barangay and city), regional offices of government agencies, communities and individuals. Although the national situation has become glaringly complicated and challenging, the work at the local level, except for the happening of the barangay elections and regular change of personnel in some government agencies, remains substantially unchanged. Although the strong anti-drug campaign of the current administration has permeated through LGUs and regional government agencies manifested in their allocation of resources and program prioritization, FORGE was able to wade through the challenge and accomplished much of its operational targets for 2018.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING DIVISION (COD)

In partnership with Christian Aid-UK and Misereor-Germany, the Community Organizing Division was able to continue its community organizing work with Metro Cebu urban poor sector to foster community resilience, disaster preparedness, critical engagement with government as well as gaining security of land tenure and accessing basic social services.

The COD Division worked to organize and strengthen City-based federations of urban poor in the cities of Mandaue, Cebu and Talisay called the ALL-POWER. These formations were consolidated into an inter-city confederation of urban poor organizations called the ALL-POWER Metro Cebu.

Alliance of Peoples Organization Working for Empowerment and Resettlement (ALL POWER)- Cebu City

ALL POWER Cebu City is composed of twenty-three (23) local people's organizations in Cebu City, covering a total of 3,494 individual members¹⁹. For this year, the alliance aimed to strike a new Memorandum of Agreement with the Cebu City government fixing their monthly housing and site development amortizations to the government at Six Hundred Pesos (Php600.00) monthly. This advocacy measure is aimed at benefiting all urban poor organizations in the City that avail of housing programs and services. Series of mobilizations and dialogue with officials of the City Government resulted to a compromise of monthly P650.00 amortization, instead of P600.00 on the part of ALL POWER versus P1,000.00 initial amount determined by the City Government. The new amortization comes with the agreement that those urban poor members who default in the payment of the agreed amortization shall be converted into renters of the Cebu City government, instead of beneficiaries of its program. The agreed terms and condition is provided to develop the urban poor sector's sense of responsibility to honor their

¹⁹ 1,368 female and 2,126 male members

obligations with the City Government. The Ordinance that will embody this agreement is yet to be enacted by the Cebu City Council.

Aside from the MOA, the alliance aimed at accessing Cebu City housing and site development funds for the delivery of basic services to TAHAS²⁰, ULNA²¹, ALASKA-FED²² and KAPASAR²³. The alliance, however, opted to forego this plan in order to prioritize provision of assistance to the relocation of members of Sitio Tangke Panaghiusa Residents Association (SITAPRA) who were threatened with demolition by the owner of the private lot they were occupying. The Cebu City Government purchased a lot for their relocation and worked with SITAPRA leaders to develop the site in terms of road access, lot survey and clearing as well as putting on electricity and water access.

Alliance of Peoples Organization Working for Empowerment and Resettlement (ALL POWER) – Mandaue City

ALL POWER Mandaue City is composed of thirteen (13) local people's organizations in the City, covering 4,372 individual members²⁴. For this year, the alliance planned to lobby for the enactment of local ordinance allocating at least 2% of City's annual budget for site development and lot acquisition. Alliance's action reached only as far as sitting in a dialogue with Mayor Luigi Quisumbing wherein an assurance was released by the Mayor that budget will be allocated once the alliance is able to find a suitable lot for relocation. The alliance searched and found a suitable relocation site which is yet to be assessed by the City Government based on their criteria for suitability.

Aside from budget advocacy, ALL POWER Mandaue City also planned to address the land tenure issues of Basak United Creek Side Homeowners Association (BUCSHOA) as well as Mantuyong Urban Poor Homeowners Association (MUPHAI). The situation of BUCSHOA was prioritized because there was a promise made by the trusted aide of City Mayor Quisumbing and even the City Mayor himself to help in facilitating the conversion of the Lot currently occupied by BUCSHOA into socialized housing site which can accommodate other ALL POWER member-organizations due to its large area. ALL POWER Mandaue City is fast tracking this target and intends to realize it at least before the election on May 2019. MUPHAI was prioritized because of the fact that since the occurrence of the fire incident in their area back in November 2016, many of their members have not been allowed to build their houses back in their area. As of 2018, due to negotiation efforts, 71 of its members considered as qualified beneficiaries for socialized housing program already built their houses back in the Mantuyong area while the 4 non-qualified members are waiting for the relocation in Casili, Mandaue City.

²⁰ Tabarno Homeowners Association

²¹ Upper Laguerta Neighborhood Association

²² ALASKA Federation

²³ Kapunongan Alang sa Panimuyosa San Roque Homeowner's Association

²⁴ 1,702 female and 2,670 male members

Alliance of Urban Poor People’s Organization Working for Genuine Empowerment and Community Resiliency in Talisay City (ALL POWER Talisay City)

ALL POWER Talisay City is composed of fifteen (15) people’s organizations in the City. While work with ALL POWER Cebu City and Mandaue City have been undertaken since the past years, the community organizing work in Talisay City started only in 2018. Thus, the bulk of FORGE’s work in this area was in the conduct of social investigation, dialogues and meetings with homeowner’s associations, courtesy calls with local government officials and community leaders. Despite the challenges faced in strengthening the urban poor organizations in the City as well as setting-up the alliance that would constructively engage with the Talisay City Government for the benefit of the urban poor in the City, the following accomplishments were achieved by ALL POWER Talisay City:

- Lobbied with the City Council Committee Chairperson on Housing and Urban Poor for the enactment of a city ordinance that would allocate budget for site development and lot purchase. This resulted to the commitment by said Chairperson that he would support the said advocacy in the Council;
- Rock of Ages Homeowner’s Association (RAHOA), in coordination with Presidential Council for the Urban Poor (PCUP), successfully convened different government agencies such as Socialized Housing Finance Corporation (SHFC), Local Housing Office (LHO), Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Mines and Geosciences Bureau (DENR-MGB), City Planning and Development Office (CPDO), City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO), Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU) as well as the owners of their lot have discussed the livability of the lot they are occupying and gathered commitment of the lot owners to sell the said lot to them;
- Bayabas Caimito Gabon Urban Poor People’s Association (BCGUPA) was able to gather commitment from barangay local government officials to continue the installation of drainage system and the opening of their road right of way.

Alliance of People’s Organization Working for Empowerment in Metro Cebu (ALL POWER Metro Cebu)

The ALL Power Metro Cebu is the confederation of the ALL POWER Federations from Cebu City, Mandaue City and Talisay City. The intention of the confederation is to strengthen the urban poor sector’s power within Metro Cebu to engage in policy and developmental discourse that would primarily affect them. While the actual engagement as to land tenure issues as well as access to basic services are tackled in the city government level, however, broader development planning is being undertaken at a wider context. An example of this is the Mega Cebu plan initiated by the business sector and participated in by local government units and business-related civil society representatives but has left out the participation of the marginalized sectors.

Through the formation of ALL POWER Metro Cebu, leaders of the different federations have acquired interest in studying and understanding Mega Cebu and has invited

Ramon Aboitiz Foundation, Inc. (RAFI), the Mega Cebu Secretariat, to provide a comprehensive orientation on the Plan. In said discussion the leaders found out that the Mega Cebu Development Coordinating Board (MCDCCB) that is sought to be established through Congress enactment is just a coordinating body of the thirteen local government units in Cebu, together with the national and local government agencies, business groups, civil society organizations and other stakeholders. The discussion confirms the result of FORGE's previous study on the Mega Cebu roadmap which presented that the addressing of the displacement of informal settlers expected from the massive infrastructure projects that will be undertaken under the Mega Cebu plan is assigned to the local government units. Thus, it is imperative that the urban poor sector must also actively engage their local governments.

Capacity-building of PO Leaders

COD has conducted various seminars and trainings to enhance the capacity of eighty-two (82) partner people's organization leaders to strengthen their respective organizations. Of the 82 that underwent the capacity-building interventions, 26 leaders have manifested capacity in facilitating organizational meetings and policy formulation while 47 existing PPO leaders have manifested capacity in facilitating tactic session, mobilization and lobbying as observed by community organizers.

Strengthening Division's Capacity to Implement Programs

In order to upgrade capacity of its team members to effectively execute their tasks and functions, COD has conducted regular staff development activities for staff members of the Division covering the following topics: Family Code, Anti-VAWC Law review, Legal issues, HLURB registration, review of CO steps, Parliamentary Procedure, Ordinance and Resolution making, workshop on Microsoft Excel and different types of energizers. The Division has also written into a manual its standard operating procedures in the conduct of its different approaches, interventions and strategies, including tools used, in doing community organizing work. The Division has also formulated its safety and security policies and procedures for staff working in the field given the current situation.

CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

Major challenge faced by the team is their safety and security especially with the current spate of killings happening in the urban poor areas. To address the risk, the team formulated their safety and security policies and procedures aimed at enhancing knowledge on whereabouts of the community organizers and the immediate action to undertake when confronted with dangerous situations.

With the election fever already setting in, major challenge for the team is on how to address the fact that many of its PO leaders are absorbed by local politician's campaign machineries which has affected their function in their organization. The team addressed this challenge by conducting dialogue with the said leaders and exploring

options that they would lie-low from leadership and turn over their tasks to other leaders.

It has also become a challenge for COD in developing PO leaders to sustain their critical consciousness in a situation wherein the government officials are too facilitative of the needs of the urban poor. If not cautious, this may lead to dependency and disempowerment of the people. Thus, constant dialogue with the PO leaders are conducted by the community organizers to remind them to remain objective in their engagement with the city officials.

SOCIAL OUTREACH DIVISION (SOD)

The SOD's main objective is to contribute to the elimination of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Central Visayas. To achieve this, the Division implements preventive, rescue and healing interventions guided by its Theory of Change involving the child, family, community and local government actors in partnership with Terre des Hommes-Netherlands, Caritas-Germany, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Asian Community Trust, Assisi Foundation and individual donors in the implementation of its strategy composed of hangout/community outreach, operation of two activity centers and separate shelters for boys and girls, scholarship program and referral system.

Children Intervention

FORGE-SOD works to empower children who are victims and those who are vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation so that they may be able to uphold and enjoy their rights. For this year, SOD was able to reach out to 647 children out of its 300 target. These children were visited in their hangouts, provided with street education on children's rights as well as prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS and encouraged to visit FORGE *Balay Damgo* (House of Dreams) for further intervention. Out of the 647 reached out, 622 of them were provided with psychosocial, psycho-spiritual and trauma-informed care services for healing and/or transformation in the activity centers and temporary shelters. Twenty (20) of the children under FORGE's care in 2018 have decided to opt out of prostitution after thorough case management and intervention and 74 of them pursued formal schooling through the availment of the scholarship program.

To sustain behavioral changes achieved through FORGE interventions, support network like the Young Dreamers was set-up this year for those children who are still at the victim stage and are still journeying towards their healing. Two chapters of Young Dreamers were established this year in Lapulapu City and Cebu City with a combined total of 138 membership. With theater and art as strategy for healing, the SOD team had established the Young Dreamers Music and Theater Group where the children are

encouraged to express and present their experience and advocate for their rights and cause.

To address the problem of sustaining further the opting out of CSE²⁵ of the children that came in contact with FORGE, a formal organization of survivors of CSE called *Kauban sa Kagawasan (Kauban Ka)*²⁶ was established this year primarily to inspire the movement of the children from victimization to survivorship. For 2018, there are a total of 49 survivors who are members of the *Kauban Ka* organization.

Parents Intervention

FORGE-SOD intends that for this year, through home visits, constant dialogue and inputs on positive discipline and responsible parenthood, at least 30 parents will effectively fulfill their parental roles and responsibilities. Although the intended outcomes are not achievable in one year, the SOD team has made progress that were manifested in the parents' behavioral changes. From the context that the targeted parents are without care of what will happen to their children before FORGE intervened, the SOD interventions yielded the following accomplishments:

- 231 parents are actively participating in center activities (scholars' meetings, parent-child encounters, parent dialogues, learning and reflection sessions);
- 39 parents had participated in study sessions on ATIP laws, Children's Rights and Magna Carta for Women to enhance their knowledge and respect on the rights of their children;
- 20 out of 25 parents of scholars regularly attending parents sessions to discuss on the challenges faced by their children at school and the needed action to be undertaken by them to support their children.

Community Intervention

The work in the community is crucial because, in FORGE-SOD's theory of change, their respect for children and human rights will effectively make them protectors and advocates for the advancement of said rights. For this year, the SOD team aimed to establish community-based child rights champions called the Agents of change for Children and Teens (ACT). The team was able to establish four (4) clusters of ACTs in San Remigio-Sta. Fe in Cebu North, Samboan-Santander in Cebu South; Panglao-Tagbilaran in Bohol and in Metro Cebu with a total membership of 45 individuals. In Lapulapu City, ACT formation went barangay-based and has established chapters in 7 barangays namely: Poblacion, Basak, Looc, Pajo, Marigondon, Pajac and Gun-ob. The establishment and training of these ACTs have resulted to the effective response of 6 TIP cases resulting to the rescue of 17 children victims for this year alone.

²⁵ Commercial sexual exploitation

²⁶ Comrades for Change

Aside from ACTs, the SOD team also established community-based organizations like Community Child Protection Volunteers (CCPV) with total membership of 278 adult leaders as well as Kabataan Batok sa Trapiking ug Abuso (KABATA)²⁷ with total membership of 330 young people in the areas of Tangbo in Bunlan, Poblacion in San Remigio and Poblacion in Sta. Fe within the Province of Cebu. These organizations bolster prevention and response mechanisms in the community for cases of child abuse and exploitation.

Work with Government Multisectoral Mechanisms

The aim of this particular area of SOD work is to support the functioning of these bodies to become effective and sustainable mechanisms for child protection. FORGE-SOD has closely worked with local government units to activate and strengthen the Barangay Council for the Protection of Children (BCPC) in the areas of Poblacion, San Remigio, Poblacion, Sta. Fe, Sta. Rosa, Lapu-Lapu, Bunlan, Santander and Tango, Samboan, and strengthened BCPCs in Pasil, Cebu City, Paknaan, Mandaue City and Basak, Sta. Rosa. FORGE is also a BCPC member in barangays Carreta, San Roque and T. Padilla in Cebu City, and barangays Gun-ob, Pajo, Looc, Mactan, Poblacion, Basak and Pajac in Lapu-Lapu City. In the Municipal level, FORGE activated the Municipal and Local/City Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking in Persons (MIACAT/LCAT) in the areas of Samboan and Santander in South Cebu, and San Remigio and Sta. Fe in North Cebu, while it is an active member of the Cebu City Inter Agency Council Against Trafficking and Local Council Against Trafficking of Mandaue. In these agencies, children and/or transport and tourism sector representatives have been officially appointed as members so they could raise into policies issues and concerns of their sector relating to child protection.

This work with government has resulted to the following accomplishments for this year:

- 8 drafted barangay referral pathways for TIP and child abuse cases;
- 8 Updated Municipal Referral Pathway and Reporting Mechanism for TIP cases;
- 1 Municipal Ordinance in Samboan enacted on the establishment of Anti-Human Trafficking helpdesk and referral pathway;
- 1 Provincial ATIP Ordinance in Bohol was approved; and
- 2 resolutions creating ATIP Helpdesk and Referral in Port areas of Larena and Siquijor was passed.

Consortium Formation Work

FORGE, in partnership with Bidlisiw Foundation and Children's Legal Bureau Inc., serves as the lead NGO for the Advocates for the Protection and the Prevention of Abuse and Exploitation of Children (APPROACH) Consortium in working against commercial sexual exploitation of children. For this year, FORGE led the Consortium in undertaking organizational development activities like strategic and operational planning, program framework development, standardization of outreach work among the three NGO

²⁷ Young People Against Trafficking and Abuse

members as well as modules standardization. The Consortium members were also able to travel to Cambodia to study on the different anti-child trafficking programs and initiatives undertaken by their NGOs in the said country.

Strengthening Division's Capacity to Implement the Program

FORGE-SOD has written into a manual of operations all the standards, steps and procedures in implementing its strategy and programs to serve as guide for all staff members of the Division in executing their tasks and functions.

The Division has also undertaken a review of its RESCUE stages of programmatic interventions for children to help staff members design case-specific interventions for the children that come into FORGE's care.

A book has been published entitled "Forging Dreams: A Narrative on Child Protection, Rescue and Healing" that lays down the strategies, lessons learned, challenges and evolution of the more than two decades experience of the Social Outreach Division in working with children.

An audio-video production (AVP) presenting FORGE's social outreach work and experience was also produced to aid in presenting to partners, networks, support individuals and visitors on what FORGE-SOD's work is all about.

FORGE has also successfully renewed its registration and acquire level one accreditation by Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

The recently concluded elections last June 2018 posed challenges for the project staff. They had to get the commitment of newly elected officials to support not just FORGE's interventions in the areas but also to give priority to children's concerns. Project staff also had to ensure that outputs in their work in partnership with the previous administration, such as referral mechanisms established, were honored through the enactment of ordinances or resolutions by the local sanggunian. The same challenge also applies to the fast turn over of their frontline personnel and even department heads. Turn over/reassignment of personnel from government agencies meant that initiatives started related to the advocacy may be stalled unless FORGE gets their commitment and support.

SOD commits to strengthen its advocacy and partnership by working more closely with government agencies and involving them in the case management of priority cases. This will ensure faster provision of services and interventions to the children. Referral mechanisms will continue to be updated as needed to effectively respond to the evolving trends of abuse and exploitation.

By 2019, SOD will take on another challenging but exciting task of selecting and capacitating selected families from its partner community to become foster parents. With the support of VHC and TdH Netherlands, this will be a pioneering effort and an addition to FORGE's effort provide safe and loving home to abused children, however, no longer within institution.

FORGE in the years to come

It is of no doubt that FORGE is endowed with the gift of passionate and dedicated people and a compelling vision and mission that excite support. The organization also possesses good governance structure and processes as well as ground-tested strategies and approaches that had delivered results for decades. The real challenge for the organization in the years to come is in sustaining its program of interventions in the context of dwindling international support for long-term developmental work like community organizing and the challenging process of empowering the people. The shift is currently heading towards humanitarian work that seeks to provide immediate support to people suffering from disasters, man-made or natural, which is undeniably a global need considering the emerging effects of environmental degradation and climate change. The perspective of organizing and empowering the people is currently not favored for support because its impact is long-term and cannot be immediately perceived. How does FORGE continue its operations in this context?

The out-of-the-box answer to the above question will be tackled by the Board of Trustees in their task to revisit and reformulate the Vision, Mission, Goals and Values of FORGE for the next five years. Well aware of the challenge, the Trustees have already commissioned the writing of a Learning Paper that looked back at FORGE's past 30 years of existence. The Learning Paper is a vital input in the upcoming revisit.

FORGE, in the coming years, will reinvent itself in "advancing with vigor and passion"²⁸ its work with the people.

Onward with the challenge!



ATTY. RUTH N. RESTAURO
Executive Director
December 31, 2018

²⁸ FORGE's 30th year anniversary theme: "Celebrating resilience; Advancing with vigor and passion".