



**ASEAN SOGIE
CAUCUS**

ASC ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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CONTENTS

About ASC	4
History of ASC	5
Message from ASC Chairperson	6
Message from ASC Executive Director	7
Supporting Local and Regional Action	8
Queering ASEAN Civil Society	20
Queering Narratives	27
Strengthen Engagement with Regional and Global Human Rights Mechanisms	35
The Year 2024 in Figures	39
Financial Report	40
Our Team	41
Acknowledgments	42

ABOUT ASC

VISION

An ASEAN Community that respects the human rights of all people regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

MISSION

ASC is a regional network that dynamically engages diverse actors to collectively advocate for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer people, non-binary and gender-diverse persons in Southeast Asia.

GOALS

ASC works towards the following goals:

- All human rights mechanisms impacting the ASEAN region adopt and implement frameworks and plans of action that promote and protect the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, non-binary, and gender-diverse persons (LGBTQIAN+).
- Domestic laws, policies, and programs in Southeast Asian countries include the protection and promotion of the rights of LGBTQIAN+, and gender-diverse persons.
- LGBTQIAN+, and gender-diverse civil society are empowered to engage with state and non-state actors to adhere to human rights standards.

HISTORY OF ASC

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC) is a regional human rights organization that works for the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) within the human rights work in ASEAN. Advocating for the human rights of all persons regardless of SOGIESC is at the heart of ASC's mission.

Our roots go back to the courageous action of activists from eight (8) ASEAN countries, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Our founders ensured the visibility and meaningful engagement of LGBTQIAN+ voices in ASEAN civil society spaces, especially the annual ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF). Since 2010, our founders have worked to ensure that LGBTQIAN+ issues are addressed in the ASEAN civil society actions and recommendations reflected in outcome documents.

In 2011, ASC was formally established during a meeting of LGBTQIAN+ activists held in Jakarta, Indonesia in preparation for the ACSC/APF of that year. This meeting was organized jointly by Arus Pelangi, Indonesia for Humans, and iSEE. ASC recognizes that its birth and evolution occurred alongside the expanding spaces for regional civil society's engagement with ASEAN.

In 2014, ASC began setting up its Secretariat in Quezon City, Philippines. In 2015, ASC obtained its legal registration as a non-stock, non-profit organization under the name Southeast Asia Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression Caucus (ASC), Inc. Since then, we have pushed for LGBTQIAN+ human rights through engagements in civil society platforms and human rights mechanisms; supported local LGBTQIAN+ activists through mentorship, technical assistance, and relationship-building; and reimagined activism as a creative process anchored on a vision of South-South solidarity.

Over the years, ASC has developed innovative approaches to LGBTQIAN+ activism in Southeast Asia. It initiated the ASEAN Advocacy Week which enabled more than 100 activists to have advocacy dialogues with diplomatic missions, UN agencies, and other stakeholders engaging with ASEAN. It pioneered the ASEAN Queer Leadership Week, a program that has empowered more than a hundred leaders to engage cross-movement leadership. And recognizing the narrative power of LGBTQIAN+ artists and cultural workers, ASC trailblazed the Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival (SEAQCF).

In 2021, ASC was granted Special Consultative Status by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

MESSAGE FROM ASC CHAIRPERSON

The year 2024 proved to be a particularly challenging time for civil society organizations, especially those working on LGBTQIAN+ rights. The global spread of anti-gender ideology has increasingly taken root, contributing to democratic backsliding in numerous countries. This has been reflected in the rise of anti-LGBTQIAN+ legislation, the rollback of previously progressive laws, and the withdrawal of crucial funding for LGBTQIAN+ advocacy and programs. We experienced the impact firsthand, witnessing organizations suffer immensely—some were forced to lay off staff, scale back projects, or, in the most difficult cases, shut down entirely.

ASC was not spared from these challenges. We felt the impact deeply, but we persevered and continued our work despite the uncertainty and adversity of these times.

I'm proud to share that, despite these challenges, we successfully accomplished the following: creating a space for regional advocacy through the ASEAN Queer Advocacy Week, convening the ASEAN Queer Leadership Week being a space for cross-movement leadership, and widening the space for creative forms of activism through our Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival.

This is not to overlook the fact that our work in Southeast Asia has never been easy since 2011, when ASC was founded. Despite persistent efforts, ASEAN member states have consistently denied ASC formal accreditation to engage with ASEAN processes. In contrast, ASC was granted consultative status by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), making it one of the few LGBTIQ non-governmental organizations recognized to participate in formal UN deliberations.

We continue our work across hostile ASEAN member states, striving to ensure the equitable inclusion of gender-diverse organizations and individuals. At the same time, we remain committed to an intersectional approach, actively partnering with human rights, women's rights, and other sectoral organizations to advance shared goals.

The fight for inclusion and equality has never been more challenging. Since our inception, we have persisted in advocating for LGBTIQ rights despite increasingly difficult conditions—and we see no reason to stop now. Even as doors are slammed shut, we continue searching for the smallest gaps where light still shines through. And we will keep breaking down walls until more light can reach us all.

We invite you to join us in breaking down these walls. We hope the work we've accomplished this year inspires you, knowing that none of it came easy. But together, we can go further—and achieve even more. Let's break more walls together!

Ging Cristobal, Chairperson, Board of Trustees

MESSAGE FROM ASC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ASC continues to be a learning organization. Over the years, have operated in a way where our approach to advocacy, organizing, and movement-building transcends formulas. Instead, we took the bold risk of experimenting, trying, testing, initiating, and learning new ways of working while always being guided by the advice of various LGBTQIA+ activists and allies across Southeast Asia. In a region where human rights advancement has not seen a linear progression, applying such an inductive approach is both a context-based response, and an opportunity for exploration.

In the past years, we have ventured into unexplored programs. We collaborated with and provided support to more than a hundred LGBTQIA+ artists, cultural activists, and narrative change agents in organizing the Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival (SEAQCF). Working in the area of “artivism” is our contribution to transforming the cultural landscape of ASEAN, and making it affirming and respectful of human rights and gender diversity. We have expanded spaces for leadership: through the ASEAN Queer Leadership Week (AQLW) we supported the empowerment of young LGBTQIAN+ leaders to actively engage in intersectional and cross-movement spaces. We believe that ASEAN civil society will remain inclusive as long as there is proactive leadership from LGBTQIAN+ persons who will challenge workplaces, influence advocacy agenda, and facilitate collaborative actions.

Research is at the heart of ASC’s work. Our advocacy can only be effective when it is grounded in evidence and analysis that reflect. In 2024, we are proud to have successfully supported research using a feminist participatory action research (FPAR) approach.

But then external headwinds have affected our work significantly. The rise of conservative forces has led to a recalibration of donor priorities, consequently impacting our organizational objectives. Key donors from the Global North who have supported LGBTQIAN+ movements for decades have changed priorities. Based on our interactions with peer LGBTQIAN+ groups, there is a profound concern about movement sustainability. ASC will respond to this by continuing our organizational accompaniment support to local organizations most at risk of losing funding. ASC will also continue to recalibrate its priorities to ensure that resources remain available, and that these are leveraged for programs that directly benefit LGBTQIAN+ persons.

We thank you for your generous support. And we hope for your continuous contribution and allyship with ASC in the years to come.

Ryan Silverio, Executive Director

SUPPORTING LOCAL AND REGIONAL ACTION

ASC remains deeply rooted in working with grassroots communities and peoples' organizations, creating opportunities for growth and enrichment in areas where support is most needed. ASC dedicates much of its limited resources to supporting advocates on the ground where they can have the greatest impact in advancing human rights.

Fostering relationships and enriching one-another's potential is also part of ASC's guiding ethos. This year, ASC facilitated spaces in which LGBTQIAN+ activists could exchange ideas and experiences on urgent issues in Southeast Asia such as the rise of anti-gender, anti-human rights groups, continuing restrictions on freedom of expression and association, and the need for a strengthened cross-movement solidarity and advocacy.

The **Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR)**, an initiative we started in 2022, is a grassroots-driven, community-centered research approach that challenges traditional power dynamics by placing the most marginalized at the center of knowledge production. We engaged with partners from Indonesia (Jaringan Transgender Indonesia), Malaysia (Legal Dignity), the Philippines (GALANG), and Timor Leste (Arco Iris). Our partners were able to produce their respective research focusing on themes such as on economic participation of transgender persons, on access to justice among LGBTQIA+ persons, and the situation of elderly lesbian, bisexual and queer (LBQ) persons.

In the Philippines, GALANG trained three lesbian, bisexual, and transmen (LBT) people's organizations on the conduct of photo and video documentation of their lived experiences as a community. Each LBT organization was able to produce powerful visual narratives that captured their everyday struggles, resilience, and hopes, from confronting discrimination in their barangays to building safe spaces and asserting their right to organize.

Through our work on FPAR, ASC learned about the crucial need to ensure the creation of safe and reflective spaces where these communities can assert their expertise and truly surface key challenges without being influenced by donor-driven agendas, which often shape the scope and priorities of LGBTQIA+ research in the region. We realized that there is an urgent need to strengthen queer visibility and rights across Southeast Asia and community-led research initiatives and storytelling platforms definitely play a crucial role in driving this forward. To sustain these lessons, ASC will continue to apply transformative approaches such as FPAR that move beyond documentation toward meaningful social change.

Developing Knowledge on Feminist Participatory Action Research



Scoping Study on FPAR in Southeast Asia

ASC launched the report titled **Mapping of the LGBTIQ and SOGIESC-inclusive Studies using Feminist Participatory Approach in Southeast Asia** to examine how meaningfully marginalized voices are reflected in research. The report revealed a very limited use of FPAR by studies focusing on LGBTQIAN+ related topics. One of the key recommendations of the report is to ensure that studies result in an action component such as developing policy briefs, submitting reports to the UN mechanisms, and conducting public campaigns.

Through the **ASEAN Queer Learning Program (AQLP)**, we were able to provide short-term support for small projects of various focus proposed by individual AQLP alumni which they implemented with their respective organizations. Dana Mae Padre of Intersex Philippines conducted capacity-building activities on public speaking for Intersex Philippines members and parents of Intersex-born children. Justice Khor, Malaysian film maker, also from People Like Us Hang Out! (PLUHO), produced their musical documentary **Heels to Heal**, celebrating Malaysian queer resilience through the eyes of 3 drag queens with what they do best - heels, makeup, music, and dance. Aivan Alvarez of Wagayway Equality Inc. launched their exhibit, **Colors of Inclusion: Promoting LGBTQIAN+ Human Rights in Batangas Province and Region 4A**. This community-led initiative featured art as a medium for advocacy, and in championing diversity, inclusion, in schools and government offices.

ASC provided support to Non-Binary Thailand in organizing the **Non-Binary Rising**, which was the first non-binary march in Southeast Asia. The project likewise enabled the group to connect with fellow non-binary activists across Southeast Asia, and to consolidate their recommendations for ASEAN.



Participant during the Colors of Inclusion Project led by Wagayway Equality



A public action led by Non-binary Thailand, and activists across Southeast Asia.

The **ASEAN Queer Advocacy Week (AAW)** held in Bali, Indonesia, marked a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts of ASC to advocate for the human rights of LGBTQIA+ individuals in the Southeast Asia region. Originally planned for July 2023, the event was postponed due to a security incident but revived this year with a revised focus on advanced advocacy training in hybrid mode. The primary objective of AAW was to establish a platform for knowledge sharing, strengthen regional advocacy efforts, and implement post-program advocacy initiatives. The event aimed to deepen participants' understanding of recent geopolitical dynamics in ASEAN, foster solidarity among LGBTQIA+ human rights defenders, and equip them with advanced advocacy skills.

Twenty-two (22) queer activists from Indonesia, the Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Myanmar joined AAW, enhancing their advocacy skills through hands-on training sessions and participating in dialogue spaces with various entities, including National Human Rights Institutions, UN Regional Office Southeast Asia, civil society organizations, and donors. They also made commitments to future regional advocacy work.

During the **ASEAN Queer Leadership Week** in Bangkok, Thailand, we gathered 16 queer activists from diverse Southeast Asian backgrounds, working on non-SOGIESC based issues such as environmental justice, labor rights, disability rights, and freedom of speech. In this space we were able to foster relationships and have conversations about each others' advocacies, strengthen queer leadership in traditionally non-queer spaces, and find ways to synergize their efforts. More importantly, we were able to gather commitment in promoting the intersectionality of SOGIESC in their respective advocacies.

Joint Statement of Southeast Asia's LGBTQIAN+ Human Rights Defenders

March 2024

(This was a joint statement drafted by delegates to the ASEAN Queer Advocacy Week held in Indonesia. This statement helped shape ASC's regional advocacy agenda.)

Despite the security incidents and threats we encountered leading up to the planned ASEAN Queer Advocacy Week (AAW) in July 2023, we proudly proceeded with our advocacy week agenda in Indonesia in March 2024, with the participation of 30 human rights defenders.

We—the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual/aromantic, and non-binary (LGBTQIAN+) human rights defenders, who took part in the AAW, representing various local organisations from across Southeast Asia—strongly urge the improvement of the protection and promotion of human rights within the ASEAN. This statement was prepared during the advocacy week program through a series of discussions and dialogues with different stakeholders.

We commend the progressive advancements in the promotion and protection of the rights of LGBTQIAN+ persons in the past few decades. However, Southeast Asia still faces persistent challenges.

The need for stronger policies

Within ASEAN, LGBTQIAN+ persons remain unrecognised by the law. They encounter systematic exclusion and discrimination impacting their access to education, employment, housing, and healthcare. Conservative religious interpretations endorsed by some states also fuel stigmatisation and negative stereotypes.

With the rise of authoritarianism, right-wing populism, and anti-rights movements in the region, LGBTQIAN+ persons—particularly human rights defenders and activists—are often subjected to violence, harassment, and criminalization. In early 2023, Singapore repealed the 377a colonial law which criminalises homosexuality. Myanmar, Malaysia, and Brunei, however, are yet to follow suit.

Despite having regional human rights instruments and mechanisms—such as the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration and its ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights—the ASEAN's principle of consensus continues to hinder the advancement of LGBTQIAN+ rights due to the conservative political views of several ASEAN member states.

Discussions relating to the recognition and protection of LGBTQIAN+ persons often divide ASEAN member states. Furthermore, ASEAN's non-interference principle has prevented it from tackling and addressing the intersectional issues affecting the lives of LGBTQIAN+ persons.

All this has deprived the LGBTQIAN+ community of their fundamental rights and freedoms.

AAW participants have noted the following challenges within Southeast Asia:

Non-inclusive healthcare system

Many non-binary and transgender people in the region have been refused healthcare. Such discriminatory treatment deters health-seeking behaviour within the community. In Malaysia and Brunei, misinformation about persons living with HIV remains prevalent. Although

anonymous HIV testing is available, private data leaks have occurred.

Another problem is the lack of gender-sensitive training for healthcare workers. The absence of legal documentation among stateless LGBTQIAN+ persons has only compounded the problem.

ASEAN member states should provide an inclusive healthcare system for all regardless of a patient's legal documentation status and sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) identity as mandated by Article 29 (1) of the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration, which states that 'every person has the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical, mental and reproductive health, to basic and affordable health-care services, and to have access to medical facilities.'

Anti-rights groups' conversion agenda

Anti-rights movements and conservative groups in the region have been promoting 'conversion therapy' practices to change SOGIESC person's identity. Such practices are normalised under the guise of compassion and religious acceptance.

According to the report of United Nations Independent Expert on SOGIE presented during the 44th Human Rights Council session, 'conversion therapy is used as an umbrella term to describe interventions of a wide-ranging nature, all of which are premised on the belief that a person's sexual orientation and gender identity, including gender expression, can and should be changed or suppressed when they do not fall under what other actors in a given setting and time perceive as the desirable norm, in particular when the person is lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or gender diverse.'

In Thailand, some Buddhist temples try to 'convert' non-binary persons who are assigned male at birth by ordaining them as Buddhist monks. In rural areas, some families force children and youth to undergo exorcism in order to change their SOGIESC.

In Malaysia, state actors alongside conservative non-state actors advocate for 'conversion,' suggesting that LGBTQIAN+ individuals should be treated with civility and compassion in order to facilitate their 'rehabilitation.' Through the use of multilateral state apparatuses—including state policies, national health institutions, and religious authorities—the government has sustained a structural alienation of anyone deemed to be part of the LGBTQIAN+ community. The Malaysian Government has publicly expressed its intention to continue 'conversion practices' through media reports and government documents, including Malaysia's National Strategic Plan for Ending AIDS. To reduce the likelihood of HIV and STI transmission among gay, bisexual, and queer men as well as men who have sex with men, the Malaysian Government provides 'spiritual support and guidance' as led by The Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), Ministry of Health, and islam based non-government organisations

(NGOs). This approach discourages people from 'engaging in unnatural sexual practices.'

ASEAN member states should ban conversion therapy and related practices. ASEAN must establish regional standards outlining forbidden practices, accompanied by suitable legal or administrative policies, guaranteeing that public funds are not utilized, either directly or indirectly, to endorse such practices..

ASEAN should learn from the efforts done by the Vietnam Ministry of Health, which banned conversion practices by issuing Official Dispatch No.: 4132/BYT-PC, August 3, 2022.

Compulsory military service

The Myanmar terrorist junta has recently declared its intent to force women ages 18 to 27 and men ages 18-35 to serve in the military. Apart from the forced conscription, some LGBTQIAN+ individuals have reportedly been coerced into military service as a means of 'conversion.' As a result, they report experiencing severe depression and suicidal thoughts, particularly among transgender and non-binary youth.

In Singapore, all persons assigned male at birth are mandated to undergo National Service. While the service itself does not explicitly promote masculine traits, societal expectations perpetuate traits like masculinity, misogyny, and transphobia. There is a misconception that undergoing service could help promote masculinity. Although transgender men who have legally changed their gender can enlist in the service, gender-based discrimination still persists. For example, an enlisted transgender man was required to live in the male barracks and use common showerrooms, with the Singapore Armed Forces not assuming liability for any potential abuse or sexual assault.

In Thailand, all persons who are assigned male at birth are required to serve in the military once they turn 21. This law forces transgender women and non-binary persons to take part in compulsory military service.

States should abolish mandatory military service.

Shrinking civic space

The restriction of civic space is expanding across the region, impacting the LGBTQIAN+ community.

In Indonesia, many LGBTQIAN+ organisations are unable to legally register as an NGO at the Ministry Law and Human Rights under the pretext of failing to adhere to Pancasila, the country's five basic principles.

In Vietnam, repressive laws—such as tax laws—are used to silence activists and dissolve NGOs.

In Thailand, the royal defamation (*lese majesté*) law has been used to suppress and criminalise LGBTQIAN+ activists advocating for monarchy reforms.

In the Philippines, the Anti-Terrorism Act grants state security agencies the power to surveil and red-tag individuals and groups as 'terrorists' without proper legal procedures, resulting in the targeting of queer rights groups and various youth organisations under the guise of combating communist insurgencies.

Following the attempted coup in Myanmar, civic space has all but disappeared. The terrorist junta enacted the Organization Registration Law in October 2022 to tightly control civil society organisations (CSOs), including LGBTQIAN+ groups.

Absence of legal protection and recognition

In Southeast Asia, there are no regional standards for the legal protection and recognition of LGBTQIAN+ persons. Despite efforts in countries like the Philippines to push

for a national anti-discrimination law safeguarding the rights of LGBTQIAN+ persons, some legislators are employing tactics to delay the passage of such progressive legislation.

In Vietnam, the proposed Gender Affirmation law determines gender based on medical intervention rather than self-determination. It requires transgender persons to undergo medical intervention—either surgery or hormone therapy—before changing their legal gender.

In Thailand, the Gender Equality Act does not encompass protection for non-binary and gender-diverse individuals. Meanwhile, the Transgender Recognition Bill excludes non-binary and intersex persons. Thailand is also working on a Marriage Equality Bill. If approved, this would be the first in the region and the third in the whole of Asia, following equivalent advancements in Taiwan and Nepal.

While Brunei has stated that Sharia law would only be enforced with a high burden of proof, allowing only the most compelling cases to proceed, the very existence of such laws can still legitimise the oppression of the LGBTQIAN+ community. This can manifest through microaggressions in the form of malicious efforts of luring individuals as part of the community.

In Brunei and Malaysia—where a dual legal system incorporating Sharia law and British colonial laws is in place—LGBTQIAN+ persons are criminalised for cross-dressing and same-sex relationships.

Indonesia's recently enacted Criminal Code includes discriminatory provisions and grants law enforcement expanded powers to introduce discriminatory bylaws at the local level.

Calls to Action

1. ASEAN and its member states should acknowledge the human rights of LGBTQIAN+ persons within the ASEAN framework. This can be done by incorporating a commitment to combat SOGIESC-based discrimination, abuse, and violence into the Terms of Reference of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), enabling the AICHR to effectively address the promotion and protection of LGBTQIAN+ rights.
2. UN agencies and the OHCHR regional office should conduct regular consultations with LGBTQIAN+ CSOs in the region as well as with the office of the UN Independent Expert on SOGIE to discuss the challenges faced by LGBTQIAN+ rights defenders.
3. National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in the region alongside the AICHR should engage in regional collaboration to tackle human rights issues affecting LGBTQIAN+ persons. Countries without established NHRIs should also be involved. There is a need to establish joint partnerships and synergies to advance LGBTQIAN+ rights.
4. Donors should allocate more emergency funding to support LGBTQIAN+ activists during crises. Likewise, they should increase support for unregistered LGBTQIAN+ organisations.
5. CSOs should maintain solidarity and support by mainstreaming and integrating SOGIESC issues into their respective works.

These calls to action are only the first of the many steps that are needed to establish a truly inclusive ASEAN. Together, we will continue to advocate for regional solidarity among all stakeholders. We deserve to live in a region that fully recognises, respects, protects, and promotes the rights of the LGBTQIAN+ community.



21-25 October
Bangkok, Thailand

Asean Queer Leadership Week **AQLW 2024**

Mainstreaming **SOGIESC rights** in broader civil society



*Building the leadership capabilities of queer activists
that working on various fields of social advocacy*



@aseansogiecaucus



@aseansogie



ASEAN SOGIE Caucus

ASEAN Queer Leadership Week marked its fourth year since it was initialized in 2018.

Through the years, ASC has focused its support toward small, unregistered, and community-based LGBTQIAN+ groups at the frontlines of advocacy. Now in the face of dwindling foreign aid in support of LGBTQIAN+ initiatives in the region, ASC remains committed to resourcing those most impacted and most active on the ground, finding creative and sustainable ways to keep the movement alive and thriving. It is when local organizations are empowered and equipped to sustain and strengthen their vital work in advancing human rights in our region that we can envision a truly regional LGBTQIAN+ movement

"ASC has offered a rare and radiant space where queer Southeast Asians like myself could breathe, learn, and truly be seen and affirmed. Through ASEAN Queer Leadership Week, I found not only tools and language for my activism, but also kinship, people who hold the same fire for justice, self-expression, and collective liberation. The learnings I gained, especially on intersectionality, deep listening, and healing justice, deeply informed my research for Women in Peace Processes with the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, helping me frame queer perspectives within broader conversations on peace and inclusion through intersectionality. It reminded me that we're not alone in this region, even when the walls feels suffocating. My wish for ASC is that it continues to bloom, just as Bloom has reached out to us; that ASC keeps uplifting grassroots voices, holding brave and difficult conversations, and building the kind of queer futures we all deserve."

Zamrud, LGBTQIA+ leader from Brunei Darussalam and participant during the ASEAN Queer Leadership Week 2024.



"Working with ASC has taught me so much and opened my eyes to the world of diversity. ASC has given me a platform to pursue my passion for writing and creating artwork. Above all, ASC has helped me realize that I have a community that supports me. This gives me so much hope that we can move forward to build a more inclusive future in solidarity for our Southeast Asia region."

Preatwan Talunkul, LGBTQIA+ advocate from Thailand, and Communications Intern for ASC

As an LGBTQIA+ activist in Cambodia, I could connect and get to know with other LGBTQIA+ peers and activists around the Asia region. ASC is like a link or a bridge that leads me to another world that I've never been to. As a "Non-binary Queer Fairy" content creator, ASC helps to push my voice and my creative video contents to wider audiences. These are the reasons how ASC impacted me personally.

Sokcheat Seng, LGBTQIA+ advocate from Cambodia, and Communications Intern for ASC



QUEERING ASEAN CIVIL SOCIETY

ASC continued to work within and beyond queer movements, co-organizing workshops or learning sessions, and shaping a regional civil society agenda with various human rights, women's rights, child rights, climate justice, and disability justice groups, among others.

The Philippine network of the **Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures (FIFF)** conducted its culminating workshop in Quezon City, Philippines. This program have impacts on multiple levels—from personal, organizational, and the community. This initiative was able to produce and launch the research, **Dakbalangay: Building a Community of Care for Filipino Human Rights Workers**.¹

1 ASEAN SOGIE Caucus. (May 2024). *Dakbalangay: Building a Community of Care for Filipino Human Rights Workers*. Retrieved from https://issuu.com/fiffphilippines/docs/dakbalangay_-_a_research_on_collective_care



Culmination convening of the Forging Intersectional Feminist Futures (FIFF) project

The **Rainbow Inclusive Philippine Civil Society** was an initiative that started in 2024, which aims to foster intersectional movement praxis to advance LGBTQIA+ human rights in the Philippines. Through this initiative, we were able to conduct a baseline study and mapping of the extent of SOGIESC Mainstreaming among non-LGBTQIA+ focused organizations in the Philippines, which is expected to be published in 2025.

Meaningful allyship, sustained through genuine support for each other's work, remained to be key to truly mainstreaming LGBTQIAN+ human rights and raising awareness of SOGIESC issues within civil society and across broader human rights and social justice movements. This is why ASC continued to engaging in and influencing cross movement spaces to ensure that LGBTQIAN+ issues are articulated within the discourses of human rights, feminism, and sustainable development.

ASC is one of the founding members of the cross-movement regional network **Freedom of Association in Taiwan and Southeast Asia (FATASEA)**, which advances the issue of freedom of association in Taiwan and Southeast Asia. The overall intention of the network is to generate good practices and share capacities among Taiwanese and Southeast Asian civil society organizations in defending freedom of association. This network is being convened by Asia Citizen Future Association (ACFA), a Taiwan based organization.

As an active member of FATASEA, we wrote a chapter on the report titled **Shrinking Civic Space in Southeast Asia and the Current Status of the Freedom of Right to Association in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines**². This chapter highlights the political and legal challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ organizations in the region, including difficulties on legal registration, and threats to operations.

ASC also served as a member of the Advisory Committee of the **Indo-Pacific Center of Promoting Civil Society Resilience (IndoPac)**. IndoPac is a regional program that is managed by Freedom House focusing on incubating and supporting initiatives of civil society organizations to address disinformation, threats to freedom of expression, digital security, among other thematic issues on democracy. The program operated from Taiwan but covers several countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, Fiji, India, Pakistan, among others. In August 2024, ASC led one of the discussion groups on disinformation and threats to freedom of association in online spaces at the **Community of Practice (CoP) In-Person Convening**.

2 Silverio, R., & Nelmidia, M. T. (2024). *Freedom of association and the specific context of LGBTQIA+ activism in Southeast Asia (Chapter 5)*. In L. Lin, D. Yang, & L. Huang (Eds.), *Shrinking civic space in Southeast Asia and the current status of the freedom of right to association in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines* (pp. 76-84). Asia Citizen Future Association (ACFA). Retrieved from <https://www.acfa.tw/publication/>

Critical outcomes on the discussions on disinformation and threats to freedom of association in online spaces:

- **Recognition of Disinformation as a Major Threat:** Participants acknowledged that disinformation, particularly from state actors like China and Russia, poses significant risks not only to public health but also to democratic processes and civil liberties. The spread of false information can undermine trust in institutions and hinder effective public discourse
- **Impact on Freedom of Association:** The conversation emphasized how disinformation campaigns can directly threaten the freedom of association by creating an environment of fear and mistrust. This can deter individuals from engaging in collective actions or forming groups that advocate for social or political change
- **Need for Collaborative Responses:** There was a strong call for collaborative efforts among governments, civil society, and tech platforms to combat disinformation. Participants discussed the importance of creating frameworks that promote transparency and accountability in online spaces, ensuring that users can engage safely without fear of manipulation or harassment
- **Empowerment through Education:** The convening underscored the necessity of educating communities about digital literacy. By equipping individuals with the skills to critically assess information sources, they can better protect themselves against disinformation tactics that aim to silence dissent and undermine collective action
- **Policy Recommendations:** The discussions led to several policy recommendations aimed at strengthening protections for freedom of association in digital environments. This includes advocating for stronger regulations on social media platforms to limit the spread of harmful disinformation while balancing the need for free expression

These outcomes reflect a growing recognition of the intertwined nature of disinformation and civil liberties, highlighting the urgent need for proactive measures in addressing these challenges in online spaces.

In Southeast Asia, complex emergencies often arise from the intersection of natural disasters, armed conflict, political instability, displacement, and socio-economic inequalities. These emergencies, such as climate-change induced disasters in the Philippines, or armed conflict and displacement in Myanmar, created layered vulnerabilities, particularly for already marginalized groups like LGBTQIAN+ communities. Queer-led groups in the region have shown that meaningful, community-centered approaches are essential to ensure no one is left behind.



Regional learning session on the Intersection of Climate Justice, SOGIESC, and Youth

Building on the dialogues initiated by the exploratory report and webinar in 2023, ASC, in collaboration with Youth Voices Count, and Sida, facilitated a **regional learning session on the Intersection of Climate Justice, SOGIESC, and Youth** in Quezon City, Philippines. This session aimed to promote cross-learning between youth and LGBTQIA+ communities by emphasizing the intersectional impact of climate change on the human rights of LGBTQIA+ persons, and encouraging discussions on integrated and intersectional approaches within climate justice, encompassing the perspectives of LGBTQIA+ children, youth, and indigenous communities.

The heightened vulnerability of queer communities in the region serves as a strong impetus for advocacy towards LGBTQIAN+ inclusion in humanitarian action. Queer communities are often already marginalized and made invisible in times of crisis, and without intentional inclusion, their specific needs and safety are overlooked in disaster response, displacement, and recovery efforts. To this end, ASC persisted in its engagement in humanitarian advocacy and responses over the past years. In 2024, ASC engaged several regional platforms to raise concerns on the impact of climate change, and humanitarian crises towards LGBTQIA+ persons.

Towards a Feminist and Queer Humanitarian Agenda

ASC engaged in different platforms to ensure that feminist and queer perspectives factor in the design and imagination of humanitarian systems. Here are some points we intend to echo while we collaboratively advocacy for a SOGIESC-inclusive humanitarian agenda:

- a) The need for evidence-based disaggregated data, both quantitative and qualitative, during crisis/disaster for an effective policy formulation, programming, monitoring and evaluation;
- b) Ensure/Lobby the full and meaningful inclusion, participation, and leadership of women, those with diverse gender identity, marginalized groups, and communities in decision-making forums/bodies/mechanisms;
- c) The need for more effective policies and mechanisms to prevent and respond to GBV with a sustained referral mechanism and resources;
- d) The need for development partners, donors, and UN agencies to implement a more sustainable and responsive humanitarian policy intervention,
- e) Ensure transparency and accountability by using international humanitarian laws, principles, and mechanisms to sanction the weaponization of humanitarian aid and open humanitarian corridors to ensure delivery of aid through CSOs/ NGOs, and
- f) The need for a framework to redefine humanitarian action using feminist lens.



ASC sharing views on how to make humanitarian systems SOGIESC inclusive

At the **ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People's Forum (ACSC/APF)** held in Dili, ASC played a crucial role in pushing for addressing LGBTQIAN+ issues within the broader context of democracy and human rights in Southeast Asia. During the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) meetings held back-to-back with the forum, ASC emphasized the importance of integrating SOGIESC concerns into discussions on democratic governance and civil liberties. By collaborating with various civil society organizations, ASC aimed to highlight the unique challenges faced by LGBTQIAN+ communities in the region, including discrimination and violence, while advocating for inclusive policies that uphold human rights for all.

QUEERING NARRATIVES

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN ADVANCING LGBTQIAN+ RIGHTS

Activism is a force that transcends borders, language, and fear. In ASEAN where histories of queer resistance meet ongoing struggles for freedom, art becomes a lifeline for truth-telling, healing, and collective action. For queer communities and other marginalized voices, activism is not just expression; it is survival, visibility, and a radical tool for change. This is why ASC commits to activism as a vital part of our storytelling and narrative change work. In a region where dominant narratives often silence and erase queer lives, we believe that creative expression can challenge injustice, reclaim space, and spark deep shifts in how communities see themselves and are seen.

The **ASEAN Queer Imaginings (AQI) Vol. 2**, which was initially published in the latter part of 2023, was translated into both Khmer and Thai. The translated versions were launched in Bangkok, Thailand, and in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The ASEAN Queer Imaginings remains one of ASC's flagship publications, providing a space and a platform for LGBTQIA+ advocates to exercise thought leadership.



Launch of the ASEAN Queer Imaginings in Bangkok, Thailand.





Launching of the ASEAN Queer Imaginings in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.



Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival (SEACQF) 2.0



Publicity announcement of the Southeast Asian Queer Cultural Festival (SEAQCF)

The second edition of the Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival (SEAQCF), one of the flagship programs of ASC, kicked-off in 2024. This edition dubbed as SEAQCF 2.0 embraced the theme “**ImagiNATIONS**” to reimagine borders, shared experiences, and solidarity among queer individuals and communities across the region. Once again, ASC provided the space for more than a hundred queer artists and cultural workers to collaborate and showcase their art, and work alongside us in shaping an inclusive narrative within ASEAN. The SEAQCF 2.0 entailed both off-line events that took place in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam, as well as on-line events. Most of the artworks were made accessible through the dedicated website - <https://exhibition.seaqcf.net>.

SEAQCF as a space for collaborative activism

Since its inception in 2021, the two iterations of the SEAQCF have provided the opportunity, and the space for more than 300 LGBTQIAN+ artists and cultural activists. This collaborative space resulted in the production of nearly 100 artworks of diverse media - short films, literary works, visual arts, and performances. Aside from being a festival, SEAQCF sought to widen the space for freedom of expression for artists and cultural workers who face LGBTQIAN+ censorship within their own countries.



The SEAQCF 2.0 kicked-off with a community arts space in Dili, Timor Leste during the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples Forum.



Community arts gathering took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.

Selected Featured Works during the SEAQCF 2.0



Digital artwork titled, "Oh, For the Love of Women!"

"Oh, For The Love Of Women!" is a digital artwork that pays homage to queer love and the fight for rights and freedom in Singapore, where LGBTQ+ issues remain discriminated against in public discourses. Blending lesbian iconography with historical motifs and Sappho's poetry, it honors past struggles while imagining a future where love can be expressed openly and proudly. The artwork was produced by Kerru who is a multidisciplinary artist who identifies as deaf, queer and Asian creating works that navigate complex socio-political concepts alongside deeply personal explorations of the self.



One of the self-portraits in the series titled “be:longing”

“be:longing” is a self-portrait series by a Vietnamese trans-femme nonbinary artist Dan Ni, exploring rest, comfort, and the desexualization of queer bodies in unconventional spaces. Inspired by impressionist nudes, the work critiques the hypersexualization of queer bodies in art and media, offering a vision of gender at rest and bodies simply existing.

STRENGTHEN ENGAGEMENT WITH REGIONAL AND GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

All across Asia, the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association (FoAA), and expression (FoE) continued to erode, reflecting a broader trend of shrinking civic space. One of the most alarming developments has been the misuse of anti-terrorism laws to suppress dissent and target civil society. These laws have been used to unjustly label activists and organizations as “terrorists,” effectively criminalizing legitimate human rights work.

Moreover, criminal laws against LGBTQIAN+ identities which are aggravated by continuous social stigma, have resulted in censorship of LGBTQIAN+ information, restricted pride related events, and prohibited queer-led organizations from obtaining legal registrations.

In 2024 laws banning LGBTQIAN+ representation in traditional and digital media remained in force, such as in Malaysia and Indonesia. In Myanmar, the military junta actively suppressed queer voices. These state actions have escalated online censorship and harassment targeted at LGBTQIAN+ communities, curtailing press freedom and queer representation. While Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines continue to make important strides toward acceptance and legal protections, conservative governments in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and the military junta in Myanmar, are intensifying repression, trapping many queer individuals and communities in fear and silence.

In this backdrop, ASC continued to engage multilateral platforms to raise issues, and

advocate for better policies and programs for LGBTQIA+ persons. **Engagements with UN Special Procedures** were done by submitting communications, responding to calls for submissions for thematic reports, and direct meetings with mandate holders. **Engagements with the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC)** were done by raising concerns at the Working Group on Diplomacy, and by participating in the ERC conference. **Engagement with the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** during its 68th session enabled ASC to collaborate and mobilize LGBTQIA+ and feminist organizations in issuing a Joint Statement, which highlighted several factors that contribute to the disproportionate economic and social marginalization experienced by LBTIQ women. **Engagement with the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights** was done in collaboration with Transmen Indonesia and led to the committee to ask a question to the Indonesian government about the state-sponsored SOGIESC change efforts in the country.

ASC likewise became involved in the process of reviewing the Merida Declaration³ which is a key document signed by civil society and representatives of the Spanish government. The Merida Declaration lays down commitments to advance LGBTQIA+ rights through political dialogues, multilateralism, and international development cooperation. At present, Spain has yet to enhance its support for LGBTQIA+ rights in Southeast Asia.

3 Fundación Triángulo & Agencia Extremeña de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo. (2024). *La Declaración de Mérida: así se consiguió el compromiso de las administraciones públicas españolas con los derechos LGBTI*. Cooperación Extremadura. Retrieved from <https://cooperacionextremadura.es/la-declaracion-de-merida-asi-se-consiguio-el-compromiso-de-las-administraciones-publicas-espanolas-con-los-derechos-lgbti/>



Asia Regional Consultation **UN Human Rights Mechanism**

*on the Rights to Freedom of Peaceful
Assembly and of Association*

by **FORUM-ASIA**

**ASC Steering
committee member
Yuli Rustinawati**
met with

Prof. Surya Deva
the Un Special Rapporteur



Ms. Gina Remero
the Un Special Rapporteur



@aseansogiecaucus



@aseansogie



ASEAN SOGIE Caucus

ASC Steering Committee member, Yuli Rustinawati, meeting UN Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Development, and on the Rights to Peaceful Assembly and of Association.



ASC Executive Director giving a presentation during the *Declaracion De Merida: Derechos Humanos, Diversidad Sexual y De Genero En El Mundo*, a forum attended by Spanish civil society and government representatives.

THE YEAR 2024 IN FIGURES

18

ONLINE AND IN-PERSON
CONVENINGS

that served as spaces for
collaboration, dialogues,
and cross-learning among
LGBTQIAN+ activists

16

REGIONAL FORUMS
ATTENDED,

advocating for the
inclusion of SOGIESC
in regional human
rights and
development
frameworks

680

INDIVIDUALS
FROM THE
11 SOUTHEAST
ASIAN COUNTRIES

that we have
reached through our
local and regional
online and in-person
convenings, learning
sessions, and
workshops.

5

PUBLICATIONS

produced

27

LOCAL INITIATIVES OF
LGBTQIAN+
ORGANIZATIONS
SUPPORTED.

These include those
supported through,
ASEAN Queer Learning
Program and also includes
other forms of technical
support extended to local
LGBTQIAN+
organizations.

138.3 K

FACEBOOK AUDIENCE

Reach

251 K

INSTAGRAM

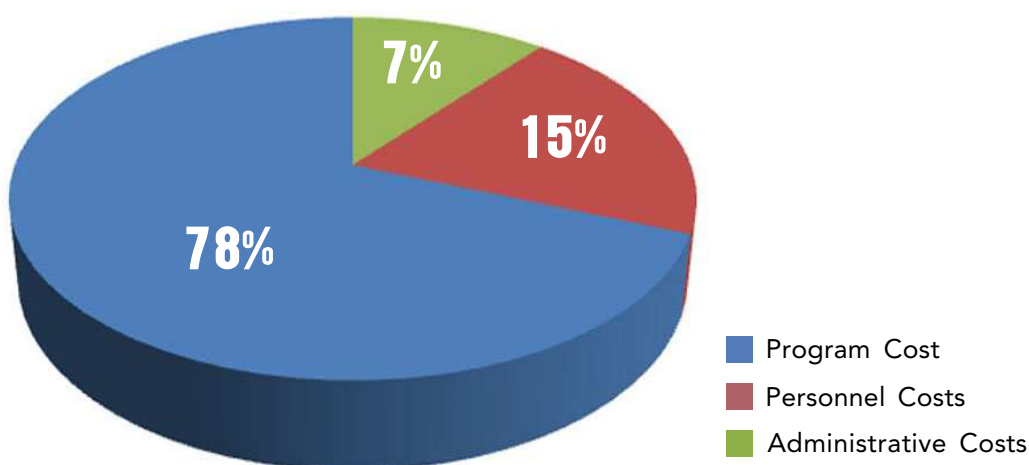
Reach

FINANCIAL REPORT

Receipts in PHP	2024
Grant	28,419,217
Donation	120,555
Interest	106,758
Total	28,646,530

Expenses in PHP	2024
Program Costs	24,263,785
Personnel Costs	4,564,711
Administrative Costs	2,129,314
Foreign Exchange Loss	1,985
Total	30,959,796

TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR 2024



OUR TEAM

BOARD OF TRUSTEES (2023 TO 2026)

Ging Cristobal, CHAIRPERSON
Srun Sorn, VICE CHAIRPERSON
Maria Nica Dumlao, SECRETARY
Ronald Emmanuel De Vera, TREASURER
King Oey, MEMBER

REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE (2023 TO 2026)

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Hla Myat Tun, MYANMAR
Vien Tanjung, INDONESIA
Thilaga Sulathireh, MALAYSIA
Yuli Rustinawati, INDONESIA

A. SECRETARIAT

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Lini Zurlia, ADVOCACY MANAGER
Riska Carolina, ADVOCACY OFFICER
Donna Nuñez, PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
Ham Pidor, COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER
Jenny Roa, FINANCE OFFICER
Juliet De Guzman, ADMINISTRATIVE
OFFICER
Carolina Advincula, FINANCE ASSISTANT
Genica Bucao, PROJECT OFFICER -
FORGING FEMINIST INTERSECTIONAL
FUTURES
Mario Pratama, PROJECT COORDINATOR-
FEMINIST PARTICIPATORY ACTION
RESEARCH
Sidhi Visatya, SEAQCF FESTIVAL
COORDINATOR
Nanitsara Kam, SEAQCF FESTIVAL
ASSISTANT
Bloom Siri wattakanon, COORDINATOR -
ASEAN QUEER LEADERSHIP WEEK
Edelmiro Solis, COORDINATOR - ASEAN
QUEER LEARNING PROGRAM
Preatawan Talunkul, COMMUNICATIONS
INTERNS
Sokcheat Seng, COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

B. ASC MEMBERS

ASC is a membership organization composed of individual human rights defenders as well as LGBTQI+ focused organizations. Our organizational members are:

- Arus Pelangi
- Arcolris Timor-Leste
- CamASEAN Youth's Future
- Colors Rainbow
- Iloilo Pride Team
- Indonesia for Humans
- Institute for the Study of Society, Economy and Environment (ISEE)
- Justice for Sisters
- Micro Rainbow International
- Outright Action International
- Sayoni
- Seksualiti Merdeka
- Togetherness for Equality and Action (TEA) Group

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AICHR Indonesia | AICHR Malaysia |
AICHR Thailand | AICHR Philippines

ALTSEAN Burma

APCOM Foundation

Arcolris Timor-Leste

ASEAN Civil Society Conference/
ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF)
2023

Asia Citizen Future Association (ACFA)

Asia-Pacific Resource & Research
Centre for Women-ARROW

Asia Democracy Network

Asian Network of A-Spec Queer
Activists (ANOQA)

Asia Pacific Transgender Network

ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF)

ASEAN Youth Conference on
Violence (YVC)

B-Dev

Cangkang Queer

Commission on Human Rights of
the Philippines

COC Netherlands

Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade Australia

Edge Effect

Embassies of Mexico in Indonesia,
and in the Philippines

Embassies of Germany in Indonesia,
and in the Philippines

Equal Asia Foundation

Equality Australia

FORUM ASIA

Free To Be Me (FTBM)

Freedom House

GALANG Philippines

Global Philanthropy Project

Independent Expert on protection against
violence and discrimination based on sexual
orientation and gender identity (SOGI)

ILGA Asia

ILGA World

Innovation for Change East Asia
Hub (I4C-EA)

Institut Francais du Cambodge

Intersex Asia

Intersex Philippines

IWRAW Asia Pacific

Jaringan Transgender Indonesia (JTID)

Legal Dignity

Metro Manila Pride

Movement for Alternatives and
 Solidarity in Southeast Asia (MASSA)
 MUJER LGBT Organization
 Nationwide Organization of Visually-
 IMpaired Empowered Ladies
 (NOVEL)
 New Naratif
 Non-Binary Thailand
 Office of the High Commissioner for
 Human Rights (UN Human Rights),
 Regional Office for Southeast Asia
 OutRight Action International
 Panggung Minoritas
 PanACEa / Asexuality Asia
 Permanent Mission of Canada to ASEAN
 Permanent Mission of the
 United States to ASEAN
 Philippine LGBT Chamber
 of Commerce
 Plan International Asia Pacific Region
 Pride PH
 Queer Indonesia Archive
 Rainbow Alliance
 Rainbow Six
 ROJALI
 San Julian Pride
 SHAPE-SEA
 Side B Philippines
 STRAP
 SUHAKAM

Susuri Pelangi Podcast
 Swedish International Development
 Agency (SIDA)
 TERPCAP
 UniGEN
 UN Women
 UPCIDS Alternative
 Development Program
 Urgent Action Fund for Women -
 Asia Pacific
 Visayas LGBTQ Network
 Women and Gender Institute,
 Miriam College
 Women's Legal and
 Human Rights Bureau
 Youth for YOUTH
 Youth Voices Count

**We thank the following partners for
 their continuous trust and confidence
 towards ASC:**

APCASO Foundation
 East West Management Institute
 GiveOut
 National Democratic Institute
 Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay,
 Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and
 Intersex Rights (RFSL)
 Terre Solidaire - CCFD
 Thousand Currents
 Women Fund Asia

SUPPORT OUR WORK



SUPPORT QUEER ADVOCACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Your donation will go a long way in supporting our mission. Together, let's strengthen LGBTIQ activism in Southeast Asia.



Contact Us

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus

E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, Quezon City, Metro Manila, Philippines

EMAIL info@aseansogiecaucus.org

WEBSITE www.aseansogiecaucus.org

FACEBOOK facebook.com/aseansogie

TWITTER [@aseansogie](https://twitter.com/aseansogie)

INSTAGRAM [@aseansogiecaucus](https://instagram.com/aseansogiecaucus)

YOUTUBE bit.ly/ASEANSOGIECaucusYoutube

