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Written submission by The Philippines: Commission on Human Rights*

Note by the Secretariat

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Report of the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines on the High Commissioner's report on State response to pandemics (res. 44/2)

The Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (hereafter "the Commission" or "CHRP"),[1] submits its written statement for agenda item 2 on the High Commissioner's report on State response to pandemics. The Commission would like to update the Human Rights Council (HRC) of developments since its letters to the HRC President H.E. Ms. Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger on 27 April 2020, and High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet on 30 April 2020, respectively, which highlighted human rights policy advisories[2] on the Philippines' initial responses and policies to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

This submission focuses on the current State laws, policies and their implementation to curb the steep rise in the rate of COVID-19 infection this year as well as the ongoing efforts to vaccinate Filipinos against COVID-19. Food insecurity prominently resurfaced as a primary human rights concern in the country this year with the organizing of community pantries, which are also given emphasis in this submission.

1. Rising cases of COVID-19 and current government responses

Over a year into the pandemic, as of 13 June 2021, the Department of Health (DOH) recorded 7,302 new COVID-19 infections, adding to the nationwide tally of 1,315,639. Out of the total cases, 59,865 are considered active cases. 137 deaths are recorded on 13 June 2021, which raise the death toll to 22,788. There are 7,701 new recoveries, increasing the total recoveries to 1,232,986.[3]

The government imposed a third hard lock-down for Metro Manila and nearby provinces known locally as enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) on 29 March 2021 until 30 April 2021, similar to the first hard lockdown in March 2020,[4] following an alarming surge of cases, with the highest daily record of 15,280 on 3 April 2021.[5] Infection rates rose steeply and swiftly by the end of the first quarter of 2021, due to the more contagious COVID-19 variants. The health system was barely coping with hospitals reaching critical occupancy of COVID-19 and ICU beds, and with hospitals regrettably turning away patients.[6] In May and

[1] As the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) of the Philippines, the CHRP has the mandate vested by the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines and the Paris Principles to promote and protect the full range of human rights including civil and political rights, and economic, social and cultural rights. It has the responsibility to regularly report and monitor human rights situations and violations, and recommend steps in advancing the realization of human rights and dignity of all. The Commission has "A"-status accreditation from the Sub-Committee for Accreditation. It is a member of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

[2] See 2020 CHRP human rights policy advisory series on the COVID-19 pandemic here: http://chr.gov.ph/5th-commission/.

[3] Department of Health, COVID-19 Case Tracker, *available at* https://doh.gov.ph/covid-19/case-tracker (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[4] Philippine News Agency press updates, *available at* https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1135111 ; https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1136359 (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[5] World Health Organization, data on the Philippines, *available at* https://covid19.who.int/region/wpro/country/ph (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[6] Cristina Eloisa Baclig , Inquirer, "COVID-19 beds in 22 NCR hospitals 100% filled, 42 in critical level — DOH," 23 April 2021, available at https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1422909/covid-19-beds-in-22-ncr-hospitals-100-occupied-42-in-critical-level-doh (last accessed: 13 June 2021); JC Gotinga, Al Jazeera, 'We've cried ourselves dry': COVID overwhelms Manila hospitals, 19 April 2021, *available at* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/4/19/for-kate-patients-die-as-covid-overwhelms-philippine-hospitals (last accessed: 13 June 2021); CNN Philippines, "Gov't needs to double COVID-19 beds in NCR – treatment czar," 15 April 2021, *available at* https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/4/15/Metro-Manila-COVID-19-hospital-beds.html (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Philippine News Agency, "Healthcare system capacity expanded during ECQ: DOH exec," 12 April 2021, *available at* https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1136475 (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

June 2021, cases have been slowly trickling down in Metro Manila and adjacent towns, however, increased local transmission has shifted to the south of the Philippines.[7]

The Philippines has imposed quarantine restrictions with more than 25 million of its population, mostly in Metro Manila and adjacent provinces have remained under lockdown with differing levels of severity, rules and restrictions depending on infection rate per local government unit in the country, since 15 March 2020.[8] There is a consistent reliance on lockdowns to contain the spread of the virus, with measures in the Philippines considered as one of the longest lockdowns in the world.[9] The Commission recognizes that "the government's position to restrict freedom of movement in the interest of public health and safety. However, we stress that quarantine measures are being implemented as a public health measure and not as a peace and order solution—this is the rationale as previously espoused by the Chief Executive himself when he stated that the quarantine is not tantamount to martial law."[10]

The administration has framed its pandemic response strategy as "war against the virus," a militaristic and securitization approach that penalized and criminalized quarantine violators, similar to its campaign against illegal drugs[11] and recently the more blatant red-tagging,

[7] Philippine News Agency, GCQ with restrictions, 'effective' as NCR+ cases decline: DOH, 12 June 2021, *available at* https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1143505 (last accessed: 13 June 2021); CNN Philippines, DOH: COVID-19 cases rising in all regions in Visayas, Mindanao, 29 May 2021, *available at* https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/5/29/DOH-COVID-19-Visayas-Mindanao.html (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Patricia Denise M. Chiu, Inquirer, COVID-19 cases down in Metro Manila but rising in Visayas, Mindanao, 19 May 2021, *available at* https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1433542/cases-down-in-metro-but-rising-in-visayas-mindanao-doh (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[8] Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF), OMNIBUS GUIDELINES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OFCOMMUNITY QUARANTINE IN THE PHILIPPINES with Amendments as of March 28, 2021, https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/downloads/2021/03mar/20210328-OMNIBUS-Guidelines-RRD.pdf (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Jove Moya, Philippine Tatler, "MECQ and ECQ: What's The Difference And Guidelines For 12 to 30 April," 12 April 2021, https://ph.asiatatler.com/life/the-difference-between-ecq-and-mecq (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Roy Stephen C. Canivel, Inquirer, "Been there, done that but what's the difference between MECQ and GCQ? 3 August 2020, *available at* https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1316124/been-there-done-that-but-whats-difference-between-mecq-and-gcq (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Jim Gomez and Aaron Favila, Associated Press, "Philippines weighs extending lockdown as COVID cases top 1M," 27 April 2021, available at https://apnews.com/article/asia-pacific-southeast-asia-philippines-health-manila-1ba0dd6a94aaee584786422cd49f79b8 (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[9] Aie Balagtas See, Time Magazine, "Rodrigo Duterte Is Using One of the World's Longest COVID-19 Lockdowns to Strengthen His Grip on the Philippines," 15 March 2021, *available at* https://time.com/5945616/covid-philippines-pandemic-lockdown/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Edson C.Guido, Journal of International Affairs, Columbia University, " How the Philippine Can Recover From One of the World's Longest Lockdowns, 16 May 2021, *available at* https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/how-philippines-can-recover-one-world%E2%80%99s-longest-lockdowns (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Dan Olanday and Jennifer Rigby, The Telegraph, "Inside the world's longest and strictest coronavirus lockdown in the Philippines," 11 July 2020, *available at* https://www.telegraph.co.uk/global-health/science-and-disease/inside-worlds-longest-strictest-coronavirus-lockdown-philippines/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[10] Statement of CHR Spokesperson, Atty Jacqueline Ann de Guia, on the death of Darren Peñaredondo and the call for community service for quarantine violators, 7 April 2021, https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guia-on-the-death-of-darren-penaredondo-and-the-call-for-community-service-for-quarantine-violators/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[11] Karl Hapal, "The Philippines' COVID-19 Response: Securitising the Pandemic and Disciplining the Pasaway." Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs, (March 2021). https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103421994261 (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

arrests and killings of human rights defenders and community workers in the guise and cover of the implementation of the Anti-Terror Act.[12]

The Commission monitored, received and investigated reports and cases of quarantine violators who have died or was subjected to torture due to punishment by security officials.[13] "Excessive punishments and fines which are punitive in nature and disproportionate with the violation represent an overreach of the enforcement of quarantine rules and regulations. [The Commission agrees with] the statement of Justice Secretary Menardo Guevarra in recommending local government units to impose community service on quarantine violators as an alternative to harsh physical exercises and fines which only add hardships already being felt by members of the poor and vulnerable sectors."[14] However, with the statement of the President days after the Secretary's recommendation to arrest and detain those who are improperly wearing masks, the Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued guidelines primarily using local ordinances as basis.[15]

COVID-19 testing and contact tracing have been a challenge in the country. The government is reluctant to provide for mass testing and instead prefers the risk-based approach.[16] Despite the rise in cases this year, the National Task Force Against Covid-19 (NTF)[17] has quoted a statement of the Healthcare Professionals Alliance Against Covid-19 (HPAAC)[18] on mass testing, saying "indiscriminate mass testing of asymptomatic individuals using tests with sub-optimal sensitivity is neither feasible nor practical".[19] In the first outbreak of COVID-19 in the country last year, the DOH admitted during an online meeting of the House Committee

[12] Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, Statement of the Commission on Human Rights on a study's assessment of a 'repressed' civic space in the Philippines, 13 December 2020, *available at* https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-the-commission-on-human-rights-on-a-studys-assessment-of-a-repressed-civic-space-in-the-philippines/ (last accessed: 15 June 2021); Statement of the Commission on Human Rights on the proposed Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, 5 June 2020, *available at* https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-the-commission-on-human-rights-on-the-proposed-anti-terrorism-act-of-2020/ (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[13] See recent statements of the Commission: https://chr.gov.ph/?s=quarantine+violator

[14] Statement of CHR Spokesperson, Atty Jacqueline Ann de Guia, on the death of Darren Peñaredondo and the call for community service for quarantine violators, 7 April 2021, https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guia-on-the-death-of-darren-penaredondo-and-the-call-for-community-service-for-quarantine-violators/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[15] Lian Buan, Rappler, "PH solution to pandemic arrest problems? Holding areas," 1 June 2021, *available at* https://www.rappler.com/nation/holding-areas-philippines-solution-arrest-problems-covid-19-pandemic (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Christopher Lloyd Caliwan, Philippine News Agency (PNA), "DILG, DOJ ink memo on stricter health protocols' enforcement," 1 June 2021, *available at* https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1142196 (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Evelyn Macairan, Inquirer, "Face mask arrest rules may be out this week," 11 May 2021, *available at* https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/05/11/2097402/face-mask-arrest-rules-may-be-out-week (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[16] Department of Health (DOH), "DOH Issues Guidelines on Expanded COVID-19 Testing," 11 June 2020, available at https://doh.gov.ph/press-release/DOH-ISSUES-GUIDELINES-ON-EXPANDED-COVID-19-TESTING (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Gaea Katreena Cabico, Philstar, "DOH: No 'mass testing', just 'risk-based testing' to get more people tested," 29 March 2021, *available at* https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2021/03/29/2087811/doh-no-mass-testing-just-risk-based-testing-get-more-people-tested (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Bonz Magsambol, Rappler, "Despite surge in COVID-19 cases, DOH says PH has no mass testing plans," 29 March 2021, *available at* https://www.rappler.com/nation/doh-says-philippines-no-plans-conduct-mass-testing-surge-coronavirus-cases (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[17] The National Task Force (NTF) COVID is directed to develop the necessary operational plans of the government relevant to the management of the coronavirus disease 2019 situation: https://doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/health-update/IATF-Resolution-No.-25.pdf

[18] Healthcare Professionals Alliance Against Covid-19 (HPAAC) is group of of healthcare professional organizations and health workers working together to manage the COVID-19 and improve the healthcare system: http://hpaac.org.ph/members

[19] Philippine News Agency,"NTF exec explains why gov't can't do mass testing, 6 April 2021, https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1135922 (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

on Health that testing for the virus among the population affected have not been conducted.[20] Actual cases are likely underreported,[21] and contact tracing was described as failing.[22] Despite the ongoing efforts of the government to improve testing and contact tracing capacities, the weakness and failure in implementation has seriously impacted the conditions of at-risk and vulnerable groups such as older persons, persons with disabilities, persons deprived of their liberties, internally displaced persons and indigents living in cramped quarters, where physical distancing is next to impossible and restrictions on movement are discriminating against these groups.

A promising initiative of the government includes the mobile testing program of the Office of the Vice-President called "Swab Cab" launched in March 2021, which provided free mobile antigen swab service to high-risk areas in Metro Manila and Cebu.[23] The program also has provided incentives such as food packs to encourage people to get COVID-19 tests. However, the outreach has been limited and underfunded, hence the impact is difficult to assess.

People living with HIV/AIDS also struggle to deal with the difficulties of accessing health services, especially during a pandemic. The Commission cites the efforts by the DOH as a bright spot in this challenging time to make sure that health services for PLHIV do not come to a halt. The DOH and its partners from local government units (LGUs) through its Social Hygiene Clinics, public and private HIV treatment facilities, community-based organizations, and advocacy groups are all working together to make sure that HIV prevention, testing, treatment, care and support services are continuously provided. DOH also continues to assess and approve the operation of HIV testing labs to help reach more people.[24]

[20] Inquirer, Duque admits no COVID-19 mass testing ever conducted since outbreak, 21 May 2021, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1278855/duque-admits-no-covid-19-mass-testing-ever-conducted-since-outbreak (last accessed: 13 June 2021); GMA News Online, Duque: No country has conducted COVID-19 testing for entire population. 21 May 2020, available at https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/news/nation/739228/duque-no-country-has-conducted-covid-19-testing-for-entire-population/story/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[21] Jan Frederick Cruz, Department of Economics, Ateneo de Manila University, An Empirical Argument for Mass Testing: Crude Estimates of Unreported COVID19 Cases in the Philippines vis-à-vis Others in the ASEAN-5, Working Paper No.2020-14, 18 August 2020, available at https://ateneo.edu/sites/default/files/downloadable-files/ADMU%20WP%202020-14.pdf (last accessed: 13 June 2021); "The inconsistency can be viewed in two ways. It can mean the current fatality rate is overstated, meaning there is nothing to be worried about. It could also mean that the fatality rate is understated, meaning things are much worse. What is certain is the inconsistency in reporting is blinding the government and the public to the true state of conditions on the ground," from ABS-CBN News, "Dissecting Data: COVID-19 is killing Filipinos at its fastest rate in 7 months,"22 February 2021, available at https://news.abs-cbn.com/spotlight/02/22/21/dissecting-data-covid-19-is-killing-filipinos-at-its-fastest-rate-in-7-months (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[22] Rappler, 'We are failing': House highlights Duterte admin's mishandling of pandemic, 31 March 2021, *available at* https://www.rappler.com/nation/highlights-house-hearing-duterte-government-mishandling-pandemic (last accessed: 13 June 2021); TIME, "Rodrigo Duterte Is Using One of the World's Longest COVID-19 Lockdowns to Strengthen His Grip on the Philippines," 15 March 2021, *available at* https://time.com/5945616/covid-philippines-pandemic-lockdown/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021); Jose Ramon G Albert, PIDS, 23 December 2020, *available at* https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2020/12/23/were-the-philippines-covid-19-responses-sufficient/ (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[23] Office of the Vice President, https://ovp.gov.ph/

[24] Statement of CHR Spokesperson, Atty Jacqueline Ann de Guia, commending the Department of Health's commitment to continue the provision of HIV treatment amid the Covid-19 pandemic, *available at* https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guia-commending-the-department-of-healths-commitment-to-continue-the-provision-of-hiv-treatment-amid-the-covid-19-pandemic/ (last accessed: 15 June 2021).

2 Vaccine roll-out[25]

The CHRP issued an advisory in January 2021 on the human rights-based approach to the COVID-19 vaccination.[26] The advisory recommended for the government and relevant stakeholders to develop and implement a national COVID-19 immunization program that must be framed within human rights, along with science, as the fundamental consideration. The State should take all the necessary measures, to the maximum available resources, to guarantee access to COVID-19 vaccines of all Filipinos and persons in the Philippines without discrimination.[27]

A Social Weather Stations (SWS) survey recently revealed that only 3 out of 10 adult Filipinos are willing to be vaccinated months into the national vaccine rollout.[28] While these numbers are worrying, the Commission takes great solace in the efforts of several local government units (LGUs) that have sought to ensure that vaccines remain accessible to the public through vaccination drives and information dissemination campaigns to address vaccine hesitancy and common vaccine misconceptions.

The right to information to matters of public concern is crucially linked to the realization of an individual's right to health in times of a pandemic. Enabling individuals to make sound decisions based on facts is the right way to decrease vaccine hesitancy among the public. A testament to the importance of information dissemination is the high vaccine acceptance rate amongst constituents in Iloilo City. The success of their vaccine rollout shows how well-informed individuals are in the best position to make decisions on their health and well-being. The launch of drive-thru Covid-19 vaccination sites,[29] and house-to-house vaccination[30] for bedridden residents, among others, go a long way in helping curb Covid-19 transmission among the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, older persons and indigent groups, and keeping number of cases down.

The Commission is concerned with reports of individuals involved in the sale of vaccine slots and advises them to immediately desist from doing so. Individuals excluded from the priority list that jump the vaccination queue by selling and purchasing vaccine slots, not only violates the principle of equitable vaccine distribution, they also compromise the country's obligation under the COVAX agreement to provide free and succeeding vaccine allocations for agreed upon groups. The Commission commends the move of the Chief of the Philippine National Police, Police General Guillermo Eleazar, on the dropping of charges against the whistleblower on the "vax for sale."[31] This move by the PNP will help allay the fears of the

[25] From the Statement of the CHR Spokesperson, Atty. Jacqueline Ann de Guia, on local government efforts to speed up vaccination, 5 June 2021, *available at* https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-the-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guia-on-local-government-efforts-to-speed-up-vaccination/ (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[26] Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, Human Righs Advisory on COVID-19 Vaccination, CHR(V)A2021-001, 26 January 2021, available at http://chr.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Human-Rights-Advisory-COVID-19-Vaccination.pdf (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[27] Ibid.

[28] Social Weather Stations, "First Quarter 2021 Social Weather Survey: 51% of adult Filipinos are confident, 17% are not confident about the government's evaluation of Covid-19 vaccines, 20 May 2021, *available at* http://www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20210520103851 (last accessed: 13 June 2021).

[29] In Quezon, Rizal, and Borongan City.

[30] Manila and Taguig City.

[31] Dexter Cabalza, Inquirer, "PNP junks case vs vax for sale tipster," 13 June 2021, https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1445372/pnp-junks-case-%E2%80%8Dvs-vax-for-sale-tipster (last accessed: 14 June 2021); CNN Philippines, "PNP to drop cases vs. businesswoman tagged in vaccine slot for sale,"
12 June 2021, *available at* https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/6/12/PNP-withdraw-case-Nina-Cabrera-vaccine-slot-for-sale.html (last accessed: 14 June 2021); Philippine National Police, "PNP Files Raps vs. 3 in Vaccine/Vaccination Slot Sale," 9 June 2021, *available at* https://pnp.gov.ph/index.php/news-and-

public that publishing or posting on social media anything critical of the administration is dangerous.

According to the fourth quarter 2020 survey published by SWS, 65% of adult Filipinos agreed with the statement, “It is dangerous to print or broadcast anything critical of the administration, even if it is the truth.” 18% said they are undecided, while 16% disagreed. This gave a net agreement score, or the percentage of those who agreed minus the percentage of those who disagreed, of +49, classified by the survey as “strong.”[32]

3. Community pantries, red-tagging and attacks against organizers and volunteers

The Department of Science and Technology conducted the Rapid Nutrition Assessment Survey from 3 November to 3 December 2020, which has revealed 62.1% or six out of 10 individuals reported they experienced moderate to severe food insecurity. 56.3% of the households surveyed reported having problem accessing food during community quarantine period due to: no money to buy food (22.1%); no/limited public transportation (21.6%); no money due to loss of job (19.5%); limited food stores in the area (10.8%) and mobility issues due to old age - no other members to buy food (5.1%).[33]

The social amelioration programs of government and food donations organized by the LGUs and the private sector provide temporary relief for individuals and families who experience job loss, hunger and food insecurity in this time of the pandemic.

The community pantries are promising initiatives aiding Filipinos to access essential goods and serving to fill the gap in government services. The community pantry first emerged in Maginhawa Street, Quezon City and has been emulated in different parts of the city, in the provinces and outside the country.[34] However, the main organizer of the Maginhawa Community Pantry was red-tagged and forced to suspend operations for safety concerns. Government social media pages linked these initiatives to the communist movement. The Commission received reports of local law enforcement agents subjecting organizers of community pantries to questions regarding their affiliations and photos on social media

information/4457-pnp-files-raps-vs-2-behind-vaccine-vaccination-slot-sale (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[32] Social Weather Stations, "Fourth Quarter 2020 Social Weather Survey: Net danger in publishing things critical of the administration rises sharply from +21 to +49,” 19 March 2021, available at, https://www.sws.org.ph/swsmain/artcldisppage/?artcsyscode=ART-20210319095324&mc_cid=97cbc43887&mc_eid=adc91a8fff (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[33] Department of Science and Technology Food and Nutrition Research Institute, Rapid Nutrition Assessment Survey on Food Security, "Coping Mechanisms, and Nutrition Services Availed during COVID-19 Pandemic in Selected Areas in the Philippines," *available at* http://enutrition.fnri.dost.gov.ph/site/uploads/RNAS%20Virtual%20Dissemination%20to%20Partners.pdf (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[34] Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, Statement of CHR Spokesperson, Atty. Jacqueline Ann de Guia, on the community pantry initiative and profiling of its volunteers, 20 April 2021, *available at* https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann de-guia-on-the-community-pantry-initiative-and-profiling-of-its-volunteers/ (last accessed 14 June 2021); Philippine News Agency, More PH-inspired community pantries open in TimorLeste, 24 April 2021, *available at* https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1137860 (last accessed: 14 June 2021); CNN Philippines, Inspired by PH initiative, Timor-Leste sets up first community pantry, 22 April 2021, *available at* https://cnnphilippines.com/news/2021/4/22/Timor-Leste-sets-up-first-community-pantry.html?fbclid=IwAR33I8QCVqy6Q_mhJ3YYxOziWhm0-NKVbshwp5PZIXDJxvI9YFe9DfCl2RQ (last accessed: 14 April 2021); The Washington Post, Community pantries offer reprieve from covid-19 hardships in the Philippines, 21 April 2021, *available at* https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/philippines-pantries-covid-pandemic/2021/04/21/30ad8a5c-a1ac-11eb-b314-2e993bd83e31_story.html (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

allegedly showing policemen handing out forms that organizers need to fill out with their personal details.[35]

The Commission commends the action of the National Privacy Commission (NPC) through the Statement of Commissioner Raymund Liboro who strongly advised against "unjust profiling" of community pantry organizers and said that the same "poses risks for private citizens."[36] Quezon City Mayor Belmonte issued a statement assuring support for the community pantry and the safety of the organizers operating within the city.[37]

The Commission reminds the government, particularly local law enforcement officers, that collecting data, including the affiliation of community pantry organizers, is an encroachment upon the right to privacy of citizens and represents yet again an overreach and abuse of police power bereft of any statutory or legal basis. The community pantry is an example of the exemplary spirit of bayanihan to make-up for the gaps of government action in addressing the long-term adverse effects of the pandemic.[38]

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[35] Ibid, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines.

[36] National Privacy Commission, On the Alleged Profiling of Community Pantry Organizers, 20 April 2021, *available at* https://www.privacy.gov.ph/2021/04/on-the-alleged-profiling-of-community-pantry-organizers/ (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[37] Quezon City Government on Twitter, Statement of Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte, 20 April 2021, *available at* https://twitter.com/qcgov/status/1384349940189593601?lang=en (last accessed: 14 June 2021).

[38] Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, Statement of CHR Spokesperson, Atty. Jacqueline Ann de Guia, on the community pantry initiative and profiling of its volunteers, 20 April 2021, *available at* https://chr.gov.ph/statement-of-chr-spokesperson-atty-jacqueline-ann-de-guia-on-the-community-pantry-initiative-and-profiling-of-its-volunteers/ (last accessed 14 June 2021);