

**INTERNATIONAL VISITOR
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM**

*Faces of
Exchange*

F A C E
S . O F
E X C H
A N G E



International Visitor Leadership Program

U.S. Department of State



ABOUT THE BOOK

The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) is the U.S. Department of State’s premier professional exchange program. Through short-term visits to the United States, current and emerging foreign leaders in various fields experience the United States firsthand and cultivate lasting relationships with their counterparts.

Throughout the program’s 80-year history, more than 225,000 people have participated in the program, each with a story to tell. “Faces of Exchange” features 50 Filipino IVLP alumni who promote rights, nurture communities, and redefine service. Each story narrates how Filipino alumni, and their exchange experiences, help shape the Philippines.

This book celebrates the program’s success and is a testament to the 75 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Philippines.

Opinion Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed by the U.S. exchange alumni featured in this book do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. government.
Any opinion or views provided by the exchange alumni is their own.

Promoting Rights

Capitalizing on their knowledge and skills, these alumni promote rights by ensuring justice, equality, freedom, and representation.

Nurturing Communities

Committed to improving quality of life, these alumni devote their lives and work to help shape and nurture communities into inclusive, sensitive, and empowered institutions.

Redefining Service

Dedicated to improving their communities, these alumni redefine service by expanding access, creating solutions, and introducing innovations.

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#USPHThrivingAt75: Celebrating 75 Years of U.S.-Philippines Diplomatic Relations

THE UNITED STATES AND THE PHILIPPINES signed the Treaty of Manila on July 4, 1946, recognizing the independence of the Philippines. The United States established diplomatic relations with the Philippines on the same day, when American Ambassador Paul V. McNutt presented his credentials.

U.S.-Philippines relations are founded on strong historical and cultural linkages and a shared commitment to democracy and human rights. The 1951 U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty, which marks its 70th anniversary this year, formalized our robust security partnership, an alliance forged on the battlefield in World War II.

Strong people-to-people and economic ties form the bedrock of bilateral cooperation. We engage on these issues continuously, including through the U.S.-Philippine Bilateral Strategic Dialogue, a forum for forward planning across the spectrum of our relationship.

A multitude of programs aim to strengthen people-to-people ties between the United States and the Philippines, including the longest continuously-running Fulbright program in the world, the International Visitor Leadership Program, and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative. This year, we also mark the 60th anniversary of the U.S. Peace Corps volunteer program in the Philippines.

The United States is proud to be one of the largest economic partners of the Philippines, serving as the country's third largest trading partner with a two-way trade of \$16 billion and the third largest source of net FDI inflows. American firms are the largest

electronics and semi-conductor exporters in the country and serve as some of the largest private employers. The American Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines has over 600 members and is one of the oldest business chambers in the world, with U.S. firms like Citibank, Ford, and Bank of America operating in the Philippines since the early 1900s.

There are more than four million U.S. citizens of Philippine ancestry in the United States, and more than 350,000 U.S. citizens in the Philippines, including a large number of United States military veterans.

The American Cemetery in Manila is the largest American military cemetery outside the United States, serving as the final resting place for over 17,000 U.S. and Philippine servicemen and women.





SINCE 1948, more than 9,000 Filipinos and Americans have participated in people-to-people international exchanges sponsored by the U.S. government. Of those 9,000 participants, nearly 2,000 are Filipinos that participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the U.S. Department of State's flagship professional exchange program.

As a career diplomat, I have witnessed first-hand how participants in U.S. government exchange programs inspire those around them. As leaders in their fields, their expertise and experiences in the United States contribute to a safer, more prosperous, and more inclusive world.

In the Philippines, many alumni have gone on to remarkable careers across a broad spectrum of government, business, civil society, and educational institutions. Many continue to work in close collaboration with the Embassy to advance our shared interests for a more prosperous and secure Philippines. Without fail, Filipino alumni amaze me with their work for the nation, and I look forward to meeting many of you and collaborating over the next few years.

This commemorative book captures the stories of 50 Filipino IVLP alumni, their lives and leadership, and the impact of their exchanges on their communities. As we celebrate 75 years of Philippine and U.S. diplomatic relations and the 80th anniversary of the IVLP, it is clear that this program has fostered long-lasting ties between Filipinos and Americans.

As we celebrate these milestones, we thank our alumni, program partners, and the Philippine government for contributing to the success of this and all of our exchange programs. In order to overcome future challenges and seize new opportunities, together, we are committed to forging even stronger ties with the Philippines as friends, partners, and allies.



THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS extends its warmest congratulations to the U.S. Embassy in Manila for the continued success of the Leadership Program (IVLP). On 20 December 2020, we celebrated the 80 anniversary of the program — a testament to the strength and enduring relevance of the IVLP.

Since its inception in 1940, the IVLP has promoted greater understanding in the world by building bridges between current and emerging leaders via this flagship cultural exchange program of the United States. The program is an epitome of public and cultural diplomacy. It provides an avenue for synergy, construction and deconstruction, proliferation of ideas, and transformation. Its impact has been far reaching, especially in the digital age.

The IVLP, like other cultural and educational exchanges, further cements the bond between the United States and other countries. Present and future leaders come to a better understanding of the theories and dynamics of U.S. Politics and culture. American and foreign participants exchange honest views, thereby contributing to the knowledge and advancement of good governance.

Several Filipino leaders in media, local governance, legislature, law enforcement, defense and security and health have participated. Their experience in the program, in no small measure, has contributed to further strengthening of the country's democratic institutions.

As an alumnus of the Program, I know firsthand how the IVLP serves as a melting pot for fostering friendships with Americans and nationals of other countries. It offers a plethora of experiences that can only lead to improvements in both personal and career life.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and the United States. We are reminded that people-to-people ties are at the heart of our bilateral relations, facilitating friendships, cooperation, mutual respect and understanding. The IVLP and other exchange visitor programs of the United States push forward and strengthen these people to people ties.

On behalf of the Philippine government, I would like to thank the United States government for continuing to run the IVLP and involving the Philippines in this laudable program. We remain committed to actively participating in the program in order to promote greater understanding among our peoples and our nations.

Thank you and Mabuhay!



Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr.

**SECRETARY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS**



Matt Lussenhop

started his tenure as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) in 2019 and currently serves as Acting Assistant Secretary of State. He served as press officer and spokesperson for the United States Government to the Philippines from 2005-2007.



BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS

I HAD THE PLEASURE EARLIER in my U.S. Foreign Service career to work alongside distinguished journalists and community leaders in the Philippines during my time as Press Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Manila. Many of those individuals were alumni of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). Over the years, the IVLP has played a significant role in the United States-Philippines bilateral relationship. IVLP alumni are not only invaluable contacts of the U.S. Embassy, connecting the United States to Philippine politics, society, and culture, but are also trusted partners in our nations' mutual efforts to inspire global change. The U.S. government began IVLP exchanges in the Philippines in 1951. With the help of a dedicated network of community-based nonprofit organizations in the United States, the IVLP has engaged nearly 2,000 rising Filipino leaders who have impacted their home communities and enriched the U.S.-Philippine relationship. The alumni stories showcased in this book are but a sampling of the many individual IVLP experiences that together advance the mission of public diplomacy and highlight how values such as empowerment, support, coexistence, learning, and responsibility are the bedrock of people-to-people exchange. This past year, the IVLP responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by embracing virtual exchange programs worldwide. With new tools and resources, there will be even more opportunities for in-person and virtual exchanges in the future, allowing us to continue to invite emerging leaders to gain an understanding of life and government in the United States and acquire knowledge and connections to implement in their work at home. Unimpeded by the pandemic, this ongoing dialogue will continue into the future, strengthening the relationship between the United States and the Philippines.

IVLP alumni model the spirit of volunteerism and public service that reinforce a strong civil society. They lead their communities and country in diplomacy, charity, and civil society work as faces of exchange in the Philippines. Reflecting on the IVLP and its 80-year legacy, I deeply value our shared trust in democracy and universal liberties. My time in the Philippines was personally and professionally rewarding, and I look forward to witnessing more inspiring alumni stories like those featured in this book that represent the power and potential of people-to-people connections between the United States and the Philippines.



THE PHILIPPINE EMBASSY in Washington DC conveys its heartfelt congratulations to the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines on the continued success of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP).

IVLP continues to provide its participants with invaluable insights and broaden their perspectives as they embark and proceed with their chosen career. The program rightfully boasts of over 500 current and former top leaders in global politics, business, civil service and various professions. It has afforded the opportunity for more than 2,000 Filipinos to excel and effect change in the country and in their communities. One such person is DFA Secretary Teodoro Locsin, Jr., who was a participant in the program. More recently, Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio and Zamboanga City Mayor Beng Climaco have joined the prestigious ranks of IVLP alumni.

We have no doubt that the current and future alumni will be community multipliers and will work to enhance Philippine-American bilateral relations in their own special way considering that the IVLP promotes inter-country and global networking among its alumni.

I feel that it is not only the program studies and lectures in the classrooms and research venues that have enriched the participants. But perhaps as valuable and enduring are the participants' encounter with the American way of life in its various forms and manifestations while going about mundane preoccupations such as exploring internet and mobile access, riding the subway, visiting American parks and museums as well as exchanging pleasantries and interacting with Americans of different backgrounds and persuasions – the American tapestry writ large with all its flaws, swagger, dynamism and vibrancy.

The Philippine Embassy looks forward to our continued and enhanced collaboration on the IVLP as we anticipate the full resumption of the program.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay!



Jose Manuel G. Romualdez **AMBASSADOR**

80 Years of IVLP



Mrs. Lillian Carter
Mrs. Lillian Carter converses with Mrs. Leela D. Menon, Member of Parliament, Kerala, India, during the Democratic National Convention in 1976. More than 40 distinguished visitors under the Exchange Program gained direct experience of the American political process as observers at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.
Photographer: Jesse Weathersby





Promoting Rights

Capitalizing on their knowledge and skills,
these alumni promote rights by ensuring justice,
equality, freedom, and representation.





Anecdotes, Activism, Airwaves

**Howie
Severino**

Journalist, GMA News and Public Affairs
1996 Investigative Reporting in the U.S.

IN FIFTH GRADE, Howie Severino interviewed his father, a diplomat, about the war between India and Pakistan for a class newspaper. Howie's conversations with his father inspired him to take writing seriously and pursue journalism. Howie recalls with fondness how his meaningful relationship with his father spurred an interest in journalism. He found that he was a skilled interviewer, but more importantly, he enjoyed the task. "This might be something I'd want to do for the rest of my life. I have interviewed thousands of people. I have been a journalist for 33 years, and what I did with my dad then is not too different from what I do today."

STARTING LINE

Now an esteemed journalist, Howie credits his upbringing for his interest in journalism. "I became interested in the outside world as a child," he said. Howie began writing for the school newspaper when he was just ten years old. Then, while studying at Tufts University, he became an editor of the leading campus newspaper.

After college, Howie returned to the Philippines as a high school teacher, but the situation in the Philippines at the time turned him into an activist. "It was still Martial Law, and a lot of restrictions were

placed on the press. I became an activist because I felt I should be free as a journalist," he said. When Howie interviewed former Senator Ninoy Aquino, their conversations enriched Howie's awareness and interest in current Philippine events. The assassination of Ninoy Aquino was a catalyst in his advocacy for press freedom.

ON-GROUND ACTION

Having told stories for decades, Howie finds interest in nooks and crannies. "That's why journalist rhymes with generalist. To be successful and happy as a journalist, you have to be interested in everything," Howie commented. So, he has covered a spectrum of topics from natural disasters like Typhoon Yolanda and the Baguio earthquake to armed conflict-related hostage-taking, the Abu Sayaff group, and the New People's Army. Eventually, his interests branched out to writing books and reports. Howie's favorite area to cover is the Cordillera region, which he has covered for years, "I felt it was underreported. It's hard to cover a mountainous region. You have to be pretty tough and have a lot of stamina."

While journalism communicates reality, delivering factual information alone is insufficient. Howie believes that a journalist's

vital role is discerning which reports are most crucial for the public, commenting that "journalists need to be trained and committed to making judgments about what is important. How do you choose which facts to share with the public?"

According to Howie, today's problem is the constant influx of information. "Our traditional role as information gatekeepers is obsolete because there are no more gates. Previously, our news sources were limited to mass media or neighborhood gossip. Now, with the Internet, you have millions of sources, many of which are of dubious value," he said. Because nobody can control what people watch, read, and hear, a journalist's role has shifted from being gatekeepers to information shepherds, or "people who guide the rest of us to know better."

***"Journalists need to be trained
and be committed to making
judgements about what is important.
How do you choose which facts
to share with the public?"***

As people maneuver the world with different versions of the truth, "information shepherds" are essential to translate facts into rational actions. "Information shepherds need to point to facts that will help us make good decisions about our lives," Howie stressed the responsibility of journalists to remind the public of the truth. "There is so much false information about vaccines. We need information from verified and validated sources. [...] Now, many people are consuming inaccurate information about vaccines, and now, many do not want to be vaccinated. Scientists and historians say the greatest way to put a pandemic behind us is through vaccination; otherwise, we will only wait for people to die. That is a much worse scenario than fear of vaccines."

While a curator helps a painter decide which pieces to display in an art exhibit, the public needs journalists to curate valid and credible information. Howie said that journalists do not have a monopoly on information, "We cannot absorb all information out there. If we try to do that, we will end up more confused. [...] Today, our role has been demonized by some, devalued by others, and denied, so sometimes we hardly make any impact. Nevertheless, you do not give up. I think society safely functions if you have people who are devoted to finding the truth."



BOUNDLESS LEARNING

Howie broadened his breadth in journalism and further explored the U.S. through the IVLP. He met journalists from other countries and visited the United Nations headquarters and Washington State. "America is a huge country with so much diversity," he said after seeing the East Coast and Midwest.

When his IVLP cohort visited the Rocky Mountains in Colorado, Howie met a sustainable energy guru who ran an energy institute. "That trip to the U.S. opened my eyes to what many of us should be talking about in the future," he shared about the ways in which alternative energy is increasingly being utilized today. "Nobody was talking about climate change back then, but people knew we had to start shifting from fossil fuels to renewable sources. [...] The Program gave me a chance to talk with people who were ahead of their time. It taught me that putting these concerns on the public agenda through our work would solve problems faster. If we had started talking about climate change back then, maybe we'd have a better world today."

Learning more about journalism and the environment reinforced Howie's commitment. "It equipped me to cover the environment and disasters better. It enabled me to understand America better. I think that would benefit anyone in journalism because America has a huge impact on what is going on in the world," he shared about the Program's influence on his work. "I think we need to forge more relationships globally and regionally to maximize impact. In doing so, we can create opportunities for collaboration. We have a lot more in common than what we previously believed."



From Pains TO PROGRESS ON *Human Rights*

*Laisa
Alamia*

Member of the Parliament and Minority Leader,
Bangsamoro Transition Authority
2012, Women and Justice

“**OUR VILLAGE** was burned down by armed men believed to be members of the Philippine Army. People remember it as the Tictapul Massacre, and it wasn’t until I was much older that I realized it was the event that changed my family’s life forever,” narrates Laisa Alamia, human rights lawyer, Philippine Navy Reserve Commander, and incumbent Member of Parliament at the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, (BARMM) a new autonomous administrative region in the Southern Philippines. “Armed men looted our family’s house before they razed it to the ground. I was only a child back then, and if our fate took a slightly different turn, I could have lost my parents in the same way I lost my other relatives during that dark time,” she shares.

Growing up with the weight of her people’s history on her shoulders, Laisa now finds herself in a position to shape the destiny of a newly-established BARMM government, a product of years of struggle and peace negotiations between the Philippine government and armed liberation groups in Mindanao to end one of the world’s

longest-running conflicts. Her difficult beginnings shaped her into the person she is today and led her on this path to help others.

Following the Tictapul Massacre in the 1970s, her family relocated to Zamboanga City’s business district to seek safety. However, the illusion of safety was quickly shattered as she was exposed to overt discrimination and bullying rooted in anti-Muslim sentiment. “I felt like I had a [moral] responsibility as a Muslim and as a Moro to not just be good but to excel – to excel in school, to excel in life – because that is the only way that we will be able to show that we are not *moklo*. That it is not true that we are monkeys, nor are we barbarians. We are survivors. We can overcome these challenges.” And excel she did, earning a bachelor’s degree cum laude as class valedictorian at Ateneo de Zamboanga University. She worked as an intensive care unit nurse abroad for two years, and then returned to the Philippines to become a government officer working on economic planning and social welfare.

Early in her career, she worked at the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA), the socio-economic planning lead agency of the Philippine government. There, she worked on an initiative supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which once advocated for establishing an independent state for Muslims in Mindanao. Around this time, she went back to Barangay Tictapul and discovered more about her family’s painful and tragic history. She learned how her mom had lost all her hard-earned property during the 1977 tragedy. Moreover, it hurts her more to learn how countless women and children were killed in their village.

Knowing more about the fate of her family and village motivated her to pursue a career in human rights lawyering, focusing on the rights of women and children. “I saw that while so many people experience human rights violations, women and children are often the most severely affected by the conditions that facilitate these violations, which include poverty, conflict, displacement, and trafficking,” she said.

*“We are survivors.
We can overcome these challenges.”*

In 2012, Laisa joined the International Visitor Leadership Program on Women and Justice as the sole delegate from the Philippines. Through this program, she saw how the United States was also fraught with gender and equality issues that its government has constantly sought to address. Through conversations with fellow IVLP participants, she learned that the challenges faced by Muslim women in the Philippines were also manifest in other countries and that there was much to be learned from each other on the ways their governments addressed these issues. She saw her story mirrored in those of her fellow participants.

Coming home from the IVLP with those stories and insights, she said, “I came home more confident and courageous. There were times when I made mistakes, but it helped me become more resilient. I am far from fearless because I still have many fears, but I am certain that I have become more courageous.” Armed with a heightened sense of courage, she helped establish the Commission on Human Rights-ARMM Regional Office in 2012 and served as its Officer-in-Charge-Director. There she worked on women’s rights, transitional justice, and reconciliation for children’s rights, among other measures to guarantee the protection of marginalized groups in the region. She then served as the first chairperson of the Regional Human Rights Commission.



Later on, she would eventually serve as the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) government, BARMM’s precursor, while also serving as the Regional Executive Secretary. She was appointed as a Member of the Parliament and became the Minority Floor Leader in BARMM’s Bangsamoro Transition Authority in 2019.

Laisa also co-founded a nonprofit organization through the Bangsamoro Lawyers’ Network, alongside Moro lawyers who handled cases of human rights violations against minority groups on a pro-bono basis. At the same time, her group Nisa ul-Haqq Fi Bangsamoro, or Women for Justice in the Bangsamoro, worked on advancing women’s and children’s rights in the region.

Advocating for human rights and improving the welfare of the people in the Bangsamoro region came with some sacrifices for Laisa. For one, she had to relocate her whole family from an established life in Zamboanga City to Cotabato City. There was also the delicate task of balancing family responsibilities and the demands of the work. She recognizes the limits of her impact, as she acknowledges that “even beyond my lifetime, we will not be able to resolve all of the issues that have been plaguing the Bangsamoro.” Despite this, she affirms that it will be her lifelong mission to push for significant progress for the welfare of the people and human rights in the Bangsamoro region.

Inclusive Education Hero



**Dennis
Magbanua, FSC**

President, De La Salle College of
St. Benilde (2013-2019)
2017 Inclusive Higher Education

NO LEARNER GETS LEFT BEHIND, even in higher education. For Brother Dennis Magbanua and the De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde administrators, educational institutions should be responsive and inclusive. He has been working to make this a reality since 1988, striving to promote inclusive programs in Benilde and other Philippine higher education institutions that cater to students from low-income families and with special needs. In 2017, Benilde went further by setting up the Center for Inclusive Education (CIE) to assist other educational institutions in providing inclusive education. That same year, Brother Dennis and the Benilde team were invited to participate in the IVLP on Inclusion for Higher Education.

Describing the inclusive nature of American educational institutions and organizations, Brother Dennis said, “What impressed me the most was one University’s program where they printed in Braille all the textbooks that a blind student would need in his or her course.” The unspoken philosophy of inclusiveness in U.S. universities moved him. He learned, “No one has to pay extra just because he or she has a form of disability.”

Disability should not make a person pay more than anyone else. It has changed my old worldview that, because persons with disabilities [need] extra services or requirements, they will have to find a way to pay for these. If we, however, operated with Universal Design in planning, practice, implementation, or construction, then no person with a disability will need to pay more than anybody else.”

Brother Dennis’s IVLP experience inspired him to have dogged optimism amidst the challenge of making higher education institutions genuinely inclusive. “I first thought that we could only do so [much] about inclusion in Higher Education. My IVLP experience has shown me that there are so many roads to take in this journey to make education accessible to those who have special needs,” he said.

We Deserve Better



**Milwida
Guevarra**

President, Synergeia Foundation
1985 Individual Project

DR. MILWIDA M. GUEVARRA, President of the Synergeia Foundation, is no stranger to the importance of smart policies and interventions for development. Committed to helping local governments provide quality education to children and improve the overall development of their communities, her advocacy is anchored firmly in the importance of empowering citizens to elect great leaders.

“We deserve better.” This has always been her mantra when it comes to demanding accountability from public servants.

Her experience with the IVLP way back in 1985 has greatly influenced her advocacy, work, and life. “My IVLP experience prepared me for my work on reforming the tax system. The year following, I joined the Department of Finance and worked with Secretary Jaime V. Ongpin in formulating the Comprehensive Tax Reform Program. I was greatly helped by my meetings with economists from Brookings, Syracuse University, the U.S. Senate, and the IMF (International Monetary Fund),” she recalled.

On a personal level, she also looked back on the moments she distinctly remembered of people helping her during her visit. These acts of kindness ignited a sense of volunteerism in her.

Alongside building a personal hunger and discipline for conducting research in designing any policy and capacity building program, Dr. Milwida also takes pride in sharing her successes of being an IVLP alumna as a remarkable chapter in the story of her life as a public servant — going beyond the academic and into the communities.



Legislating FOR Progress

Ralph
Recto

Senate President Pro Tempore,
18th Congress of the Philippines
1993 The Role of Congress within
the U.S. Political System

FRESHLY ELECTED the youngest member of the 9th Congress at 28 years old, then-Congressman Ralph Recto was selected to participate in the IVLP. Now a three-term senator, Senator Recto firmly believes that his IVLP experience continues to influence his work today.

Senator Recto has been involved in legislation and advocacy work since 1992, when he began as a young and talented Congressman of the 4th District of Batangas. Serving three terms in the House of Representatives, three terms in the Senate, and a stint as Director General of the National Economic and Development Authority, Senator Recto is known for his competence, compassion, and diligence, especially when challenged by social and economic development issues.

“Providing more opportunity for our people — that’s what we do in so far as legislation and advocacy work is concerned. That is why we passed certain laws to give opportunity for people to get

educated, to be able to earn a living, to get work, to see a doctor when they are sick,” shared Senator Recto about his government career and advocacy work.

Creating laws to provide these opportunities is an arduous endeavor. Proposed laws go through tedious policy development processes that are subject to different ideologies, critical thinking, and careful judgment from the side of policymakers. Legislators, too, need opportunities to expand their perspectives when designing policies. For Senator Recto, one of these opportunities arrived in his mailbox.

“I received a letter, when I was a member of Congress, inviting me to the IVLP. Unfortunately, I had to miss some sessions of congress to go to the U.S., but it was truly an eye-opener for me. I got to meet people from all over the world and visit probably more states than most Americans do,” shared Recto. He was part of a cohort of international legislators, executives, and development sector representatives for the 1993 IVLP on “The Role of Congress within the U.S. Political System.”

Recto and the rest of the cohort had the opportunity to participate in classes at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, interact with legislators in Washington D.C., and immerse themselves in urban and rural communities in Nebraska, Ohio, Michigan, and Florida.

During his travels across the United States, Senator Recto observed how Filipinos and Americans share a “love for democracy, freedom, and liberty [since] our system of government is very much the same.” Recto enriched his political worldview by engaging with his diverse cohort, including a Native American chieftain, a police officer investigating serial murder cases in New York, a politician from Pakistan, and a journalist from Turkey.

“Providing more opportunity for our people — that’s what we do in so far as legislation and advocacy work is concerned.”

“The IVLP experience is beneficial because it gives you perspective, where you take a look at the ideology and then compare it to where we are in the Philippines,” said Senator Recto. Noting how collectivist the Filipino culture is, he says there should be a balance between collective responsibility and individual responsibility in policymaking. “When we look at legislation, I look at [these different responsibilities], and how markets operate. I can take a more in-depth look because of that experience going to the United States [where] I was able to see the differences in ideologies and how it’s practiced there,” he said.

After his IVLP, Recto filed the Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act. The act was passed into law, creating the National Anti-Poverty Commission, the People’s Development Fund, and introducing policies on microfinance in the country. In addition, Senator Recto said that the IVLP helped enhance his community organizing, dialogue, and conflict resolution skills, sticking to a “two steps forward, one step back” thinking when developing policies. Coupled with continuous observations on the U.S. Congress’s policy debates, Senator Recto could integrate best practices into his legislative efforts until today, including his work on the Universal Healthcare Act and the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education.

“[I continue to observe] policy debates in the U.S. Congress up to this day, and based on what I know, I try to fit in best practices to my legislative work. So, all of that [relevant laws I authored], I would say, started 28 years ago when I participated in the IVLP. If you think about



it, it is all part of that experience,” said Senator Recto. Asked if there were any specific highlights in his IVLP that influenced his work, he said, “all of them were highlights, just visiting all those spaces. It is not one single activity but a combination of all of those experiences.”

Senator Recto’s IVLP experience continues to motivate his efforts to provide opportunities for Filipinos. “I’m glad to know that IVLP is already 80 years [worldwide], and I thank the U.S. government for providing us with this opportunity.” Hoping to extend this experience to other Filipino lawmakers, Senator Recto looks forward to more exchange programs in the future.





Making Democracy Work

**Jose Luis
“Chito” Gascon**

Chairperson, Commission on
Human Rights (2015-2021)
2001 Freedom and Democracy

JOSE LUIS GASCON, known by many as ‘Chito,’ has long championed democratic freedoms. From his early days as a student activist in the ‘80s protesting against the Marcos dictatorship to his current role as Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, Chito has been building and strengthening democracy.

He was the youngest framer of the 1987 Constitution, ushering in the country’s transition from dictatorship to democracy. Now, more than three decades later, Chito remains dedicated to making the Philippines’ hard-fought democracy flourish. “From my youth fighting against the dictatorship, I became the youngest member in the body that wrote the [1987] Constitution. After we removed the dictatorship, we needed to build a new society, a new democracy to guarantee freedom and human rights,” said Chito, who was only 22 years old at that time. “Since then, [my career] has been about making democracy work in different ways and forms.”

Chito worked in positions in both the government and non-government sector, where he dealt with human rights issues, democratic consolidation, and conflict resolution. He was the youngest member of the 8th Philippine Congress. He helped pass landmark legislation that institutionalized youth participation in government (Sangguniang Kabataan) and sought protection for children who experienced abuse. He served as Undersecretary of the Department of Education during the Arroyo administration and Undersecretary for Political Affairs under the Aquino administration. Chito was also involved in peace negotiations and conflict transformation for several secessionist movements. In addition, Chito has worked with think tanks, legal assistance groups, and civil society organizations outside of the government sector. He served as the Executive Director of the National Institute for Policy Studies (NIPS).

While serving NIPS, Chito was nominated as the Ninoy Aquino Awardee for Public Service in 2001 and participated in the IVLP the same year. Because he was the only participant and could tailor-fit his itinerary to what he wanted to learn, Chito’s experience in the IVLP was unique. During his three-week program, Chito met representatives of organizations that focused on different aspects

of American democracy. These included human rights-focused nonprofit organizations in Washington D.C., conflict resolution and peace negotiation think tanks in Boston, and an election administration office in Phoenix, Arizona.

The visits to Atlanta and Memphis, however, were the most memorable. “Atlanta and Memphis are still vivid to me. One of the key moments of my [IVLP] journey was when I tried to follow the footsteps of Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK) — the physical footsteps, not the literal [because] I can never fill his shoes — I have always believed in his advocacy and approach in non-violent resistance,” said Chito. In Atlanta, where MLK began his public life as a pastor, Chito visited the MLK memorial shrine. In Memphis, Chito visited the Lorraine Motel, the site of MLK’s assassination. “In a sense, my IVLP experience was my pilgrimage trying to appreciate and fully take in the meaning of Martin Luther King’s journey and the struggle for civil rights,” said Chito. He also met Arun Gandhi in Memphis. Gandhi is the founder of the Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence and the grandson of democracy icon Mahatma Gandhi whom Chito also admired.

“The experience of meeting counterparts who are doing the same thing but in a different country and a different context, it says that you are on the right track.”

In terms of cultural exposure, Chito appreciates the warmth and sincerity of the American people. “Whether they are people in suits or people you meet in the streets, you can immediately experience their warmth, candidness, openness, and truthfulness,” he recalled, “and I think that rubbed off on me, and I brought that here. People back home in Asia think I am very brash, but it is not about being brash. It is just about setting aside or breaking the veils because you lose time if the veils are there. So, you get to the point, and that’s what I do.”

His IVLP program is not the only U.S. experience Chito has had. However, this customized learning tour allowed him to get up close and personal with how his American counterparts are navigating the dynamics between civil society and the state. “Many of the things that I did in IVLP were things that I was already doing,” he said, “so essentially, what it provided were reinforcement and encouragement. The experience of meeting counterparts who are doing the same thing but in a different country and a different context. It says that you are on the right track. You are not getting lost in the world [and that] you are part of a community of practitioners.”



A few years after his IVLP, Chito became a Democracy Fellow at Stanford University and a fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in Washington, D.C. In both fellowships, he immersed himself into concepts and the practices of democracy while also convincing program administrators to reinvest and allocate funds to strengthen Philippine democracy. “I would not have been able to [convince them] if I did not have my earlier public diplomacy experience with IVLP. So, when I did the IVLP in 2001, six years earlier, I moved around, went to the states, went to the house of representatives..., and they got me to sit down and to talk, to inform people who might have an interest in the Philippines,” recalled Chito. “My IVLP program helped prepare me for my Stanford and NED fellowships,” he added.

Today, more than 20 years after his IVLP, Chito continues to advocate for democratic approaches and practices. As Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, he not only defends victims and holds violators accountable, but he also emphasizes the importance of learning from history and educating the new generation to uphold democracy. Inspired by the Lorraine Motel that later became the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Chito leads the Philippines’ human rights museum and memorial establishment.

“Much of the inspiration I have for putting this project is what I saw in Memphis,” said Chito. There will be an inauguration of the human rights museum and memorial during the 50th anniversary of the Martial Law declaration on September 21, 2022. “The museum is, in a way, partially inspired by my IVLP experience because it will be a memorial commemorating the struggle of the Filipinos against the Marcos dictatorship, just as we have the MLK civil rights museum in the United States,” he added.

Chito hopes that the democracy they fought for in the 1980s thrives today and beyond with the museum project and his advocacies in human rights and citizen participation.



**Ma. Yvette
Tamayo-Coronel**

Assistant State Prosecutor,
Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking,
Department of Justice
2019 Combating Trafficking in Persons

ADDRESSING HUMAN TRAFFICKING requires a holistic strategy that addresses how and why it exists. Policymaking is key to eliminating modern-day slavery, which occupies the everyday life of Ma. Yvette Coronel, an Assistant State Prosecutor at the Department of Justice. Starting as a staff lawyer for the Undersecretary-in-Charge of the Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) in 2012, she has fastidiously fought human trafficking in the Philippines: from proposing specific policies, supervising technical groups, designing and implementing programs and projects, to giving lectures to raise awareness of the problem.

Vital to Yvette's work is learning about the global trends and best practices in combating human trafficking and applying them in the Philippines wherever possible. From her IVLP experience, she says, "Sharing of ideas from the Trafficking in Persons Office [in the State Department] was particularly rewarding. I learned about the principles to guide government action to combat human trafficking in global supply chains, which became the backbone of the new policy thrust of IACAT to develop and implement measures to identify and reduce the risk of human trafficking in government procurement supply chains. The policy thrust will also provide a basis for statutory reporting requirements for industries and companies operating in the Philippines."

Combating MODERN DAY Slavery



Besides policies, she noted from her IVLP best practices on database management, data analysis, and case management strategies for prosecuting and investigating extreme child abuse cases. Her exposure to Dallas Children's Advocacy Center provided her with ideas on how IACAT can operate its newly-launched TIP (Tahanan ng Inyong Pag-Asa) Center, a facility exclusive for children survivors of human trafficking.

Past the technical domain, her IVLP experience shed light on how the American and Filipino cultures are alike and different. "The love for democracy and free speech plays a central role in both cultures," she says. "Civic engagement plays a big role in shaping policies and volunteerism at the community level, and I would love to see this being developed more here in our country."

Human trafficking is still a global issue that persists today. However, advocates like Yvette are also gaining a broader worldview, increasing their competencies, and strengthening their resolve to free people from modern-day slavery.

Similarities TIE US Together



**Rene Augusto
Verceluz
Saguisag, Sr.**

Ex-Chair, Movement of Attorneys
for Brotherhood, Integrity &
Nationalism, Inc. (MABINI)
Teacher, San Beda Law
1982 Human Rights

ATTY. RENE SAGUISAG is known for his long, storied career advocating for human rights through civil society, press, academe, and government. In 1972, Atty. Saguisag was one of the leading opposition figures to the Martial Law regime in the Philippines. A few years later, he joined the Free Legal Assistance Group (FLAG) in 1977. Then, in 1988, he co-founded the Movement of Attorneys for Brotherhood, Integrity & Nationalism, Inc. (MABINI) to take stands on national issues. Today, as a professor, columnist, and lawyer, Atty. Saguisag still actively advocates for human rights in the Philippines.

In 1982, Atty. Saguisag participated in an IVLP on human rights, which allowed him to arrange meetings with people he wanted to meet in the United States. During this time, he met with influential Filipino figures, such as Jovito Salonga, Raul Daza, Sergio Osmeña, Sonny Alvarez, and Walden Bello, who were in the U.S. But he said the highlight was "maybe meeting with the Aquinos in Boston—a certain Ninoy, and his 'housewife.' That was the only time he [Ninoy] and I met. The [housewife] candidate, then President-elect Cory Aquino, picked me as her spokesperson."

Atty. Saguisag was not new to the United States, having studied at Harvard Law School, worked for an American law firm, and traveled across America by bus in the 1960s. These experiences helped familiarize him with the similarities and differences between the U.S. and the Philippines. Looking back on his IVLP experience, however, Atty. Saguisag said it "sharpened" his "appreciation of the nuances of the American way, especially the commitment to democracy, free speech, fair play and love of sports."

Lastly, he said his experience taught him that both countries have undergirding similarities that tie them together. "Lots of similarities in politics, basic education, sports, music, etc. We are both libertarians, presidential, and Hollywood fans; in taste, fast food consumers and NBA fanatics," he said.



A Step Closer TO Liberation

**Naomi
Fontanos**

Executive Director,
Gender and Development Advocates Filipinas
2015 Preventing and Responding to Bias-Motivated
Violence Against the LGBT Community

SHE FIGHTS FOR what most people take for granted. Naomi Fontanos has spent a significant portion of her life assisting the LGBTQI community in the Philippines through human rights and social justice efforts. “LGBTQI people around the world,” she says, “continue to face discrimination, stigma, and violence, both off and online.” Now the Executive Director of the non-profit Gender and Development Advocates (GANDA) Filipinas, Naomi fights for profound structural change in the Filipino citizenry amidst a conservative culture.

Naomi’s IVLP included participating in the 11th annual New York City Trans March on June 26, 2015. The event sought to spread awareness of racial and social injustice at the hands of both public and private institutions. It coincided with the 2015 Supreme Court decision on marriage equality. “While...I experienced deep solidarity with the [trans and gender non-conforming] (TGNC) and POC community at the march,” she recollects, “I also couldn’t help but feel invisible at that moment.” The lack of [media] coverage to the Trans March served as a cold reminder of the long road ahead for TGNC people worldwide.”

Naomi’s visit to the American South showed her the most pressing problem: the built-in systemic oppression in government structures and processes. Her findings of “social justice and human rights [as] intersectional issues” require society to come together and “change structures of inequality” in their countries. Thankfully, this is where close-knit communities get to shine. Reminiscent of the Filipino bayanihan spirit, these in-groups within the United States were a stark contrast to an otherwise highly individualistic culture. “There is a lot more community caring happening at the grassroots level than what American culture is usually credited for,” she explains.

“My IVLP experience is a constant reminder of the power of collective struggle to [affect] change,” Naomi said. Strength in numbers is an ever-true strategy, and an ever-increasing understanding of these marginalized groups brings them one step closer to liberation.





**Marites
Dañguilan Vitug**

Editor-at-Large, Rappler
1985 International Relations and
Foreign Policy
2002 Print Journalism

WHEN MARITES VITUG ENTERED the University of the Philippines, she was not passionate about becoming a journalist. She found broadcast communication required fewest courses on mathematic and statistics; It was a logical decision for someone with a fear of numbers. Today, she has become a trailblazer in investigative journalism, and the author of numerous books on Philippine politics and justice.

A journalist for more than three decades, she finds journalism gratifying for different reasons. “I love the adrenaline that goes with daily reporting, the fulfillment of chronicling the highs and lows of politics, and yes, the byline,” she says. On a larger scale, Marites believes journalism should serve the public interest. “It is [in] being able to inform the readers, so they are able to make wise decisions. This, in itself, is a kind of public service.” Instilling this purpose dates back to the early 1980s when she was still writing reports on industry. As the country grappled with turmoil—and economy and business intertwined with politics—her publisher started a section on political news. The assassination of Ninoy Aquino in 1983 propelled her into daily political reporting. “I volunteered to cover politics, from the parliament of the streets, to the formal parliament, to the military which had rumblings from a group of rebel soldiers.”

Journalism is Public Service

Since then, she has penned thought-provoking stories that give readers a window into national events. In 1984, she was the first journalist to cover the formation of Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM), a rebel group of military officers. More recently, she wrote *Rock Solid*, the first book to document how the Philippines won its maritime case against China.

Investigative journalism on sociopolitical issues entails risk as much as fulfillment. After uncovering the plunder of Palawan’s forests in the 1990s, she was sued for libel. She also faced libel charges for her book *Shadow of Doubt*, the first book on the inner workings of the highest court in the Philippines.

With her knowledge about the local setting and the worldview provided by her IVLP experience, her journalism acumen increased. “My IVLP experience opened my mind to the various actors and influences at work in policy-making in the U.S., showing that the U.S. government is not a monolith,” she said. “What is impressive is the number of think tanks, the amount of research, data, and insights they produce. I wish we had a more robust think tank sector here.” Traveling to countries like the United States not only made her reporting “less parochial” but also enabled her to learn about other peoples and cultures.

As a young journalist in the 1980s, her first IVLP was mind-blowing as she visited the Pentagon, State Department, and other government offices—all of which she was covering from afar while reporting on Philippine-U.S. relations. She noted, “My IVLP opened doors which reading alone would not have given: meeting people, immersing, even if only for weeks in the world’s model democracy at the time.”

Marites has witnessed a multitude of changes. Yet, while journalism adapts to the times, she believes the basics remain. “There is no substitute for hard work, on-the-ground reporting, accuracy, and fairness.”



Melanie Reyes, DSD

Chairperson, Department of International Studies,
Miriam College
Gender and Development Program Head,
Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College
2018 Women in Politics and Civil Society

FROM Shared Experiences TO Collective Action

True to her word, Melanie is actively engaged in these collective strategies in multiple capacities. As the Gender and Development Program Head of the Women and Gender Institute of Miriam College, she worked with local and international groups on legislative advocacy, research, and capacity building on a wide range of gender and development issues. As a member of the National Gender Resource Pool of the Philippine Commission on Women, she also provides training for government agencies, local governments, and academic institutions on gender-related concerns. As an IVLP alumna, she often serves as a resource person for U.S. Embassy programs. She has remained in touch with her IVLP colleagues to deliver virtual programs on various contemporary global issues.

Leveraging the networks she gained from IVLP and other programs, Melanie works tirelessly with stakeholders to achieve a shared desire – equality for all.

MELANIE REYES PARTICIPATED in the IVLP with other gender equality advocates from different parts of the world. She came home affirming what she knew all along – no matter where women are, they share similar experiences of oppression. “We all came from different contexts and culture[s] but shared similar experiences of abuse, discrimination, oppression, subordination, and marginalization, which became the common ties that united us all together,” she recalls of her international colleagues. Her IVLP experience highlighted the intersectionality of gender inequality across borders, be it in the form of: violence against women, gender pay gap, underrepresentation, access to social services, or labor participation.

In this collective experience of marginalization, Melanie believes the response should also be collective. “[Improving the conditions of women globally] should be built on women’s solidarity, [through] exercising one’s agency, building relationships not only among women but also with men, investing in research and most importantly, cultivating or mentoring young blood,” she declares.





**Ellen
Tordesillas**

President, VERA Files
1986 Journalism in the United States

ELLEN TORDESILLAS, a pre-Martial Law journalist, witnessed the fall and rebirth of Philippine media. From using typewriters to adapting digital technologies, operating underground to mainstream reportage, and witnessing the threats to press freedom throughout the years—Ellen has seen it all. As a veteran journalist who experienced the growing pains of Philippine media, she works hard to raise the level of Philippine journalism and protect its role in a democratic society.

Ellen started as a magazine reporter, but during the Martial Law years she joined Malaya, an alternative newspaper operating underground, to offer a critical view of the government. “We were accused of being biased against Marcos, but we were giving balance,” says Ellen to highlight the media’s role as a government watchdog. At Malaya, she covered the education beat to report on the issues faced by students and teachers while also dealing with harassment towards journalists.

When democracy and the free press were restored in 1986, Ellen knew that she and other journalists were at a crossroad. How could Philippine media thrive from that point? Then, Ellen joined a small group of mid-career Filipino journalists for a six-week IVLP to get exposure to and learn about the American media landscape.

Advocating FOR THE Truth

“[The IVLP] was intelligently designed,” said Ellen as she recalled the highlights of the coast-to-coast trip. Her trip included White House and Pentagon press briefings, discussions with American journalists who covered the Philippine’s People Power Revolution, and immersions in American media companies such as the Washington Times, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, and Chicago Tribune. Ellen and her cohort also covered the U.S. state visit of newly-installed Philippine president Corazon Aquino as she strengthened bilateral relations between the two countries. Aside from attending official meetings, the group also visited rural communities, elementary schools, and tourist attractions to experience American society and culture. The eventful six-week IVLP did not end there though. Their final stop was a visit to the Commander in Chief Pacific Fleet Headquarters in Honolulu and an interview with the Marcoses (who were in Hawaii at the time).

Ellen says the IVLP was an eye-opener that reaffirmed her beliefs on responsible journalism. While Philippine and American media have differences in operational capacities and issues being covered, Ellen and her fellow journalists got a clearer picture of the media’s role in a democracy. “It reinforced my stand on freedom of the press—that the media can only thrive in a democracy and that there is no democracy without a free press,” she said.

It has been 35 years since Ellen participated in IVLP, her first international trip. Nevertheless, she clearly remembers the highlights of that eventful trip and why she went there in the first place—to raise the level of Philippine journalism and protect its role in a democracy. Today, Ellen lives up to this mission through her opinion pieces and VERA Files, a nonprofit media organization she co-founded in 2008 to advance journalistic excellence by developing media products and training journalists.

To younger and future journalists, she offers this wisdom: “Always go back to the basics of journalism: accuracy, fairness, humaneness, and accountability... You empower people with information, and it is up to them to make decisions. Our only advocacy is for the truth.”



Just Judgment

**Jerlie Luis
Requerme**

Presiding Judge, 3rd Municipal Circuit Trial
Court, Impasug-ong, Sumilao, Bukidnon
2014 U.S. Foreign Policy and Human Rights

THE PHILIPPINE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM has five components: community, law enforcement, prosecution, courts, and correctional institutions. Its notoriety for slow justice cannot be attributed solely to one pillar. An example is the glaring imbalance of numbers between judges and detainees. Even so, hope glimmers with judges like Jerlie Requerme, a trial court judge in the south of the Philippines.

Competence is only one dimension in delivering swift justice — character is equally important. Recognizing how the law is multifaceted, she advocates for women and children’s rights, good governance and transparency, environment, and character-driven leadership. Her advocacy includes indigenous people, including the seven indigenous groups in Bukidnon. Empowerment through sustainable livelihood and education enables them, among others, to better care for their land and environment. Her participation in the IVLP widened the options she can use to better serve as a judge.

“In Ohio, thorough intake procedure and presence of court personnel prevent delays during the arraignment of the accused,” Judge Jerlie recalls. “Their records were already forwarded to the court before the hearing.” She also witnessed speedy justice unfold through a hearing that used closed-circuit television (CCTV) from jail to the court. Early on, the accused can enter a plea, or cases can be terminated. Working in a remote area, she has adopted this practice to help ensure vulnerable populations access legal services. Finally, her IVLP experience allowed her to rethink her perspective on the Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) coverage. Now, she believes that men can also be victims, and that a law should also be enacted to protect them.

She knows that one person alone cannot solve all societal ills and injustices. One person, however, can “cast a stone to create ripples of inspiration that propel others also to create positive changes.” Hope remains for the Philippines justice system, with judges like Jerlie driven by solid principles and an expanded worldview.



Unmasking Truths

**Jessica
Soho**

Broadcast Journalist,
GMA News and Public Affairs
1988 Communications

KNOWN FOR HER GUTS, prowess as a reporter, and passion for unveiling the hard truths of society, Jessica Soho traveled an arduous road before becoming an award-winning journalist.

Of course, now her name is well-known, especially for her defense and military coverage, news magazine programs, and human-interest stories. Working in the media sector for 36 years, Jessica started as a reporter covering historical events as early as the EDSA Revolution in the 1980s.

“I remember about ten coup attempts, and aside from the usual problems that the country had like the rebellions from the left and also in the Southern Philippines, there were also rebellions from the rightist rebels,” Jessica shared.

Getting more than just a glimpse of what was happening in the country, Jessica slowly started making a name for herself as she covered domestic political struggles, especially in Mindanao, where many unpredictable events occur. As she built her skills and gained recognition, she worked her way up to hosting news programs, eventually becoming the head of the newsroom.

When asked about her passion and advocacy, the veteran journalist firmly stated, “I have no other advocacy, but the truth. That’s always been my advocacy. There’s no better time to advocate for the truth than now.”

“Of course, we all want to have a better world – I’m all for those causes. But I never really had time to devote to one particular cause aside from journalism. If you can call journalism a cause, aside from it being my calling or my vocation,” Jessica said.

Visiting the United States was a lifelong dream, so when Jessica was selected for the IVLP, she was absolutely thrilled. Aside from stepping foot on historic U.S. landmarks, the reporter was able to see firsthand the production process of the world’s best networks, including CBS, ABC, and NBC.

“Ang gawang experience niya kasi (It was a great experience) because all of my childhood dreams [came true], at the same time because I’m also professionally working. Then I get this chance to visit all these networks and interact with American journalists, broadcasters and find out how they do their jobs,” Jessica said. Hopping from New Mexico to Nebraska and then to Los Angeles, Jessica said she wouldn’t trade the experience for anything. “Para siyang (It was like) heaven-sent for me,” Jessica further cited that her IVLP experience was the biggest thrill of her life and merged all her dreams, including her desire to experience snow for the first time.

***“I have no other advocacy,
but the truth. That’s always been
my advocacy. There’s no better time
to advocate for the truth than now.”***



A notable aspect of IVLP for her was getting to know the program participants. Jessica treasures her interactions with her fellow journalists and broadcasters. She realized that despite differences in technology and equipment used in different countries, all the reporters she met shared the same values and mission.

Jessica’s trip also showed her the cultural differences between Filipinos and Americans, particularly in handling tasks. “Sila talaga pag trabaho, trabaho. Tayo, nahahaluan natin ng chika yung trabaho natin (For them, when work demands it, they will work on it. Filipinos, on the other hand, can still mix chitchats in our work). Sa kanila, talagang (For them), work is work,” Jessica said.

“The IVLP experience gave new meaning to the true value of a reporter’s work. Importante talaga itong ginagawa ko no. Kasi nakita ko na (What I’m doing is important because I have already seen) how they do it there,” Jessica said.

After the IVLP, Jessica was able to appreciate her craft in journalism even more. She said the experience made her realize that journalism is a vocation, and it shouldn’t limit a person to being task-oriented where one would only get the story and deliver the news.

Given a chance to situate vis-à-vis American journalists and broadcasters was an experience Jessica wouldn’t trade for anything in the world.



THE *World* Beyond THE *Lens*

*Rufino "Raffy"
Tima*

News Anchor and Senior News Producer,
GMA News and Public Affairs
2009 Citizen Participation in a Democracy

TECH-SAVVY JOURNALIST, producer, and presenter Raffy Tima has always been at the forefront of history as it unfolded. He is among those who pioneered the use of drones and 360 cameras in news coverage, which enabled him to ensure timely and accurate delivery of information to the public.

Raffy notes that the highlight of his exchange program was witnessing the first inauguration of President Barack Obama. He was taken aback when the program took them to visit homeless people living under Florida bridges.

"Most of them were released sex offenders and were now living in tents and makeshift houses. While I was aware that this situation existed in the United States, it was still a shock to see it in person," he said.

He further recalled reflecting on the presence of inequality regardless of how rich and powerful a country is. Raffy narrated, "I learned firsthand about the racism and the civil rights movement during our trip to Alabama. And from our other trips around three states, I learned that there will always be inequality, and the struggle to ameliorate it is absolutely worth fighting for."

During his trip, he realized the importance of transparency. "Before the program, I imagined that in a program like the IVLP, we would see only the best a country has to offer with everything painted in a positive light. We were able to see the beautiful parts of America and engage in open discussions on serious topics, including areas where the U.S. still has room for improvement.

According to Raffy, his IVLP experience left a lasting impact on him both professionally and personally.



Safe Spaces FOR *Children*

COMMITTED TO THE PROTECTION of the rights and interests of children, Atty. Tricia Clare Oco has taken on society's shared duty to provide safe spaces for children — environments free of violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse.

She has been advocating for children's rights since she was just a law student intern, and has continued to do so as a lawyer, focusing on juvenile justice issues, and in her current role as Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC). She remains committed to the cause for one simple reason: the "many children who are still denied their basic rights."

Despite the Philippines' progress protecting children, many continue to be shunned and silenced. "As an advocate, it is my duty to be their voice and help provide a better environment where they will have an opportunity to thrive and be their best selves," she said.

Atty. Tricia continued to learn the importance of programs that strengthen the juvenile justice system during her IVLP. "The court visits provided us with a concrete example of the significant impact of court modernization to be efficient and accessible to the public," she said.

She also recalled her visit to The Becket Academy, which made her understand the importance of rehabilitation institutions, programs, and the people involved — all demonstrating the dedication of a community to rehabilitating children and giving them "a second lease in life."



*Tricia
Clare Oco*

Executive Director,
Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council
2018 U.S. Juvenile Justice System

"The experience not only inspired me as I continue my advocacy, but also helped deepen my knowledge in viewing child rights and juvenile justice advocacy from a comparative and international perspective," she shared. Atty. Tricia hopes to apply her gained knowledge in the Philippine context.

Beyond professional knowledge, Atty. Tricia is thankful for the friendships she made with other IVLP alumni, especially those who "believe in the same philosophy and principles as (I) do."

"They remain my inspiration and source of encouragement as I do my advocacy work," she said.



AN *Advocate* *Through* AND *Through*

FROM A YOUNG AGE, Sheena has been an advocate against gender-based violence. Growing up with a childhood friend whose father was physically abusive, she would urge others who experienced similar abusive situations to get out of unhealthy relationships. “I could not bear the thought of abuse, particularly in a family setting,” she reflects.

Later, a neighbor who worked as a domestic helper in Singapore sent an SOS: she needed to escape her employers who locked her up, sexually abused her, and confiscated her passport. She immediately coordinated with the Gender Watch Against Violence and Exploitation, Inc. (GWAVE) that helped her neighbor to come home. Inspired by their work, Sheena became a student volunteer for GWAVE and was then hired before rising to the ranks as its Executive Director in 2011.

Because of her work at GWAVE, Sheena was invited to join the 2017 IVLP on Change Makers: Women in Social and Political Sectors. There, she met other gender advocates with whom she still engages today, saying: “I find it amazing and wonderful how, as a group, we are able to sustain a working and helping relationship.” When countries imposed COVID lockdowns, her cohort shared the same concerns of increased vulnerability for victims of gender-based violence and exchanged strategies to assist them during the pandemic. Despite their differences, Sheena says her cohort “takes strength and comfort in the fact that we share the same passion to make our world a much better place for both women and men.”



***Sheena
Alesna***

Former Executive Director of Gender Watch
Against Violence and Exploitation, Inc.
2017 Change Makers: Women in Social
and Political Sectors

Today, Sheena has transitioned from GWAVE to working as Clerk of Court in a Family Court in Dumaguete City. While she is no longer at the forefront of advocacy work, her mission against gender-based violence remains as clear today as when she was younger: “Women today must continue to strive hard to ensure that the gains won yesterday that we enjoy today will not be lost tomorrow. And now, more than ever, men have to [really] step up in taking action towards gender equality.”

Nurturing Communities

Committed to improving quality of life,
these alumni devote their lives and work to help
shape and nurture communities into inclusive,
sensitive, and empowered institutions.





Moving Forward WITH Culture

**“Kidlat Tahimik”
(Eric Oteyza de Guia)**

Philippine National Artist for Film
1984 Directing

VALUING HIS CULTURAL ROOTS and keeping a balance between development and culture, Kidlat Tahimik is a renowned filmmaker who wants to show the world that Filipinos can progress without drifting away from the traditions that make Filipinos unique.

Kidlat sees the beauty and value of Filipino Culture vividly. Although the country has evolved dramatically with globalization, he believes Filipinos should be proud of their pre-colonial origins.

A filmmaker, with a background as an economist, Kidlat said he shifted his professional field in order to become a more contributive citizen of the world.

“Kung hindi ako masaya bilang isang ekonomista (If I’m not happy as an economist), I should find where I can blossom as an individual and as a cultural being. I should not be a prisoner of my diploma,” the artist said about his decision to go back to theatrical arts. (Tahimik literally tore up his MBA diploma to facilitate the transition to becoming an artist.)

After spending six years working as an economist in the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), he returned to the Philippines to pursue his love for culture and filmmaking, Kidlat rekindled his passion and re-tooled his craft after awakening to the many cultural contradictions he recognized during his stint with the OECD in Paris.

Since his debut film “Perfumed Nightmare” which won the International Critics Prize in 1977, Kidlat has produced several low-budget independent films outside the mainstream blockbuster industry. These indie flicks earned him renown locally and internationally as the “Father of Filipino Independent Cinema” and as a “voice in the global Third Cinema” movement (which consciously avoided the formulas of Hollywood commercial movies and Soviet propaganda films.) It was during this time that he joined the IVLP.

Through the program, Kidlat visited the Sundance Institute where he met Nick Lizaso, a fellow independent filmmaker and today Chairman of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). Together, the two friends had a chance to observe storyboard development and interact with movie icons and mentors.

When he returned to the Philippines, Kidlat continued his film projects with added energy — strengthened by the spirit of indie film at Sundance.

“In 1979 I started my film about Magellan’s voyage, focusing on his Filipino slave, as the first circumnavigator in 1521. Attempting a historic film from our native POV took me 35 years to find an ending. Finally I submitted it to the Berlin Film Festival in 2015 where it won the Caligari Prize. Pero hanggang ngayon kinukutiting ko pa (But until now, I am still tinkering with it.) In this year 2021, the 500th anniversary of the first circling of the planet, I want to finish it,” Kidlat said.

“Culture serves both as a collective energizer for our people to progress materially and spiritually and also a collective preno—so we don’t repeat the sins of modernization against nature and mankind.”



Anchored on cultural independence, Kidlat said he wants Filipino culture to blossom and preserve its richness while resisting the global homogenization that tends to suppress local culture. His experience in the United States helped mirror to him why the country is regarded as the most “Americanized” country in Asia.

“Our balanced development means we must not lose our original Kapwa culture – the compassionate ways of our Lolos and Lolas — which includes the self in the other. This ancestral orientation (which he and his wife Katrin advocate by organizing international Kapwa conferences) must not fall victim to industrialization that fosters individualistic competition. This compassion of Kapwa balance is what the world is waiting for today.” It is for this advocacy that Kidlat Tahimik was awarded the National Artist Award.

Kidlat said it is now easier for him “to understand our special relationship with America and assert myself as a citizen without the frame of a clenched-fist artist. I am always applying the cultural preno (brake). Culture serves both as a collective energizer for our people to progress materially and spiritually and also a collective preno — so we don’t repeat the sins of modernization against nature and mankind. It’s finding this balance that has been my advocacy as an artist.”

After experiencing both American and Filipino culture, Kidlat wants to remind Filipinos that although our shrinking global village inevitably influences our way of living, we must still retain Filipino cultural assets while integrating new influences. “It’s not going back to the stone age.”

Kidlat believes that exposure to other cultures is a great help to understand ourselves before our careers can flourish, emphasizing that Filipinos should not abandon their cultural roots to keep up with the advances of other countries. Instead, they should use inspiration from our forebears’ Kapwa lifestyles to make progress more relevant, vibrant and humane.



Serial TO Social Entrepreneur

Pacita
“Chit” Juan

Founder, Echo Store
2008 Women and Entrepreneurship

“I ADVOCATE FOR WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT, business, coffee, and the environment. I cannot make one of them less than the other. They are equally important,” Pacita “Chit” Juan shared. Indeed, in the Philippines, Chit Juan has become a paragon of women’s empowerment, entrepreneurship, coffee, and environmental advocacy owing to her long and storied career of what she calls being a “serial and social entrepreneur.” Her four advocacies are showcased in her current business venture, the Echo Store. Founded by Chit and two other women, the Echo Store sells local, eco-friendly, and healthy products to promote small local business enterprises, particularly those owned by women. In Chit’s words, the store’s mission is to establish “a marketplace for all the women who don’t have access to markets.” She and her colleagues wanted to bring women enterprises to the newly evolved market.

Chit’s career as a serial entrepreneur started early in life, primarily influenced by her entrepreneurial family. She recalled, “I think that there was a big advantage when my parents did not look down on us when I was trying to earn a living in school. I enjoy selling ideas and things, and I guess it has become second nature since we started while we were young. During summers, we did not get used to watching TV at home. We either worked in my father’s office or found a summer job. For me, it was never working since I love

what I do, even [the] summer jobs I chose. So, if you like what you do, I believe that it is not considered work. That is where I got my entrepreneurial tendencies.”

From those beginnings, Chit ventured into multiple businesses. She set up a music lounge in a mall in Makati City, launched the successful coffee shop chain Figaro, the Binalot Fiesta food company, and now Echo Store. Despite her outstanding track record, however, Chit’s career as an entrepreneur also had its fair share of challenges, risks, trials, and errors. She recalled, “I have been through many start-ups, not all are successful. So, you just pick yourself up, brush off your knees and start again. I am a serial entrepreneur because there is always something that catches my fancy, not to say that you will be defocused. You do not stop at one business. You always find something related but evolving.”

But profit is not Chit’s only motivator for her businesses, as she also values opportunities to have a positive impact on the world. Along with her illustrious business career, Chit was heavily involved in development programs for women and the environment, often partnering with different civil society and nonprofit organizations to harmonize how businesses can earn profit while providing benefits to the community and the environment. Some key initiatives involved a

collaboration with the Peace and Equity Foundation and the Philippines Business for Social Progress to help women entrepreneurs gain skills and knowledge that would help them develop and produce products with competitive quality for the market. She then helped sell these products in her stores.

Eventually, Chit became involved with the Great Women program. Additionally, she formed the Echosi Foundation, a nonprofit organization that partnered with USAID, UN Women, Private Foundations Sunlife, NGCP, and the Shell Foundation. Chit’s work in the nonprofit sector sent her traveling across the country to train women entrepreneurs to improve their product quality and marketing strategies. Through training sessions, Chit continues to engage with an extensive network of women entrepreneurs. “[nonprofit organizations and government agencies] would come to us and collaborate with us,” Chit remarked, “because we have networks of weavers, coffee farmers, and food producers because of Echo Store.”

“I have been through many start-ups, not all are successful. So, you just pick up yourself, brush off your knees and start again.”

Around the time Chit and her business partners set up the Echo Store in 2008, a letter from the U.S. Ambassador to the Philippines arrived – an invitation to participate in the IVLP on Women and Entrepreneurship. She was excited about the prospect of traveling to the United States with a delegation of fellow women entrepreneurs and economic development advocates from different parts of the Philippines. Chit and other women entrepreneurs on the program traveled across America, from big cities like Washington, D.C. and New York to rural American towns, further enriching their already innovative ideas and exchanging best practices.

Chit fondly remembers their visits to government agencies and women-led businesses in the United States. “I learned how to collaborate with government agencies and other groups, about small business administration, how to get loans, among others. We even went to a farm where only one person was doing all the farm work, operating all the machines — and she is a woman.” She continued, “my eyes opened to a lot of possibilities that inspired my plans about Echo Store. I remembered that while my partners are busy setting up the store, I have been sending them pictures by email.” Upon returning to the Philippines, these experiences inspired Chit to approach Philippine government offices to help her business and to open partnerships with more organizations.



The group also visited schools and incubation labs that left her awestruck by the ideas and technologies showcased. “It was going to a different kind of graduate school. [Those] three weeks [were] like taking an executive program, and you are walking right through it. For me, that was so precious.” Chit remarked.

“In my personal life, [there is] pride [in] being one of the fellows, which I know is by invitation. Even state leaders have joined this program. It is as if you have graduated from a school of life. So, it is a good sneak peek of the American system of government as it was a sneak peek of how the government relates to everyday life in America.”

Recalling the program’s impact on her work, Chit continues, “when I came home, I was fearless to collaborate. We have to evolve our institutions. We have to level up. So now, we help design policies. We are not shy to suggest changes in policies. We were even approached by congressmen and women when they needed ideas for bills to file. It should come from the people and stakeholders,”

Today, Chit Juan runs social enterprises, sits on the board of nonprofit organizations, and continues to advocate for government policies that promote women’s entrepreneurship and empowerment. More than a dedicated entrepreneur, Chit is a committed advocate for the betterment of society and saving the environment.



Seeding Professionalism

*Diane Estephania
Montero Bagui*

Program Officer,
Forest Foundation Philippines
2018 NGO Management II

DIANE BAGUI IS PASSIOANTE about sustainable forest management for the benefit of all. She believes planting native species will increase forest cover, ensuring future generations' access to ecosystem services. In a parallel vein, she underscores that developing formal NGO education within the Philippines will allow the sector to continue thriving for generations.

"What I found fascinating [in my IVLP experience] is the fact that there are U.S. academic institutions that cater to nonprofit sector[s], which I deem lacking in the Philippines," Diane recounts of her meeting at the Nonprofit Center at La Salle University in Philadelphia. It is one of many U.S. academic centers offering formal education and capacity-building opportunities for the nonprofit sector. "While there may be short courses offered [on NGO Management in the Philippines], such are limited and very broad," she opines.

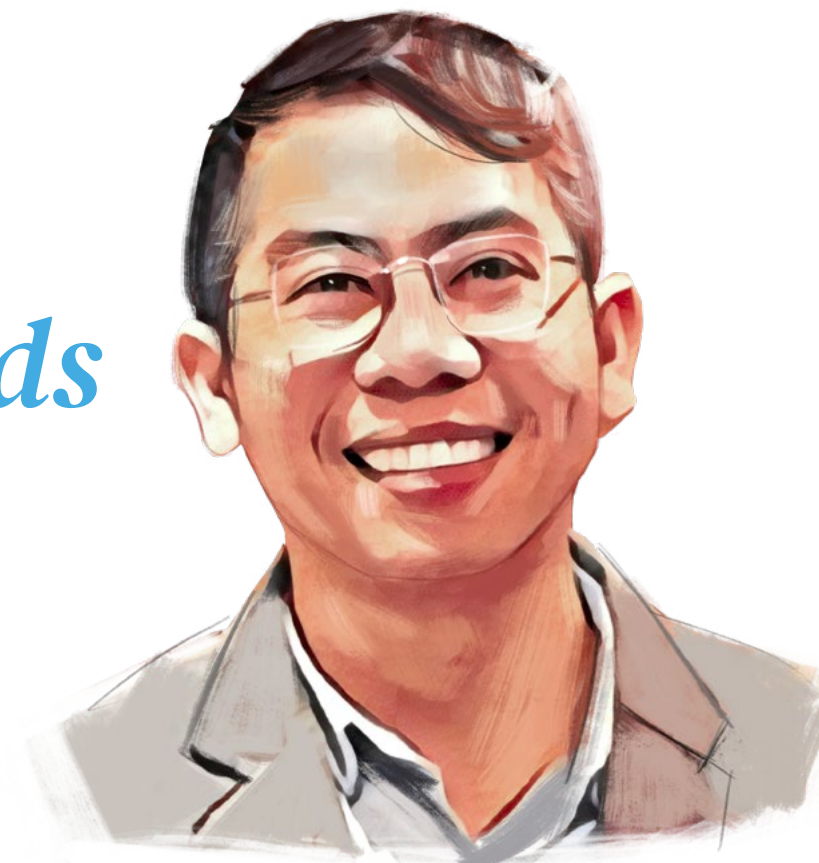
Upon completing her IVLP, Diane's organization supported a capacity enhancement project for Filipino nonprofit organization leaders, which included modules that amplified the knowledge she gained from her IVLP experience. She also integrated into her organization the working practices she learned from IVLP and shared them with partners through training and publications. "I hope that the academe will adopt the program so it can reach more practitioners and [inform] individuals that there is a career in NGO management."

Diane believes that NGO management is a learning process. She praises the passion of people engaged in different advocacies in the nonprofit sector but cautions that passion should be complemented with professionalism through continuing education. "There is a need to formalize and institutionalize processes to ensure day-to-day operations and to realize the vision, mission, and goals of NGOs." By seeding these concepts and practices in formal education, Diane hopes to equip nonprofit organizations to deliver better results for people and the environment.

Power OF Words

*Christopher
"Chris" Kingco*

Master Teacher I, Labuan Central School
2017 American English Instruction

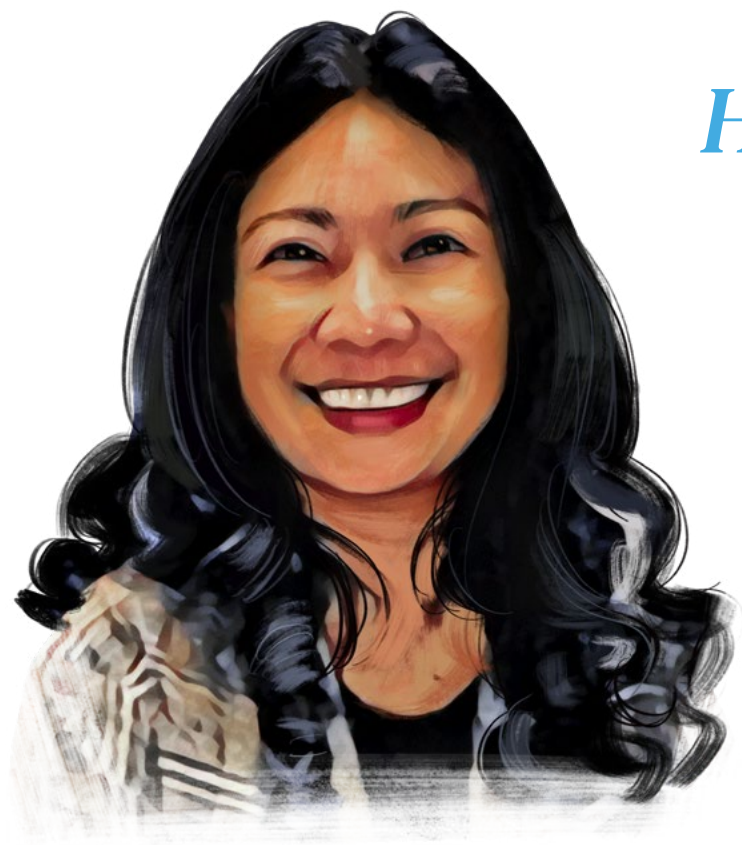


FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, Christopher "Chris" Kingco has taught English and writing to elementary school students and coached them for campus journalism and public speaking contests. Teaching in Labuan Central School in Zamboanga City, he sees his profession as a gratifying vocation of "molding the minds of Filipino learners" and "providing opportunities for growth and developing their talents." He believes every educator serves a vital role in molding the future of young people. "Every learner deserves a quality education that helps them develop their potential as a community builder," he says.

For Chris, with teaching comes learning. He feels that students and teachers equally need growth and life-long learning opportunities. The IVLP allowed him to gain new insights and teaching competencies from the United States, which he imparted to teachers and students to his community in Mindanao, where long-term conflicts persist. He remembers his one-month IVLP experience in detail, from the exhilaration of being chosen for the program, to visiting places he recognized from movies, to meeting people who made him feel at home in the United States. They visited government education offices, museums, and institutes and interacted with students and fellow

teachers at schools. He also engaged in a vibrant exchange of ideas and experiences with his fellow IVLP participants from other Asian countries about their teaching practices. These experiences led him to learn new methods for teaching here in the Philippines, including engaging teaching methods such as incorporating videos into teaching, using daily conversations, and using articles in newspapers to present lessons.

Since his return, Chris has been relentless in his pursuit to serve his community through education: helping children in Zamboanga and Basilan through literacy programs and conducting training programs for thousands of teachers in Mindanao on enhancing English teaching pedagogy. Chris plans to continue to sharpen minds and inculcate the power of words in students and teachers alike but this time, with more experience and a broader worldview. With a bolstered commitment to educating future leaders, he opines, "Education is the best weapon for building a peaceful community."



Honing GREAT WOMEN'S Business Potential

*Imelda
Romano Canuel*

Programs and Partnership Officer,
GREAT Women Philippines
Brand Partner Coordinator, Artefino
2018 Women Entrepreneurship

WORKING TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY and maximizing women's potential, Imelda Canuel partners with government offices, non-government organizations, social enterprises, and aid agencies to address the gaps in the value chain of women-led micro-enterprises.

Imelda says her experience with IVLP was enriching and transformative. "The sharing of experiences on the different topics like start-ups, innovation programs, mentorship, and entrepreneurship made the concepts practical, relatable and gave me a wide range of perspectives on the challenges and their application," she said.

Seeing a glimpse of how the United States supports women entrepreneurs, the Programs and Partnership Officer of GREAT Women Philippines said she realized that establishing the same business centers in the Philippines would significantly advance women's economic prowess, especially in rural areas.

On a personal level, Imelda said that the program influenced her to be more visible and to more broadly communicate her interventions to help more women sustainably grow their businesses.

"My IVLP experience has made me feel supported; it inspired me to grow and engage my curiosity," she said.

Imelda actively participates in U.S. government exchange alumni activities. She shared how these activities allow her to meet new people and broaden her understanding of her work, while engaging in possible partnerships and making innovative solutions.

As an alumna, she "look(s) forward to working with other alumni in creating an ecosystem that works towards a more sustainable and equitable world."

Strokes OF Change

*Guerrero
"AG" Saño*

Lead Artist, Art Atak
Board of Director, Teach Peace Build Peace Movement
2019 Promoting Social Change through the Arts



GUERRERO "AG" SAÑO attributes his life's work to an old camera he found at home. Repairing his father's discarded film camera sparked an interest in immortalizing the temporary and sharing images with the world. In 1999, he started honing his photography skills. Later that year, he joined an expedition team assembled by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to study the whales at the Babuyan Channel in the northernmost sea of the Philippines. Becoming the team photographer of WWF started AG's colorful journey in advocating for the protection of the environment and peace in Mindanao.

In 2010, AG picked up a paintbrush and led a street mural art campaign called Dolphins Love Freedom. "I discovered the rampant dolphin slaughters happening worldwide, and it sparked a desire in me to help put a stop to it," he said. He island-hopped across the Philippines to color street walls and saw how art could brighten up a community. This campaign led him to far-flung and sometimes dangerous places. He became a true activist in conflict-ridden areas, conducting "Art Atak" workshops and mural painting sessions with children, teachers, parents, and soldiers. "Those trips exposed me to a world unknown to most of us," AG said. "A teacher told me a grade school kid was killed in the crossfire on his way to school. Countless stories followed, and I felt the need to be more present in promoting peace." He joined and helped lead the Teach Peace Build Peace Movement to promote peace education wherever needed in the Philippines.

In 2019, AG joined the IVLP on Promoting Social Change through Art, an experience which solidified his belief that art can bring people together and change the world. He recounted, "In Los Angeles, we met two former inmates who are now teaching theater in the detention facility where they used to be incarcerated. They are the best examples of redemption in real life, and their mere presence conveyed hope." AG and his fellow IVLP participants from other countries also held a pop-up show in Miami, which showcased their different art forms to communicate unity in diversity. Through these interactions with fellow artists in the United States, AG said he "saw the similarities in life goals, concerns, and values." "So my view of cultures became more global. The similarities were so intense that I felt I was talking with fellow humans, not just people from another country," he said.

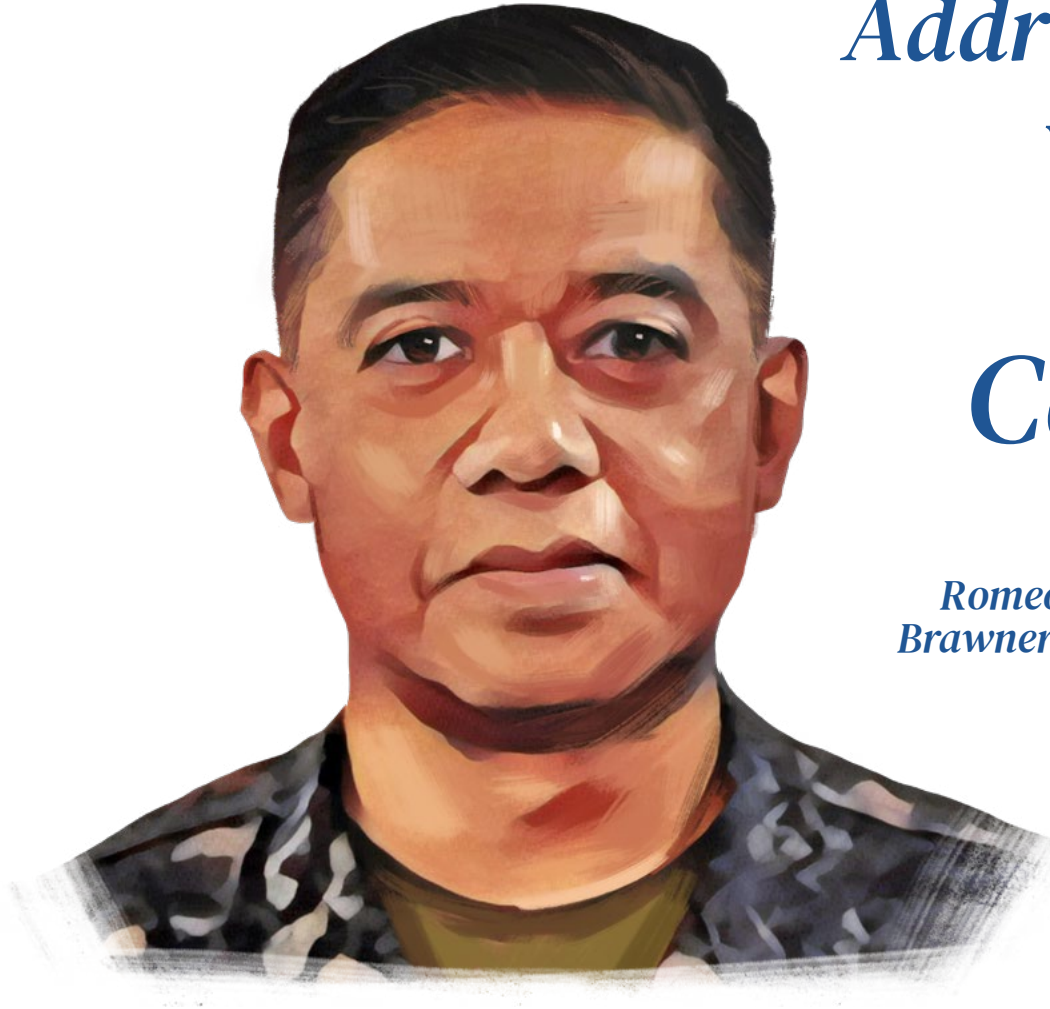
Eleven years after using a camera and a paintbrush as tools to make change, AG looks forward to conducting a global art caravan for climate action. He added, "I believe in the power of art to create a strong voice for the young generation to call for a world where nature and people thrive better."



Addressing Violence THROUGH Cooperation

Romeo
Brawner Jr.

Commander, 4th Infantry "Diamond" Division,
Philippine Army
2011, U.S. Foreign Policy: The Decision Making Process
2014, Cyber Security in the U.S.



"PEACE AND SECURITY are of utmost importance. Without these, businesses cannot thrive, education cannot flourish, politicians cannot govern, and the citizens cannot live progressively." This idea is where Major General Romeo Brawner Jr. anchors his purpose and mission as a military man and a citizen. General Brawner became famous as one of the leaders of the Philippine military forces who fought against ISIS affiliates in Marawi City in 2017. In 2019, he was appointed the Commandant of Cadets at the Philippine Military Academy to address hazing incidences at the military school. Currently, he focuses his work on two areas: Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (PCVE) and addressing violent behaviors.

General Brawner believes violent extremism is a global phenomenon that has reached the Philippines, not only in Marawi but also in large cities such as Davao, Baguio, and Metro Manila. He has deployed a nonviolent solution to counter and prevent violent extremism in Mindanao. Working with community stakeholders and international organizations, he worked on providing livelihoods for rebel returnees and victims. He learned that individuals join extremist groups because they offer a good income stream. "The problem is economic. So, the solution should also be. If you give them sustainable livelihood, they will not even think of joining the extremists because they would rather work and earn an honest living, than join a group

that puts their life at risk." Through the help of various collaborators like USAID and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the implementation of this strategy went full swing.

General Brawner participated in the IVLP twice. First in 2011, to learn about U.S. Foreign Policy decision-making, and again, in 2014, to learn about U.S. Cybersecurity. His IVLP experience deepened his sense of leadership and mission of peace. He was often the only military man in the group during the IVLP, so he cherished the diversity of views from his fellow participants. As he says, "I realized that we are all the same. We are human beings, and we still respect each other no matter where we come from and no matter what our backgrounds were." One of the essential lessons from his whole IVLP experience, he says, is that the "foreign policy of a country is dependent on its national interests. These national interests may be similar or entirely different among countries. But despite the uniqueness of our national interests and foreign policies, good international relations and cooperation should prevail."

"I realized that we are all the same. We are human beings, and we still respect each other no matter where we come from and no matter what our backgrounds were."

In his experience of addressing calamities and mitigating threats to peace and security, he opines that international cooperation "proved critical in the resolution of the conflict or the mitigation of the effects of calamities, even a pandemic." Having been on the ground during these calamities and conflicts, Brawner witnessed first-hand how aid came from different countries in the form of relief goods, doctors, equipment, and rescuers. However, he said intangible support in data, information sharing, and intelligence was also a vital collaboration between nations. He says, "I am grateful for the U.S. Forces when they were here. We were able to strike the enemy because of the intelligence that they shared with us. They gave us technical and intelligence support, and all these came from policies they formulated up there but placed into action by us on the ground."



After his assignment in Marawi City in 2019, the Secretary of Defense appointed him as the Commandant of Cadets at the Philippine Military Academy in Baguio City, where he oversees cadets' military training and character development. His marching orders were to address the hazing and improper behavior in the academy, which at that time lost a 20-year old cadet to hazing. As he says, this assignment is crucial because the academy trains the future leaders of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. "By eradicating hazing, we are developing cadets who will be future officers who will be respectful of the human rights of people. If we develop positive leadership, they will bring that with them as they become officers, and we will have a new breed of officers who will promote a more just and peaceful society," he asserts.

In his mission to promote peace and security, he learned that "hindi natin puwede sarilinin ang ating problema, (we cannot work on our problems in isolation), we need to cooperate." Coming from his IVLP experience, he asserts, "We have our own problems, but if we do not cooperate and help each other, more often, we will fail. If we help each other, then we can find a better solution for our problems."



Creating A CULTURE OF *Peace*

**Bai Rohaniza “Honey”
Sumndad-Usman**

Founding Chief Peace Mission Keeper,
Teach Peace Build Peace Movement
2018 Community Strategies for
Increasing Resiliency

FOR BAI ROHANIZA “Honey” Sumndad-Usman, peace is not just the absence of conflict; peace is a lifestyle. As the founder of the Teach Peace Build Peace Movement (TPBPM), Honey is committed to raising a generation of peace heroes where everyone becomes “a charismatic, visionary servant leader who has acquired peacebuilding values and skills and has accepted a mission and obligation of peacebuilding as a way of life.”

Honey experienced war and its adverse effects at an early age. When she was seven years old and living in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War, Honey vividly remembers explosions, missiles, and the daily routine of preparing for a possible chemical attack. Their school, which was adjacent to the Philippine Embassy, became an evacuation center for Filipinos who sought refuge in Riyadh from Iraq. Later, when Honey became a young professional, she interacted with children who suffered from armed conflict, discrimination, bullying, and neglect.

A first-hand experience in the Gulf War and children’s stories in conflict zones inspired Honey to found the Teach Peace Build Peace Movement or TPBPM. It is a nonprofit organization that protects children from being negatively influenced by different forms of violent narratives, such as living in conflict-afflicted areas. Aiming “To make every Filipino Child and Youth a Peace Hero”, the organization works to bring peace education out of the classroom and integrate it into children’s everyday lives using creative and innovative approaches in games, arts, and music. In addition, TPBPM works with

organizations focusing on education and interfaith, intercultural, and intergenerational engagements in peacebuilding. “Building a culture of peace should be seen as the core of humanity in response to the different forms of conflict and violence in the society. A kind of culture of peace that teaches about living harmoniously with oneself, with others, and with our environment,” Honey said.

In 2018, when Honey participated in the IVLP on Community Strategies for Increasing Resiliency, the meaning of Culture of Peace evolved for her. After engaging with fellow peace advocates and immersing in American institutions with best practices on resiliency, “I realized that the essence of community resiliency is creating a Culture of Peace where we all work together in nurturing [other] positive traditions.” Honey describes these other positive cultures in her experiences throughout the IVLP:

CULTURE OF SHARED RESPONSIBILITY: In a session about Federalism, Honey realized that each State promotes a culture of responsibility like paying for taxes and advocating for good governance, transparency and freedom of press. When every community practices this culture and each member understands that they have key roles, it can contribute to resilience and peace.

CULTURE OF LOVING: Honey remembers what officials from the City Government of Orlando said in their meeting: hatred breeds hatred, loved breeds love. When the city could have spiralled in hatred after the Orlando shootings, the community instead came

together and showed their love for one another. This culture of loving was also apparent in her meeting with the Dallas County Juvenile Department where officials treat juveniles as if they were their own children, showing them support and tapping their potential to become peaceful and productive members of society.

CULTURE OF EMPATHY: Pastor Jim Coffin of the Interfaith Council in Florida stressed the importance of trying to go through the experience of other persons and understanding the context they are coming from. At the University of Central Florida, they take empathy a bit further by actively seeking out who is missing in the conversations of the school and providing them with platforms to engage and nurture their innate peacefulness.

CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS CARING: In building resilience, Pastor Jim also stressed the need to continuously make everyone feel that someone cares, that they matter and are valued. Honey remembers this piece of advice from Pastor Jim: “In whatever ways you can show care, the point is to build a bridge, even in simple things like remembering their names.”

*“With all the tragic situations
happening in society, we need a
radical positive change.”*

CULTURE OF BUILDING GENUINE RELATIONSHIPS: At the Dallas Interfaith Council, they created a symbol, a place of welcome for people of different backgrounds and of various faiths to always remind everyone about the value of having genuine relationships. “They also reiterated that Faith is all about love; when it does not talk about love, then that is not Faith,” Honey recalls.

CULTURE OF COMPASSION AND SERVICE: Honey had an unforgettable visit at Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, a gang rehabilitation and re-entry program. Former gang members shared how they were abused and had no good role models growing up, and all they wanted was to be accepted and loved. Honey was moved: “It reinforced what TPBPM strongly believes in — the importance of providing a nurturing environment for children and youth, especially when they are living in a negative environment.”

CULTURE OF MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT, DIALOGUE, SENSITIVITY AND INCLUSIVITY: At All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Virginia, they value dialogue, sensitivity and engagement with people from all walks of life and

from different faiths. Honey recalls how ADAMS has developed programs for their younger members to show what it really means to be a Muslim – a person with so much love and compassion for every human being. “It inspired me to develop more learning resources for our Muslim children in the Philippines to teach them concrete ways how to practice Islam.”

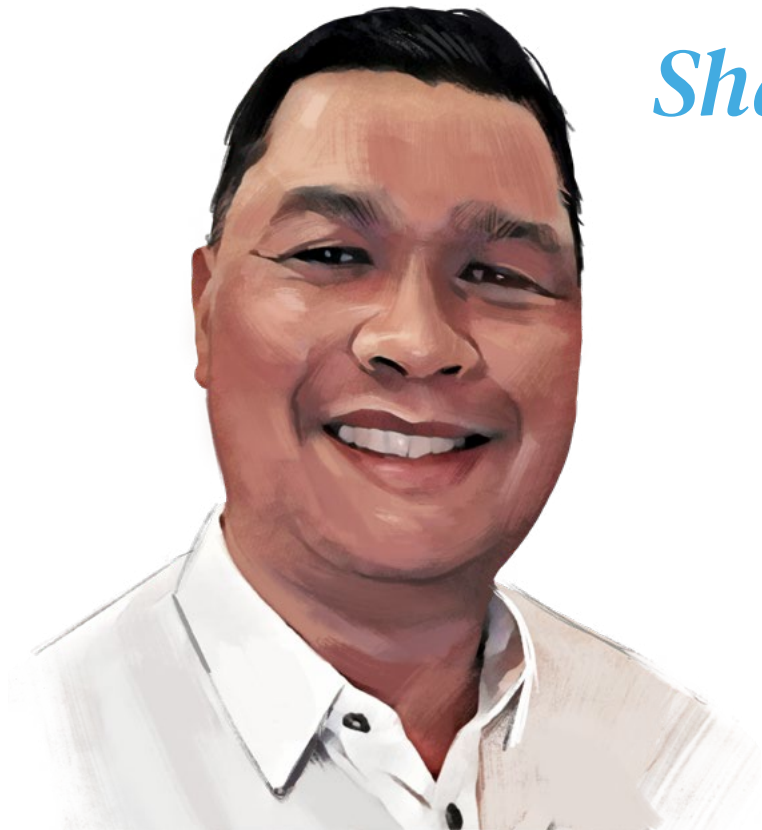
CULTURE OF THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: Honey was inspired by the Chief of Dearborn Police Department, an innovative leader whose focus was building mutual trust between the police force and the community through regular meetings and creative activities with schools. She was also introduced to the All Stars Project, an initiative to transform the lives of youth and poor communities through the developmental power of performance, which inspired her to expand TPBPM’s own Artists for Peace program.

CULTURE OF TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS: Honey remembers how Pastor Jim said that every person is superior at something and that everyone can learn from what others have to teach. She also had an effective teaching-learning experience from their IVLP liaison, Mr. Barry, who enhanced their knowledge on the history, culture and tradition of various U.S. States, and by creating a warm atmosphere in their cohort.

CULTURE OF THE HUMAN FAMILY: Honey believes in the concept of the human family, that everyone in the world is rooted in the same identity and should be regarded with respect and dignity. “This culture is significant in building resiliency because it is about the essence of humanity where we see one another as brothers and sisters. It will improve our subjective condition so we can see one another beyond color, race, religion, age and gender,” says Honey.

These ten cultures and positive traditions, enriched by her IVLP experience, have helped expand and concretize what Culture of Peace means for Honey. Since returning from IVLP, Honey continues to be a strong advocate and mover for intercultural, interfaith and intergenerational peace — only this time, with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the generation she wants to leave behind.

To teach peace and build peace, Honey declares: “With all the tragic situations happening in society, we need a radical positive change. [We need to] radically create a Culture of Peace that nurtures positive traditions to help form a strong, unified structure and foundation for a peaceful nation, a peaceful world...This is the kind of Culture that we should all live by and share with our brothers and sisters — one child, one family, one school and one community at a time.”



Shaping Society THROUGH *MILiteracy*

**Marco
Polo**

Professor, De La Salle University – Dasmarias
2019 Promoting Media Literacy through Education

AS AN EDUCATOR, Marco Polo has a vision of the Philippines as a media and information literate society. He is constantly working toward this goal. Over the past decade, he has helped train high school and college teachers, students, and working professionals on Media and Information Literacy (MIL). When he was invited to be part of an IVLP for MIL education, he saw this as a chance to see his advocacy through a new lens.

“The wide array of civil society organizations that we encountered was awe-inspiring (i.e., Aspen Institute, Pew Research Center, National Democratic Institute, Bill of Rights Institute, Center for Civic Engagement). The programs and projects they implement have global impact and are models for a country like the Philippines,” said Marco. Describing himself as a professional beggar (aka fundraiser), he added that these visits made him “appreciate the role of philanthropy in fueling a lot of these great programs.”

Marco also noted how MIL education in the U.S. is “inclusive and participatory of all major stakeholders.” He saw how MIL in the United States included both formal and informal school systems, and the strong involvement of media and professional organizations helping the country fight misinformation and disinformation. These, he said, were some of his biggest takeaways from the IVLP.

“Throughout the three weeks that I journeyed with colleagues in the IVLP, we got a sense and slice of American life. From catching a baseball game, watching a musical, getting “lost” in the city, to taking various modes of public transportation, visiting several churches, museums, and landmarks, the experience was enriching and life changing. Sometimes we felt like we were in the Amazing Race as we were constantly on the move. Rushing from one meeting to the next, trying to beat jet lag and homesickness,” said Marco, recalling how his IVLP experience with eight other Filipino MIL advocates went beyond professional and career enrichment.

Coming from the program, Marco took home several insights and ideas to improve MIL offerings in the country. In addition, his experience with the program has fueled his desire to work harder toward a more media-savvy society here at home.

Towards AN *Inclusive Business Environment*

PROMOTING NEW IDEAS in uplifting the lives of Filipinos, Maria Roxanne Lu strives to help the Philippines become an innovative member of the global community, particularly in the fields of business and human development.

As the Programs and Projects Director of the Makati Business Club, she has committed endless time and effort to further various initiatives. Her work promotes adopting a national e-payment system, gender diversity in companies, the passage of a Freedom of Information Law, and the crafting of bike lanes as a sustainable transport alternative. She imagines the Philippines as a model in the region for a fair, competitive, and inclusive business environment and strives to turn this vision into reality.

“The International Visitor Leadership Program is not just about the United States, but a global educational and networking program that creates understanding and connections,” Roxanne shared. She further highlighted how the IVLP experience aided her understanding of trade and business, and how it affects U.S. players.

The program also helped Roxanne identify the struggles and fears of many Americans, particularly those in the countryside, through her engagement with three-generation farming family members in Nebraska.



**Maria
Roxanne Lu**

Programs and Projects Director,
Makati Business Club
2018 International Trade

Apart from this, the director was also able to magnify the similarities between Filipinos and Americans. These include their love for family and elders, creativity in finding solutions amid limited resources, and giving value to history.

“My IVLP experience has made me more involved in my organization’s U.S.-Philippine bilateral relations work. Having a deeper understanding of their government and the views of the business sector, I became more confident in working with U.S. organizations and experts and in communicating with our American partners,” Roxanne shared.

Noting the numerous learning experiences that she gained from the program, Roxanne looks forward to initiating activities that would further strengthen the relationship between the United States and the Philippines.



Thirst FOR Knowledge

*Aaron Jed
Rabena*

Research Fellow, Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress
2019 Nations of the South China Sea: Sovereignty
and Rules-Based Order

HIS PASSION FOR RESEARCH led him to the opposite side of the world. As a research fellow in the Manila-based think-tank, Asia-Pacific Pathways to Progress, Aaron Rabena contributes to the body of knowledge on East Asian geopolitics, Chinese politics, and foreign policy. He strives to keep himself constantly abreast of developments in his areas of interest.

But there is a limit to how much a person can study in one place. Aaron welcomed the opportunity to join the IVLP in 2019, which introduced him to leading figures in his field. “The good thing about U.S. exchange programs is that it allows you to work or network with people who are the best or rising stars in their fields,” he said. Throughout September 2019, he visited some most distinguished cities in the United States, from the Big Apple to the Golden Gate City. However, his time in the nation’s capital exposed him to America’s political process in action. Whether inside the Pentagon, the State Department, or the U.S. Senate Building, Aaron’s exposure to the United States’ political system, culture, and society yielded valuable information for the research fellow.

A highlight of his trip was interacting with American people. “[They] are more outspoken, straightforward, and expressive,” Aaron said. While on the topic, he mentioned the surprising similarities between the two countries’ cultures. He admitted that “while the Philippines may be an Asian country with Asian characteristics,” a gradual push of western ideology has “nevertheless long developed a penchant for American pop culture, food, and lifestyle.”

Experience was not the only payoff Aaron gained from the IVLP. His time in the states expanded his network of fellow scholars. He hopes to use these newly acquired tools and network back home to further his field of study in the Philippines. “I always see to it that I live up to the expectations of being an alumnus of the program,” he said. As an alumnus, he added that he looks forward “to taking part in more exchanges to help contribute to the development of Philippines-US relations.”

Building Trust

DON MUSTAPHA LOONG has made it his life’s mission to help develop sustainable communities and build lasting peace in Mindanao. He has been contributing to this mission by building a more responsive government currently as a member of parliament in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), and previously as the Secretary of the Department of Public Works and Highways in BARMM, Provincial Administrator of Sulu, and a member of the Secondary National Roads Development Project.

While serving as a Provincial Administrator of Sulu in 2006, Mustapha participated in the IVLP. His exchange program focused on promoting good governance through accountability, ethics, and combating corruption, which provided him valuable insights. “I found the Government Accountability very pertinent,” Mustapha reflects on his time in the United States, “despite the U.S. government’s tremendous power, [it] has [placed] structures in itself to ensure that it is accountable. Moreover, while it has its internal checks and balances, there is a vital role that citizen watchdogs and the media play to ensure that the government is behaving ethically and transparently.”

One experience that struck Mustapha was an IVLP meeting he had in Washington, D.C. As customary in the Philippines, he gave souvenir items as gifts to U.S. government officials. However, the officials told him they needed to check if they can accept the gifts and explained that they might need to decline them politely. To curb corruption, the United States government imposes restrictions on gift-giving to government officials and employees. “I was shocked and awed. If this policy, protocol, behavior, or norm would be practiced in all sectors of the Philippines, I think the country would move much faster to prosperity and peace,” he said.



*Don Mustapha
Loong*

Member of Parliament,
Bangsamoro Transition Authority
2006 Good Governance: Strategies
for Promoting Transparency

Since his IVLP experience, Mustapha has advocated for a responsive, transparent, and trustworthy government, which he believes is essential for Mindanao’s continued development. “I realized there that having an empowered civil society is essential to demand responsive governance. Hence, I have been engaging with civil society groups and volunteer organizations and involving them in governance.” He continually ensures that citizens and stakeholders are aware of what his government agency is doing and that his government agency responds to the needs of his constituents. This idea stems from a gift of insight that Mustapha takes to heart – “A government that the people cannot trust, cannot efficiently and effectively deliver its mandate.”



Mental Health Advocate

**Marylendra “Neth”
Penetrante**

Founder and Executive Director
Children and Youth Wellness,
Technical & Advocacy Center, Inc.
2019 Women Leaders Promoting Peace and Security

ADVOCATES OFTEN ACT because of a deep level of conviction, propelling them to do the impossible. For Dr. Marylendra Penetrante, the conviction to advocate for mental health came from seeing others' sufferings. “I saw the struggles of the Filipinos, and these struggles took a toll on the mental health of many people. Graduating from University at 18 years old and seeing first-hand the situation in the poorest places in my country, I knew I had to take action,” she shares. Dr. Marylendra founded the Children and Youth Wellness Technical and Advocacy Center (CYWTAC). This nonprofit organization provides psychosocial services such as workshops and training, family empowerment activities, and educational and financial assistance to poor children. It also leads advocacy works to address mental health, child abuse, and LGBT teen issues.

It's always with a smile that Marylendra vividly recounts how she received the email from the U.S. Embassy in the Philippines inviting her to participate in the IVLP. “I immediately jumped on board believing firmly that this program will help me learn and grow in my advocacy work,” she shares. The IVLP experience exceeded her expectations and strengthened her belief in the work she has been doing. She says, “IVLP, as a program, created a meaningful

opportunity for me to learn, thrive, and exchange ideas on how to solve shared tribulations and hopefully secure a progressive future for our own countries.”

Dr. “Neth,” as she is fondly called, considers her IVLP journey truly one for the books. She highlights having gained an increased appreciation for the uniqueness of the Filipino character when helping others and making things happen amidst poverty and lack of resources. The most powerful of all her lessons learned, she shares, was when she observed that Filipinos and Americans had similar problems despite their differences and that shared empathy can fuel powerful international collaboration and understanding.

With a renewed passion coming from IVLP, Dr. Neth was energized to serve more. “[The IVLP experience] deepened my desire to serve and not to lose hope in finding ways to make the lives of our people better. It also help[ed] me gain a deeper understanding of myself as a community worker and those around me,” she adds. She says this gained knowledge has helped her “capitalize on the resources available to me in order to realize my vision for the center.” She is also grateful to have found like-minded individuals in the alumni network who have helped her develop her center and “reach out to to advance our causes,” especially in the areas of mental health and community education.

Power OF Print



JOURNALISM GOES BEYOND PRESENTING the who, what, when, and where of events. It helps the public make better decisions for their personal lives and the affairs of their community and country. This belief has driven Juliet Javellana, an associate publisher, for decades. “Through our news reports, investigative stories, and incisive commentaries, we at the Philippine Daily Inquirer do our best to help Filipinos become better-informed citizens and build our country. I wish to do my part in protecting our hard-fought democracy and freedom,” she states.

Curating content for an influential news outfit comes with the need to expand one's perspective. During Juliet's IVLP across four states and seven cities in 21 days, she enhanced her acumen, particularly on the role of journalism in society. She recounts visits to media organizations like Tulsa World, a 110-year-old paper, or Louisiana Weekly, giving examples of how investigative journalism led to substantial changes to local governance. It also introduced her to fellow journalists from 23 countries, who she remains in touch with today to know what is happening in different parts of the world. Describing IVLP as a “rare privilege that opens many doors,” she believes it bolstered her commitment to independent journalism, especially with the new challenges it faces.



**Juliet Labog
Javellana**

Associate Publisher, Philippine Daily Inquirer
2018 Edward R. Murrow Program for Journalists:
Best Practices in Ethical Reporting

“Journalism and journalists face great challenges in this age of the Internet, from declining readership and revenues for the print medium to the proliferation of misinformation, disinformation, and manipulation on social media,” she reflects. “But it is also [through] these challenges that journalism has become even more important and call[s] upon journalists to do their job with determination and excellence.”

The essence of print remains more vital than ever as misinformation spreads at an unprecedented scale and speed. Every story and think piece can sharpen a reader's mind, translating to better-informed decisions. These printed words shared with millions of people motivate Juliet as a journalist with enormous responsibilities in and beyond the newsroom.



Paddling FOR Hope

**Anton “Doc Anton”
Mari H. Lim,
DVM, MBA**

Chief Hope Paddler,
Yellow Boat of Hope Foundation, Inc.
2019 Volunteerism and Civic Action

IT ALL STARTED in 2010 with a group of children in Zamboanga City who had to swim through rivers to attend class, often arriving at school soaking wet. To help children cross the rivers safely and remain dry, volunteers raised funds to build boats, and painted them bright yellow as a symbolic color of hope. This simple intervention became a national movement for quality and accessible education initiated by the Yellow Boat of Hope Foundation. Beyond building boats to safely transport school children, the foundation also provides scholarships and school supplies. In addition, they have constructed classrooms, conducted medical missions, and implemented livelihood programs for parents. Leading this movement is Chief Hope Paddler, Dr. Anton Mari Lim, more famously known as “Doc Anton.”

A veterinarian by profession and an active leader in several civil society groups in Zamboanga City, Doc Anton initiated the fundraising

program to build the first yellow boats. The initiative gained national attention. Soon, more volunteers and donors pitched in to build more than 4,600 boats that have assisted nearly 200 communities to date. The foundation’s supporters, called Paddlers, are central players in the Yellow Boat’s project areas, which were geographically isolated and disadvantaged.

When Doc Anton participated in the 2019 IVLP on Volunteerism and Civic Action, he noticed that the tremendous volunteer support for nonprofit activities is a value shared by Filipinos and Americans. “The difference, [however], is that more often than not, we [Filipinos] don’t treat nonprofits as businesses. This difference is the reason why many nonprofits end up as a project and are not able to scale or outlive its founder,” he said.

From his interactions with fellow IVLP participants and through immersions in different U.S. nonprofit organizations, Doc Anton learned how succession planning and continuity of programs make the efforts of their American counterparts impactful, sustainable, and scalable. In addition, he cited how volunteer work is regarded as so integral to American society that they actually monetize volunteer hours. Similar to running a business, Doc Anton said, “everything takes planning and deliberate intent to keep going for the long haul. Having a well-planned volunteer and donor experience is key to the success of any organization.” Apart from having a deep dive into volunteer and donor engagement, his IVLP experience also affirmed some of the values and key strengths of Yellow Boat of Hope Foundation: transparency and storytelling. Doc Anton acknowledged that “in the age of social media, impact stories are king” and shared how he learned that “transparency and the use of social media to tell the story is more important than stating numbers and accomplishments.”

“Having a well-planned volunteer and donor experience is key to the success of any organization.”



With a rich learning experience from IVLP, he returned to the Philippines, paddling harder than ever before. “I became swamped,” he admitted, “[because] immediately upon my return, we hired staff to ensure all records are in order and that donor and volunteer experience are well-thought-out and planned (in advance). [In addition,] [w]e revamped our website to make it more interactive and maximized the power of storytelling by hiring a community and social media manager.”

Apart from organizational development changes, Doc Anton shared how the foundation has become more active in networking and seeking co-branding and partnerships worldwide.

In his capacity as a resource person and a mentor, he has also accepted more speaking and mentoring engagements in the Philippines and abroad, something that he says he was shy of doing before. “The effect [of seeking collaborations] is tremendous; not only did our story inspire people to take action in their community, but we also broadened connections with different organizations worldwide,” said Doc Anton.

He believes that he builds a community of hopeful Paddlers by sharing the Yellow Boat story to create ripples of change for children’s education.



Storyteller AND Storymaker

**Kara
David**

Broadcast Journalist, GMA News and Public Affairs
Journalism Teacher, University of the Philippines
Founder, Project Malasakit Inc.
2009 Managing Public Health

AS A JOURNALIST with a storied 25-year track record, Kara David exemplifies how storytellers can be story-makers of positive change. Kara has become a household name in the Philippines, having been on TV and radio newscasting for many years. She has always volunteered to take the more daring news beats in the country, often volunteering to gather stories of inspiring everyday heroes in remote areas. Aside from telling the stories of grassroots communities, Kara has also devoted much time to helping these communities etch a hopeful story of change for themselves. As she said about her work as a journalist, “*Tayo yung nagiging tulay ng mga taong gustong tumulong at mga taong dapat tulungan,*” (We are the bridge between those who want to help and those who need help). Moved by the stories of underserved communities in the Philippines, she has gathered support from different organizations throughout the years to address these communities’ needs.

Of particular interest to Kara has been working on the health and welfare of women and children, mainly from indigenous communities

in Mindoro island. The stories of indigenous communities she visited moved her to establish Project Malasakit, a foundation that provides a scholarship for underserved but deserving Filipino children. This organization has sent child laborers and physical and sexual abuse victims to attend elementary to college schooling. Aside from scholarship grants, they also visit indigenous communities in far-flung areas to provide solar energy equipment, construct daycare centers, and set up medical and health facilities and services. Being a mountain climber herself, she would trek for hours in mountain regions in the Philippines to better understand the needs and bring necessary aid. In Mindoro, she set up birthing clinics in the indigenous communities to lower childbirth risks among women and their infants.

Because of her remarkable work in expanding access and improving the quality of health services in remote areas, she was invited to participate in the IVLP on Managing Public Health in 2009. Much to her surprise, she was one of the few non-medical doctors or public health experts in the group. However, she brought with her stories and her experience of working on health issues in the grassroots communities in the Philippines. It also helped her father,

political scientist Randy David, encourage her to participate in an enriching experience.

Kara turned out to be the life and spokesperson of the group during her IVLP trip, often spending time getting to know her fellow IVLP participants’ stories and synthesizing and sharing the group’s insights during gatherings. These interactions with fellow participants and different public health experts from governments, private and nonprofit organizations in the United States enriched her. “*Nadagdagan ang kaalaman ko, at dahil nadagdagan ang kaalaman ko, mas na enrich ang buhay ko. Mas lumawak ang aking pananaw at mas lumalim ang paninindigan.*” (I gained new knowledge, and because of this knowledge, my life is enriched. It widened my perspective and deepened my commitment.), she says.

*“Tayo yung nagiging tulay
ng mga taong gustong tumulong
at mga taong dapat tulungan.”*

Gaining a new understanding of health issues and new ideas on health services, she returned to the Philippines with more plans to help expand and improve access to quality health services. Through her community service work, she developed programs on education and health services in the remote areas of the Philippines. She partnered with local governments in the Philippines to ensure interoperability of her foundation’s health facilities with the government health offices. She also engaged more organizations in her work on health and education. She likewise empowered indigenous communities to manage the birthing clinics and ensure that health services consider their culture and norms.

Besides learning, she believes the IVLP presented a unique opportunity to showcase the Philippines and its culture to the Americans. “*Hindi lang kami yung natuto. Pakiramdam ko, kahit papaano, nakapagbahagi rin kami ng kaalaman namin sa mga Amerikano. May natutunan rin sila sa amin.*” (I feel that we were not the only ones who learned. In a way, we were also able to share our knowledge with the Americans, and they learned something from us.)

Through the exchange of ideas and experiences, Kara gained many insights into the similarities between Filipinos and Americans. Among many, she observed that the value of “*bayanihan*” is the story-making element shared by both Americans and Filipinos. There is a



sense of volunteerism, and a spirit of service shared between the two peoples, especially when there is a need. It is this element, she says, that makes heroes out of ordinary people. Speaking of this spirit, she says, “*Sa bansa namin kung saan madaming mahihirap, kailangan naming magtulungan upang i-angat ang isa’t-isa. Hindi tayo uusad kung hindi magbubuhay ang lahat. Sa Pilipinas kasi, hindi kami tumitingin sa kung ka-dugo mo ba yan, kung kapamilya mo ba yan, o kababayan mo ba yan. Basta naantig ang puso mo at pakiramdam mo anak din siya ng Diyos, dapat mo siyang tulungan.*” (In our country where many are poor, we need to help each other uplift their condition. Progress will not happen unless all of us will uplift each other. In the Philippines, we help our fellow citizens regardless of their relation to you or where they come from. You must help whenever their condition moves you, and you believe the person is a child of God.)

Today, Kara continues to tell stories on the daily news of GMA. When she is off the camera, she makes the stories of hope and change in the country – for the Filipino nation to be healthier, better educated, and constantly uplifting each other. She also teaches at the University of the Philippines, where she prepares the Philippines’ future journalists to be storytellers and story makers of hope and positive change for the world.

Preparing Leaders OF Tomorrow

**Manuel
De Vera**

Assistant Professor and Executive Director,
TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership,
Asian Institute of Management
2002 Electronic Commerce and the Global Economy



SYSTEMS WORK because of empowered individuals. Empowered individuals are formed through the foresight of an effective leader. Manuel De Vera says his mission is to lead, inspire, and make systems work. To achieve this, he provides leadership education with audiences including the Executive Director of the Asian Institute of Management TeaM Energy Center for Bridging Leadership. Their work focuses on “increasing leaders’ capacity to better understand their social, political, and economic contexts in leading meaningful and sustainable positive change in their organizations and communities.”

In his IVLP experience, which covered the concept of e-commerce, one lesson that stuck with him was the idea of the digital divide and how to address it in education, business, and government service. He said, “it was a great learning experience, which we now see has a critical relevance with our increased reliance on digital services from the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.” He also found it notable to see the robustness of U.S. government bureaucratic systems supporting human capital development and in strengthening institutions. For him, it is one of the “hallmarks of American governmentality that we need to reflect on and adopt when it comes to improving the service delivery functions of our government agencies.”

The IVLP experience inspired him to commit to learning more. In addition, he said, “The experience strengthened my resolve to pursue my graduate studies in public administration, which I did in 2007 at the Harvard Kennedy School.” His research interest also evolved because of his IVLP experience. As such, his doctoral research for the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex investigated the political settlements and enterprise development in the conflict-affected cities of Mindanao. His research portfolio also include topics on public management, leadership and negotiation, stakeholder engagement, conflict management, public-private partnership, and inclusive business.

AN Educator’s Journey



**Samuel
Soliven**

Assistant Bureau Director,
Bureau of Curriculum Development,
Department of Education
2005 American Education

“AT THE HEART OF MY VOCATIONAL and professional life is proactively helping form and transform learners for the development of their potential, gift, and talent.”

This is the goal of Samuel Soliven, who has dedicated thirty years of his life to helping transform the lives of children, youth, and adults. Since 1991, his work has emanated his passion for teaching and inspiring his community.

Samuel firmly believes that an individual’s holistic transformation and development will contribute significantly to nation-building. He likened them to “seeds in the fertile soil, watered and nurtured unceasingly [for them] to grow, bloom and bear fruits.”

His IVLP experience in 2005 was one of the many milestones of his journey as an advocate and an educator. He joined an IVLP about the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), where he was able to ponder on the essence of quality leaders to create quality education.

“From 1991 to 2005, I really can deduce that improved learner outcomes are a product of quality education influenced by quality teachers. Quality teachers have a clear sense of mission and purpose, motivation, and conviction. They pursue quality and equality. This is the essence of No Child Left Behind. As governments address equity in education, teachers will take care of quality education,” he emphasized.

Moving forward with the knowledge he gained through his IVLP experience, Samuel has relentlessly continued his journey to transform the lives of his students.



Branching Out

**Linartes
“Lites” Vilorio**

National Project Coordinator,
Women in STEM for Workforce
Readiness Development Programme
2018 Hidden No More:
Advancing Women in STEAM Fields

LITES IS A SELF-PROFESSED SPACE ENTHUSIAST.

As soon as she set foot inside the NASA Space Center in Orlando, Florida, she became a wide-eyed kid again, seeing the different space shuttles that inspired a nation to reach for the stars. “It brought tears to my eyes, seeing one of the global milestones in space travel right in front of me!” she recalled. As the national project coordinator for women in the STEM Workforce Readiness and Development Program of the International Labour Organization, she experienced how theories transformed into real-world scientific milestones. Moreover, she notes, “Seeing and understanding these space journeys better can inspire a love and appreciation for science for all ages and for men and women alike.”

IN-DEPTH LEARNING

Lites, whose role as a coordinator included encouraging women to study information communications technology, witnessed

the promotion of STEM education among women and girls, and resonated with it. “What struck me, in particular, was how the focus of STEM education was on building skills such as problem-solving, communication, and creativity at a young age and building a network of support among women and girls,” she commented. There were different programs offered to boost the confidence of girls in STEM learning and to support women in STEM jobs. Moreover, learning the disciplines of this strand—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics— goes beyond rote memorization and written tests – but rather a deeper yet practical sense of understanding on application on concepts to real world settings.

Lites understood how learning values critical thinking through probing questions and hands-on activities. She recalls that the science centers offered a colourful array of playful activities that spark students’ interest in how things work. However, student interest in science did not stop at the classroom door. Outside the classroom, Lites met young students who built robotics projects as an after-school activity. “The children at the First Lego group blew me away when they explained their design process for the project in detail,” she shared. They were having fun but learning important

STEM skills in teamwork, communication, and collaboration. “With the rapid changes the pandemic has caused globally, building these STEM skills at an early age is critical in developing leaders and a skilled workforce that can stay resilient.”

DIVERSIFIED VIEWS

Interested to learn in another setting, she perceives her IVLP involvement as a game-changer. Lites’ mother herself became a volunteer in the Volunteers to America program, the counterpart of the Peace Corps Volunteer Program more than 40 years ago. She said, “As I was growing up, my mother shared photos of her trip, and I saw how her experience helped shape her career as an education superintendent.” Having supported many women in STEM-related occupations, she hopes more women can participate in programs that bolster their competency.

“Tackling global challenges like technological changes and climate change requires diversity in talent to design solutions.”

Her visit to the United States also enriched her cultural experience. “Americans and Filipinos love their food! At the dinner table with our host family, we were sharing stories about how our countries celebrated gatherings with the family—each with a family anecdote from home,” she recalled. “Whether in the Philippines or the U.S., food is a way to get people to share stories and connect on a deeper level.” Beyond identifying cultural similarities and differences, she reflected on the relevance of the IVLP to the Philippines. “It has given me a more profound appreciation of the foundations of American democracy, of how much work still needs to be done in strengthening our institutions, and of how much we are capable of, as a nation,” she commented.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF FILIPINO WOMEN THROUGH STEM

Empowered by her experience on the IVLP, Lites applied the lessons she learned to programs that provide scholarships to women for computer programming courses and soft skills training, both of which help propel their professional growth in STEM-related occupations. Together with the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA), they incorporated STEM skills into



the Technical Vocational Education (TVET) policy. Lites explained, “The work focuses on developing STEM skills in different TVET training programs to provide machinists, welders, and technicians the critical work skills to stay competitive.” The program partnered with the U.S. Embassy’s Regional English Language Office for a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) camp on English for STEM. There, the regional lead trainers will learn and teach the lesson to thousands of TVET learners nationwide.

The IVLP helped Lites connect with like-minded women doing work in STEM advocacy work. She has been in touch with the alumni network for collaboration in their profession and advocacy. She has worked with Hidden No More alumni in Indonesia for women in STEM activities in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries. Outside Asia, Lites connected with colleagues in Slovenia and Australia for information sharing on digital economy and Women in STEM initiatives. With her new project on women entrepreneurs in the works, she collaborates with Women Entrepreneurship IVLP alumni.

Lites ends with a hopeful note on what she looks forward to as an IVLP alumna. “I hope more women in science education get to see what I saw and bring their learning to the classrooms, workplaces, and communities,” she stated. “Tackling global challenges like technological changes and climate change requires diversity in talent to design solutions. I hope through these exchanges more women will participate in furthering their leadership in STEM and discover their unlimited potential to changes peoples’ lives through their contributions in science.”

Redefining Service

Dedicated to improving their communities, these alumni redefine service by expanding access, creating solutions, and introducing innovations.





Connecting Opportunities, Possibilities, AND Growth

Anna Mae Yu Lamentillo

Chairperson, DPWH Build Build Build Committee Spokesperson, DPWH 2018 Indo-Pacific Strategy: Infrastructure Development in the Indo-Pacific Region

“NEVER NEGATE A DREAM because it is difficult.” These were Anna Lamentillo’s words as she tried to actualize a daunting task: connecting Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao through roads, bridges, ports, rails, and other infrastructure. Her work as chairperson of the Build Build Build Committee in the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) spans over 80 provinces and 140 cities across the Philippines. It is one of the most ambitious infrastructure development initiatives ever tackled by the Philippine government. “The Philippines is a country about to realize its full potential,” she said, as the new infrastructure provides “access to opportunity, possibility, and growth.”

Anna’s 17-day experience on the IVLP saw her traveling across five U.S. states with 20 other individuals from 14 different countries. What caught her attention immediately were the great pains the U.S. undergoes to conserve historic and vulnerable sites and how the private sector had invested in public building rehabilitation and nature preservation. Anna also drew parallels between the beaches in Florida and Boracay in coastal rehabilitation efforts. “I have always been an advocate for tourism preservation and sustainable use of natural resources,” she shared.

From her IVLP experience, Anna also noted, “[The] Philippines and the United States are multi-faceted...and it is important to have this depth of cultural immersion, which provided us with a new perspective on the diversity that exists and how we must respect it.” The experience brought her a deeper appreciation of unity in diversity – a value she helps realize in the Philippines by building the nation’s infrastructure.



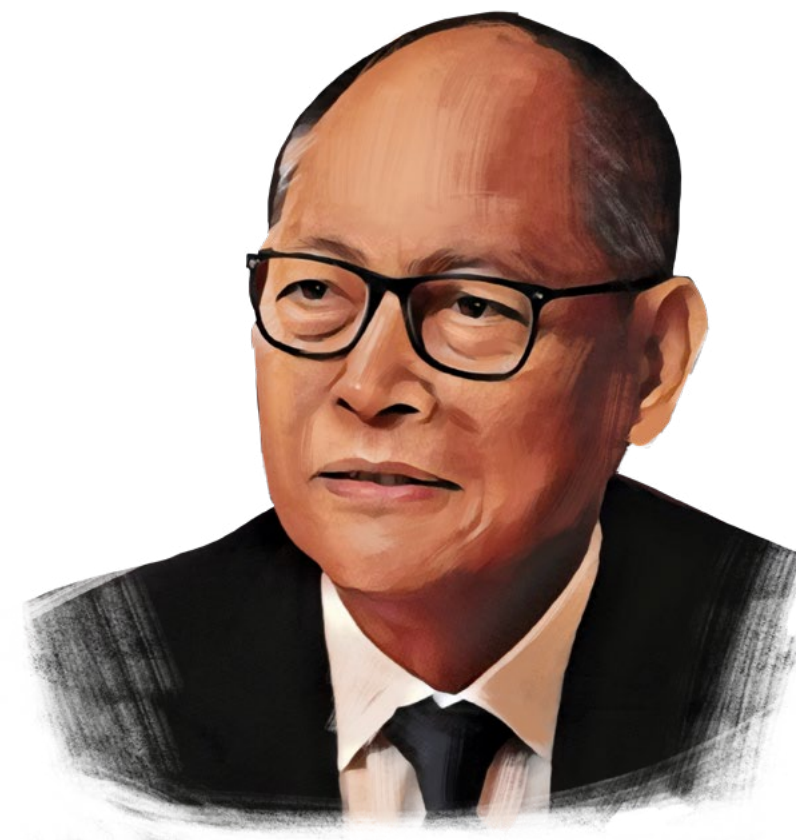
Fiscal Reformist

“I AM A REFORMIST AT MY CORE.”

These are the words of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Benjamin Diokno, always believing that there are alternative ways of approaching things, especially in his role of balancing the nation’s budget. He believes that there are alternatives to the usual options of raising taxes or reducing spending. Gov. Diokno also wants to change people’s impression of BSP’s role as merely printing money and producing coins. “I want the BSP to be closer to the Filipino People because if you see other central banks here and abroad, they are [seen as] unreachable and infallible,” he expressed.

His extensive experience as a budget secretary for previous administrations and his work as an economics professor at the University of the Philippines has helped him navigate his current job’s intricacies. His academic grounding has also supported his way of doing things as a Rockefeller Foundation scholar. It helped him earn his master’s degree in political economy at John Hopkins University and his Ph.D. at Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs.

One of his main goals is to promote the country’s shift from a cash-heavy to a cash-light society. He said, “Our twin goals are to shift 50% of all retail payment transactions to digital form, and to have 70% of adult Filipinos have their transaction account by 2023, which is the end of my term. But because of the pandemic, I think we can accomplish it sooner than later.” This shift has been desired since “printing money and minting coins happens to be the most expensive part of the central bank activities.”



Benjamin Diokno

Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas 1987 Public Finance and Tax Policy

Thinking back to his IVLP experience, he said he welcomed the opportunity to go back to the United States after spending seven years on his post-graduate degrees. The most memorable part of the trip for him was meeting with the Office of Management and Budget, where “I get to look at the budget documents, which help [model] our budget processes in the Philippines.” Because of his participation in the IVLP, “I understood the politics of reforms and the dynamics behind it including the various circumstances involved in the whole process.” In general, Gov. Diokno says the program aided him in coming up with the design of the new budget system of the Philippines.

The whole IVLP experience affirmed his instinct to be a reformist. “We constantly search for what is applicable in a particular situation. I applied this view not just in my career but also in my personal life. You must be open-minded in general. You need to be open to new experiences and to better ways of doing things, constantly.”



From Nowhere TO Cover

**Alfredo Matugas
Coro II**

Vice Mayor, Municipality of Del Carmen,
Siargao Islands, Surigao del Norte
2014 Tourism and Economic Development

“HOW DO WE MAKE PEOPLE TURN LEFT?” Then-Mayor Alfredo Coro asked this question to himself and the local community in Del Carmen, a town on the western coast of the Siargao Islands. While his Del Carmen hosts the Siargao airport, most visitors leave the airport and turn right onto the road leading to the famous beaches and surfing spots in the town of General Luna. “We don’t have beaches in Del Carmen; we have mangroves. So, how do we position ourselves?” asked Alfredo.

Del Carmen is home to the Philippines’ largest contiguous mangrove forest reserve of nearly 5,000 hectares. It is the habitat of endangered flora and fauna including rare saltwater crocodiles. Unfortunately, with this vast tract of natural resources, some locals have resorted to illegal fishing and overcutting mangroves, endangering the town’s natural ecosystem. “People did not visualize that they could deplete these resources. Same with the marine [life] that live below the waters, the resources you can tap above water will also become finite if we do not manage everything around the ecosystem. [This] impacts health, school system, children, intergenerational issues, and others,” said Alfredo.

In 2011, when Alfredo became Mayor of Del Carmen, he started the mangrove conservation program through comprehensive community organizing, environmental awareness campaigns, and exploration of alternative livelihoods. “When we started, we were

trying to convince them, and nobody wanted to change,” Alfredo recalled and added that the people desired to keep their unsustainable practices. But he soldiered on: “We patiently went through the process of listening, engaging, and managing conflicts through community organizing because there is potential.”

Slowly, things started to look up. There was a decline in illegal fishing, mangrove cutting, and endangered crocodile killing. The town’s government was also able to pass legislation that mandated the closure of some local ecotourism sites for environmental recovery. With the community’s behavior towards environmental conservation evolving, Alfredo sought to capitalize on local governance initiatives to expand an ecotourism-based economy for sustainable development.

During his second term as mayor, Alfredo participated in the IVLP in Tourism and Economic Development. His cohort spent three weeks exploring tourism as an economic driver using different approaches. Alfredo’s IVLP visits included a historical island destination in Georgia, a public-private partnership tourism model at the Yellowstone National Park in Montana, and science-based educational tourism at the California Academy of Sciences. In addition, he visited urban and rural American towns and observed how communities harnessed the tourism potential of the assets they must build a vibrant economy.

As a local chief executive juggling competing priorities and sectors in local governance, Alfredo previously did not fully appreciate the potentials of tourism. “We sometimes leave [the tourism sector] behind

for the private sector to pursue, grow and invest in due to the previous mental models that tourism is capital-intensive and limited to beds and seats. But [after IVLP], I realized that I was wrong – tourism is an important contributor to the economy. It is the fastest to recover during calamities and disasters and can be adapted to any type of business and government climate.”

His key takeaways from the IVLP program are a deeper appreciation for participatory governance, community-driven tourism and economic development. Having observed how different groups manage vital biodiversity areas in the United States, “I used this stakeholder management and multi-disciplinary approach in improving the management of our town, our natural assets, and our people.”

Upon returning from the IVLP, Alfredo quickly applied best practices and innovations on a local scale. Inspired by the community-based tourism models he saw in Montana and Georgia, Alfredo introduced Siargao It Up! Del Carmen Mangrove Management and Social Tourism Program, a whole-of-community approach to developing the ecotourism potential around their natural resources. For example, instead of having private groups develop the tourism potential of Sugba Lagoon, a pristine body of water in one of the town’s islands, “we employed the whole barangay. Every family has a representative, and there is a weekly rotation. So, everybody has a piece of the pie.”

“When you start listening to communities, you can build and work on a dream together.”

Alfredo and his team built on their earlier community organizing efforts to get local support exploring a systems approach to livelihood development. Riding on the increasing popularity of their neighboring surfing and beach towns, Del Carmen put itself on the map by positioning itself as a prime ecotourism destination. They started with a marketing strategy of selling the idea of recapturing childhood memories. “Our market mainly targeted visitors in their 40s who have been in the city for a while and want to relive their childhood in the province. So, we built diving boards and other simple structures made of wood to resemble a childhood playground. That was all we sold, nothing fancy, just solely childhood memories.”

And it worked — more visitors have now started to turn left. In addition, Del Carmen saw its tourist arrivals explode with social media influencers and celebrities, which boosted the local economy.

At their peak before the pandemic, close to 150 boats were rented out daily to explore the lagoon. “For each boat, we are directly helping three families: the owner of the boat, the boatman, and the assistant to the boatman,” explained Alfredo on the economic benefits. Other microenterprises and industries have also developed with the influx of tourists – retail, homestays, food, crafts, and transportation.

“What we launched is not [just] a program, but an ecotourism industry,” said Alfred of their award-winning initiative. “It has allowed us to stop illegal mangrove cutting, illegal fishing, increase household income and decrease poverty by 20%.” He also emphasizes that while Del Carmen is known for its ecotourism, its story of progress is anchored more on strengthening community participation and ensuring local governance works for all. “If you govern properly, all of the other things will follow,” said Alfredo on the importance of listening to people and jointly designing programs to create meaningful impact.

Throughout his three terms as Mayor, Alfredo pushed for better local governance to put the previously unknown town of Del Carmen on the map of top ecotourism destinations worldwide. He spoke at national and international events to showcase their town’s best practices while inviting the global community to experience Del Carmen.

Now serving as Vice Mayor, he remains a staunch advocate of participatory governance: “You have to appreciate the power of communities, their knowledge, their experience, and you simply translate these into something a little bigger with the latest technology, processes, science, whatever they have in their communities. That is governing.”

With the arrival of more visitors, Alfredo is proud of how they transformed Del Carmen from a mangrove forest endangered by illegal fishing and cutting into a prime ecotourism spot with sustainable livelihood practices. As a result, Del Carmen has won local and international recognition for environmental governance and is often featured in travel magazines and blogs.

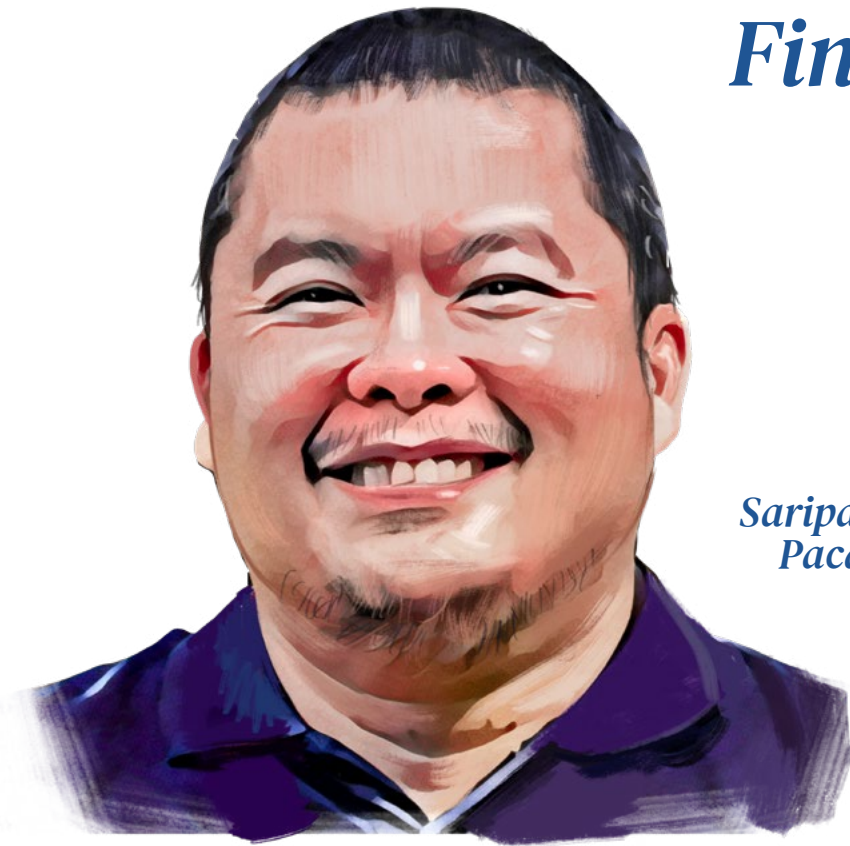
Alfredo smiled as he said, “When you start listening to communities, you can build and work on a dream together. We are very proud of that. As we always say [at Del Carmen], we have come from nowhere to cover.”

Finding Jihad

IN Community Resilience

Saripada “Tong” Pacasum, Jr.

Department Head, San Juan City
Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office
Executive Director, Emergency Response Network
2017 Emergency Response Preparedness, Disaster Management



SARIPADA “TONG” PACASUM, JR. is no stranger to dangerous missions. During the siege of Marawi City, Tong led the “white helmets,” a volunteer group that rescued civilians and retrieved people trapped in the middle of the conflict. Now, as a frontline worker in the battle against COVID-19, Tong continues to brave the dangers of emergency response to save lives. “It is now my mission, my jihad in life, to be part of the solution and not the problem... in making this world a safer and more peaceful place to live,” he said.

In May 2017, when Islamic State-affiliated terrorist groups took over Marawi City, hundreds of civilians were trapped in the crossfire between state and terrorist forces. Tong, then head of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (DRRMO) of the Lanao del Sur province, organized volunteers to conduct daily rescue and retrieval missions. They courageously completed risky tasks with minimal equipment, a single truck, and white construction helmets as their only protective gear.

“During the first four days, the police and military were still not there, and Marawi was in chaos. I only had two remaining staff members. The rest were volunteers — fishermen, tambays, and people without training, but willing to help out,” Tong recalled. “I realized that community resilience is the best and most effective direction we should be taking. Locals will know how to react to emergencies when they have the capacity. Having capacitated local communities allows for faster and more reliable disaster response than solely relying on disaster managers.”

When the battle ceased, Tong turned his efforts to the rehabilitation of Marawi and preparation efforts for future disasters. During this time, he participated in the IVLP’s Emergency Response Preparedness and Disaster Management project to support and build a more resilient Marawi. Tong visited command centers and spoke to different urban and rural communities in the United States. There, Tong learned about practices he could apply to Marawi. “Aside

from the disaster facilities and systems in place, what surprised me was the visit to a school in Los Angeles. I was amazed at how knowledgeable the elementary students were on what to do during different emergency scenarios,” Tong recalled. “I think [this is where] we should measure our success. If we have [community resilience] in the Philippines, there will be fewer casualties, and we can save more lives.”

At the end of his visit, Tong immediately set his eyes on building local government disaster preparedness and prevention systems, training staff, and establishing a disaster preparedness and prevention network. Tong collaborated with fellow IVLP alumni Nikki de la Rosa of International Alert to develop the Early Response Network (ERN) in Lanao del Sur that utilized aspects of the Integrated Command System, which Tong learned from his experience with the IVLP. The ERN uses community empowerment approaches that strengthen locally rooted mechanisms to build conflict-resilient communities. By enabling local stakeholders to report real-time emergencies and use advanced technologies, the ERN jointly monitors community tensions and prevents them from erupting into violent flashpoints. “We can track potential disaster incidents. We try to intervene before they escalate into bigger disasters,” said Tong, “especially in the BARMM (Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) area where rido [an act of killing between conflicting clans] and family feuds are very prevalent. We want to prevent such incidents and the loss of innocent lives.”

“It is now my mission, my jihad in life, to be part of the solution and not the problem...in making this world a safer and more peaceful place to live.”

Tong stressed the importance of community-led action: “We can intervene. Peace and order are not just the role of AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and PNP (Philippine National Police), but also of civilians. It must be a community-driven effort. Everybody must help.” To support building conflict-resilient communities, the ERN involves stakeholders who have critical roles in resolving clan feuds: traditional and religious leaders, local government officials, women, and youth, among others. In addition, Tong invested in the next generation by conducting basic training for disaster response, first aid, and leadership skills for the young people in all 40 Lanao del Sur municipalities.

Today, Tong is the Executive Director of ERN and assists his former colleagues in Lanao del Sur DRRMO while also serving as the DRRMO Head of San Juan City in Metro Manila. Although Metro Manila’s setting is urban, very different from the province, Tong insists that the need to capacitate barangay officials and local communities on proper contingency planning and disaster management remains the same. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic brought this need to the forefront. Unfortunately, communities are unaware of what to do, and not all responders have the necessary training to handle COVID cases.

Nonetheless, Tong and his team wear their protective equipment and brave the danger as frontliners to help manage the pandemic. Even before the national government launched the Balik Probinsya Program, Tong and his team were facilitating relief efforts and transporting people stranded in Metro Manila back to their provinces — a mission all too familiar from his ‘white helmet’ days in Marawi.

Parallel to his efforts in capacity development for community resilience, Tong is also pushing for a contingency plan on human-induced disasters. His experience in Marawi and the active shooting contingency plans he learned in the United States inspired Tong to give equal attention to human-induced disasters as those induced by natural hazards. “Why do we [only] keep doing contingency planning for earthquakes and natural disasters? [We have to keep doing them], but we also have to adapt and evolve. Aside from the Marawi siege, there are already growing cases of disasters caused by humans.” While there have only been a few documented cases of active shootings in the urban settings in the Philippines, Tong said it is crucial to begin planning for such events before they happen.

While Tong has expertise in DRRM, he is also learning a lot from his colleagues and his immersion experience in an urban setting. He links the ERN in Lanao del Sur and the DRRMO officers in Metro Manila to exchange knowledge and best practices. “Another takeaway from the IVLP is the importance of networking... it is my obligation to share with my fellow DRRMO practitioners all that I have learned and to also learn with them.”

For Tong, community resilience through capacity development is his jihad. “Jihad kasi is your battle, your mission. To do good, to be better, and not to hurt others. And with this work, I saw and experienced first-hand *yung sarap na makatulong ka* [that good feeling of helping others]. When you help save lives, *kahit isa lang, sobrang sarap, sobrang fulfilling* [even one, it is elating and fulfilling].”



Sweet Dreams

Dalareich Polot

Founder, Ginto Fine Chocolates Corporation
Manager, Dalareich Food Products
2016 Fostering Growth and Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship for the Philippines



SCENTS CAN EVOKE MEMORIES OF EXPERIENCES

we thought were long forgotten. For Dalareich Polot, the bittersweet aroma of tableya, or unsweetened chocolates, wafting through her home evokes memories of her childhood. Among a brood of five, she helped her mother make tableya since grade school, which augmented their family income while her mother worked as a street sweeper and her father a tricycle driver. After 26 years, their humble family enterprise in Bohol has grown into the Dalareich Food Products Company, an ethically conscious food business that exports chocolates to Australia, Japan, and Singapore.

The invitation to join IVLP in 2016 came at a fortuitous time. Dalareich had been striving to learn more about cacao processing and farming, chocolate manufacturing, and social entrepreneurship. Her IVLP experience brought her to visit a food innovation hub consisting of agricultural companies and social enterprises, a “microgreens farm” in Sacramento, and a chocolate factory in Hawaii, whose owners also advocate for cacao farming. Further enriching her knowledge on agriculture was a visit to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These experiences cemented Dalareich’s belief in the importance of food and agriculture sustainability to improve the quality of life in communities.

Upon returning to her hometown, Dalareich has inspired women and young entrepreneurs to build a community that advocates for sustainable agriculture and social entrepreneurship. In her hometown, “Young entrepreneurs [have] been discussing doing a food innovation hub using produce from backyard farmers and helping them [with] the whole value chain.” This community has been essential to Dalareich because running a successful business is challenging. In tough times, she reminisces about her IVLP experience, when fellow female leaders shared their experiences and struggles. Their stories of resiliency impart the belief that better days lie ahead, beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionately affected small businesses. “The most important learning especially shared among women entrepreneurs is you will learn from every difficulty or challenge you face in business and your personal life,” she says. “Use those learnings, be grateful, and keep moving forward. There is always a solution to every problem.”

With Dalareich’s depth and breadth of experience, she can help farmers improve their yield, and more people will associate tableya with sweet memories.

THE Business OF Clean Air

FOR THE PAST SEVEN YEARS, Everlyn Tamayo has made atmospheric pollution analysis and air quality management the focus of her career. “I play a key role in the development, implementation, and review of air quality activities and projects of Clean Air Asia,” she explains. This critical work prioritizes air quality monitoring, emissions inventory, and a health impact assessment. Her most recent work in several local Philippine cities included designing air quality monitoring networks, data analysis, and visualization for pollution monitoring.

Even though her IVLP experience was cut short because of COVID-19, Everlyn feels the program fostered connections between participants and relevant U.S. agencies. She found her meeting with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to be particularly significant. She discovered most of the air quality management policies used were based on EPA’s protocol and policies. She was thrilled to observe work ranging from grassroots to the federal level in the United States. “I was glad to see similar [familiar] research methods and strategies on air quality research and policy development.”

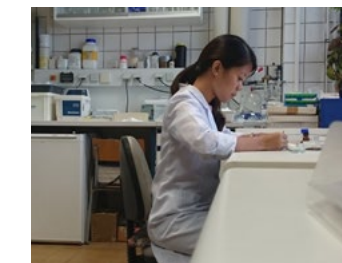
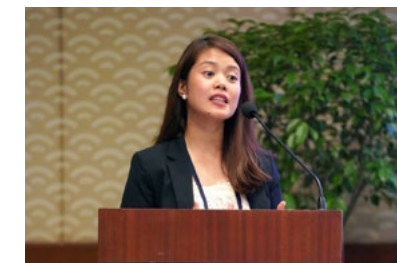
She believes her IVLP experience will serve her well in the long term. “I have learned about individuals and groups that also work in the field of atmospheric science and air quality management,” she explains. Everlyn recollects one of her favorite IVLP alumni events involving painting handwashing stations in Rizal Park. In addition, the connections she made with fellow alumni from other projects helped her appreciate the fulfilling work they do. “I am also glad to be able to extend assistance to co-fellows by inviting and engaging them in my organization’s capacity-building activities focused on air quality management.”



Everlyn Gayle Tamayo

Environmental Scientist
2020 Challenges to Improving Air Quality in the Indo-Pacific Region

She is looking forward to the opportunities available to IVLP alumni. “Once the opportunity comes,” she declares, “I look forward to more IVLP activities that can further expand connection[s].” Direct learning, mentorship, and projects with U.S. agencies and local groups interest her; Everlyn is excited to see what the future may hold. “I plan and hope for, especially in the context of environmental work...air quality improvement and climate change mitigation in the Philippines.” Meaningful work for an important cause.





Empowered Educational Leader

**Reynajoyce
Bucoy-Barutu**

Education Program Supervisor,
Department of Education
2011 Innovations in Primary
and Secondary Education

WHEN YOU THINK OF A TEACHER, you usually think of someone lecturing inside the four walls of a classroom in front of students. However, that is not always the case for Ms. Reynajoyce Bucoy-Barutu. During her IVLP experience, she learned that it takes innovation, risk-taking, and collaboration to become a more effective educator – that is, taking education beyond the classroom.

“My IVLP experience influenced me to become a more empowered educational leader, to be more resourceful, and to work hand-in-hand with stakeholders by involving them in the planning, [implementation] and [assessment of] the school curriculum, governance, and in [celebrating] success,” she shares. The experience shifted her paradigm. She learned the value of taking risks for the good of teachers, learners, and stakeholders. Through her IVLP experience, Reynajoyce understood that education governance and systems should be enabling for teaching and assessment innovations. One system she observed during school visitations in the United States and hoped to integrate into the Philippine public school system was how learners are taught and studied simultaneously.

Grateful for her experience, she dedicates her work to vigorously engaging stakeholders, redefining systems, and sharing her lessons learned with others. Notably, she enthusiastically continues to train hundreds of fellow educators and school administrators in Mindanao on innovative teaching strategies and education governance. It is a platform she is blessed to leverage to share her experiences and gather like-minded partners in the process while tirelessly advancing her advocacy to empower teachers in Muslim areas in Mindanao.



A Renewed Passion FOR Service



FORGING A STRONG RELATIONSHIP and open communication between the government and its people – this is what Salma Jayne Tamano believes to be her goal as the Provincial Information Officer of Lanao del Sur. She spends her days listening to the pulse of the people and perfecting ways to communicate crucial information to the people of the province. “I believe that when the people in communities receive the right kind of information on government programs, they will be empowered to make their communities resilient and developed. Giving the right information and getting the right feedback can bridge gaps between the government and the people,” she said.

In 2017, Jennie participated in the IVLP on State and Local Government, which allowed her to see how local government units in the United States serve the needs of the citizens. It also served as an opportunity for her to learn from her fellow IVLP participants from other countries about different approaches to local governance. One surprising discovery Jennie had was finding out some local officials in the United States work voluntarily and without pay. It inspired her how pure passion for service led people to work in government.



**Salma Jane “Jennie”
Alonto Tamano**

Provincial Information Officer,
Provincial Government of Lanao Del Sur
2017 State and Local Government

It was also a chance for her to witness the shared values between Americans and Filipinos – love for family, adventure, and having a say in how leaders should lead societies, among many others. She also found parallels between her own experiences and the story of Native Americans. “I belong to one of the ethnic Muslim tribes of the Philippines who fought for autonomy. The history of my people is almost the same as that of the Native Americans I met there,” she said.

To Jennie, the IVLP experience reaffirmed her beliefs, that public service is not just a full-time job but also a passion and calling for others. “If only people in government can love their work and love the people they serve, they can make a difference in a developing country like the Philippines,” she said. Coming back to the Philippines with ideas and lessons, Jennie found renewed confidence and profound respect and appreciation for her passion for public service.



Beyond Bars

Xavier Solda

Chief, Community Relations Service Office,
Bureau of Jail Management and Penology
2018 Illegal Drugs: Reducing Demand
and Improving Rehabilitation

His community organizing was put on hold when he studied criminology, after which he entered the Philippine National Police Academy (PNPA). He started as a police cadet before deciding to transfer to the BJMP. His decision was met with hesitation and resistance, “Why the BJMP? Wouldn’t you be wasting your potential by opting to transfer?” Xavier, however, was adamant. “Little did they know, I am really into this kind of work—looking after the welfare of those who have less in life.”

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Xavier whole-heartedly believes that pursuing jail management as his profession is one of his best decisions in life. First, it is meaningful. “It sets the direction of my life, in line with my mission of bringing change to other people’s lives and helping them realize there is still hope. They can be part of doing something big for the community. They can change their ways,” he shared. Second, the profession aligns with his advocacy—as a jail management professional, he can understand the background of those in jail. “Why are they in jail?” Xavier reflected. “A lot of people behind bars are just victims of circumstances. They are not bad people. So, what drives them to commit petty crimes?”

He recalled a case of a father who worked as a jeepney barker. Authorities detained the father for grabbing loaves of bread in a bakery after knowing his children had not eaten breakfast and lunch. “He was ostracized by the community and was jailed for months. My heart bled upon learning this story,” Xavier said. “I realized that if we do not do our best to reform or rehabilitate their ways, if we do not

understand where they are coming from, this will be the same set of people who will return to the community and repeat this infraction.”

As Chief of the Community Relations Service Office (CRSO), the public relations arm of the BJMP, Xavier also takes responsibility for improving the system, which encompasses the families and children of persons deprived of liberty (PDL). He invites people to see through their situation, “Thinking, ‘hayaan mo sila makulong’ (let them be imprisoned) is barbaric.” The law is the law intended to uphold justice,” he opined. “But in giving justice, we should always have compassion for the accused. Yes, he stole bread, but why did he steal bread?”

“A lot of people behind bars are just victims of circumstances. They are not bad people. What drives them to do those petty crimes?”

Inside the BJMP, efforts are full-on for rehabilitation. For one, they have a therapeutic community modality program. An anticipated project is Just Five Minutes for the families and friends of PDL when in-person visits will have resumed. “Before seeing the detainee, they will watch an educational video describing the harmful effects of illicit drugs,” he shared. Seventy percent of PDL are facing drug-related offenses. “Our public information officers will explain the content on every visit.”

The BJMP maximizes radio, TV, print, and social media to share efforts within the facility and stories of rehabilitation. Their information campaign also includes coaching among the personnel to hone their communication skills.

Through these methods, reformation is possible, as is the case of a man imprisoned for a drug-related offense. “One man was notorious in his community for using methamphetamine, and he admitted to it,” Xavier shared. “After his acquittal, he changed his ways and became a *barangay tanod* (community officer). From a lawbreaker, he became a law enforcer!”

TURNING POINTS

IVLP solidified his grasp of jail management. In Vermont and Colorado, he witnessed firm community support to employ former convicts. He drew inspiration in strengthening the reintegration



program where a detainee’s profile can guide their post-detention path based on educational attainment and skills. For example, they may finish primary education or a vocational course. Then, inside the BJMP, they learn skills like sewing and handicraft-making, which can be a source of livelihood.

In 2012, BJMP expanded into the visual arts through a national painting competition. Xavier recalled, “Some people who donate materials also purchased the paintings. This competition is where the community has started to appreciate what the BJMP was doing.” As he saw in Vermont, detainees can reintegrate better when people know they are proactive in improving. “Facing a drug offense does not mean the end of the world. They need to take the opportunity during detention and commit to changing their ways. We have structured programs for their welfare and development,” he added.

Through IVLP, he also gained a broader worldview on jail operations. Contrasting the work culture of the United States and the Philippines, “There is no doubt prisoners in the US are raking in the gains of successful reformation programs. Much of it is attributed to the professionalism of correctional officers and to every state and practitioner’s commitment to the rehabilitation programs,” he continued. “The same professional culture makes the BJMP hold up amidst the challenges of jail administration and operation. Jail overcrowding has always been a primary concern since it gives rise to more problems and slows down efforts for the PDL. This problem is the reason much hope is placed on strong-willed and committed jail professionals.”

His IVLP experience deepened his appreciation for collaboration between government and civil society organizations to create lasting change. He stated, “The rich history and culture of the United States offered insights on how the Philippines can grow as a nation—to carry on despite the odds and face challenges strategically.”



Authentic Parliamentary Proceedings

**Armado Formoso
Maralit**

Director, Senate Legislative Parliamentary Counselling Service
Chief Legislative Counsellor on Parliamentary Law
2017 U.S. Parliamentary Rules and Procedures:
A Project for the Philippines

IMAGINE HAVING THE INFLUENCE TO WRITE legal parliamentary opinions or having Philippine Senate officials routinely seek your counsel. This is the reality for Dr. Amado Formoso Maralit. As the Director of the Senate Legislative Parliamentary Counselling Service, he is the go-to person for the Senate President, Majority Leader, and other key officers of the Senate regarding parliamentary opinions, comments, advice, and reports.

Dr. Amado joined the IVLP on U.S. Parliamentary Rules and Procedures in 2017, which he ascribes to reinvigorating his passion for his work at the Senate. He highlights two significant learning moments from his IVLP. He says, “The first was the rare opportunity of being able to retrieve and secure a copy of the centenarian Senate Rules of 1917, safely kept at the Adams Building of the U.S. Congressional Library; the second was the conversations we had with the Senate and House Parliamentarians, who are our counterparts in the U.S. Congress.” He remembers them as exhilarating experiences that provided him with valuable insights that still aid him today.



His IVLP experience allowed him to deepen his knowledge and expertise in his work. It allowed him to cite the work of legal and parliamentary authorities such as Jefferson, Riddick, and Hind in his legal opinions, as his IVLP experience revealed these have also been bases for old 1917 Senate rules in the Philippines. His experience in the United States is something he fondly shares while lecturing or conducting meetings, offering insights into the similarities of both countries’ legal traditions. He hopes to encourage Filipinos to be proud of the Philippine identity and heritage and the values that both countries share.



Empowered Woman Leader

**Jenny Lind
Elmaco**

Regional Representative, European Research Action
Service Partnership and Advocacy Initiatives
Advisor, Baryo Balangaw Creative Initiatives
Board/Trustee, Association of Young Environmental Journalists
University Fellow, Wesleyan University
2016 Role of NGOs in Promoting Global Women’s Issues

TO BE EXCEPTIONAL, people think one can only focus on a few causes and not be spread too thin. But this is not the case for Dr. Jenny Lind Elmaco. She has been a force for positive change in various fields—from science and cultural diplomacy to peace and conflict transformation, sustainable development, and gender equality.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, her work intensified. She found that the pandemic left the nation struggling in a variety of areas, creating a demand for more effective science communication, a careful study and response to the virus’s effects on marginalized sectors, and more targeted and effective ways to sustain livelihoods. She coordinated efforts to provide vital information about COVID-19, delivered supplies to frontliners, and created livelihood opportunities for those who lost their jobs during the pandemic. Notably, gender equality has a special place in all her work. She has led initiatives to empower and support women through the arts, international relations, and social enterprises for many years.

One of the inspirations for her work is her IVLP experience. “To say my IVLP experience was life-changing is an understatement,” she said. Her exchange experience gave her insight into U.S. government strategies for promoting gender equality worldwide and the ways that U.S. organizations encourage women’s empowerment, diversity, and inclusion. “My IVLP experience guided me to identify the places where I know I am most needed and where I can best contribute while also taking a step back for others in the other spaces where they would be a better fit.”

Besides insights from her fellowship, another significant gain from her IVLP experience was building a network of fellow women leaders with whom she shares a passion. “Because I gained new knowledge and a new family, I began to push the envelope a bit more, stretch my muscles more for what else I can do for others.”



Championing Inclusive Growth

*Junaflor
“Sweet” Cerilles*

Mayor, Municipality of Dumalinao,
Zamboanga del Sur
2016 Fostering Growth and Promoting
Women's Entrepreneurship

AS THE FIRST WOMAN MAYOR OF DUMALINAO, Zamboanga del Sur, Junaflor Cerilles is a champion of many advocacies. However, it all started with her resolve to empower women as equal partners for growth.

Before she was elected local Chief Executive, Junaflor was actively engaged in development initiatives, most notably in her role as Federation President of the Women Empowerment Movement - Rural Improvement Club (WEM-RIC) of Zamboanga del Sur. WEM-RIC is a non-government organization that assists more than 40,000 women members in taking care of themselves and their families and increasing their participation in decision-making processes through programs like agriculture-based microenterprise development. As Mayor, Junaflor has broader policy goals and an executive platform to advance her women's empowerment advocacy.



Shortly after being elected Mayor in 2016, Junaflor was invited to the IVLP on Fostering Growth and Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship. There she learned the importance of adequately assessing people's needs, innovating for businesses to be competitive, valuing local producers and their products, and engaging other sectors in participatory development. Being with other inspiring women during the IVLP, "I was able to reassess my people management skills, how government and businesses should be run, and the needed strategies for better community programs for the people," she recalls. Her experience also expanded her understanding of the convergence of government, businesses, and civil society in fostering inclusive growth.

After her IVLP and in her role as Mayor, she remains a staunch advocate for women's empowerment. She has since partnered with other organizations and her fellow U.S. government exchange alumni to collaborate on other pressing issues, including youth empowerment, biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and education promotion.

She continues to make history – an impactful and lasting one at that – by continuously learning, doing, and collaborating. "The whole journey of IVLP opened my mind to different opportunities – to gain new friends, to collaborate with individuals and agencies working for the same causes, and to implement projects and initiatives for inclusive growth," she shares.





Breaking THE Mold

Francisco “Isko Moreno”
Domagoso

Mayor, City of Manila
2010 The U.S. Mayor and Local Governments

THEN A MATINEE IDOL and actor in the Philippine entertainment industry, Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso, entered the political arena as a councilor. Now the current mayor of Manila, one of the most significant accomplishments of his first few months in office was clearing illegal vendors from Manila’s crowded streets. This act shocked the vendors and the whole country, as this was a concern that persisted for the last 30 years but was only acted upon recently.

Naysayers questioned the sustainability of this effort and argued that the poor would suffer. Mayor Isko stood his ground, saying that “*ginagamit ninyo ang kahirapan ng tao para sa inyong mga mapansamantalang mga balak. Hindi niyo sila tinuturuan ng tamang perspektibo.*” (you are using the poverty of the people for your agenda. You do not teach them the proper perspective.) “You tolerate them not because you love them or care for them but because you are getting something from them,” he added. Mayor Isko found his mission from the trust the electorate gave and believes that “people are expecting different things, if they do not like different things, they would not have elected me.”

On the 4th day of his clearing operations, 15,000 of the sidewalk vendors are gone. Although this would seem extraordinary in the eyes of the world, Mayor Isko insisted, “I am no superhuman. What I am doing is just basic governance. *Kaya lang mukha siyang kakaiba kasi hindi ginawang pansinin ng iba. Iyong mali, dahil araw-araw nang nakikita at nakalakihan, nagiging tama sa mata ng tao.*” (The reason why it looks peculiar is that others did not attend to it. The wrong, which people live and grow by every day, become the norm in the people’s eyes.) Inspired by his IVLP experience in the district of Columbia, he learned that “the rule applies to everyone and they should be made available to everybody. While their streets are busy, they managed to clear the roads and made it accessible to everyone.” It made him think that “if they can do it, we can do it as well.”

Surprisingly, Mayor Isko was hesitant to join the IVLP at first because of his perceived difficulty in communicating in the English language and not knowing enough about the program. However, Mayor Isko said that his participation was one of the pivotal moments of his life and that every day was a learning opportunity for him when he flew to the U.S. His mind was opened to many possibilities, even inspiring him to further his education. Believing

that there is so much left to learn after his IVLP experience, Mayor Isko studied at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy Executive School of Government and eventually took another executive program at Oxford University. Growing up from humble beginnings, Mayor Isko realized the importance of continuously updating oneself to better serve his constituents to the best of his ability. He even cited that one of his wildest dreams is supporting Filipinos and sending them to Ivy League Universities to help their country. “They will be future leaders,” Mayor Isko said. “We need to invest in our future leaders.”

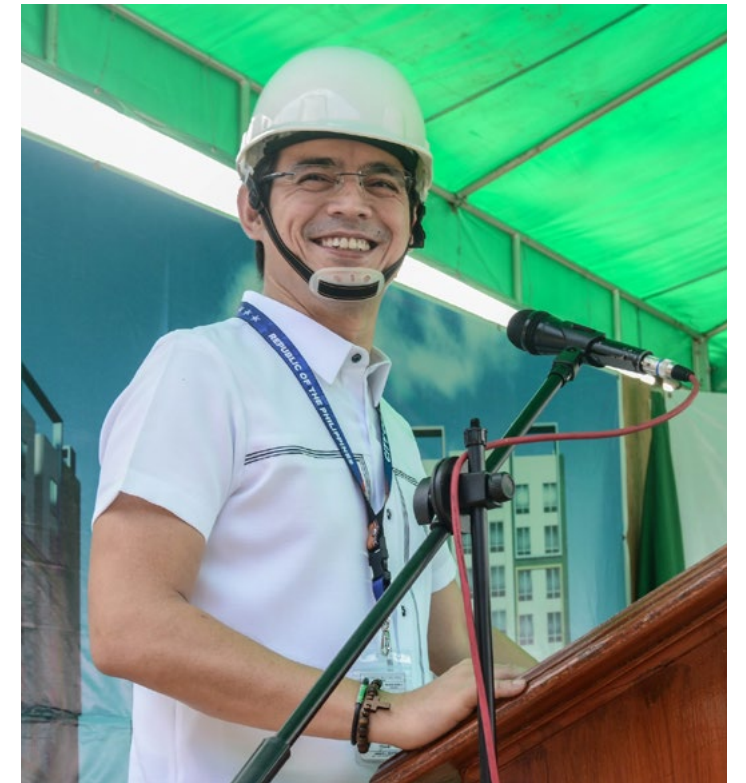
He can recall how museum visits on the IVLP made him value history, culture, and heritage more. Mayor Isko saw the essence of valuing things from the past as a guide for the next generation.

*“Governance is a difficult field.
That is why you really must
develop yourself and be a sponge.”*

Out of all the places Isko visited, Seattle and Oklahoma stood out the most. Seattle’s Groundswell inspired Mayor Isko in ascertaining the importance of political participation within the community. “If you let people participate, you will have a better visual of what is the real situation,” Mayor Isko said. When he became mayor, he was inspired to utilize existing technology to promote open governance. According to Mayor Isko, the benefit of having the government more accessible to the people will lead to “[more] have access to me, and I will have access to information from the public, especially on what the people need their leaders to do.”

Oklahoma taught him the importance of foresight. He was amazed by how a community confronted with a water shortage converted unclean water into clean, drinkable water sources available to individual house pipes. “It was clear that as leaders, we always need to be ahead of the problem.” This lesson reminded Mayor Isko that leaders’ priority is to be present and advocate for their constituents when the government has limited resources. “When there is a choice between development and people, you should always choose the welfare of the people,” Mayor Isko stressed.

Mayor Isko was sincerely grateful for his experience on the IVLP. He said, “*Kaya magaling ang program kasi hindi sinusubo sa’yo.*” (The



program is good because it does not spoon-feed). He remembers gaining meaningful insights along the trip. He even remembered asking why the U.S. government has been utilizing taxpayers’ money for this exchange program. One person told him that ultimately, “it is about making a better world.” Paying it forward, he realized it is his responsibility now to become a leader who genuinely serves the people.

At the same time, Mayor Isko is aware of the tremendous weight of this responsibility. Mayor Isko said, “governance is a difficult field. That is why you really must develop yourself and be a sponge. My practical experiences teach me every day and help me to make decisions. But we need to act according to our theoretical understanding of things, understand facts, address concerns, and make sure that we respond to people’s demands. Luckily for me, I learned it from my IVLP Experience.” He added, “I always believe that there is a higher being above authority and leaders. Since I already expected that I would face people taking advantage of the government’s weakness and the people, I always pray. I get my strength from God.”



“Herstory” TOWARDS *Inclusivity*

**Isabelle “Beng”
Climaco-Salazar**

Mayor, Zamboanga City
2006 Grassroots Democracy
2020 Strong Cities, Strong Partnership:
A Comprehensive Approach to Preventing
Terrorism in SEA

time experience as a guidance counselor and educator for children and family affairs. To Mayor Beng, governance is like understanding and managing family dynamics and looking at the system as a whole when responding to the needs of the people. This motherly kind of leadership helps her tend to the bustling and evolving multicultural city of Zamboanga, home to more than one million Christians, Muslims, and Indigenous peoples.

Mayor Beng’s leadership approach prioritizes a “SHE” (Security, Health, and Education) platform in Zamboanga City. “I carry within me the advocacy of ensuring that women, children, and girls are given an opportunity for development in our society and the legacy of our ‘herstory’ in the history of women’s involvement,” she said. However, just like the women leaders before her, she met an unprecedented challenge when the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) laid siege on Zamboanga in September 2013. For nearly three weeks, government forces and the MNLF engaged in conflict, causing a humanitarian crisis that left hundreds of fighters and civilians dead and displaced more than 100,000 people. The local economy was severely affected as the conflict caused businesses to close and stalled economic trade in the area “I was tested in the mettle of fire with the 2013 Humanitarian crisis – the Zamboanga Siege,” she recalled. It took years for Zamboanga to recover from the aftermath of the crisis, and more work is still needed today. “We are 80% finished, [but] 700 Internally displaced people are still suffering from the rebels’ attacks

IT IS NO WONDER that the Philippines is one of the most gender equal countries in Asia — The Philippines prides itself in the many strong women leaders in its history who overcame societal barriers and unprecedented challenges. Generations of Filipina leaders have fought and worked hard in Philippine society, from the early days of the country’s fight for independence, world wars, restoring democracy through peaceful revolution, and running its government and economy.

Continuing this tradition of Filipina leaders is Mayor Isabelle “Beng” Climaco-Salazar of Zamboanga City. As a mayor, Beng is one of the 20 percent of women who occupy local government chief executive positions in the Philippines. “It is essential for a woman’s perspective to be in governance this time,” Mayor Beng asserts, “because a woman should have a place in nation-building and decision making.”

Mayor Beng looks at her leadership role like a mother managing her household, where she ensures the safety and welfare of every member of the family. This perspective originates from Beng’s long-

in the city. That is why we are trying to expedite the rehabilitation and recovery of our people,” she shared.

The September 2013 siege brought human security to the forefront of Mayor Beng’s priorities, as it was an essential element to achieving inclusivity in the city. Since then, the Zamboanga City government has bolstered its programs on security and preventing extremism. In addition, Mayor Beng launched development programs and increased the capacity of the security sector. In early 2020, she joined a special IVLP entitled “Strong Cities, Strong Partnership: Comprehensive Approach to Preventing Terrorism in Southeast Asia,” which was apt to further support the human security programs in her city. “The priority [of] keeping our constituents safe cannot be emphasized enough, and it is a very timely program that the IVLP gave us,” she said. Mayor Beng fondly recalls many experiences from the IVLP program. She visited the White House and learned how the United States highly valued the safety and security of Southeast Asia. She spent time with the Muslim community at the Adams Center in Sterling, Virginia. The visit reminded her of the beautiful masjids in her city and showed her how development programs for the community were alive in the masjids.

*“It is essential for a woman’s
perspective to be in governance
this time, because a woman should
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and decision making.”*

Mayor Beng saw the experience as insight into preventing conflict: “what is more important is the structure of the heart. Where you develop loving relationships, they become the bulwark against hate and violence.” This encounter affirmed her initiatives to work closely with her own city’s Interfaith Council continually.

Another visit she found insightful was at the Sol Price School of Public Policy in Southern California. There, she learned about different forms of extremism, particularly in the United States, and how it evolved through time. “You just do not talk about terrorism that is foreign-led...when you look at the problem systemically, there are internal and external factors, and I think that one way of addressing them is by inclusive governance. In Mindanao, different sectors are trying to gain recognition, so I think we have to give them space and opportunity to express and realize that they can be part of the solution,” Mayor Beng said.



Another impactful encounter was her visit to Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, California, a rehabilitation and livelihood center for gang members run by Jesuits. She had read about the center in a book before, so the encounter was particularly meaningful. “I was so wide-eyed and interested. I wanted to cry when I went around the hall, seeing how you have the capacity to change people’s lives. It was an ‘aha’ moment for me in live-action, and previously it was something that I was eager and excited to experience,” she said.

The IVLP, she says, provided her valuable insights on launching inclusive developmental and security initiatives that prevent and counter violent extremism and build peace. It led to Zamboanga becoming the first city in Southeast Asia to be part of the Strong Cities Network. Inspired by her experience in the Command Center of LA Live, she invested 1.2 billion pesos in building the police, military, and coast guard capacity. In addition, she invested in building force multipliers and acquiring necessary infrastructure and equipment that would support the military, police, and coast guard in their work to prevent and counter-extremism. Mayor Beng also has worked closely with USAID to promote inclusive socio-economic development in her city.

Mayor Beng found a spark for “a lifelong commitment, and advocacy” through the IVLP program. The IVLP inspired her to continue etching her story and including more people in the work that builds her city and the nation. Mayor Beng concludes, “[We must] make sure that in our different careers, we are challenged to always be democratic in our decisions. Remember that freedom, democracy, and inclusivity always matter.”



AS THE GLOBAL FULBRIGHT PROGRAM celebrates its 75th anniversary this year, Fulbright Philippines celebrates 73 years of cross-cultural and educational exchanges with an eye toward our own 75th anniversary in 2023 as the oldest continuous Fulbright Commission in the world. The Fulbright Commission in the Philippines, known as the Philippine-American Educational Foundation, is a bi-national commission funded by the governments of the Philippines and the United States to implement educational and cultural exchange programs to promote mutual understanding between the two countries. Its alumni have included a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Pulitzer Prize Winners, National Artists, National Scientists, and senior leaders in government, the private sector, and civil society.



The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is proud to celebrate the impact and achievements of the over 400,000 alumni of the Fulbright Program as we commemorate its 75th anniversary.

Led by the U.S. government in partnership with more than 160 countries worldwide, for 75 years Fulbright has offered opportunities to accomplished students, scholars, artists, teachers, and professionals of all backgrounds. The Fulbright Program is a longstanding pillar of U.S. public diplomacy – it produces international leaders, strengthens binational relationships, reduces misunderstandings, and forges lasting connections around the world.



IN OCTOBER 1961, Peace Corps Philippines welcomed its first group of 128 Volunteers, all of them teachers. Today, 60 years on, over 9,300 Peace Corps Volunteers have successfully served across the Philippines – in diverse roles and sectors including education, youth, agriculture, fisheries, small business development, and disaster risk reduction and management, amongst others. Peace Corps Volunteers work alongside their host communities to make a lasting impact and achieve Peace Corps' mission of world friendship and peace. They have a unique ability to integrate into their host communities and, here in the Philippines, have learned up to nine different Filipino languages and lived with thousands of welcoming Filipino host families over the decades.

At the invitation of the Philippine Government, Peace Corps Philippines currently has three two-year Volunteer programs in 1) Education; 2) Community, Youth, and Family; and 3) Coastal Resource Management. Peace Corps Philippines also has a Response Program, which places more highly experienced or specialized Volunteers with state universities or LGU partners for short-term technical assistance projects. At present, Peace Corps Philippines is preparing for the safe return of Volunteers soon and supporting partners with COVID-19 recovery and other shared priorities. Peace Corps Philippines embodies the best in the U.S.-Philippine partnership and friendship with the Filipino people and will for many more years to come. Happy 60th anniversary, Peace Corps Philippines!



USAID at 60

USAID in the Philippines: 60 Years of Partnership for Development

THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID) helps people around the world build stronger, more prosperous communities. Established by President John F. Kennedy in November 1961, USAID has partnered with the Philippine government, private sector, and local implementers to achieve shared development goals for the past 60 years.

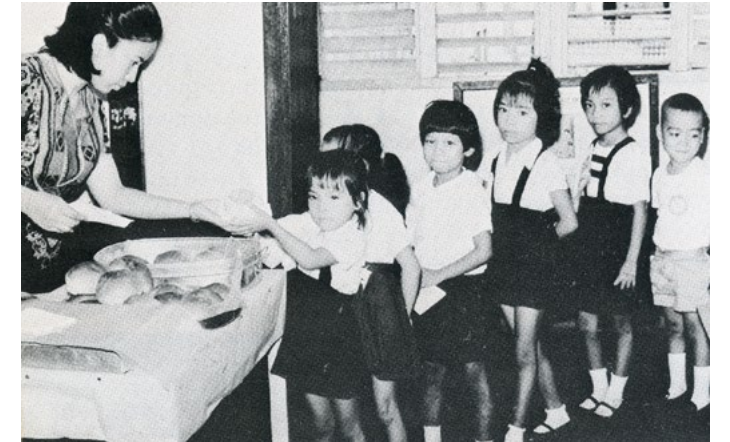
In its first two decades in the Philippines, USAID supported infrastructure development, agricultural and medical research, and rural electrification. In the 1980 and 1990s, USAID supported the development of civil society organizations (CSOs) and citizen engagement in policy making, and assisted the Philippine government CSOs in rolling out the Local Government Code and decentralization. USAID also supported the health and education sectors, helped build local capacity, and continued to invest in infrastructure.

Today, USAID works nationwide to expand inclusive, market-driven growth; foster strong democratic systems and good economic, health, and education governance; promote responsible natural resource management; and enhance resilience for communities and the environment.



USAID has provided more than \$5 billion to support sustainable, inclusive growth in the Philippines since its founding in 1961.

- Since 2018, USAID has helped establish 1.2 million hectares of Marine Protected Areas in the Philippines, protecting the environment and ensuring a sustainable source of food and livelihood for millions of Filipinos.
- USAID works closely with 24 local governments in the Lanao region to help communities recover from the 2017 violent conflict in Marawi. USAID awarded nearly 700 micro-grants, benefitting over 70,000 citizens, and extended training support to about 7,000 youth and adults for workforce readiness and civic engagement.
- Over the past 20 years, USAID has provided nearly Php 29.6 billion (\$582 million) to help strengthen health systems; prevent, detect, and treat tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS; and support maternal, newborn, and adolescent health and family planning. USAID supported the passage of landmark legislations such as Universal Health Care Act, Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Law, and Tuberculosis Elimination Law.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID has provided more than Php1.2 billion (\$25 million) to support the country's COVID-19 response at the national and local levels, helping strengthen infection prevention and control strategies; contact tracing and surveillance; laboratory systems; specimen transport and critical care management, including the provision of 100 mechanical ventilators to 46 COVID-19 referral hospitals; health communication; and support for vaccine deployment.



- Since 2010, USAID has provided Php16.5 billion (\$340 million) to help more than 100 cities and municipalities in the Philippines respond to disasters, including Typhoon Yolanda. This assistance has helped rebuild schools and health clinics, fund livelihood activities, support the Philippine government's planning and coordination efforts, and strengthen the Philippines' ability to implement disaster risk reduction measures.
- Since 2012, USAID has partnered with more than 100 Philippine academic institutions and 500 private sector organizations to encourage innovation and help youth gain the skills they need to lead productive lives, gain employment, and contribute positively to society.



PROGRAM-BASED ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ACCESS Philippine Youth Leadership Program
Alumni Associations, Inc.(ACCESS-PYLP)

East-West Center Alumni
Association Philippines (EWC)

Fulbright Foreign Language
Teaching Assistant Program
(FLTA) Alumni Association

Philippine Fulbright
Scholars Association

Fulbright Philippine Agriculture
Alumni Association (FPAAA)

Global Ugrad Scholars of the Philippines
Alumni Association (GUSPAA)

Hubert H. Humphrey Alumni
Association Philippines

International Leaders for Education Programs
/Fulbright Distinguished Award in Teaching Program
(ILEP-FDAI) Philippines Alumni

International Visitor Leadership Program
Philippines, Inc. (IVLP)

The Eisenhower Fellowship Association
of the Philippines (EFAP)

Youth Exchange and Study (YES)
Alumni Philippines



AREA-BASED ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

A **UNIQUE ATTRIBUTE** of U.S. exchange programs in the Philippines is the dynamism of the Filipino exchange alumni who have organized themselves into more than 30 associations. Through these alumni associations, they actively leverage their exchange experiences to develop programs and projects to address some of the nation's most pressing needs.





LAUNCHED IN 2013, the **Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI)** is the U.S. government's signature program to strengthen leadership development and networking in Southeast Asia. Through a variety of programs and engagements, including U.S. educational and cultural exchanges, regional exchanges, and seed funding, YSEALI seeks to build the leadership capabilities of youth in the region, strengthen ties between the United States and Southeast Asia, and nurture an ASEAN community. YSEALI focuses on critical topics identified by youth in the region: civic engagement, sustainable development, education and economic growth.

YSEALI programs include:

- Professional Fellowships to the United States
- Academic Fellowships to the United States
- Regional Workshops
- Grant Funding
- YSEALI Academy



YSEALI HUBS

SINCE 1948, more than 9,000 Filipinos and Americans have participated in U.S. government-sponsored exchange programs between the Philippines and the United States. These participants include youth, mid-career professionals, and senior officials who represent all sectors from both countries. The connections forged between Filipinos and Americans through these exchange programs have helped build mutual understanding and strengthened a robust bilateral relationship. Exchange program alumni have contributed to the development of the Philippines upon their return and continued to connect and work with alumni from around the globe.





EDUCATIONUSA PHILIPPINES promotes U.S. higher education to students and working professionals by offering accurate, comprehensive, and current information about opportunities to study at accredited postsecondary institutions in the United States through a variety of services including outreach programming, fairs, and student advising. In addition to providing guidance throughout the application process, EdUSA works to connect Filipino alumni of U.S. universities with prospective students. EducationUSA also provides services to the U.S. higher education community to help institutional leaders meet their recruitment and campus internationalization goals.



WHETHER YOU PLAN to pursue a short-term or full degree program in the United States, EducationUSA has the resources you need in 'Your Five Steps to U.S. Study'.

- 1 **RESEARCH YOUR OPTIONS**
Learn more about the variety of options available and how to identify an institution that best fits your needs.
- 2 **FINANCE YOUR STUDIES**
Need funding? Explore options or check out our university financial aid opportunity list.
- 3 **COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION**
Plan ahead and know the documents and requirements to apply for your program.
- 4 **APPLY FOR YOUR STUDENT VISA**
Become familiar with U.S. student visa requirements and allow plenty of time to prepare your application.
- 5 **PREPARE FOR YOUR DEPARTURE**
Pre-departure information including gathering documents for arrival and immigration compliance.



THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION of the U.S. Embassy maintains the American Center of Manila on the Embassy grounds in addition to the fifteen American Corners located in host universities across the Philippines. Some of these longstanding partnerships began over 30 years ago. American Spaces in the Philippines are modern, tech-driven resource spaces where a diverse range of people, private and public partners, and others can access U.S. Embassy programs and opportunities. The spaces are designed to facilitate discovery, build connections, share ideas, and empower people with new ideas and skills that can bring positive change to individuals and communities. American Spaces offer free information resources and dynamic programming on different themes such as U.S. culture and society, education, women's empowerment, civic engagement, innovation, STEAM, and entrepreneurship and other topics that support the U.S. foreign policy of building bridges of understanding, collaboration, and partnership between the Filipino and American people.

LUZON:

American Center Manila - U.S. Embassy
 American Corner Baguio - Saint Louis University
 American Corner Batac - Mariano Marcos State University
 American Corner Manila - De La Salle University
 American Corner Puerto Princesa - Palawan State University

VISAYAS:

American Corner Bacolod - University of St. La Salle
 American Corner Cebu - University of San Carlos
 American Corner Dumaguete - Silliman University
 American Corner Iloilo - Central Philippine University



MINDANAO:

American Corner Cagayan de Oro - Xavier University -
 Ateneo de Cagayan
 American Corner Cotabato - Notre Dame University
 American Corner Davao - Ateneo de Davao University
 American Corner Jolo - Notre Dame of Jolo College
 American Corner Marawi - Mindanao State University
 American Corner Tawi-Tawi - Mindanao State University - TCTO
 American Corner Zamboanga - Ateneo de Zamboanga University



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THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, through the Regional English Language Office (RELO) in Manila, offers several English language programs, resources (material and human), and opportunities to improve overall English language proficiency by promoting English language learning and improving English language teaching in the Philippines. The RELO in Manila oversees English Language programs in the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and the Pacific Island countries. The English language programs in the Philippines include the following:

English Access Microscholarship Program provides a foundation of English language skills to bright, economically disadvantaged 13- to 20-year-olds through two-year programs of after school classes and intensive summer learning activities.

English Language Fellow or Virtual English Language Fellow Program provides talented, highly qualified U.S. educators in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) on short-term assignments to academic institutions in the Philippines.



English Language Specialist Program provides U.S. academics and professionals in the fields of TESOL or Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) to do teacher training programs, materials writing, and curriculum development.

American English Online Professional English Network (OPEN) offers online courses from U.S. experts in the most recent English language teaching methods and techniques to English language teachers, teacher trainers, and administrators of English language program who are willing to share their learnings from the course with their colleagues

American English Live: Teacher Development Series is a six-session, 60-minute online professional development course for English teachers or teacher trainers around the world.

American English Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are free online courses for English teachers and learners produced by the U.S. Department of State, in partnership with the course providers in the U.S.

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Throughout the program's 80-year history, more than 225,000 people have participated in the program, each with a story to tell. "Faces of Exchange" features 50 Filipino IVLP alumni who promote rights, nurture communities, and redefine service. Each story narrates how Filipino alumni, and their exchange experiences, help shape the Philippines.
