



Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Regional Office 02
Tuguegarao City, Cagayan

DOCUMENTATION REPORT

Situation of Women Fisherfolks and Women and Girls in Claveria, Cagayan at Risk of Trafficking and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during COVID19 Pandemic and New Normal

Title of Activity: PHASE 1B: Focused Group discussion on GBV during COVID19 Pandemic and New Normal

Venue/Location : Claveria, Cagayan

Date Conducted : September 14, 2020

Participants:

In order to establish the impact of the COVID19 pandemic to the sector of women fisherfolks and how aligned agencies catered to them, the Commission on Human Rights Regional Office # Gender Ombud Focal, Atty. Grace R. Marcos, invited and conducted a Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with government service providers in Claveria, Cagayan, to further gather data, verify as well as clarify issues and information collated during the remote interviews with women fisherfolks.

Government Service Providers Profile

	Name	Government Agency
1	Odessa	Bureau of Aquatic Resources – Fisherfolks Livelihood Development Technician
2	M. Bernardino	PNP Women’s Desk- Claveria
3	Joel Angelo	Local Government Unit- Municipal Agriculturist
4	Virginia	Local Government Unit- Municipal Agriculturist
5	Jarett	Department of Interior and Local Government representative
6	Girlie	Local Government Unit- Municipal Agriculturist
7	Ryan Jay	Local Government Unit- Municipal Agriculturist – Fisheries

Context and Rationale

Mapping of women fisherfolks at risk of Gender-Based Violence and other incidence of discrimination during COVID-19 Pandemic is a two-pronged system. This involves the women fisherfolks as Key Informant for their lived experiences plus aligned government service providers for verification, clarification and other significant information. Conducting Focused Group Discussion (FGD) with these service providers helps eliminate any gap that may have resulted from the KII, documents interventions and best practices as well as presents existing systems. FGD also addresses recommendations gathered from the KII of women fisherfolks.

This FGD with government service providers or aligned agencies serves as an opportunity to communicate with duty bearers gaps and challenges, and for members of the referral networks to work together to ensure prompt, effective, and survivor-centered GBV response as stressed by the CHR.

The FGD is composed of but not limited to the following:

- BFAR as the agency tasked with the development, conservation, management, protection and utilization of fisheries and aquatic resources
- Councils like Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Councils (M/CFARMC)
- Local Government Unit of Claveria
- Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Person
- Philippine National Police (PNP)

□ Objectives of the Sectoral Monitoring:

Mandated as Gender Ombud of marginalized sector like women fisherfolks, the mapping of legal referral mechanisms on GBV during the pandemic and new normal is anchored on the following:

1. Establish a baseline pertaining to the roles and participation of women in small scale fishing and of the issues of the women fisherfolks including trafficking and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), the implementation of MCW provisions on women fisherfolks and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and
2. Gather during the regional data on women fisherfolks and GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic and the new normal, creating partnerships with communities and CSOs and strengthening CHR regional office's situation monitoring on women in the marginalized sectors as Gender Ombud in their respective regions.

□ Specifically, it aims to:

1. Render visible and document the roles and tasks undertaken by women fisherfolks in the household and in the community;
2. Monitor the implementation of MCW provisions on women fisherfolks by looking at: women's roles; economic participation and recognition; access to information, resources and food production; experiences of marginalization; discrimination; GBV
3. Document the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women fisherfolks;
4. Document awareness of and availing by women fisherfolks of government programs in response to COVID19; and
5. Gather recommendations from the ground

PRELIMINARIES:

After the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with identified women fisherfolks in Claveria, Cagayan, Focused Group Discussion (FGD) was set and held on September 14, 2020 at Ocean Inn in the said coastal town. Atty. Grace R. Marcos, Regional Gender and Development Focal Person, Commission on Human Rights Region 02, welcomed the participants to the FGD. Before Atty. Marcos proceeded to the FGD proper, she discussed with them the rationale of the project and cited the specific objectives. She informed them that the results of the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with women fisherfolks and government service providers will be presented in a webinar on the sector.

Furthermore, Atty. Marcos inquired on the consent and willingness of the interviewees to be named in the report or request anonymity. She assured them that their identity and the information derived from the FGD will not be used against them.

FOCUSED GROUP DISCUSSION PROPER

1. Situationer of Women Fisherfolks

- There are 557 registered women fisherfolks in the coastal town of Claveria. FishR or Fish Registration System of the LGU, BFAR created the database and LGU Claveria supplied the data. There are still many who remain unregistered despite free and voluntary registration in their barangays. This occurs despite BFAR information drive on the benefits of registered fisherfolks.
- There was mass registration of fisherfolks but those who were minors during the conduct of such have not enlisted as of this report.
- Generally, women fisherfolks are in fish vending business since majority of them are married to fishermen or have families in fish trading. Fish vending includes buying and selling.
- In addition, the BFAR Fisheries Livelihood Development Technician (FLDT) informed Atty. Marcos that they conduct post-harvest training to fisherfolks and Rural Improvement Clubs (RICs) on bagoong making, drying and value adding products such as fish nuggets, fish *tocino*, fish *lumpia* to name a few.

CHR: Are these women involved in post-harvest activities such as *pagdaklis* (beach seine fishing), fish drying and making value adding products for example, considered as women fisherfolks or are they just an extension of their husbands or partners? Are they restricted from sailing and fishing?

MAO Virginia: Yes, they are considered as fisherfolks as defined by FishR as any individual directly or indirectly engaged in fishery and fishery-related activities. Women are not prohibited to sail the sea as long as they sturdy and strong to brave the open sea. They have that option. Majority of women fisherfolks are involved in *pagdaklis*

CHR: That's what we call equality of opportunity. On another note, what is the current state of their income?

BFAR FLDT: Fisherfolks in Claveria, Cagayan are extremes in income. There are some who are middle- income *compradors* and fish traders but most fisherfolks living in Pata East, Pata West, Culao, Dibalio and D. Leano are below poverty level. These are fisherfolks who do not have the capital to *compra* or buy fish from traders.

MAO Virginia: They fish, sometimes 30-40 kilos gross weight of catch, and their wives do ambulant vending using *padyak* or bike given by LGU/ BFAR or sell their fish right on the shore, in the barangays, or surrounds of the public market. Others are *tagadaklis*.

CHR: The results of the KII with women fisherfolks revealed that these women are not extremely marginalized compared with the national statistics. This can be attributed to the fact that Claveria fisherfolks have others sources of income such as farming, livestock raising, and labor to name a few.

MAO Virginia: Fisherfolks are below poverty line when their only source of income is fishing but in Claveria, they have alternative sources of livelihood so most are middle income fisherfolks.

CHR: Are these women fisherfolks recognized as such and independent from their husbands?

MAO Virginia: Yes. They have individual registration.

- **Issues of fisherfolks particular in Claveria and interventions made by government service providers**

- ❖ The issue on the restriction of *ressing* (crablets) which was raised by the fisherfolks was clarified by BFAR. Administrative Order 264 and 265 regulates crablets harvesting. This prescribes when open season is and what size can be harvested. The intervention made was putting up crab nursery where fully-grown crabs are gathered and harvested then sold to LGU. This practice addresses the high demand of crabs and at the same time protects crablets from being prematurely harvested.
- ❖ *Ipon* (*sycyopterus lachrymosus*) or lunar fish endemic in Cagayan is “closed season” hence there is restriction on gathering the said popular fish. Regulated and not prohibited.
- ❖ Livelihood programs for fisherfolks are not sufficient.
- ❖ VAWC Incidence (GBV reported by one of the women fisherfolks KII during their remote interview was confirmed.)

CHR: There was a reported VAWC by KIIs with women fisherfolks. Are you aware of this?

MAO Virginia: This was reported last year. The victim was a mentally-deficient minor living in the shelter molested by an ex-convict (illegal fishing). There was amicable settlement.

PNP Claveria Women’s Desk: Since January 2020, there were no reported cases of VAWC. Previously reported complaints were minor and were settled through amicable settlement particularly for first offense. The complainant had an option to file a case or to desist. Habitual and repeated offenses are filed for criminal charges.

CHR: We have to clarify the issue: There are no reports because there are no VAWC or there are cases but no one files complaints or presses charges.

PNP Claveria Women’s Desk: There were cases but they were dismissed because complainant chose not to press charges.

Claveria Fisheries Office: Does spreading rumors that destroy the reputation of a woman VAWC?

CHR: No. VAWC occurs only when the perpetrator has intimate relationship with the victim woman. So when they are just neighbors and have no intimate relationship, spreading rumors against that woman is not VAWC but oral defamation.

2. Policies and Programs

- Registration of fisherfolks (FishR or Fish Registration System) and BoatR or Boat Registration system
 - ❖ Registered boat owners are mostly women fisherfolks.
- Skills and Livelihood Training for women fisherfolks
- There are fisherfolks cooperatives such as Claveria Fisherfolks Cooperative and the dispersal of tilapia fingerlings to fisherfolks for additional livelihood.

BFAR FLDT: Before the ECQ, BFAR distributed free tilapia fingerlings or *ulang* for fisherfolks to grow and sell. Techno-demos were also conducted for qualified fishpond owners wherein they are given free *ulang*, fertilizers, and feeds. The harvest from these fishponds was for the fisherfolks to sell while BFAR just needed to be furnished with data. Income or sales from these were used by the fisherfolks as rolling capital to sustain the program.

- There are specific programs for women fisherfolks in accordance with the Magna Carta for Women
 - ❖ Empowerment of women fisherfolks through the election of a woman as Deputy Fish Warden whose duty is law enforcement.
 - ❖ Cash incentive and annual insurance are the benefits enjoyed by women fisherfolks.
 - ❖ Stalls on the fish landing facilities are open for lease to women fisherfolks/ fish vendors.

MAO Virginia: Thirty (30) members of fish vendors association will be given 10,000PhP capital payable in one year. But we plan to amend the project so we can cater to more fisherfolks as a response to the COVID19 pandemic. We conducted meetings with the Claveria Fisherfolks Cooperatives which is managed by a woman fisherfolk, to amend some provisions of the cooperatives for BFAR approval. The starting fund of the CFC was 250,000PhP but we plan to add 750,000 PhP.

- Women fisherfolks benefit from LGU's GAD budget.

LGU GAD Focal Person: Yes. The office has banner programs for women fisherfolks. Rural Improvement Programs are given 100,000 PhP budget allocation for skills training and livelihood programs for women fisherfolks. To illustrate,

coastal barangay Centro 6 is the beneficiary of bagoong making project for the fiscal year.

3. Covid19 Impact and Programs

- Social Amelioration Program
- Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA)
- Financial Assistance for licensed fisherfolks for fuel of motorized boats (unmaterialized as of this report)

MAO Virginia: LGU distributed relief goods for the fisherfolks and farmers. 5,000 PhP RFFA was given to farmers who own more than .5 hectares of farmland.

Atty. Marcos: What could be the reason why fisherfolks did not receive any FA from the government? What assistance can be given to them?

MAO Virginia: BFAR had earlier released information that they would be providing cash assistance to fisherfolks for fuel but this is still not implemented. But during the flood, cash assistance was given to farmers (800PhP) and fisherfolks (500PhP). As to why fisherfolks receive less? There are more fisherfolks than farmers.

CHR: What is SURE COVID19 loan?

MAO Virginia: That refers to Survival Recovery Loan of DA which was in effect before the pandemic.

MAO Girlie: Claveria Grassroots Cooperative offered loans as assistance for pandemic-affected fisherfolks.

- Interventions and Programs during ECQ
 - ❖ Price monitoring for regulation
 - ❖ Implementation of IATF protocols specifically in *daklis* (40 people per boat in doing the *daklis*). Minors and Senior Citizens are not allowed to fish.
 - ❖ *Payao* or fish aggregating device deployment

CHR: The KIIs mentioned about re-alignment of projects such as goat-raising.

MAO Virginia: That was Integrated Coastal Resource Management Program. It was a joint project of DENR, BFAR, LGU and World Bank. There was an association that conducted a survey on alternative livelihood projects when fishing is not possible. The goat-raising project worth .5M in Taggat Norte and Centro Sur was a failure because of the fisherfolks' attitude and mismanagement. However, Ubung-ubing Association was successful in goat-raising and even multiplied the number of goats raised. In D. Leño, they hired caretakers to feed the goats.

CHR: You mentioned about *payao*. What was this all about?

MAO Virginia: BFAR deployed *payao* in the sea to lead fisherfolks where to catch fish. But guidelines were set: time of fishing, type of fishing (hook and line), ordinance on the use of squid ink (*darat laki*) as bait and the use of *sigay* or bamboo fish trap.

- Covid19 did not really affect the fisherfolks because fishing is one of the essentials that were allowed by the IATF but protocols were strictly implemented.
- In a way, it had affected the transport of the fish.

MAO Virginia: Covid19 increased sales for fisherfolks particularly fish traders as barangays became fish landing facilities. The restriction on travel brought the goods closer to the community and it provided income for the fish vendors and *compradors*. The increased demand for fish made fish more expensive, too.

4. Recommendations to empower the sector

- To address invisibility and undervaluation of women fisherfolks
 - ❖ Women fisherfolks were given Certificate of Recognition for their contribution in the uplift of women fisherfolks and counterpart of men in fishery laws enforcement.
 - ❖ They are officers and members of MFARMC.
 - ❖ Association presidents are asked to make Work and Financial Plan.
 - ❖ Skills trainings are conducted.
 - ❖ Strengthen women organization.

MAO Virginia: Generally, there is no discrimination or undervaluation of women fisherfolks in Calveria. The government through BFAR awarded free motorboats with fishing gears to fisherfolks. They built motorized *banca* under Cash for Work Program. They got paid for the work and were awarded the boats they built.

5. Clarifications on issues raised by women fisherfolks KIIs

- DA programmed to lend capital for fish brokerage or *compra* but remains unrealized as of this report.

MAO Virginia: Landbank Region has offered loans to fisherfolks and majority applied for such loans but with pending validation and approval. BFAR facilitates the updating and fast-tracking of the loan applications.

On the other hand, LGU has guaranteed all 24 fisherfolks associations 10,000PhP each. Moreover, 30 fish vendors will be given 10,000PhP each

- Fish cages without financial Aid for feeds

MAO Virginia: Those fish cages are private owned. The BFAR counterparts are distribution of free fingerlings and assistance in marketing their produce through the fish landing facilities. Moreover, BFAR through ICRMP gave 5 units fish cages as starter capital for the first cycle.

BFAR FLDT: BFAR gave materials for the structure like net and pipe as well as fingerlings and feeds so they can start the first cycle. There was regular monitoring of the project. The proceeds would have been used as rolling capital of the fish cage owner. But it was noted that after the first cycle, it was discontinued. It was a failure.

- Fisherfolks spend for repairs of fiberglass motorboats.

MAO Virginia: The fiberglass motorboats were given to them for free. BFAR provided the materials and even got paid in the construction of their own boats. The upkeep and maintenance of such should now be shouldered by the fisherfolk- recipient. Some even sold these motorboats in wanton disregard of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) that they had signed prior to the turn-over of these boats.

6. Service Providers' Response to KIIs Recommendations

- DA or TESDA to conduct skills training

MAO Virginia: The barangays conduct Training Needs Assessment among the women fisherfolks but they do not make their suggestions on this. Most do not attend meetings or dialogs. Many prefer piggery as livelihood program but this seems impractical.

- Minimize red tape or politics in projects

MAO Virginia: That is a general recommendation. But with regard to fisherfolks projects such as MMK, there was politics. The proposed projects for MMK were not approved. Each time the Mayor enters a MOA with an NGO, he seeks the authority of the Sanguniang Bayan but the SB disapproves such MOA. Moreover, these fisherfolks do not fully understand the dynamics of accounting. But rest assured that these proposed projects are now given green lights.

- Financial Assistance through loans be made available to eradicate loan sharks or 5-6

MAO Virginia: It is the lending institutions that approve their loan applications. Approvals are pending or deferred probably because of lacking or unaccomplished requirement. As of this report, no loans to fisherfolks have been released.

- Community Fish Landings be made functional.

MAO Virginia: Claveria Fishermen Cooperative was set to have a MOA with an NGO. The CFC was advised by the MFARMC to get accreditation. The resolution of the SB authorizing the Mayor to engage in a MOA with them was postponed due to failure to get accreditation from the SB.

- Information drive be made regularly and for concerned unit to sanction be imposed for failure to attend dialogs or meetings
- Women fisherfolks be pro-active and not reactive or passive.
- Women be empowered by providing additional source of income and given more responsibilities in the coastal community.

MAO Virginia: Each time we call for a coastal clean-up drive, very few women fisherfolks respond.

- Vigilance of VAWC in the community

In conclusion, the service providers would have wanted an interaction and a dialog with the women fisherfolks to address their concerns and issues. The lived experiences of the KIIs were verified by them during the FGD. Moreover, clarifications to some information were made. In addition, concurrence to some of the data gleaned from the women fisherfolks was also made. The recommendations of the women fisherfolks are noted and possible interventions will be mapped out.

Atty. Marcos ended the FGD by informing them that the result of the FGD will be shared during the regional webinar where it is hoped that programs for women fisherfolks would be crafted.





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