

CONCEPT NOTE

Community-Based Dialogue (CBD) and Regional Level Policy Dialogue (RLPD) WEDefend (Women Environmental Defenders) Program

Overview of the WEDefend Project

In 2021, the Philippines was identified as the deadliest country in Asia and third in the world for environmental defenders, with women facing unique vulnerabilities and even graver threats. In the face of continued extractive human activities that have devastating environmental impacts, along with the persistent feminization of the burden of managing natural resources for a household's survival, WEDefend will advance women's leadership through innovative and direct support that empowers and capacitates women environmental defenders (WEDs). Through the support of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), The Asia Foundation through The Alternative Law Groups, Inc. implemented a 16-month project to empower WEDs to meaningfully and safely participate across all levels of environmental governance.

The WEDefend project objectives include the following:

- Objective 1. Equip WEDs and civil society organizations (CSOs) with the necessary skills to conduct their work safely and effectively and influence policies without threats of violence.
- Objective 2. Improve access to justice of WEDs who face violence, abuse, or harassment.
- Objective 3. Advance women's leadership and advocacy on local and national priorities related to natural resources and the environment.
- Objective 4. Strengthen public and institutional knowledge of technical environmental information.

WEDefend Project Areas and Partners

The coverage of the project will be nationwide and three Regional Coordinators shall be engaged, one for each island groups of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The Regional Coordinators took the lead in coordinating activities with the other ALG member organizations, partner communities, and other relevant stakeholders in the identified region/ island. The areas identified for each major island groups and ALG implementing partners:

Luzon:

- Masbate: Sentro ng Alternatibong Lingap Panligal (SALIGAN) – Luzon cluster head
- Palawan: Environmental Legal Assistance Center, Inc. (ELAC)
- Pangasinan and Quezon Province: Tanggol Kalikasan (TK)

Visayas:

- Cebu: Philippine Earth Justice Center, Inc. (PEJC) – Visayas cluster head

- Negros Occidental: KAISAHAN (Kaisahan tungo sa Kaunlaran ng Kanayunan at Repormang Pansakahan) Negros
- Ilo-ilo and Antique: Participatory Research Organization of Communities and Education towards Struggle for Self-reliance (PROCESS) Foundation

Mindanao:

- Maguindanao Province and South Cotabato: Legal Rights And Natural Resources Center, Inc. – Kasama sa Kalikasan/Friends of the Earth – Philippines (LRC-KsK/FoE-Phils.) – Mindanao cluster head
- Surigao Sur and Bukidnon: BALAOD Mindanaw

The Community-Based Dialogue (CBD) Sessions

The Community-Based Dialogue (CBD) Sessions aim to contribute to the improvement of the Human Rights situation in the Philippines primarily through the enhancement of the relationship between the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) and Philippine National Police (PNP), on one hand, and local communities and civil society organizations, on the other hand, in the common effort to promote and protect human rights.

The CBD sessions want to create venues for dialogue among various stakeholders, both from the government (AFP, PNP, CHR) and civil society (CSOs, local sectoral organizations) on the need for cooperative efforts in the promotion and protection of human rights, and to strengthen the partnership and collaboration between the security forces and civil society.

The CBD project was launched on October 21, 2008, with the following project current partners:

- Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHR)
- Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) – through the Center for the Law of Armed Conflict (CLOAC)
- Philippine National Police (PNP) – through the Human Rights Affairs Office (HRAO)
- Philippine Alliance of Human Rights Advocates (PAHRA)
- Alternative Law Groups, Inc. (ALG)
- Hanns Seidel Foundation of Germany (HSF)

By the end of the first phase of the project, the program had already conducted CBDs in all administrative regions of the country. In the succeeding years and phases, the project continued to implement the concept of inter-sectoral dialogue and enhancing the relationship between security sector and civil society by taking on various forms and activities, such as localized regional and inter-region CBDs, the development of training handbooks and actual conduct of trainings and trainer's trainings on CPR (Civil and Political Rights) and ESCR (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), and the conduct of Top Level Policy Dialogues (TLPDs) and Regional Level Policy Dialogues (RPDs).

Seeing the importance of holding CBDs under the WEDefend project in order to surface, discuss and collectively come up with strategies or mechanisms to address the issues experienced by WEDs, the CBDs under WEDefend will be piloted in 2 areas: Palawan and Region 6. The 2 pilot areas were chosen due to ongoing active partnerships between the local stakeholders. Also, the process of Leahy vetting is required (but takes a long time to complete), so the pilot was limited to the 2 areas.

The Regional Level Policy Dialogues (RLPDs)

The Regional Level Policy Dialogues (RLPDs) is a way to scale up the dialogue process from the grassroots to the policy arena by involving local policy makers of lead government offices. The RLPD mechanism involves constructive discussion of policy gaps and policy reform recommendations that can be implemented towards the continuous promotion and protection of human rights, and works towards the improvement of the relationship between the security forces and the civilians.

Program (CBD & RLPD)

Time	Activity/Session	Remarks
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Arrival and Registration for CBD	
9:00 am – 9:30 am	Opening Program	Opening Prayer National Anthem Welcome Remarks Acknowledgement of participants
9:30 am – 10:00 am	Overview of the program	Morning session – CBD Afternoon Session RLPD
10:00 am – 10:45 am	Presentation of WEDefend Project & Issues Experienced by WEDs	
10:45 am – 11:45 am	Open Forum	
11:45 am – 12:00 nn	Closing Program (CBD)	Synthesis of Action Points Closing Remarks
12:00 nn – 1:00 pm	Lunchbreak	
1:00 pm – 1:15 pm	Registration for RLPD	
1:15 pm – 1:40 pm	Opening Program	Opening Prayer National Anthem Welcome Remarks Acknowledgement of participants
1:40 pm – 2:15 pm	Overview of the Program	
2:15 pm – 3:45 pm	Issues Raised & Policy Recommendations of WEDs	
3:45 pm – 4:45 pm	Open Forum	
4:45 pm – 5:00 pm	Closing Program (RLPD)	Synthesis of Action Points Closing Remarks

