



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 GBV during COVID19 Pandemic and New Normal**

**Title of Activity:** PHASE 1A: Conduct of Key Informant Interviews with women fisherfolks to gather their lived experiences

**Venue/Location** : Claveria, Cagayan

**Date Conducted** : August 24– September 10, 2020

**Participants:**

The Commission on Human Rights Regional Office # 02 under the leadership of Regional Director Atty. Jimmy Baliga, CPA, and front-lined by Atty. Grace R. Marcos, Regional focal Person for Gender and Development, identified fifteen (15) women fisherfolks from the fishing community of Claveria, Cagayan. Identified key marginalized sectors in our society at risk of Gender-Based Violence as well as trafficking during the COVID19 pandemic, these women responded to the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

**Key Informant Interviewee (KII) Profile**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Description</b>
A	An “AMPA-guard” (Adopt a Marine Protected Area) from Taggat, Claveria who works as small time “ <i>comprador</i> ”/fish vendor
B	A wholesale <i>comprador</i> (fish broker/ dealer) married to a tricycle driver
C	Fish vendor/ <i>comprador</i> married to a fisherman
D	Wholesale <i>comprador</i> and fish dealer with <i>kitong-kitong</i> (or improvised delivery tricycle) which the husband drives

E	<i>Lampitao</i> (fishing boat) owner/operator
F	<i>Comprador</i> on a commission basis
G	Regular employee/ staff of fish trader for 10 years
H	Motorized boat owner, wife of a fisherman
I	Fish cage owner married to a barangay chairman
J	<i>Comprador</i> married to a payload operator
K	Fish dealer/ <i>comprador</i>
L	Widow, leader of Claveria Fish Vendors Association
M	National Awardee for front-lining Claveria's entry to the, (MMK), an annual search for coastal community which won 3 <sup>rd</sup> place
N	A fish trader at Claveria Fisherfolks Landing cooperative, married to an ex- OFW
O	<i>Comprador</i> and wife of a fisherfolk

## Context and Rationale

Before women empowerment became a catchphrase, fishing is known as an occupation dominated by men. Studies present this traditional image of men exclusively going to sea in their fishing boats. In most cases, women in fishing communities are not allowed to go with the fishing vessels. This prohibition is tied mostly to the need for them to remain within the premises of the household so they can attend to their designated wifely duties and child-rearing responsibilities. In addition, fishing is a “muscles and brawn” industry. Due to these, women fisherfolks have zero or little direct involvement in fishing or “*agkalap dyay taaw*” as the locals would call it.

However, there are some who are involved in shell and fry gathering/gleaning, traps and fish baskets, all of which tend to be near-shore activities. There are many who are involved in post-catch activities such as “*agdaklis*” or beach seine fishing done by pulling the fishnets full of catch on the shore. These activities either contribute to household income or provide direct food for the table. Sadly, their contribution to the household upkeep is trivialized.

It must be noted however, that fishing as an occupation is more than just fish production or sailing into the seas and casting the fishnets and other gears. With the paradigm shift and the need to augment income, women have upgraded their pre-conceived role and made their

presence in the bigger picture of fishing industry. There are pre- and post-production activities these women fisher folks perform which are significant in terms of their economic and social value. These activities include net mending, sorting fish upon landing, fish vending, trading and market retailing, and processing and preservation (salting or drying). These women who are engaged in post-harvest fishing activities constitute the minority of fisher folks regardless of their major role in substantially increasing the total income of their households (Villacorta, Lachapelle, 1998). Despite these, the participation of women before and after fish capture has remained unnoticed and unrecognized. Their role remains insignificant and trivial in this sector of the society. This near- invisibility resulted to their being identified as marginalized sector.

Responding to the urgent need to create a baseline data on women fisher folks, the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) acting on its mandate as Gender and Development Ombud under the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) undertakes this sectoral monitoring of women fisher folks and women and girls at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) during COVID19 pandemic in areas considered as fishing communities.

□ **Objectives of the Sectoral Monitoring:**

The monitoring or mapping of women fisherfolks aimed to:

1. Establish a baseline pertaining to the roles and participation of women in small scale fishing and of the issues of the women fisher folks 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.

□ **Specific Objectives include:**

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 fisher folks of government programs in response to COVID19; and
5. Gather recommendations from the ground

## Data Gathering Methods

CHR Region 2 undertakes the monitoring of women fisherfolks in Claveria, the identified fishing community in the Province of Cagayan for the mapping and monitoring. Recommended participants were gleaned from both organized and not organized fisher folks groups. Strictly observing the Inter- Agency Task Force protocols and working under the new normal, there were no face-to face interviews or dialogues with the Key Informants (KIs). Remote monitoring was conducted through cell phones and video calls whenever possible.

The monitoring of women fisher folks is divided into three phases:

- A. Conduct of Key Informant Interviews with women fisherfolks to gather their lived experiences
- B. Conduct of regional webinar or meeting to present initial results of the KIIs
- C. Conduct of National Webinar on the Situation of Women Fisherfolks and Girls and Women at Risk of Trafficking and GBV.

Mechanics on the Conduct of the KII with women fisherfolks

A hired documenter conducted the remote monitoring and mapping of women fisher folks. The list of women fisherfolks who comprised the KII was given to said documenter. The documenter then scheduled phone interviews as well as video calls to gather data and lived experiences of these women. Before an interview was made, documenter briefly introduced the project by sharing to the KIIs the general and specific objectives. The KIIs were made to understand that data privacy law was observed. She sought the willingness of the KII and their consent to be named on the report or request for anonymity. They were further informed that the collated results of the interviews will be presented during the regional webinar on women fisherfolks.

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND INFORMATION GATHERED

### I. On the Roles of Women Fisher Folks

- What is the importance of the sea to them?

The women were unanimous in pointing out that the shores of Claveria serve as their primary source of livelihood. Barangays of Pata East, D. Leño, Dibalio to name a few are fisherfolks populated. Taggat Sur and Norte, as well as Centro, 6 have

compradors or fish brokers. Even when the shores and the beaches of Claveria have lots to offer such as recreation facilities (beachfronts and resorts) and eco-tourism, the shores of this coastal town provide jobs to many locals.

- Do you consider yourself as a fisherfolk or just an extension of your fisherman husband:

They consider themselves as individual fisherfolk for they have separate registrations at the FishR or Fish Registration System. For a few of the KIIs, a typical day involves tending to hearth and home, waiting for their fisherman husband or other fishing boats to dock so they can *compra* or deal and/or buy from the fishermen or from big fish dealers, help with the *daklis* or beach seine (pulling of the fish nets or boats), and occasionally doing their duties as AMPA guard (Adopt a Marine Protected Area). Having women as members of AMPA or Deputy Fish Warden and joining PNP Maritime in its regular coastal clean-up are manifestations that there is no gender bias.

Their husbands or partners are registered fisherfolks at the Department of Agriculture (DA) as reflected in the FishR and their boats in the BoatR (Boat Registration System) when applicable. A few have their own motor boats which they use for fishing while others are employed in local big time fish dealers. One has a husband who was an OFW and later went on to put up fish dealership while another one is the wife of barangay chair. Those living in Pata East are fish vendors of their husbands catch. Generally, these women fisherfolks are low incomed families and tend to be disgruntled with their living conditions. When asked what could have brought this perceived dismal interest in the livelihood, the KIIs were one in stressing that fishing is hard and it does not make a stable source of income particularly for those who are second hand traders or those whose only source of income is fishing.

- What are the effects and changes Covid-19?

COVID19 pandemic has brought changes in their lives as most of them had to find alternative livelihood. Fishing is not a regular daily source of income for most fishermen. Fishing is only productive when weather allows it or when fish traders have much for brokerage. Five of the 15 KIIs revealed that their average income of 500-1,000 PhP was not sufficient to feed families, pay bills, buy medicines specifically maintenance medicines, and pay for monthly amortization of motorcycle which the family uses for their fish delivery. A few hinted at having to scrimp to be able to pay their daily dues to lending firms or loan sharks. Nonetheless, online selling, ambulant vending of *turon*,

banana cue and the like, barbecue and *isaw* stands tided them over during those early months of the pandemic.

## II. ON ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND RECOGNITION

- What are the fisherfolks organizations in the community? Are there women representations?

Claveria has fisherfolks' cooperatives or organizations. Claveria Fisherfolks Cooperative (CFC), Taggat Norte Fisher folks Organization (TNFO), Claveria Fish Landing Cooperative (CFLC), Rural Improvement Clubs (RIC), and the Municipal Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (MFARMC) are just few of these. Though usually headed by a registered male fisherfolk, it is noteworthy that these organizations and cooperatives are managed by women fisherfolks, too.

It must be pointed out here that women fisherfolks have a say during dialogs and decision-making and are active in fisheries law enforcement though it is seldom that they join the Philippine Coast Guard when they patrol the seas.

Respondent K: I am On Call *bantay-dagat* but not keen on patrolling the waters as *trabaho lang iti lallaki nga nataraki*. (It's a man's job.)

The landscape of women fisherfolks in Claveria, it was observed from the remote mapping, is diverse. On one hand, there is the low income group of women fisherfolks. They are residents of Pata East and West Culao, Dibalio and D. Leaño. These women are fish vendors selling their husbands catch or "*aglaladig*"(gathering clams, *tahong* or oysters in the rivers). They ply the side streets on their *padyak* (bike with sidecar) or *kitong-kitong* (motorcycle with a sidecar). They are 4Ps beneficiaries and recipients of SAP during the Enhanced Community Quarantine.

On the other hand, are fish traders and fish brokers (*comprador*) employed by commercial fish traders whose business dealings reach the nearby province of Ilocos Norte. A number also owns fishing boats. A few are small time *compradors* who handle the small scale marketing. There are also fish cage owners. On both landscape however, micro-lending such as ASKI and CARD or borrowing from loan-sharks (5-6) are their recourses to have capital for fish brokerage and fish buying.

- How much does your husband earn and where does his earnings allocated?

These women collectively revealed that the family income derived from fishing is budgeted for bills, food, education of children, medicines and payments of debts/loans. It is noteworthy, though, that these women fisherfolks make both ends meet because of other sources of income such as farming, tricycle driving, and construction.

- Do the government and duty bearers respond and cater to your issues and concerns?

As to bias on responding to and catering to women fisher folks, the KIIs concurred that there is no significant partiality between the male and female fisherfolks. The Fisherfolks Livelihood Development Technician (TFDL) of BFAR conducts skills training and livelihood program seminars for income augmentation. They receive awards and recognition for their active participation and contribution to the fishing community.

### III. ON ACCESS TO INFORMATION, RESOURCES AND FOOD PRODUCTION

- Do you have access of information on rights and benefits of women?

There is access to information. The Department of Agriculture- BFAR, the Municipal Agriculture Officer (MAO) and their barangay officers in addition to the officers of fisherfolks organizations, provide them with relevant and updated information such as price monitoring and COVID19 protocols in fishing.

Respondent M: Information drive is through flyers distributed as well as bulletin boards. Those who claimed to be uninformed and unaware of information are those who has “*dakay lattan*” attitude. They are just indifferent or passive.

Respondent E: Yes, there is access to information and resources because there are forums and and “*Timpuyug ti Manggalap*” (Fisher Folks Organization). But there are some of us who usually disregarded or seldom attended particularly by the fish vendors renting stalls in the public market and the ambulant vendor in favor of their livelihood.

Respondent I: There is a noteworthy complaint though on a fisherfolks organization headed by a male leader who is seemed remiss of duty as the treasurer recommends financial report of their organization. No consultation meetings were conducted.

- Are you aware of the Magna Carta for Women?

The MCW that basically arms and empowers these women fisherfolks is not fully understood or known by them. But they are aware that have opportunities to work in male- dominated environs. One example is the PNP Maritime Chief and is a female.

- What benefits do you receive as fisherfolk? Is it apart from your husband’s benefits?

Their husbands are registered in the FishR and naturally, they are beneficiaries of programs that DA-BFAR has. They have insurance coverage for a minimal fee of 100PhP per fisherfolk. FLDT has conducted techno-demo to some women fisherfolks for value adding post –harvest products such as fish tocino making. Some women fisherfolks were lend–leased by DA with “*padyak*” or rolling store.

- What are the assistance or interventions that lessen the impact of Covid-19 did you receive?

Respondent M: In Taggat Sur, we have devised a scheme to allow even the small-time *comprador* do business. We provide them gasoline for their boats and capital for fishing among other expenses. In return, they deliver their produce to us. Further, the cash prize from the MMK win was allocated for each fisherfolks organization.

Respondent N: In September, DA will give Claveria Fishermen Cooperative freezer van to prolong the freshness and shelf life of our catch. Through BFAR Claveria, there was distribution of fish gears and motorboat to active fisherfolks organization.

Respondent L: We were told that “300,000PhP of the 12MPhP was allocated as additional capital for registered fish vendors.

- How has Covid-19 affected you?

Respondent E: Projects are pending or postponed.

Respondent M: There are “re-alignments” of projects as BFAR recommends that such projects should be “fishing-related.” Purchase and distribution of boats and funding of CFC are given green lights. The CFC was established but is not yet fully operational though since it needs capital to offer loans for fisherfolks.

- What aid did you receive from the government during the pandemic?

They were united in their positive response. Government aid was received as most of them were SAP recipients. LGU distributed relief goods and food packs as well as cash (500PhP). Some were given weighing scales, styro, and pedicab.

#### IV. ON EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALIZATION, STIGMA AN DISCRIMINATION

- On experience of marginalization

Respondent N: “*Apay iparit dan iti nangala ti ressing (crablets)?*” (Why do they restrict crablets harvesting?) *Ressing* or crablet harvesting had been the main livelihood of the locals hence the restriction is not welcomed. This restriction has become striking a balance between needs for survival and needs of the time.

- On experience of discrimination

Occasionally, some commercial fish traders can take away as much as half of the small *compradors*' share. This is particularly true when the catch is delivered to nearby provinces. This practice creates a third hand scenario where the small-capital *compradors* have to buy and sell at a higher price to have sales. Hostilities occurred, too, when some locals questioned the barangay on perceived unqualified SAP beneficiaries. Women officers received the brunt of their complaints.

#### V. ON TRAFFICKING AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The remote interviews revealed the following cases of GBV:

1. Barangay Tanod vs minor ( Taggat Sur)
2. PWD ( mentally-incapable) minor was molested by an ex-convict ( Taggat Sur)

The women fisherfolks believed that domestic violence still occurs in the form of verbal abuse or even physical abuse but shrug it off as “*away mag-asawa*” or marital spat.” These are oftentimes resolved at barangay level or when liquor intoxication wears off and the complainant desists. They reason out that these few cases of GBV are due to poverty and the difficulties such as limited livelihood and lessened mobility to name a few brought about by the pandemic.

#### VI. ON GENERAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic resulted with protocols in fishing that regulated the number of fishermen who sails out to sea. There were delays and cancellation of government projects.

During the lockdown, fishing was allowed but regulated. Ambulant vending (*padyak*) was restricted but a few had travelled as far as Ilocos Norte to sell their catch. They say: No catch, no *compra* (fish brokerage). Despite lean catch caused by restrictions and protocols, stall lessees were still required to pay rental fee. The Philippine Coast Guard was keen on social distancing when fishing. That is, maximum of two (2) fishermen are allowed on a boat. Only 40 fisherfolks are allowed to do *daklis*. They had to comply with requirements such as food pass and travel pass.

When asked for incidence of abuse and harassment during the pandemic, the women fisherfolks replied in the negative.

Government support and assistance during the ECQ was sufficient, they agreed. The SAP, the native chicken and seedlings distributed by the Provincial Government, and other relief goods distributed by private individuals like Respondent M as well as the feeding program of PNP as part of their Community Outreach tided the fisherfolks during the onset of the pandemic. Respondent N noted that surviving the pandemic and making both ends meet depends on the fisherfolk. This was concurred by Respondent M since there is no dearth of alternative income such as online selling, deboning, bagoong and *gamet* making or seaweed drying.

There is one loophole though. Government projects were stopped or delayed. To illustrate:

- DA planned to lend capital for their fish brokerage/dealership but remains unrealized.
- Fish cages were built and positioned but there is no financial aid yet to purchase fish feeds.
- A list of beneficiaries was circulated/created but with the pandemic, the identified beneficiaries have not received any assistance.
- BFAR conducted training on boat making but these boats produced by the fisherfolks did not meet the standards hence fisherfolks spend for their repairs and retrofitting.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The 15 key informant interviewees have the following recommendations:

- DA or TESDA to conduct skills training and livelihood programs for the women fisherfolks
- Minimize or remove Red Tape as this takes much of the fisherfolks time and resources just to have projects or proposals approved
- Financial Assistance through loans be made available to minimize 5-6 patronage
- Information dissemination to be made regularly and for DA- BFAR to impose sanctions for fisherfolks who fail to attend.
- Community fish landing to be made functional.
- Women fisherfolks should be pro-active and not reactive or passive. “Dakay lattan.”
- Women fisherfolks should be empowered by providing additional source of income (livelihood program) as well as more responsibilities in the coastal community.
- Be vigilant of VAWC cases in the community. There should be education drive to make them realize that “*away mag-asawa*” is VAWC per se.

In conclusion, the women fisherfolks of Claveria gives us two scenarios of this identified marginalized sector of the society. Compared to the national scenario and statistics, these women are empowered despite issues on poverty and discrimination with farmers. They are not just extensions of their husbands but a separate and income generating individual. They may be stereotyped as the weaker sex, in the context of fishing community, they are partners with their male counterpart.

There are few reported cases of VAWC. Reported cases are usually settled outside court or victims probably chose not to press charges. There is awareness of the MCW though not fully understood.

They have training needs but claim that there is no sustainability of such trainings and projects. Hence the need to resort to micro-lending institutions or even the 5-6.

The results of the KIIs is hoped to provide the CHR, being the Gender Ombud, craft policies and laws that safeguard and empower these sector of the society.





Prepared by:

**ROSARIO P. YAP**

Documentor

**MARIE GRACE DIVINA R. MARCOS**

Attorney IV – CHR Region 02

Gender Focal Person

Approved by:

**ATTY. JIMMY P. BALIGA, CPA**

Regional Director