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Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender- Based Violence

Municipality of Malita, Davao Occidental
September 12-13, 2019



GOJUST
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Human Rights
PROJECT

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Background of the Activity

The ***Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender-Based Violence*** is a continuation of the initial mapping conducted under the ***Gender Based Violence Observatory Project***. This project was carried out in 2018 as part of the efforts to respond and recognize continuing prevalence of gender-based violence and the continuing challenges in women's access to justice.

Through the GBV Observatory Project, the ***Commission on Human Rights***, with funding support from ***Go Just***, undertook research engagements that looked at how laws on GBV are implemented and how GBV manifests in the lived experiences of women. The GBV Observatory is envisioned to contribute to the monitoring of state's obligations in addressing GBV and in forwarding key policy recommendations. It also aims for a deeper and wider understanding of GBV, enhancing women's access to justice, and in general, in making data work for women. It further hopes to address one of the key targets of SDG 5 (Gender Equality), on the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spaces, including trafficking and sexual violence and other types of exploitation.

The GBV Observatory Project began in 2018 spearheaded by the Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights and led by focal Commissioner for Women, Commissioner Karen Gomez Dumpit. The specific objectives of the project included the review of the roles of state actors in addressing GBV, the mapping of existing legal referral mechanisms, and the documentation of processes, key themes and discourses, including the identification of issues, gaps, and challenges.

As one of the major components of GBV Observatory Project, the Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender-Based Violence aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Capacitate the officers and staff of the 16 regional offices of the Commission on the mapping of legal referral mechanisms, identification of issues, gaps and challenges, and responding to gaps through the regional office's mandate of protection, promotion, and policy;
2. Harness the capacities of the Commission's 16 Regional Offices in monitoring functionality of referral mechanisms, providing recommendations, and influencing enhanced functionality and responsiveness of local inter-agency mechanisms to respond to VAW; It aims to strengthen Commission's mandate as Gender Ombud; and
3. Gather regional data on GBV, particularly highlighting issues faced by the most marginalized and 'excluded,' a focus on intersectionality, and an analysis that looks into women's lived experience of GBV.

On September 12-13, 2019, the CHR Region XI implemented the mapping of legal referral mechanisms on gender-based violence in partnership with the Municipality of Sta. Maria. These activities were participated by the different members of the LGU. This document outlines the details of the processes that took place during these activities.

DAY 1:

Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender-Based Violence
September 12, 2019 | Municipal Hall, Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental

List of Participants

#	Name	Affiliation/Organization
1	Jeziel Gapitulan	Staff, MSWD
2	Genalyn Lucero	Staff, MSWD
3	PCPL Shayne S. Bautista	PNP
4	Wenna Mae Gaquit	Planning Officer, MPDO
5	PAT FPEMA Jane Dela Rosa	PNP
6	Shirly Yu	GSO
7	Roderick Tongon	GSO
8		
9	Aubrey Jane, Aranez	SWO1, MSWD
10	Rechille, Allawan	Midwife, MHO
11	Rutchille Tahir	Staff, MSWD
12	PAT Hanahzel Bedolido	PNP
13	Raissa Jalalon	CHR XI
14	Alfonso Balansag	CHR XI
15	Mary Joy S. Bravo	CHR XI
16	Peter Niel Arendain	CHR XI
17	Ciena May Juyo	CHR XI
18	Karl Sandino R. Lozano	Documenter

Actual Program Flow | September 12, 2019

Time	Activity	Facilitator
8:54 – 9:44 AM	Arrival of Registration of Participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM Snacks 	CHR XI
9:45 – 9:53 AM	Preliminaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening Prayer • National Anthem • Introduction of Participants 	Peter Niel Arendain
9:54 – 10:12 AM	Rationale of the Activity and Commission on Human Rights Mandate	Mary Joy Bravo
10:13 – 10:15 AM	Welcome Remarks	Wenna Mae Gaquit Planning Officer MLGU Sta. Maria
10:16 – 11:50 AM	Focus Group Discussion	Atty. Ciena Mae Juyo
11:51 – 12:09 PM	Synthesis and Validation	Atty. Ciena Mae Juyo
12:10 -12:15 PM	Closing and Ways Forward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of Certificates • Photo Ops 	Peter Niel Arendain
12:16 PM	Lunch	

I. Arrival and Registration | 8:56 AM – 9:40 AM

At 8:56 in the morning, participants started to arrive at the venue. The CHR XI team facilitated the registration of the participants. While waiting for the other participants to arrive, the morning snacks was served. At 9:40 in the morning a total of 12 participants, coming from different key offices of Sta. Maria LGU, were registered for the activity.

II. Preliminaries | Opening Ceremony | 9:41 AM – 9:50 AM

At 9:45 AM, the activity was formally opened with an invocation. A multimedia presentation of the song Dakilang Maylikha by Gary Granada served as the morning prayer. This was then followed by the singing of the Philippine National Anthem. Acting as the main facilitator of the activity, Mr. Niel Peter Arendain led the introduction of the participants. He asked the participants to stand up and be recognized as he called their names in the plenary. Shortly after this, Mr. Arendain thanked all the participants for responding to CHR's invitation.

III. Rationale of the Activity | 9:51 AM – 9:53 AM

Mr. Niel Peter Arendain gave a brief background of the activity. He explained that the regional mapping of legal referral mechanisms on gender-based violence will ease out the process of looking into the experiences of participants in handling or managing cases related to gender-based violence. Particularly, the process will look into how these cases are reported to appropriate government offices or authorities in the barangay and in the municipality. Given so, Mr. Arendain encouraged everyone's participation in the focus group discussion.

IV. Commission on Human Rights Mandate | 9:54 AM – 10:13 AM

The Commission on Human Rights Mandate was presented by Atty. Mary Joy Bravo. She is one of the Chief Investigators of CHR Region XI. Below are the salient points of her discussion:

- Atty. Mary Joy Bravo opened her presentation on CHR Mandate by providing a brief background of CHR. She explained that the Commission on Human Rights is an independent national human rights institution that was created under the 1987 Constitution. She added, that the establishment of CHR was a response to the atrocities that happened during the Martial Law under the Marcos Regime.
- The CHR mandate is to conduct investigations on Human Rights Violations (HRV) committed against marginalized and vulnerable sectors of the society involving civil and political rights. CHR's basis of investigation are the existing laws that were promulgated by the state to protect the basic human rights of the citizens. Thus, Human Rights and the law go hand-in-hand

- Atty. Bravo also explained that CHR serves all the persons in the Philippines as well as Filipino nationals abroad. It provides services to both right holders, duty bearers, and other persons in authority. Particularly, CHR serves the marginalized groups in the society. Among these are: women, children, youth, persons deprived of liberty, indigenous peoples, domestic and migrant workers, internally displaced persons, persons living in poverty, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expressions, and other marginalized sectors.
- The mandate of CHR is articulated in its 4 core functions. These functions are carried out to protect the rights of the marginalized sectors:
 - **Human Rights Protection Services** - Documentation and management of human right violations and complaints; monitoring of human rights conditions in detention facilities and penal rehabilitation centers; and provisions of independent forensic services and medico-legal services in aid of legislation.
 - **Human Rights Promotion Services** - Continuing development of client-based human rights education and training programs and the delivery of client-based education and training project for priority sectors.
 - **Policy Advisory Services** - Issuance of human rights advisories, position papers, statements and comments on existing policy and issues.
 - **Specialized/Thematic Human Rights Program** - Child Rights Center; Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Right; Center for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Center for Crisis, Conflict and Humanitarian Protection
- Atty. Bravo also added that CHR also forge partnership and cooperative arrangement for the promotion and protection of Human Rights. This falls under CHR's **Cooperation and Partnership Program**.

At 10:13 in the morning, Atty. Bravo ended her presentation on the Commission on Human Rights Mandate. Shortly after, Mr. Peter Niel Arendain asked Wenna Mae Gaquit, Planning Officer of the Municipality of Sta. Maria to share a brief message.

V. Welcome Message | 10:13 AM – 10:14 AM

Ms. Wenna Mae Gaquit, Planning Officer of the Municipality of Sta. Maria thanked and welcome everyone in the plenary. She also expressed that she is happy to see the Commission on Human Rights working with the Municipal Local Government of Sta. Maria especially in the promotion of human rights and the welfare of women and children. In closing, she articulated that this activity will help the municipality be more conscious and aware of their duties related to human rights promotion and protection.

VI. Focus Group Discussion Proper | 10:15 AM – 11:50 AM

At 10:15 in the morning, Atty. Ciena May Juyo led the focus group discussion. Prior to this, she explained why the activity has to be carried out by the Commission on Human Rights. She emphasized the following points in her discussion:

- The Magna Carta for Women tasked CHR as a gender ombud. Given so, CHR is mandated to spearhead programs that are articulated in the law.
- According to a research study, gender-based violence remains to be pervasive. About 1 out of 4 women population experienced abuses and they normally sought help from their peers. Thus, the mapping of legal referral mechanisms on GBV is important in order to check gaps in implementation and management of GBV cases.
- Atty. Juyo also added that the results of the mapping activity will be used in designing programs or education campaigns to intensify support on the implementation of laws related to gender-based violence. Furthermore, it will help CHR to identify best practices on ground and craft necessary recommendations to improve the policy. Specifically, it will help CHR map the GBV referral mechanism, check its effectivity, identify challenges in implementation, and craft policy recommendations by looking into local experiences and responses.
- Before the actual focus group discussion, Atty. Juyo encouraged the participants to share their insights and ask questions if needed.

The following table outlines the responses of the participants during the focus group discussion:

Gender Equality Situation in the City/Municipality

Theme	Responses
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have a data in MPDO but not disaggregated; these area household level data (MPDC).
Gender equality policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• MPDC requires that 25% of the working force must be women (MPDC)• No specific policies for Gender Equality in the department (MPDC)• No specific policies but we ensure equal treatment in dealing with clients (PNP)

Experiences with GAD mainstreaming and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSWD conducts planning and budgeting for GAD programs. GAD plans and programs are then implemented after it is approved by the DILG. (MSWD) The budget for GAD programs are subsidized by the budget for health at the barangay level (5%). The Municipal Health Office's budget for GAD programs are provided by the MPDC. (MHO) The PNP office also submits GAD plan and budget to MPDC. The FJDG officer takes care of the submission of the plans and budget requests. (PNP)
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Gender-based violence in the city/municipality

Themes	Responses
Common forms of GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women filing for child support (PNP) Physical abuse and child custody (MSWD) VAWC – specifically involved during the provision of health services (MHO)
Affected Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IP women Women from low-income family
Difficult Cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are clients who are sometimes “toxic”. These are clients who are difficult to handle. Even if you have already provided them with the necessary counseling and other support they will still insist on what they want even if the policy will not allow it. This normally happens on cases related to child support or child custody. (PNP/MSWD) There was once a rape case filed in the PNP where the father was accused of raping his daughter. The mother insisted to settle the case because according to her, the alleged accused and the victim have a romantic relationship. This case is still being litigated. (PNP) MHO articulated that they have not experienced any difficult cases related to VAWC or GBV. (MHO)
Challenges	
<i>Reporting and investigation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private health services/doctors refuse to provide services to VAWC related incidents especially if they are aware that medical results will be used in the legal process (MSWD/MHO/MPDC/PNP) There is currently only one MHO/doctor in the municipality of Sta. Cruz. The PNP are often forced to refer VAWC victims to nearby municipalities (Malalag/Malita) for health examination (PNP/MSWD)
<i>Providing support services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The MSWD are sometimes challenged with clients who keep on violating the agreements that they have settled for. These cases are referred to the barangay but will eventually be

	referred back to the MSWD. This results into repetitive interventions. (MSWD)
Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of basic needs (food, support on education of children, etc) to victims of VAWC (MSWD/MPDC) • Provision of livelihood interventions to KALIPI (womens' group). Livelihood interventions are not specific to VAWC victims. (MPDC) • Oplan Davao Kalinaw - implementation of medical missions, distribution of school supplies, education campaign on VAWC, Rape, and other laws. (PNP)

Flow of Management Case (specific to the service provider)

Themes	Responses
Entry points for GBV cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starts by filing a blotter (pink blotter) in PNP; case is then referred to MHO for medical, and referred to MSWD for counselling (PNP) • VAWC incidents that were reported to the barangay are usually referred to the PNP; most of the time no documentation of these incidents is made at the barangay level (MSWD)
<i>Available services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GBV victims are given priority in certain need-based interventions (provision of livelihood, etc) • Victims of GBV are regularly visited by social workers from the MSWD.
Available services often accessed by women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support provided to women who are victims of GBV (MSWD) • Assistance on transportation (PNP)
At which point in the process of GBV intervention do women often exit the formal helping system of the service provider?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cases are resolved when couple are already OK or if they have already settled their issues (MSWD) • When case is already filed / when warrant is already issued (PNP)

Documentation

Themes	Responses
When does documentation of GBV complaints start?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pink Blotter book (PNP) • General Intake Sheet (MSWD)
Filing and storing	
<i>How long will they be kept</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-4 years (General Intake Sheet) (MSWD) • Pink Blotter book / 20 years (PNP)

<i>Electronic Database</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSWD and PNP have electronic database
Utilization of Data (publication of reports/cases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MSWD generates report for province, region, national office; GBV cases are report daily to the provincial office; submits report via online database every 2pm (PNP)
Who can access these files? Protocols?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all information are accessible to public; sensitive data needs approval from OIC (PNP) Counseling notes are only for MSWD (everyone in the office) (MSWD) General data regarding number of cases and other are accessible only to agencies/departments where reports are submitted; DILG, CHR, etc. (MSWD/PNP) Academe also access statistical data of GBV from MSWD / interested party submits letter of request (MSWD)
Which information are made public and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General data like types of cases or number of cases. These are sourced out per barangay

Recommendations

Themes	Responses
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 agency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We want to know how to manage difficult (toxic) clients. (MSWD/PNP) capability/capacity building on counselling for other MSWD staff (MPDC) More seminars on process related to GBV/WHR. Specifically, learning sessions on how to handle cases and or clients? (PNP) Information and or programs for GBV related to mentally challenged women
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any information/policies related to GBV; constant education campaign (MSWD/MPDC)
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and or programs for GBV related to mentally challenged women
Other recommendations for the CHR as the gender ombud as mandated by the Magna Carta of Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation of doctors / as response to the challenge in securing medico legal for VAWC related incidents

After the focus group discussion, Atty. Juyo allowed the participants to raise questions and clarifications. Below are the salient points of the discussion that followed:

- Participants asked if VAWC cases can be settled in the barangay level. They cited experiences where the complainant agreed to settle the case by signing an agreement with the accused. Atty. Juyo emphasized that VAWC cases are criminal offense. Given so, this cannot be amicably settled in the barangay level. Any agreement/settlement signed in the barangay will be considered null and void by the court of law.
- A participant from the PNP expressed that they currently do not have any facility that can accommodate children and mentally challenged clients. She then asked whether they will be made liable or accountable by CHR if they are caught accommodating these clients in a “purok” outside of the PNP facility. Mr. Peter Arendain recommended that these clients must be referred to appropriate agencies such as MSWD or MHO.

At 11:50 in the morning, the discussion was formally closed to give way to the presentation of the FGD synthesis.

VII. Presentation of Synthesis/ Validation | 11: 15 AM – 12:09 PM

The synthesis of the focus group discussion was presented by Atty. Ciena May Juyo. She presented back the participants answers and asked whether she missed out on something. The participants affirmed that the synthesis is complete and accurate.

VIII. Closing / Ways Forward | 12:10 PM – 12:15

The activity was formally closed with the distribution of Certificates of Participation and Attendance. This was facilitated by Mr. Peter Niel Arendain. Participants were also asked to fill out the evaluation sheet that was distributed earlier. At 12:15 in the afternoon the session concluded with a photo opportunity with the participants.

End of Day 1

DAY 2:

Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender-Based Violence
September 12, 2019 | Municipal Hall, Sta. Maria, Davao Occidental

List of Participants

#	Name	Affiliation/ Organization
1	Giralyn Albiso	Kagawad – Sto. Rosario
2	Thelma Nardo	President, Womens Group – Sto. Rosario
3	Resty Darunday	President, Womens Group – Isidro
4	Yasmin Sultan	Kagawad - Tanglad
5	Evangeline del Rosario	Kagawad - Cadaatan
6	Marilyn Mante	Brgy. Sto. Nino
7	Delfina Mamayo	President, Womens Group – Sto. Nino
8	Rosalyn Maligon	Brgy. Daligasao
9	Monaperla Mangayao	Brgy. San Antonio
10	Hermie Fe Villa	Kagawad, Brgy. Kidadaw
11	Joahnamie Villa	President, Womens Group, Kidadaw
12	Mila Mamado	President, Womens Group, Buca
13	Norma Cabaral	Kagawad, Brgy. Malalag Tubig
14	Sharmila Estilloso	President, Womens Group - Kisulap
15	Lelia Magase	Brgy. Kagawad
16	Aquiles Dagone	Kagawad – San Juan
17	Mirasol Dande	President, Women’s Group – San Juan
18	Marie Javice	Kagawad
19	Florami Jeopli	Kalipi President
20	Adelaida Linggosan	Kalipi President
21	Lilia Capoc	Kalipi President
22	Imelda Dagon	Kalipi President
23	Victoria Yu	Barangay Captain
24	Imelda Saromines	Kagawad
25	Emma Maligon	Kalipi President
26	Glory Fe Alevaro	Kalipi President
27	Willy Gumutao	Kagawad
28		
29	Roderick Tongon	Poblacion
30		
31	Raissa Jalalon	CHR XI
32	Alfonso Balansag Jr.	CHR XI
33	Mary Joy S. Bravo	CHR XI
34	Peter Niel Arendain	CHR XI
35	Ciena May Juyo	CHR XI
36	Karl Sandino R. Lozano	Documenter

Actual Program Flow | September 13, 2019

Time	Activity	Facilitator
8:38 – 9:23 AM	Arrival and Registration of Participants AM Snacks	CHR XI
9:24 – 9:38 AM	Opening Ceremonies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invocation • National Anthem • Introduction of Participants 	Mr. Peter Niel Arendain
9:39 – 9:41 AM	Welcome Remarks	Hon. Victoria Yu
9:42 – 11:45 NN	Rationale of the Activity and <i>Human Rights, CHRP Mandate and Rights Against Discrimination</i>	Mr. Alfonso Balansag Jr.
11:46 – 12:10 NN	Open Forum	Mr. Peter Niel Arendain
12:10 – 1:04 PM	Lunch Break	
1:05 – 1:34 PM	Focus Group Discussion	Atty. Ciena May Juyo
1:35 – 1:57 PM	Presentation of Synthesis / Validation	Atty. Ciena May Juyo
1:58 – 2:10 PM	Plenary Discussion PM Snacks	Mr, Peter Niel Arendain
2:11 – 2:30 PM	Closing Ceremony/Ways Forward	Mr, Peter Niel Arendain

I. Arrival and Registration | 8:38 AM – 9:23 AM

At 8:38 in the morning, participants started to arrive at the venue. The CHR XI team facilitated the registration of the participants. While waiting for the other participants to arrive, the morning snacks was served. At 9:23 in the morning a total of 30 participants, coming from different barangays of Sta. Maria LGU were registered for the activity.

II. Preliminaries | Opening Ceremony | 9:24 AM – 9:38 AM

At 9:24 AM, the activity was formally opened with an invocation. A multimedia presentation of the song Dakilang Maylikha by Gary Granada served as the morning prayer. This was then followed by the singing of the Philippine National Anthem. Acting as the main facilitator of the activity, Mr. Niel Peter Arendain led the introduction of the participants. He asked the participants to stand up and be recognized as he called their names in the plenary. He also introduced the members of the CHR XI team who were present in the plenary hall. Shortly after, Mr. Arendain thanked all the participants for responding to CHR's invitation.

III. Welcome Remarks | 9:39 AM – 9:41 AM

Hon. Victoria Yu, the Barangay Captain of Barangay Pompong, gave a brief welcome message to formally open the morning session. She thanked the CHR XI team and the participants for their attendance in the activity. As a proud member of the women sector, she also articulated that she hopes to learn from the discussions and learning input that will happen within the day.

IV. Rationale of the Activity and Human Rights, CHR Mandate and Rights Against Discrimination | 9:42 AM – 11:45 AM

In order to provide a proper context of the activity, Mr. Alfonso Balansag Jr. provided the rationale of the Regional Mapping of Legal Referral Mechanisms on Gender-Based Violence. He explained that the session is a sort of a consultation process where everyone gets to share their experiences on handling GBV cases. This, according to Mr. Balansag, is important because CHR will be crafting a policy recommendation that will be endorsed to the legislative body and help improve the current policies and laws protecting women and children. Given so, he asked everyone to participate and share their experiences especially during the focus group discussion.

After, Mr. Balansag proceeded with his presentation on Human Rights and the Commission on Human Rights Mandate and Rights Against Discrimination. The following are the important points raised during his discussion:

- To start his presentation, Mr. Balansag asked the participants about their perceptions on the Commission on Human Rights. He then presented some of the common perceptions about CHR. Among these common perceptions are the following: *CHR favors criminals, CHR as enemy of*

the state; and CHR as allies or protector of drug dependents, drug lords, criminals, and rapists. Mr. Balansag clarified these perceptions by narrowing his discussion on the importance of Human Rights and the Mandate of CHR.

- Mr. Balansag explained that human rights is universal. He emphasized that human rights is inherent to everyone. He also gave a brief historical background of the human struggle to assert these rights. According to Mr. Balansag, the assertion of basic human rights all throughout human history happened in a situation where they experienced discriminations and violence. Women, for example, has long been perceived as lesser gender. They were perceived as secondary to men and sometimes subjects of men.
- In order to give more input on gender-based discrimination, Mr. Balansag, also explained the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression. He provided the definition of the key concepts in SOGIE and explained the difference between sex and gender.
 - **Sexual Orientation** answers the question, who do you desire?
 - **Gender Identity** is determined by answering the question, how do I see myself?
 - **Gender Expression** answers the question, how do I represent or express myself?
- Although, we are fortunate to have been born in a generation where human rights are asserted and openly discussed, Mr. Balansag emphasized that there is still a need to continuously assert it. More so, that discrimination is happening everywhere. Human Rights must be recognized as not only important but also interrelated to each other. One human right is necessary for the enjoyment of other rights. The violation of one human right, affects the other rights.
- Mr. Balansag also provided the definition of human rights according to the United Nations, Commission on Human Rights, and late Senator Diokno:
 - **United Nations:** human rights are generally defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings.
 - **CHR:** human rights as the supreme inherent and inalienable rights to life, to dignity and to self-development. It is the essence of this rights that makes man human.
 - **late Senator Diokno:** “No cause is more worthy than the cause of human rights. Human rights are more than legal concepts, they are the essence of man (woman). They are

what makes man/woman you denies man's (or woman's) humanity.”

- Mr. Balansag explained that the state has the primary obligation to protect the human rights of its citizens. This is articulated in Article 2, Section 11 of the Philippine Constitutions: “...the state values the dignity of every human person and guarantees full respect for human rights”. Given so, the state enforces laws to protect the rights of its citizens. Human rights and laws go hand-in-hand.
- The mandate of CHR is to serve as a watchdog of the government and protector of marginalized sector. As a watchdog, it is tasked to investigate on its own, or on complaint by any party, all forms of human rights violations involving civil and political rights. As articulated in RA 970, CHR also serves as Gender Ombud and is tasked further to investigate violation of anti-trafficking law, investigate and render legal assistance of violation on the rights against torture, and investigate violation of VAWC law and monitor its implementation.
- In closing, Mr. Balansag emphasized that the CHR is not anti-government.

V. Open Forum | 11:46 AM – 12:10 NN

At 11:45 AM, Mr. Balansag's presentation on Human Rights and CHR mandate concluded. This was then followed by a brief plenary discussion where the CHR team answers the questions raised by the participants. Below are the important points raised during the open forum:

- One of the participants asked if it is possible for anyone to file a case against someone who violated the VAWC law. Mr. Balansag explained that the violation of the VAWC law is considered a criminal offense. Anyone can file a case/complaint against the perpetrator.
- One participant shared her experience. She mentioned that her husband imposes a curfew on her. One time she was not allowed to enter their home because she got home minutes late from the 6 PM curfew. She wanted to know if this is a violation of the VAWC law and if she can take legal recourse. Atty. Juyo affirmed that what she experienced is emotional abuse and she may file a complaint against her husband if she wants to.

At 12:10 in the afternoon, the open forum was closed, and the participants took their lunch. Mr. Peter Niel Arendain led the prayer before meal.

VI. Focus Group Discussion | 1:05 PM – 1:34 PM

The focus group discussion was facilitated by Atty. Ciena May Juyo. Prior to the discussion, Atty. Juyo explained the context of the FGD. She emphasized that the process is part of their mandate as Gender Ombud. She also explained further that the mapping of legal referral mechanisms for GBV will rely on the willingness of participants to share their individual experiences as focal person for gender and development in their barangays. Thus, she encouraged all the participants to participate in the discussion. Below are the responses of the participants to the questions raised during the focus group discussion:

Gender equality situationer in the city/municipality

Themes	Responses
Gender equality policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All participants confirmed that they do not have specific gender equality policies at the barangay level
Experiences with GAD mainstreaming and budgeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All participants affirmed that the VAWC desk at the barangay level is functional There were no trainings conducted for VAWC Desk focal person as of this writing Recording of VAWC cases are done in the barangay level

Gender-based violence in the city/municipality

Themes	Responses
Common forms of GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical abuse, Economic Abuse, Adultery
Groups affected by the GBV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housewives (normally wives of farmers), Senior Citizens
Observed trends in GBV and factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BLGU responds to VAWC cases; Cases are reported to the police or MSWD
Difficult cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No challenges/difficulties in referring cases to MSWD; Cases are given attention promptly because BLGU VAW Desk representatives assist in referring cases to MSWD

Flow of Management Case

Themes	Responses
Entry points for GBV cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VAW Desk Victims/complainants initially approaches community leaders or leaders of women's group who then refers cases to VAW Desk Some cases are handled per sitio; Victims/complainants approaches Kagawad in-charge of the sitio who then refers the case to VAW Desk
Available Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselling

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of financial support to defray cost of transportation expenses from the Barangay to the poblacion; • Victims are sometimes sheltered in the community leaders' home
Available services often accessed by women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling • Financial support on transportation expenses
At which point in the process of GBV intervention do women often exit the formal helping system of the service provider?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When both parties have come into an agreement/settlement • If perpetrator is incarcerated

Documentation

Themes	Responses
When does documentation of GBV complaint starts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All barangays confirmed they keep record of VAWC cases in a logbook/VAWC record book; There is no specific form or template being used for recording
Utilization of Data (publication of reports/cases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports are submitted to MSWD every quarter; some reports are encoded in MSWORD while others are handwritten

Recommendation

Themes	Responses
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 agency?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seminar/ Education Campaign on VAWC in the community (for all members of the community) • Seminar for VAWC Desk focal person • Seminar for BLGU Officials who will then re-echo the training program to other members of the barangay
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihood for women victims of violence and other members of household

VII. Presentation of Synthesis/ Validation | 1:35 PM – 1:57 PM

The focus group discussion ended at 1:34 in the afternoon. This was then followed by the presentation of the FGD results. Atty. Juyo led the presentation of the FGD synthesis and asked the participants if they want to add more insights. Participants confirmed that the synthesis presented is complete and accurate.

VIII. Plenary Discussion | 1:58 PM – 2:10 PM

A brief discussion followed shortly after the presentation of FGD synthesis. Mr. Peter Niel Arendain facilitated this discussion while everyone enjoyed their afternoon snacks. The following are some of the salient points raised during the discussion:

- A concern was raised regarding setting up of shelter for VAWC victims at the barangay. Participants shared that most of the barangay councils in Sta. Maria has assigned a room at the barangay hall that will serve as a shelter for victims of GBV. However, this is rarely used for its purpose. They still find it unsafe to leave the victims of GBV at the barangay hall knowing that there are no security personnel available to ensure their safety. Most of the time, community leaders ensure the safety of the victim by allowing them to stay in their own homes.
- The participants also articulated that they need more information or learning sessions about women who are mentally challenged since they are also vulnerable to gender-based violence.

IX. Closing/Ways Forward | 2:11 PM – 2:30 PM

The plenary discussion ended at 2:10 in the afternoon. This was followed by the distribution of the certificates of participation which was facilitated by Mr. Arendain. Mr. Balansag emphasized thanked the group for their participation. He also assured everyone that all the information during the discussion will be documented and will form part of CHR's basis for policy recommendation. At 2:30 PM, the activity was closed with a photo opportunity.