

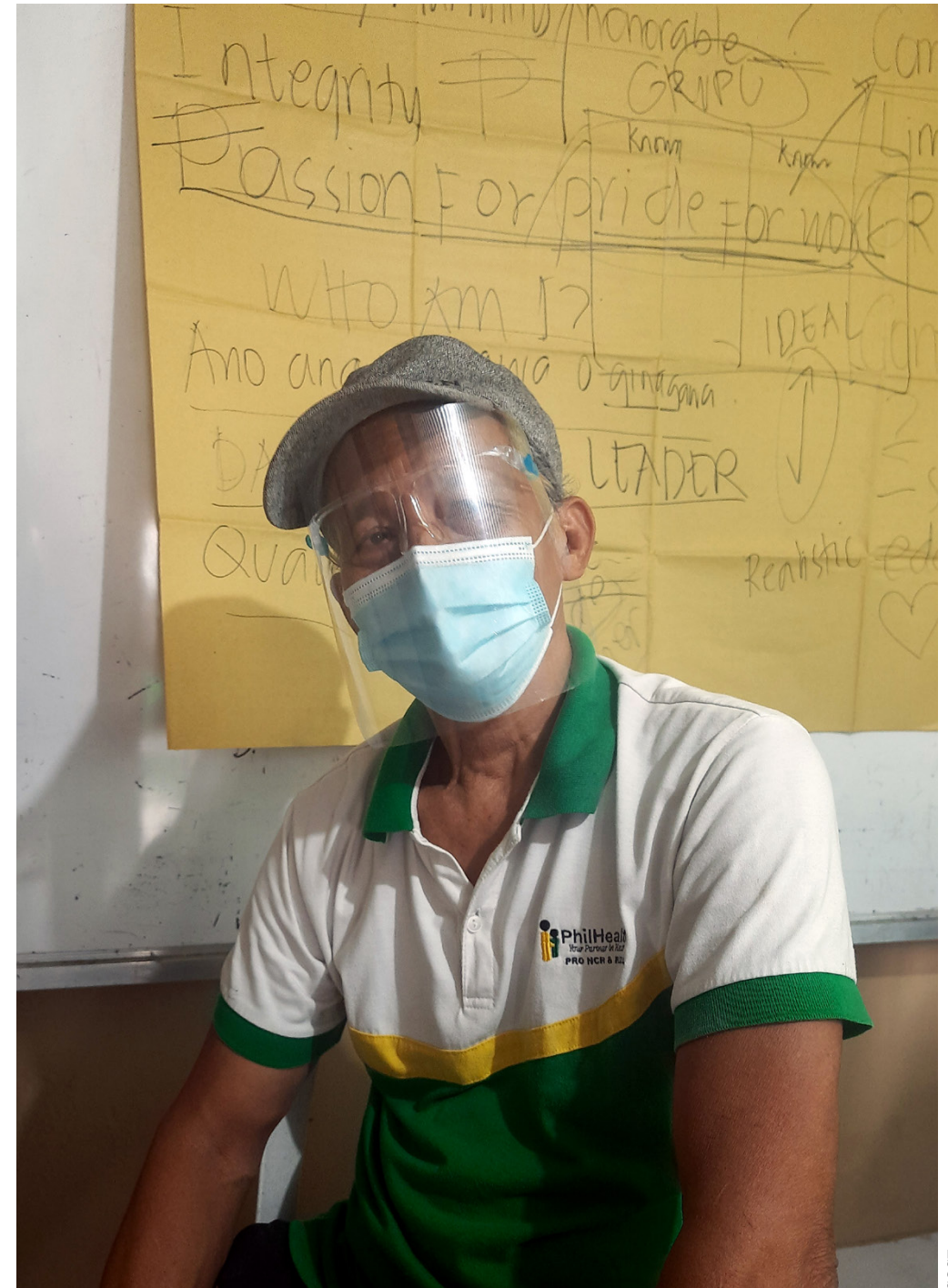
# The Philippines

## Tackling ageism through an intergenerational social media campaign

One of a series of ten case studies summarised in HelpAge's guide, *Bringing generations together for change* →

In the Philippines, the government introduced stringent lockdown measures on 16 March 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19, covering Metro Manila and other provinces in Luzon. When restrictions started to ease in early August 2020, local authorities continued to prohibit older people from leaving their homes and entering public or commercial premises. This meant it became very difficult for older women and men – especially those living alone – to access health services and meet their basic needs.

As these age-based restrictions discriminated against older people, HelpAge's network member, the Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), started to campaign to raise awareness about ageism and age-based discrimination, and why it should be challenged.



In support of:



COSE did not originally plan to involve young people in the campaign against ageism, but after seeing the materials it was distributing as part of the campaign (including social media cards and posts), four students from the De La Salle University (DLSU) in Manila contacted COSE to ask how they could join the campaign. Working together, they designed and ran a month-long social media campaign, from 1 September to 1 October 2020. The students were motivated in part by their course requirement to partner with an organisation doing advocacy work, but they also realised they had a responsibility to help address ageism by challenging attitudes towards older people among their own generation. They were also interested to know more about ageism and how they could collaborate with COSE, particularly in its campaign to challenge age-based discrimination linked to the pandemic.

### What problem or issue did the project address?

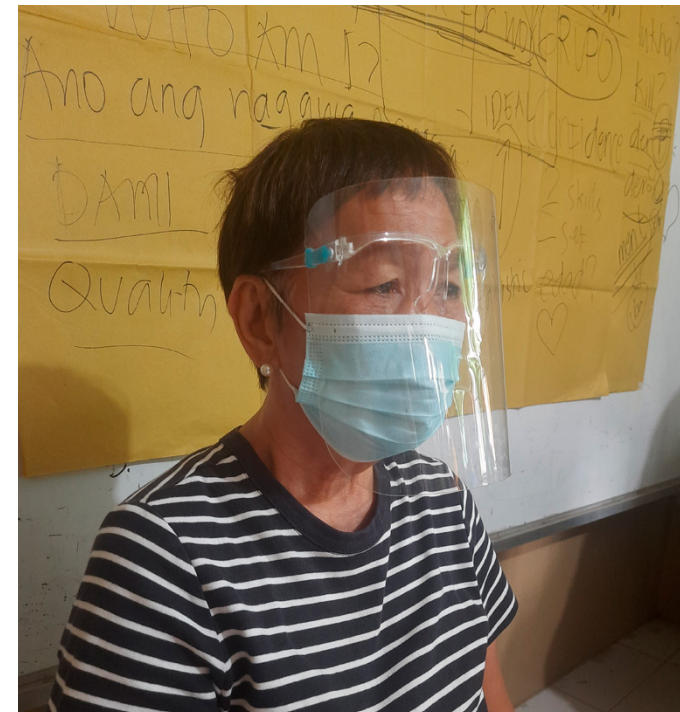
Ageism has long been an issue in Filipino society, defined as discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice based on age. Elder abuse is manifest in physical and/or sexual abuse, psychological abuse, economic and financial exploitation, neglect of care, and abandonment. The social and economic disruption brought about by the pandemic made things much worse for older people across the country, as they were denied care, medical treatment and support (one older person who had difficulty breathing was reportedly refused admission by as many as six hospitals that claimed they did not have vacant beds in their intensive care units). By highlighting the valuable contribution older women and men make to society, the joint campaign not only challenged ageist assumptions, but also provided emotional support for older people who might be experiencing ageism.

The intergenerational social media campaign, called ‘Lola’t Lolo Usap Tayo: Abuso sa Panahon ng Pandemya’ (‘Let’s Talk Grandfather and Grandmother: Abuse During the Pandemic’) aimed to raise awareness of ageist attitudes by sharing older people’s stories about what happened during the pandemic so that families living with grandparents could better understand ageism and its impact on older people. It also aimed to raise awareness among younger generations about elder abuse, and how each member of a community should be responsible for preventing this, especially during the pandemic, by reporting it to the proper channels.

### What did the project aim to do?

COSE’s overall campaign objective was to work with different organisations, government offices and groups, to raise awareness of ageism and its impacts, among older people themselves, their family members, and the wider community. It also aimed to challenge the government’s COVID-19 measures and address problems older people were experiencing due to the way local authorities and service providers were interpreting the guidelines.

The government’s Inter-Agency Task Force responsible for containing COVID-19 issued lockdown guidelines for the implementation of community quarantine in March 2020. This required certain groups of people – including all those aged 60 and above (but also “any person below twenty-one (21) years old and those with immunodeficiency or comorbidities and those living with them”) “to remain in their residences at all times, except when indispensable under the circumstances for obtaining essential goods and services or for work in permitted industries and offices”. Yet in practice, local government units in many areas prohibited older people from leaving their homes to work or even get medical care or meet other basic needs.



COSE

Working with the DLSU students meant that COSE could increase the campaign’s reach, and engage younger people in taking action against abuses and discrimination affecting their older family members and other older Filipinos. The intergenerational campaign aimed to address attitudes that stigmatise older people as ‘incapable’ and a ‘burden’ to their families. The messaging was intended to challenge these negative ideas and empower older people to showcase their abilities to a wide range of audiences such as university students, government employees, and those working closely with older people.

The campaign also aimed to make older people more aware of what elder abuse is and where to get help if they see it happening or experience it themselves.



## How did the project work ?

COSE and DLSU students planned the month-long campaign on ageism in August 2020, consulting with staff, students, and selected leaders of older people's associations. It was able to conduct face-to-face consultative meetings with 10 older people in Metro Manila. They shared their opinions on the lockdown measures and their experiences during the first few months of the pandemic, especially with trying to access health and other services.

COSE met with leaders of older people's associations and asked them to identify topics for discussion with students during the campaign webinars, as well as putting forward suggestions about which members might be willing to share testimonials and speak at one of two planned webinars.



It also scheduled campaign activities (including launching a Facebook page, see below) and consulted with the leaders of older people's associations about the content of social media cards.

As part of the intergenerational campaign, COSE and the DLSU students launched a Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/LolatLolo.UsapTayo](https://www.facebook.com/LolatLolo.UsapTayo) →, in August 2020. It was designed as a platform where older people could freely and safely share their observations, opinions, and even experiences of abuse and discrimination during COVID-19 (the identities of older people who participated in consultations and those who shared their opinions and experiences were kept confidential, except for two older women who spoke during the webinars). The page regularly posted messages about ageism, quotes from older people, and news and updates on the campaign, including promoting the two webinars. The first, on ageism, was held on 19 September 2020 and viewed by 647 people. The second, on elder abuse, was held on 1 October 2020 (though originally scheduled for 26 September) and viewed by 405 people. The campaign also produced a short video of an older woman sharing her experiences of age-based discrimination during the pandemic, which was posted on the Facebook page.

## What changes did the project achieve?

The four students involved in leading the campaign learnt about ageism and age-based discrimination, and developed a deeper understanding of older people's lives, including their vulnerabilities and challenges. They became more sensitive and considerate of older people's needs, especially in their interactions with their own older family members.

As a result of being involved in this campaign, the students also got involved in other COSE activities, such as online discussion and dialogues with older people. They committed to staying involved in COSE's advocacy work to promote and protect older people's rights.

A female university student who took part in the campaign explained what impact it had on her:

*“Our campaign made me more patient and helped me to understand more about what my grandparents are experiencing during the pandemic. I also got to hear different stories from older people, and I believe that the youth could be a great participant in this movement to break the barrier between the young and old people. Anyone can actually join and educate one another regarding ageism as anyone can be a victim of this. Ageism is a term that is not talked about by a lot of people – that’s why it’s important to raise awareness about this matter.”*

## What worked well?

- The campaign succeeded in raising awareness among audiences of different ages and backgrounds on how COVID-19 and government measures have exacerbated ageism. Those who viewed the webinars (government staff from the Municipal Social Welfare and Development, students and leaders of older people's organisations) requested copies of the presentations so that they could use them in discussions in their respective fields.
- The university students committed to sharing the campaign concept and introducing COSE and its advocacy work on supporting older people's rights and wellbeing to students in the lower year.

This meant they were able to get more younger people involved, not just in the ageism campaign but in COSE's other advocacy work and activities to promote older people's rights. After completing their course, the students who were involved in the campaign have continued to take part in COSE's activities such as online discussions and dialogues with older people.

- Using both English and Filipino in campaign messages proved to be a success factor, as older people preferred Filipino while other audiences preferred English. The choice of language for the campaign seemed to have worked well, since target audiences were receptive to campaign messages and no negative comments were received.

- Using the Facebook 'boost' function (a feature that helps attract messages, views and engagement) helped to amplify the campaign messages. During the first webinar, most viewers were older people from Metro Manila and nearby provinces (Bulacan and Cavite), and the family and friends of the four students who were working on the campaign. However, during the second webinar, the audience was larger and included government officials (from Municipal Social Welfare and Development, and the Office of Senior Citizens Affairs) from areas such as Pangasinan, Baguio, Cagayan and Pampanga. They participated in the discussion by sending comments and asking questions.
- The campaign was successful in reaching its target audiences of older and younger people and their families. From 26 August to 22 September 2020, its Facebook page reached 7,587 people from different groups, sectors and areas in the country. It was also successful in responding to the questions, concerns and comments of audiences both on the Facebook page and the livestreamed webinars. People's interaction with the Facebook page demonstrated their interest in the topics and the campaign as a whole. Statements from those who viewed the webinars, such as "*relevant, timely, insightful and great discussion*", suggested that they were successful in raising awareness, especially among those who mentioned that they were currently caring for their parents and grandparents and now "*understand their parents and grandparents better*".
- The team developed five indicators to measure how far they were achieving their targets (see table left, which gives figures on progress at a certain point in time, rather than being the final figures).

Performance indicators	
To showcase five case stories and a one–two minute advocacy video of older persons experiencing hardships during the pandemic by the end of September.	So far we have collected seven case stories, posted one case story due to approval process of COSE. We will be posting our advocacy video at the end of the campaign.
To solicit at least 30 open letters from older persons to be shown to decision and policy makers by the end of the campaign period (September 20, 2020)	We have collected six open letters and are still posting invitations to participate in our Facebook page and COSE's Facebook page.
By the end of September 2020, the campaign team would have developed two infographics about the types of elderly abuse and how to ask for help regarding it. These will have a Filipino and English version to ensure full understanding from all target audiences.	We have already posted these two infographics and plan to repost the Elderly Abuse post as a reference for the next webinar that focuses on Elderly Abuse.
To garner 1,000 likes on our campaign's Facebook page, and receive at least ten comments per post throughout the duration of our campaign period (September 4–30).	We have 333 likes and 343 follows.
To garner at least 100 participants during our webinar series on Facebook on September 19 and 26, 2020.	During our first webinar, we are able to reach 1,115 individuals and garner 431 viewers. These participants also left 34 comments.

## What could be done differently?

- Using social media and internet tools for a campaign to raise awareness about ageism and age-based discrimination proved an appropriate and effective activity for most younger people. It was also beneficial for young and older professionals who have access to the internet. There were some problems though. Many older people – especially during the first few months of the pandemic when communications started to shift from face-to-face to digital – were not ready to use digital forms of communication, as they lacked smartphones or other internet-capable devices, or lacked the skills to use them. In situations where access remains problematic, face-to-face activities would still be the most appropriate way to engage and involve more older people in discussions and campaigns.
- After consultations with COSE and older people's leaders, the campaign's Facebook page was created and managed by DLSU students. For continuity and additional support to the campaign, the project team (COSE, DLSU students, and older people's leaders involved in the campaign) could have coordinated more extensively with youth-focused and older people's organisations, as well as students from other universities, to encourage volunteers to develop social media messages and co-manage the page.

## What can we learn from this project?

- **It takes time to gain traction and engage target audiences in campaigns to raise awareness of ageism, so a longer campaign would have worked better and afforded time to do other activities and have more time to consult with more older people. (The intergenerational campaign ran for one month only because the DLSU students had a discrete task as part of their course to work on a campaign with their chosen organisation. But the students continued to be involved with COSE activities after this time.)**
- **To really reach audiences with social media campaigns, the content must be very engaging. Sharing case stories on the lived experiences of older people can be a powerful tool for exposing the impact of ageism, age-based discrimination, and harmful social norms.**
- **Since many older people still lack access to internet-capable devices or lack the skills needed to use social media apps (such as Facebook or Zoom), blended or mixed campaign strategies (using more traditional forms of communication such as flyers, posters, or local radio) may work better in a given context.**

This case study was developed with the support of the Coalition of Services of the Elderly in the Philippines. It is one in a series of ten case studies, produced in connection with HelpAge's guide, *Bringing generations together for change* →, published in collaboration with Restless Development and in support of the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism

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