

In response to Question 9:

The Commission on Human Rights, the national human rights institution of the Philippines, is an independent office created by the 1987 Philippine Constitution. It has been given an “A” accreditation rating by the International Coordinating Committee.

With respect to the Commission’s mandate to provide access to justice and remedies for older persons, the Constitution provides that the Commission has the following powers and functions:

- Investigate, on its own or on complaint by any party, all forms of human rights violations;
- Provide appropriate legal measures for the protection of human rights of all persons within the Philippines, as well as Filipinos residing abroad, and provide for preventive measures and legal aid services to the under-privileged whose human rights have been violated or need protection;
- Request the assistance of any department, bureau, office, or agency in the performance of its functions; and
- Grant immunity from prosecution to any person whose testimony or whose possession of documents or other evidence is necessary or convenient to determine the truth in any investigation conducted by it or under its authority.

The Constitution also provides that the Commission has the following powers and functions:

- Exercise visitorial powers over jails, prisons, or detention facilities;
- Monitor the Philippine Government's compliance with international treaty obligations on human rights;
- Establish a continuing program of research, education, and information to enhance respect for the primacy of human rights; and
- Recommend to Congress effective measures to promote human rights and to provide for compensation to victims of violations of human rights, or their families.

Anchored on the principles of indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, the Commission also conducts investigative monitoring of violations of economic, social and cultural rights.

Consistent with the human rights based approach, the Commission gives special attention to the vulnerable sectors of society, including older persons. In line with this, the Commission is beginning to implement and institutionalize its focal system, which aims to develop expertise within the Commission on thematic issues as well as on vulnerable sectors.

With respect to legislation, the Commission notes the recent passage of the strengthened Senior Citizens Act and the Cheaper Medicines Law both of which greatly benefit our senior citizens. The Commission expects that Congress will soon pass the proposed Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines Charter (CHRP Charter), which will expand and increase the Commission's organizational and functional structures in order to better address human rights promotion and protection in the country. Strengthened functions include that of investigation, not only of civil and political rights, but also of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as the power to take legal measures against human rights violations.