

**Focus Group Discussion with Women/ Women's Organization on
the Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender-
Based Violence**

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I. Preliminaries

The participants registered their names and some details upon arrival and the shortly after the activity started with a prayer and followed with the singing of the Philippine National Anthem. Before going straight to the activity, they were given first a backgrounder as to what the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is and its mandates, and why is the commission the one organizing such gatherings.



The event was organized by the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) as one of its roles being the Gender Ombud, as mandated by the Magna Carta of Women. The attendees were informed as to what is the purpose and significance of such event. The event was about knowing the situation of women and gender-based violence (GBV) as well. It is especially directed towards the condition of the legal process or system on GBV related cases or happenings. Moreover, it aims to create solutions to any problems raised by the attendees. The regional mapping activity was explained further by the Gender and Development (GAD) focal of the CHR Regional Office 8 and a video was shown to elaborate more on the how the idea of the activity was created.



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II. Background on the Regional Mapping Act

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III. Focus Group Discussion

The objectives of the focus group discussion (FGD) were discussed first to the attendees before conducting the FGD. During the workshop, one of the attendees from the women's organization shared a story about her helper who experienced abuse from her husband and how she helped her.



Fig. 3.1 Small talk between CHR ROs and Women's Federation

All attendees presented their answers in a simple and precise manner. They get to share their experiences and thoughts while answering the questions given to them. The attendees were composed of CHR clients, Tacloban North Women's Federation officers and a representative from a non-government organization (NGO) based in Samar which is the Terre Des Homes Samar Field Office (TDH SFO).

Guide Questions for Focus Group Discussion with Community Women

1. Gender Equality Situationer in the City/Municipality

- Are you aware of any local gender equality or GBV policies in your city/municipality? Do you know if you have a GAD Code or an Anti-Discrimination, Anti-Cat-calling ordinances or of their barangay counterpart?
 - Most participants are aware of local gender equality or GBV policies in their city/municipality and the rest were unaware if there are any existing gender equality or GBV policies in their city/municipality.
- Have you or your organization participated in the development/passage of these policies? Have you ever accessed GAD funds of the barangay/LGU? (for women focused activities etc.)

- Only from TDH SFO get to participate in the grafting of the GAD Code. They observed that one of the municipalities adopted a GAD Code from other municipalities and it was not localized for the municipality.
- Are the VAW Desks in your barangay functional? (established, trained officials, able to record VAWC cases, able to respond and issue BPO)
 - All participants answered that the VAW desk in their areas or communities are functional. However there are areas that VAW desks are not functioning properly, are not appreciated and there are officials who are not well trained.
- 2. **Gender-based Violence (GBV) in the city/municipality (in relation to gender-based violence)**
 - What are the common forms of GBV in your municipality/city?
 - Economic abuse
 - Physical Abuse
 - Child Rape case
 - Child prostitution
 - GBV on persons with disabilities (PWD)

- What are the challenges/barriers women experienced in:
 - a) Reporting and investigation of cases of GBV (PNP/VAW Desk)
 - Two (2) clients struggled during this step of the process when they accessed it.
 - Victims are embarrassed to report the incidence and they lack support or encouragement from their relatives.
 - Lack of information as to where they should report such cases and seek for help especially for them living in the resettlement areas.
 - To have access on contact numbers of concerned agencies so that the victims have other options in reporting their cases if they can't do it personally.
 - The victims are stereotyped and marginalized that is why instead of reporting it, they chose not to report the incidence.
 - b) Prosecution and legal assistance (Prosecutor's Office, PAO, VAW Desk)
 - c) Providing support services (MSWDO, CSWDO, WCPUs)
 - One (1) client experienced difficulty when accessing for help from the concerned agency.
- From your experience, which group of women are most affected by the GBV forms identified (e.g. urban poor women, women farmers, women with disabilities, on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity)?
 - Urban poor women and children
 - Women with OFW husband
 - Women with disabilities

- What are the specific challenges/barriers experienced by women in seeking legal remedies in cases of GBV? What are the challenges specific for women in the marginalized sector? (Deaf, rural woman, IP etc.)?
 - The worry that it might cause the loss of a provider or a financial supporter in the family if the wife report her husband. (Tacloban North Women's Federation)
 - The lack of encouragement or support for the victims (Tacloban North Women's Federation)
 - GBV cases are mostly occurring in far-flung areas which is a challenge for the victims. They have to save-up some money just for transportation in order to report their cases. (TDH SFO)
 - Women are not educated and local officials are being trained or educated about Magna Carta for Women but they don't conduct orientations or discussions to transfer the knowledge they have learned or gained to the community women. (TDH SFO)

- What have been the observed trends in gender-based violence cases received in the past five years? What are possible economic, socio-political, cultural and other factors affecting this/these trends?
 - Child Rape case
 - Child prostitution
 - GBV on PWD
 - Factors affecting it are socio-cultural and socio-political factors. The irresponsiveness of services by the government towards women and children. (TDH SFO)

Fig. 3.4 First batch of participants presenting their answers

3. Flow of Case Management (specific to the service provider)

- From your experience, what is often the entry point for women who seek to report cases of GBV with the government services?
 - For one VAWC victim/client she entered the government services when she asked for help for legal action towards her husband.
 - When there is physical abuse happening, it is the time women enter government services.
 - Asking help for legal action on the cases affecting women or reporting it to the women's desk would be the entry point for one of the clients.
 - The entry point mostly is through the barangay and sometimes through the police or CSWDO.
- What are the available services for GBV survivors are women often aware of?
 - Filing of blotter in barangay/municipal women's desk and asking
 - Legal consultation
 - Counselling
- Which among the available services offered by the service provider are most often accessed by women? What are the possible factors affecting their choice of what to access?
 - She accessed mostly the help from PNP Women's desk because the VAW desk in their community lacks well-trained officials, hence they forwarded or sent her case to the PNP Women's desk
- Are there services that women victim survivors of GBV seek and are often unable to access from government offices? What service are they most frustrated/disappointed?
 - The client was frustrated towards the PNP Women's desk because they don't assist or give out advices as to what are the next steps to take towards the case.
- At which point in the process of GBV intervention do women **often exit** the formal helping system of the service provider? What do you think are the underlying reasons for these?
 - One of the client's experience was there was no one, particularly in the PNP Women's desk, to encourage or push the victim to file a report or case against their perpetrator. There's no one telling them what actions or measures to take with regards to the abuse or violence experienced.
 - So far, there have been no withdrawal of cases from the victims and all cases are in progress for the Tacloban North Women's Federation.
 - For TDH SFO observance, they exit due to economic or financial constraints because the husband is mostly the provider of the family and the common perpetrator. Wives withdraw their cases

towards their husband because they worry that there would be no one else or other options to support and provide for the family. This is a common occurrence because women are not empowered to work for themselves or for their family.

4. Documentation

- Does your organization conduct documentation/research on GBV in your area? Can you provide a brief description of the documentation/research?
 - Yes, documentation is practiced in the organization which they forward or pass it on the city level. (Tacloban North Women's Federation)
 - The TDH SFO does not document the cases because the service they provide is referral. They refer such incidence to concerned agencies. They establish or create referral flow in barangays.
- Do you document cases of GBV that your organization or you assist or respond to? How is the system of documentation?
 - As per experience, the client was asked to give information about herself and the people living together with her for documentation purposes.



Fig. 3.5 Last two participants presenting their answers

- From experience, is there a government *good practice* in responding to GBV? Is there also a case that *showcase difficulty in accessing justice/legal remedies* in cases of GBV in your area?

- For one client a good practice was that her case was responded properly. The actions were seen and felt by the client and her case is now resolved.
- When she asked for help from the CHR that is when she experienced justice as well as peace of mind compared to what she experienced from PNP-Women's Desk. She was told on what measures to take and when she did that she gained or acquired justice for herself, which she think is a good practice from the CHR.
- The best practice would be the continuous monitoring and support from CSWDO and other related agencies.
- The best practice of the government is that they complement with the TDH SFO's projects or programs and provide livelihood programs.

5. Recommendations

- Are there information on gender-based violence and women's human rights which could be of use to, and you would like to be available to your organization?
 - Education on the clear referral flow of cases like for GBV cases and sources or supports available for them.
- Are there information on gender-based violence and women's human rights which you feel women vulnerable to GBV need to have more access to?
 - Education on women's rights/ educating the women on their rights.
- Are there information on gender-based violence and women's human rights which you feel the local population in general need to have more access to?
 - Educate the community
 - Capacity development and promotion of Men Oppose Violence Everywhere or MOVE.
 - Providing them access to resources or livelihood because the TDH SFO believes that GBV cases are happening because women are not empowered to have economic or financial capacity.
 - Lobby/influence LGUs for participatory and responsive planning and crafting of policies
- Other recommendations for the CHR as the gender ombud as mandated by the Magna Carta of Women.
 - Continue to help the needy in legal ways and to promote the Magna Carta for Women
 - For the CHR to impart their role to the PNP, MSWDO or any local government unit (LGU) in helping the victims or clients through trainings and the likes. Also to inform said agencies to educate

their clients that there is another agency, which is the CHR, that can help them as well with their cases. And to educate or disseminate the information on the services that CHR can give towards GBV victims.

- The recommendation given by the other client was just to continue helping the public.
- In conducting GBV orientations, all family members must be included especially the would-be perpetrators that are mostly the father/husband.
- To have a permanent information board or tarpaulin to constantly remind the community as to what is considered a violation or abuse towards other people.
- Continuous Community Awareness campaigns and free legal services.
- To have a "VAWC Center" wherein all services are provided for the GBV victims, such as legal consultation, medico-legal and others because victims dislike or in discomfort when they are moved from one agency to the other.



Fig. 3.6 CHR RO8 accommodating all concerns and recommendations

The recommendations given were received in a good manner by CHR RO8. The CHR is welcome to help on anyone that would tap for their assistance and to create partnership with anyone if given an opportunity. A concern was raised about the GAD planning and budgeting because in the community they don't have enough knowledge about it. The CHR RO8, admittedly, is still on the learning process about GAD planning and budgeting. They are open to create an activity for it and tap the resource persons needed for that event. The GAD planning and budgeting includes various technical terms that is why it is needed that people with expertise must be the ones to teach or educate the public.

IV. Closing Remarks

For closing remarks, CHR RO8 invited the attendees to their upcoming event and gave out big thanks to the participants who attend the event. The highlights of the event were recalled and the recommendations are yet again kept with consideration. One thing that was recalled was the GAD Code of a municipality that was not localized, which is similar to Calbayog City's GAD Code based on the answers of the FGD conducted with Women's Organizations in city. Another similarity is the lack of economic empowerment for women, which is the common reason why victims won't file a case or they would later on withdraw their cases against their husbands. Inclusion of men during talks or discussion on GBV because mostly they are the perpetrators, was also a discussed topic during the FGDs held in Calbayog City. The programs for women, is also another similar topic that was discussed on both FGDs in Tacloban and Calbayog cities. Lastly, the common recommendations were continuous information drive and awareness campaigns. It might be difficult to execute but the CHR RO8 is open on having partnerships with other agencies to conduct such events. To formally close the event, a photo was taken to commemorate the said activity.

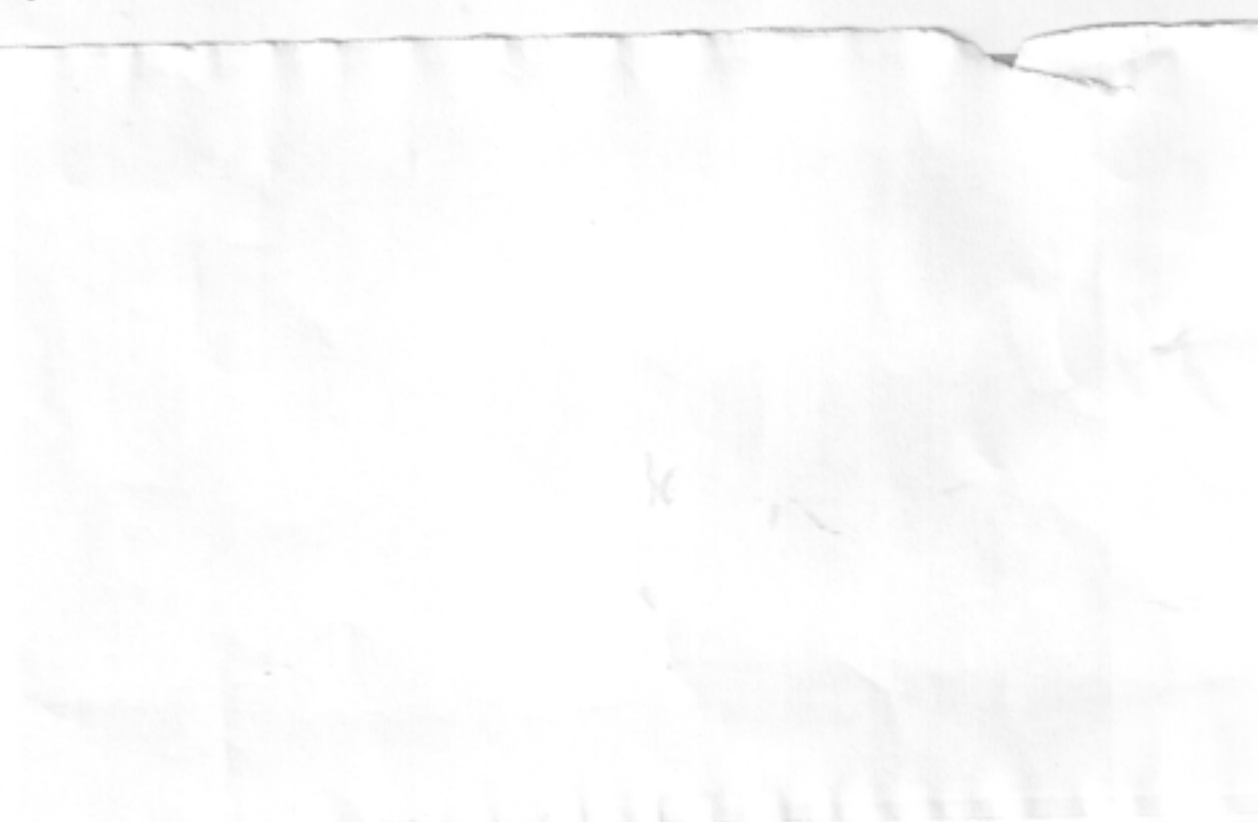


Fig. 4 Commemorative photo of CHR RO8 and participants