ASEAN SOGIE CAUCUS
ANNUAL REPORT 2020
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 actions that promote and protect the rights of LGBTIQ, non-binary and gender-diverse persons.

• Domestic laws, policies, and programs in Southeast Asian countries include the protection and promotion of the rights of LGBTIQ, non-binary and gender-diverse persons.

• LGBTIQ, non-binary and gender-diverse civil society are empowered to engage state and non-state actors to adhere to human rights standards.
History of ASC

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC) is a network of human rights activists from Southeast Asia that works for the inclusion of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) into 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 LGBTIQ voices in ASEAN civil society spaces, especially the annual ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN People’s Forum (ACSC/APF). Since 2010, our founders ensured that LGBTIQ 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 LGBTIQ 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 and eventually gained legal registration as a non-stock, non-profit organization the following year. Since then, we have pushed for LGBTIQ human rights through engagements in civil society platforms and human rights mechanisms; supported local LGBTIQ activists through mentorship, technical assistance, and relationship-building; and reimagined activism as a creative process anchored on a vision of South-South solidarity.
Foreword

2020 is perhaps the most challenging year for people worldwide and COVID-19 has brought about extreme changes across the globe, amplifying the challenges that LGBTIQ persons faced in ASEAN. It has forced many of us to adapt and adopt new strategies to survive the isolation and discrimination that is unique and specific to our communities. Instead of bowing down to the immense problems created by the pandemic, many LGBTIQ groups with the support from the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, reacted quickly to address the ordeals faced. After all, surviving in defiance against all odds has always been the core strength of our queer communities and as Southeast Asians who have often had to face institutionalized discrimination from authoritarian governments in the region.

This year’s report demonstrates the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus’ impact from the local to the regional and how a centralized network supporting Southeast Asian LGBTIQ groups doing important work is so essential in propelling the movement forward. In many of our programs, we strived for quality and depth over quantity and being uncritical. The aspirations and actions peppered throughout the report set in motion will be a corner stone for the human rights of LGBTIQ persons in the region and influence generations to come.

However, LGBTIQ rights remains underfunded and uneven in Southeast Asia on so many levels; where many funders often do not understand the diversity of the region and pay scant attention to it. In spite of these issues, we will continue to disrupt the status quo and continue to queer what Asian LGBTIQ activism looks like in the region.

At the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, we are very proud of what we have achieved over the year despite the upheavals of political and pandemic uncertainties. Together with our partners and LGBTIQ communities, we look forward to building a post pandemic future that is dynamic, resilient and feminist.

Jean Chong, Chairperson, Board of Trustees
RAINBOW REACH OUT
Responding to the Needs of LGBTIQ Organizations Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic

ASC witnessed and responded to new challenges in 2020: the Taal volcanic eruption in the Philippines, which cancelled two back-to-back regional workshops; and a protracted global pandemic, which continues to test our abilities and creativity. For several months, ASC’s office was shut down due to quarantine restrictions in the Philippines, and our operations slowed as we confronted a steep learning curve in adjusting to mostly online and remote work. Several face-to-face convenings were cancelled and had to be redesigned into on-line activities. We were fortunate to have the resources and capabilities to adjust to this so-called “new normal”.

ASC is mindful of the serious impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our fellow LGBTIQ organizations in the region. In April, we conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment to understand the impact of the pandemic on LGBTIQ groups, where we reached out to leaders from fifteen (15) organizations from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Our research found that the pandemic resulted in programmatic and priority shifts as groups needed to urgently address the emergent needs of their communities. Groups faced the cancellation, re-scheduling, and redesign of many activities, which had detrimental effects on their resources. Economic crises due to lost jobs or reduced income of members or volunteers threatened their organizational capacities. Also found were the many personal and relational challenges faced by activists, from being forced to stay at home with hostile family members to the health impacts of the stress induced by the uncertainties of the pandemic. These findings called for both short-term emergency care and long-term support for resiliency for local groups.

We responded with both targeted advocacy and resource-mobilizing geared towards addressing the survival and sustainability of LGBTIQ organizations in Southeast Asia. Together with sixty (60) organizations, we issued a joint statement urging donors and key stakeholders to allocate resources to support the sustainability and the resilience of LGBTIQ groups in the time of pandemic. ¹ We shared information with the UN

Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IESOGI) for their report to the UN General Assembly on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the human rights of LGBT persons, in which ASC was substantively cited. 2 We wrote opinion pieces on the impact of the pandemic towards LGBTIQ organizations, such as that published by SHAPE-SEA. 3 We ensured that the concerns of LGBTIQ organizations were raised in at least six (6) civil society convenings on the impact of the pandemic on human rights. For example, ASC’s Program Manager Yen Nguyen shared our findings during FORUM-Asia’s webinar titled “A Feminist Assessment of the ASEAN Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic”. 4

Responding directly to the global health crisis, ASC initiated the Rainbow Reach Out (RRO) program to provide short-term and emergency grants for grassroots LGBTIQ organizations in Southeast Asia. The program enabled local groups to undertake humanitarian work such as providing cash aids and distributing dignity or relief packs, providing mental health and well-being support for LGBTIQ persons in distress, and supporting organizational development and sustainability measures. The RRO supported eleven (11) local organizations from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam, and reached around one thousand two hundred and forty (1,240) individuals.

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2020 really challenged us. We all lost our opportunities, daily income, and hope to survive… We had to innovate all of the activities in a systematic way with the virtual approach. But we could reach out to the ground and support communities with food supplies. We could listen to the struggles of LGBTIQ people under this outbreak. We definitely need to keep sustaining the support of our movement. We must have more supportive leaders in all provinces to keep helping each other.

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus is really supportive, helpful, equal, understandable, authentic and practical for all of us. ASC always recognizes us and listens to our needs patiently. We feel so great to keep running our activism.

Rainbow Alliance, Myanmar
We are from ESBISQUET. We are happy that we have been embraced by ASC. We were very happy where we needed a proper gathering space for us and ASC was able to provide that support. Not only that, even when we needed additional community management, we were also supported by ASC to conduct capacity building training. Since then, ESBISQUET started to slowly become independent. We started networking with several non-binary organizations and human rights groups. We didn’t know at that time if we had a safe and proper shared space for our learning about SOGIESC. We didn’t expect that we could go this far to defend the rights of LBTQ people in Central Kalimantan Province.

Thank you very much ASC. All the support and solidarity that you give means a lot to us. We hope that ASC can continue to grow great, to continue to support other LGBTIQ communities in various regions and countries. Keep up the spirit for all of you; we love you.

Adham Al Ghofur, ESBISQUET, Indonesia
ASC is helping us not only supporting what is important during this crisis time in Myanmar but also connecting with other opportunities for the sustainability of Rainbow Six in Myanmar...We truly appreciate that ASC is always communicating with us to know the updated situation, and supporting us in terms of emergency funds and networking with other grant partners so that we can move forward for working LGBT people in Myanmar.

Jel Li, Rainbow Six, Myanmar
SOUTH-SOUTH SOLIDARITY
Creating spaces for cross-border LGBTIQ advocacies

Queering ASEAN entails a continuous process of creating spaces for LGBTIQ activists, especially at the grassroots level, to take advocacy actions, be it influencing domestic policies on human rights, seeking redress for human rights violations, or changing minds and hearts through public campaigns. As a regional organization, we recognize that its leadership role is to facilitate the creation of spaces and weave the political power of local activists into transnational advocacy processes. The closing of physical borders and accompanying travel restrictions did not stop ASC from pushing this process forward.

This year, we implemented our annual leadership program, the ASEAN Queer Leadership eXchange (AQLX). The AQLX served as a space for sharing experiences and learnings among young and budding queer activists. This year’s program engaged fourteen (14) activists from Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Cambodia, Malaysia, and the Philippines. ASC’s program ran for one month with sessions on regionalism, leadership in a time of complex crisis, and on advocacy, and tapped on the leadership insights of academics and fellow civil society actors such as Equal Asia Foundation. As shared by one participant:

“For all my previous advocacy work, I have always been very eager but was more of just a follower. I wanted to step up my leadership skills. This session taught me new possibilities that I can achieve.”

But sharing knowledge is not enough to cultivate queer leadership. We believe that we need to concretely enable leaders to apply their learnings in real actions in their respective communities. As an integral part of the AQLX, ASC supported five (5) local initiatives in Indonesia and the Philippines, all spearheaded by the AQLX alumni. This year, the local support linked leadership and COVID-19 response, so project design was mostly geared towards enhancing resilience and survival of local activists.
The Paglaum Mask

ASC supported the PAGLAUM MASK (PROJECT MASK) project initiated by Ogtonganon Mask Stewards from Iloilo Province, Philippines. The project was a collective effort of different LGBTIQ organizations, the Rural Health Unit of Oton and Salngan Livelihood Multi-Purpose Cooperative to help the manughabol (weavers), the LGBTIQ manugtahi (seamstress) whose livelihoods were greatly affected by COVID-19 pandemic, and various stakeholders.

This project produced face masks that represented advocacies for LGBTIQ rights and HIV awareness using the traditional Ilonggo weaving called “hablon”. 400 facemasks were produced and resources generated were provided to 30 weavers of Salngan and 5 LGBTIQ seamstresses in the municipality. Part of the proceeds also went to Ogtonganon Mask Stewards to support future projects. Moreover, the project entailed community education and awareness raising activities such as symposia on LGBTIQ rights and HIV conducted in 5 secondary schools in the Municipality of Oton, Iloilo Province.
ASC amplified the voices of Southeast Asian LGBTIQ activists and allies through a series of on-line content such as video-interviews and podcasts. This year, we produced two (2) videos on the topics “gender equality in ASEAN” and “alternative regionalism” as well as two (2) podcasts series on the themes “Queering Alternative Regionalism” and “Be/Longings”. A total of ten (10) podcast episodes were produced covering topics such as queer literature, queer theatre, queer films, and country-focused narratives in West Papua, Laos, and Malaysia. All are available via ASC’s Youtube channel. 

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The ASEAN region played witness to a growing wave of pro-democracy protests in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar, with LGBTIQ activists taking visible and active roles. We responded and amplified these calls for inclusive and democratic governance, because LGBTIQ human rights will only foster in the context of legitimate democracy. With more than seventy (70) organizations and hundreds of individual activists, ASC led a regional statement titled “Rainbow Solidarity Towards Democracy” to show solidarity to all LGBTIQ activists involved in pro-democracy struggles and to urge governments to heed the people’s calls for human rights, justice, and democracy.  

We also convened an online conversation with queer pro-democracy leaders from Indonesia and Thailand titled “Democracy Talk: Human rights violations and police brutality in Thailand and Indonesia uprising” attended by more than a hundred activists across the ASEAN region.

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PAGLAUM/HOPE Mask was a project funded by the ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC) last 2020. It was an opportunity for the Ogtonganon Mask Stewards (OMS) to transfer paglaum in the community that ASC granted to the organization. We target to help different sectors (Ogtonganon weavers, LGBT seamstress, LGBT Displaced Workers, and PLHIV). The organization is fortunate to receive the grant and promise to continue to create projects that celebrate the LGBTQIA++ Community. ASC is a tunnel that delivers paglaum to the organizations in different ASEAN Regions. Padayon lang!

Wyn Custodio Gallo, Paglaum Mask, and Ogtonganon Mask Stewards, Philippines
Preparations for the Southeast Asia Queer Cultural Festival (SEAQCF), scheduled to take place in February to March 2021, were also in full-swing. In collaboration with our partners CamASEAN, Hanoi Queer, Iloilo Pride Team, Micro Rainbow International, MUJER LGBT Organization, and Panggung Minoritas, we’ve begun developing cultural materials reflecting queer narratives across the region. We also solidified our partnerships with more than forty (40) LGBTIQ artists and cultural workers to create artistic and cultural materials for the festival.
Queering ASEAN Civil Society

ASC continues to reimagine ASEAN not just as an intergovernmental institution but as a region with a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive civil society working across borders, manifesting solidarity among local and grassroots actors. While the human rights mechanisms of ASEAN continue to fail in demonstrating progress for LGBTIQ human rights, civil society ensures its advocacy agenda and political spaces remain inclusive of persons of diverse SOGIESC. Since 2010, the annual outcome document of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples Forum (ACSC/APF) has reflected the aspirations for LGBTIQ human rights promotion and protection. And since 2017, the ACSC/APF institutionalized non-discrimination on the basis of SOGIESC as one of its guiding principles. We continue our work to ensure that ASEAN civil society is a safe and inclusive space for LGBTIQ persons.

Inclusion of most marginalized voices

“Strong efforts should be made to ensure that the most marginalized and discriminated sectors and peoples are given the space and are empowered to engage in processes and issues that affect them. There needs to be greater recognition, for example, of indigenous knowledge, values, customary land rights, and governance systems as key elements in climate strategies, planning, and decision-making. Stronger efforts should be made to enact policies and to open spaces for the meaningful participation of urban and rural workers, smallholder farmers, urban poor, fisherfolk, women, children, indigenous peoples and ethnic nationalities, older persons, professionals and rank-and-file employees, persons with disabilities, youth, LGBTIQ persons, human rights defenders, and migrants who suffer exclusion from the mainstream of social, economic, and political aspects of Southeast Asian societies and communities."

(Excerpt from ASEAN People’s Forum 2020 Joint Statement, November to 7, 2020)
In June, ASC together with key civil society groups such as FORUM-Asia, the Center of Strategic and International Studies, Asia-Pacific Refugee Rights Network, Progressive Voice, SHAPE-SEA, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, Business and Human Rights Resource Center, and Human Rights Watch organized the ASEAN Community Virtual Summit 2020.  

Its objective was to discuss the fulfilment of human rights in ASEAN during and after COVID-19, the rise of xenophobia, the continued violations of fundamental freedoms, and the protection of vulnerable groups. The summit entailed a series of on-line conversations for two consecutive days, including a town hall discussion with civil society actors, ASEAN officials, and parliamentarians, a diplomatic briefing, and a press conference.  

As part of the summit, ASC initiated a “Tweetathon”, an online conversation engaging activists and ASEAN officials on pressing human rights concerns in the region.

In November, ASC actively participated in the ACSC/APF hosted by Vietnamese civil society organizations. For the first time, the event used a blended approach combining both on-line and off-line participation. During the conference, we spoke during the convergence space on health and social protection in ASEAN; co-organized the workshop on alternative regionalism; and eventually became a proponent of a resolution on alternative regionalism.

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the ACSC/APF, we also organized a side event titled “Human Rights of LGBTIQ in ASEAN”, an online talk bringing together activists from Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, and West Papua. Apart from sharing human rights updates, the session provided a space for activists to weave together cross-boundary solidarity actions. The session was live-streamed on Facebook and participated by more than a thousand viewers.

ASC has been an active proponent of the “alternative regionalism” agenda in Southeast Asia. Going beyond the critique of a non-responsive ASEAN, civil society groups are seeking alternative, heterodox, and non-mainstream practices of cross-border relations and cooperation whose ultimate objective is to “create the infrastructure that will facilitate greater regional people-to-people interactions toward building a formidable people-led regional interaction.” For example, our work focusing on cultivating and transforming “collective memory” and using “memory activism” by reclaiming pre-colonial and cultural queer narratives was featured in an academic article on alternative regionalism published by the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies.

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The Year 2020 in Figures

11
On-line regional convenings organized focusing on the following themes: leadership, child rights, LBQ womxn activism, youth, democratization, and on human rights mechanisms. All were done collaboratively with fellow civil society organizations.

1,250
Individuals from 11 Southeast Asian countries we have reached directly through our local and regional convenings, learning sessions and workshops.

1,240
Approximate number of LGBTIQ individuals we have reached through our Rainbow Reach Out program.

22
Local initiatives of LGBTIQ organizations supported. These initiatives were led by groups from Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam. These include groups we have supported through our Rainbow Reach Out program, the ASEAN Queer Leadership X, the series of creative and cultural initiatives, and technical support for local projects of partner organizations.

278.2K
Facebook Page reach.
Financial Report
For the year 2020

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<th>RECEIPTS</th>
<th>In Philippine Pesos</th>
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<td>Grants</td>
<td>9,861,082</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
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<td>Interest Income</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Receipts</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,302,812</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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| Administrative Costs       | 1,101,364 (10%)      |
| Personnel Costs            | 2,627,601 (23%)      |
| Program Costs              | 7,521,803 (67%)      |
| **Total Expenses**         | **11,250,768** (100%)|
Our Team

SECRETARIAT
Ryan Silverio, Regional Coordinator
Nguyen Hai Yen, Program Manager
Lini Zurlia, Advocacy Officer
Jan Gabriel Castaneda, Program Associate
Jessica Rachel, Communications Associate
Belinda Mirasol, Finance Officer
Juliet De Guzman, Administrative Officer
Carolina Advincula, Administrative Assistant

ASC MEMBERS
ASC is a membership organization composed of individual human rights defenders as well as LGBTIQ-focused organizations. We have members from eight (8) countries in the Southeast Asian region.

Our organizational members are:
- Arus Pelangi
- 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
Acknowledgements

ASC’s collaborative way of working was made possible with the support of the following partner organizations or institutions:

AICHR Indonesia
AICHR Malaysia
ALTSEAN Burma
APCOM
Arco Iris Timor Leste
ARROW
Asia Democracy Network
Asia Pacific Transgender Network
Asia Society Philippines
ASEAN Youth Forum (AYF)
Cangkang Queer
Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines
COC Nederlands
Edge Effect
Equal Asia Foundation
ESBISQUET
FORUM Asia
Gaynitiative.ph
Hanoi Queer
ILGA Asia
ILGA World
Initiatives for International Dialogue
Intersex Asia
Intersex Philippines
Inpride Bangkok
MUJER LGBT Organization
Naransi Toleransi
Panggung Minoritas
Philippine LGBT Chamber of Commerce
Rainbow Alliance
Rainbow Six
ROJALI
Sangsan Anakot Yawachon Development Project
San Julian Pride
Side B Philippines
UniGEN
Urgent Action Fund for Women - Asia Pacific
Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College
Women’s Legal and Human Rights Bureau
Youth for YOUth
Youth Voices Count

We thank our funders for their continuous trust and confidence towards ASC:

- Arcus Foundation
- GiveOut
- Open Society Foundation
- Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Rights (RFSL)
- Women Fund Asia
- VOICE
Support Our Work

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

Contact Us

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus
Unit 15-N, Tower 1, Suntrust Asmara Condominium, 284 E. Rodriguez Sr. Avenue, New Manila, Quezon City, Philippines 1112
EMAIL info@aseansogiecaucus.org
WEBSITE www.aseansogiecaucus.org
FACEBOOK facebook.com/aseansogie
TWITTER @aseansogie
INSTAGRAM @aseansogiecaucus
YOUTUBE bit.ly/ASEANSOGIECaucusYoutube