

Media at Pandemya
Coping with and Covering the
Health Crisis

Community Media Challenges through a Journalist's Lens

By Rhaydz Barcia

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OUTLINE:

- - Community journalists' challenges in disaster-prone Bicol Region in time of pandemic
- - Impact of ABS-CBN and Zagsit News Radio stations closure to the public
- - Going beyond the 'comfort zone' despite of restrictions amidst the pandemic
- - Coping with the "new normal" coverage and poor internet connectivity
- - Journalist perspective in time of pandemic.

Community journalists' challenges in disaster-prone region in time of pandemic:

No public transport available for almost a year due to Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ).

Expensive transportation cost/trike drivers are inflicted with Covid-19

No public transportation



- Fear of being inflicted with the deadly virus and possible transmission to family members.
- No hazard pays, and limited financial resources and support from publications/stations due to economic downturn.
- ‘Survival of the fittest’



Impact of ABS-CBN/Zagitsit News Radio stations closure to the public

- Closure of ABS-CBN in Legazpi last August 28, 2021 resulted to the layoff of its 30 employees in Legazpi City after 23 years of operation.
- Clamping down ABS-CBN in the pinnacle of health crisis and series of natural disasters in Bicol is like cutting off the umbilical cord, putting the lives of many Bicolanos in jeopardy due to limited sources of information.
- ABS-CBN regional news team totally put down their microphones and cameras amid public health crisis in time of pandemic after Congress did not renew the media giant's franchise to operate.

- Another local radio station in Legazpi closed down that could be attributed to politics.
- The NTC ordered the closure of the radio station before the expiry date of its franchise on Nov. 19, 2021 that affected more than 25 employees.
- Hermogenes "Jun" Alegre, owner and station manager of Zagitsit News FM, accused Ako Bicol partylist Rep. Alfredo Garbin to be behind the closure of the radio station, saying it is "politically motivated."
- But Zagitsit News FM has vowed to continue fighting for press freedom in time of pandemic, adding that it will not be cowed by political intimidation.

Challenges and coping mechanisms with the "new normal" coverage and poor internet connectivity:

- Pandemic radically changed media coverage
- Coping with the "new normal" thru virtual platforms.
- Decode and shift from face-to-face coverage to virtual press conferences.

- Virtual press briefings turn more beneficial to the government agencies than the media practitioners.
- Government officials and agencies select media outlets they regard to be “friendly.”
- Being neutral is not a core principle of journalism.
- Take a stand
- Journalists are hungry for truth.

Journalist perspective in time of pandemic

- In a year like never before, the world is crippled by coronavirus pandemic. No single country rich or poor is ready for global pandemic, much less developing countries, like the Philippines.
- For nearly one year, the grassroots communities are struggling against the impact of the coronavirus pandemic as the country's economy is shrinking and heavy under uncertainty for the future. Sadly, the impact badly affected the marginalized socioeconomic sectors (farmers and fishermen).
- The impact of COVID 19 has even worsened in the Philippines specifically in the Bicol region following the occurrences of stronger typhoons that pummeled the countryside in the middle of the pandemic.





- Through my lens, these marginalized people suffered the brunt of complex disaster events in the middle of the pandemic as they could not go on fishing and farming activities during the course of enhanced community quarantine or total lockdown.
- They lost economic opportunities due to limited access to public transportation. There were no storage and carriage facilities to keep and bring their products to the market.
- Legitimate and independent journalists' resiliency is tested in time of pandemic and complex disaster events despite of restrictions and economic crisis.







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