

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: 09/07/2020

18 organizations request the Philippine Government to protect people's privacy in its COVID-19 contact tracing efforts

Manila/Bangkok - In an open letter to the relevant stakeholders overseeing the StaySafe.ph and *COVID-KAYA* applications used for COVID-19 contact tracing efforts, 18 organizations are calling for the Government of the Philippines to be more transparent about the processes and uses of these applications. The open letter urges the government to protect the fundamental human right to privacy of its citizens.

StaySafe.Ph is a contact tracing application developed by Multisys Technology Corporation (Multisys) in partnership with the National Task Force Against COVID-19. According to the [Resolution No. 45](#) of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), all collected data from StaySafe.ph shall be migrated to the *COVID-KAYA* application. *COVID-KAYA* has been developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in coordination with the Department Information and Communications Technology (DICT). The app aims to have a data collection system that can be used by health authorities when they collect COVID-19 case reports.

As privacy is a fundamental human right, the government's efforts to combat COVID-19 should not overlook users' right to privacy. The Philippines should explore the international best practices on contact tracing efforts and follow the WHO's guideline on contact tracing, '[Ethical considerations to guide the use of digital proximity tracking technologies for COVID-19 contact tracing](#)'. According to the guideline, the use of the contact tracing app should also be voluntary and based on the informed consent of users. The Philippines must protect the right to privacy according to the international human rights instruments to which it adheres, including Article 12 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 17 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

The undersigned organizations called for the relevant stakeholders, which include the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Multisys Technology Corporation (Multisys), and World Health Organization (WHO) Representative Office for the Philippines, to take the following actions:

1. Release the white paper and source code of both StaySafe.ph and *COVID-KAYA* under an open-source license so that independent experts can examine any vulnerabilities in the system. The white paper should document the system's architecture, functions, protocols, data management, and security design, while the source code should be of the deployed system, complete, up-to-date, and buildable. The white paper and the source code must be regularly updated along with the app.
2. Conduct human rights assessments, particularly a privacy impact assessment of both StaySafe.ph and the *COVID-KAYA* systems, as mandated by [NPC Circular 2016-01](#), which was issued by the National Privacy Commission on the security of personal data use by government agencies. The result of the assessment should be made publicly available. The DOH should also ensure that the collected data by SafeStay.ph will, without exception, only be used for contact tracing purposes.
3. Follow the WHO's Interim Guidance, '[Ethical considerations to guide the use of digital proximity tracking technologies for COVID-19 contact tracing](#)', and protect the privacy of

citizens in any upcoming contact tracing efforts in keeping with its international commitments to protect the fundamental human right to privacy.

The open letter is signed by following parties:

DigitalReach

Foundation for Media Alternatives

Democracy.Net.PH

Gender and Development Advocates (GANDA) Filipinas

EngageMedia

Freedom from Debt Coalition

Internet Society - Philippines Chapter

Philippine Computer Emergency Response Team (PhCERT)

Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)

Sustainability and Participation through Education and Lifelong Learning (SPELL)

Human Rights Online Philippines

Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

Southeast Asia Freedom of Expression (SAFE.net)

University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies Program on Alternative Development (UP CIDS AltDev)

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Women's Legal and Human Rights Bureau

Privacy International