



Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PHILIPPINES
Region IV-B MIMAROPA
Mindoro Provincial Office

**Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview on the Situation of Women
Fisherfolks and Women and Girls at Risk of Gender-based Violence
and Trafficking during COVID-19 Pandemic and New Normal**

September 11, 2020

Municipality of Victoria, Oriental Mindoro

A NARRATIVE REPORT

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PREPARATION OF THIS NARRATIVE REPORT

This narrative report presents the conduct of Key Informant Interview and the narration of events that takes place during and after the activity. The main goal of this report stated in the Key Informant Interview Guide were as follows:

- Establish a baseline pertaining to the roles and participation of women in small scale fishing, and of the issues of women fisherfolks including trafficking and GBV, the implementation of MCW provisions on women fisherfolks, and the impact of the pandemic;
- Gather 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, the following objectives were gathered in the conduct of this activity.

1. To render visible and document the roles and tasks undertaken by women fisherfolks in the household and in the community;
2. to 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; Gender Based Violence;
3. to document the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Women fisherfolks;
4. to document awareness of and availment by women fisherfolks of government programs in response to COVID-19;
5. to gather recommendations from the ground.

ABSTRACT

The Commission on Human Rights, as Gender and Development Ombud under the Magna Carta of Women undertakes regular monitoring of women's human rights, especially women in the marginalized sectors. Since the establishment of its Center for Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights Center, sectoral monitoring of women, girls, and LGBTQI human rights have been undertaken. Initial situations were released on indigenous and rural women, women with disability, LGBTQI, girl-children, women in detention, urban poor women, and older women. From these sectoral monitoring, policy recommendations are forwarded to key government agencies. Reports drawn from women's insights and identified issues also inform submissions to human rights treaty bodies and inputs to reports of human rights mandate holders.

One of the key sectors identified by the Magna Carta of Women are women fisherfolks. While they are amongst the most vulnerable, the Commission has not had the occasion of focusing on their specific issues and situation. It has been emphasized that the Philippines, being an archipelago, has for its key industries, the fisheries – and yet despite this, fisherfolks, and most especially women fisherfolks are among the

poorest. With the COVID-19 pandemic with its vast economic impact, fisherfolks are among those affected, and yet, as always often invisible in the public discourse. With this, the Commission on Human Rights, with its 16 regional offices, which serve as Gender Ombud in their areas of jurisdiction, will be undertaking sectoral monitoring focused on women fisherfolks, including women and girls at risk of trafficking in areas considered as fishing communities. *(Guidance Note for Women's Human Rights Situation Monitoring by CHR Regional Office)*



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I. INTRODUCTION

The nation was in a shock on the spread of the COVID-19 cases in March of the present year. The virus has threatened the Filipinos and has brought changes from the usual into accepting the changes that the virus has left. Several cases of violation among men and women has also become another challenge for the people as to how they survive during the Pandemic and face the New Normal.

The Commission on Human Rights as an independent agency, took action in helping the people in need. The commission took action in monitoring human rights, especially women in the marginalized sectors as the Gender and Development Ombud under the Magna Carta of Women.

Women fisherfolks is one of the marginalized sectors that has been identified as one of the key sectors by the Magna Carta of Women. Fisheries has been one of the known industries in the country for food reproduction. Men and women both play their roles in this industry. Despite this situation, fisherfolks, most specifically women fisherfolks remained invisible in the public context. It was also noted that this sector (women fisherfolks) has been affected at large of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The province of Oriental Mindoro is one of the provinces whose livelihood is more of fishing and other aquatic resources. It has become a great opportunity for the Mindoreños that water resources has become their ways of earning and living. It was all of a sudden that this industry was also affected of the Pandemic. Issues on Gender- based Violence has also been reported. To better help women, specifically women fisherfolks, the Commission on Human Rights has served a vital role.

II. PROGRAM DOCUMENTATION

The activity entitled: Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview on the Situation of Women Fisherfolks and Women and Girls at Risk of Gender-based Violence and Trafficking during COVID-19 Pandemic and New Normal formally started at 8:30 in the morning. The first part of the said activity is the registration of participants. Safety and Health Protocols has been strictly observed. Upon arrival, participants were equipped with free surgical masks and face shields as well as sanitation with alcohol and other health measures. Physical Distancing was also observed throughout the activity. A total of 15 participants as needed for the session was completely checked.

To facilitate the flow of the activity, Marivie Andalis, documenter of the activity, welcomed the participants. The opening program was formally commenced with a prayer and the singing of Lupang Hinirang. The introduction of the CHR-MIMAROPA- Mindoro Provincial Office Team then took place. As an activity in the New Normal, a new way of smiling to one another set the mood of the activity. In the presence of the OIC- CHR MIMAROPA- Mindoro Provincial Office- Atty. Estrella C. Baltazar, participants were presented. As an opening activity for the session, a collaborative group work was done. The participants were divided into 3 groups with 5 members. The teams were named as; Team Nemo, Team Masaya and Team Bagong Kaalaman. Each group collaboratively work on a survey about CHR programs that took place in their municipality.

The table below shows the result of the activity.

	YES	NO	Not sure
1. Is this the first time that you will join or attend to this kind of activity?	5	10	0
2. Is this the first time that you attend to this kind of activity by the Commission on Human Rights in your municipality?	12	0	3

Table 1.1

The given table presents, that on the first question, 33.33% of the respondents has joined the said activity, while 66.67% already attended. In the activities done by the CHR, 80% answered that it was the first time that they have had this kind of activity and 20% of them are not sure about the activity that they have attended. The result of this activity has informed the Commission that there is a need for wide dissemination of information about the CHR. A video presentation about activities done by the commission was presented. Accomplished activities were watched from the video presentation.

After the activity, Atty. Estrella Baltazar, introduced the CHR's mandate as Gender Ombud and discussed the importance of focusing on a marginalized sector like women fisherfolks. The participants were able to ask some questions and grasp relevant information. It was also presented that the CHR is an independent constitutional office created under the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines. It has the primary role in investigating all forms of human rights in our country. It was also emphasized that the commission has the authority for free legal assistance about crimes and violence that abuses people's rights most specially the poor ones who cannot afford to pay legal advises. During the introduction of the CHR, participants actively share responses on their observations and experiences during the Pandemic. They were able to relate on example situations given by Atty. Baltazar.

The next part of the activity is the Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interview on the Situation of Women Fisherfolks and Women and Girls at Risk of Gender-based Violence and Trafficking during COVID-19 Pandemic and New Normal. On the screen, questions were presented as followed in the Annex A Key Informant Interview Guide for Women Fisherfolks.

The following are the data gathered from the interview. (Personal Interview. 11 September 2020)

1. Roles

Naujan Lake is the nearest body of water in Victoria. Shrimp, Tilapia, Biya, Ayungin, Dalag (mudfish) and Hito (catfish) are the primary kinds of fish caught for selling and earning money for everyday finances. As a typical housewife in the fishing community the usual day for them (women fisherfolks) is to do house chores like cooking and cleaning the house and attending to the needs of their children especially the young ones. Mostly, male members of the family are the ones to do the fishing activities as a source of income and food resources.

In their estimation, they earn around P 300 to P 500 daily. It was a good catch for them if they have earned P500 in a day. In a monthly basis, other

All of them named themselves as women fisherfolks. They do activities related to fishing and their way of earning is through the fishing industry as well. For these reasons, they were identified by the community as people who earned through fishing.

In the time of pandemic, many have said that nothing has change, they still need to earn money whether they like it or not to be able to have food and earn money. They continued their work as fisherfolks despite the pandemic but with proper coordination through the Barangay and Municipal office.

2. Economic Participation and Recognition

10 out of 15 participants answered that their husbands and male children have become part of the fishing community. It was traditional for this kind of job that male took part at large. 5 out of 15 participants were female fisherfolks who go with their husbands in fishing. They do the same job like *pagtataan* and other ways of catching fish.

Traditionally, women fisherfolks sell and earn through *paglalako* or *pagtutuyo/pagdadaing* (dried fish preparation). It has become their way of surviving daily expenses even before the time of pandemic. Earning money in this sector is measured depending on their catch. It ranges around P100 to P400 a day. This proceeds to the daily finances at home like, food, bills and some have answered like they have to pay for Microfinances as payment for their loans to avail fishing boat and other materials used in fishing. Of the 15 identified women fisherfolks, 8 of them were 4Ps Recipients. 11 of these identified women fisherfolks detailed that their husbands are part of the organization (Samahan ng Mangingisda). They also identified certain members of Bantay Dagat in their communities. 1 answered that women as become part of some organizations related to fishing, and 3 of them made clarification that they are just vendors and they do not belong to certain organizations related to fishing industry. From this answers, it was stated that women were unrecognized in this sector. They were mainly considered as helper or small scale fish vendors.

3. Access to information, resources and food production

When asked if they were able to have knowledge on the rights and benefits as fisherfolks, 3 were able to answer yes because they have attended meetings in their communities and some of them attended seminars from the Department of Agriculture, 11 says no for the reasons that they do not have enough time to attend to said seminars and others lose interest as to this information due to lack of education. One from the responses said that she has learned a few through television programs and hear says. For this reason, only 20% of this identified sector has learned about their rights and benefits as fisherfolks.

The identified respondents were not all able to have received access to benefits from the government. In the data gathered, four (4) were able to have granted of the P 5000 Social Amelioration Program, 12 from this sector has received *ayuda* from the government and 3 answered that they were not able to receive any of the above mentioned. The barangay official pay attention to their situation and they were able to take charge of it. It was stated as well that they were not able to be informed on the SURE COVID-19 loan program for eligible farmers and fishers.

4. Experiences of Marginalization, Stigma, Discrimination

“Maayos naman po, ngunit hindi sapat,” this phrase has been detailed in the answers of the respondents. They also stated that they find a lot of ways for them to be able to eat at least two to three times a day. On the other hand, fortunately, 13 of these identified women fisherfolks said that what they earn a day is just right for their daily expenses. They also give emphasis that the government treated them just right, in their term “tama lang po, medyo po”.

In the real context, almost 90% of this sector still needs to find other ways and benefits that can make their lives more convenient.

5. Trafficking and Gender-based Violence

The following were the listed forms of violence that took place during the Pandemic. These were identified by the respondents.

1. Family misunderstandings
2. Vice (hindi angkop na pag-iinom at pagsisigarilyo) and money issues inside the family due to lack of work
3. Misunderstanding in the distribution of *ayuda*
4. Lack of knowledge on the Human Rights and the Law
5. Violence against women (particularly female partners)
6. Few cases of child abuse

The respondents identified such issues as a common happening in their communities. For them, these problems already existed even before and is still happening for varied reasons and different situations. Lack of work brought by the Pandemic has affected a lot of them. Money problems resulted from it which leads to arguments and then causes crimes or violence to poor people.

Luckily, the barangay officials and the Police were visible when times of violence occurs. Their visibility has somewhat lessen the said incidents and were managed at the same time. Crimes also lessened, but women became weak during this Pandemic, this leads to domestic violence, violence against women and harassment. This gathered information stated that Gender-based violence has become another challenge during the period of Pandemic

6. General Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic

Losing jobs during the ECQ has affected their ways of life. Borrowing certain amount of money from lending investors and microfinances has become the most urgent and easiest solution for this COVID-19 impact.

Fish vendors were not allowed to enter nearby barangays to sell their goods. It has affected their source of income during the Pandemic. Due to this, the positive impact is that, they were able to plant vegetable in their own backyards, *Bayanihan* once again proved the Filipinos are united as one. And within their families, each was able to survive the negative effects of the pandemic.

7. Recommendations

The following were suggested and recommended from the women fisherfolks sector based on the interview.

1. To uplift the present state of the fisherfolk sector, an access to free availment of fishing equipment for eligible member of the fishing industry should be established;
2. health insurances as fisherfolks should be handed to eligible members;
3. an amount of Financial Assistance particularly to women fisherfolks should be allotted to serve as capital in starting up and improving their earnings; and
4. the government should cater trainings and seminars for women fisherfolks to uplift their knowledge about the rights and benefits of Fisherfolks.
5. To enhance women's role as fisherfolks, an equal opportunity for both men and women is suggested in terms of their participation as productive members of fishing organizations.
6. To become more equipped of knowing the rights as women, and prevent discrimination against women, a conduct of more activities like this is suggested. (Specifically on Human Rights and Gender-based violence)
7. To hoist and prepare Women Fisherfolks in facing the New Normal, women empowerment should be strengthened, a conduct of orientation on how to face the New Normal is very much in need.
8. For the government, Fisherfolks sector should be given other programs which can further enhance their earnings and at the same time help other sectors in their community, specifically the women sector.
9. An enhanced and better protection for the water resources is also suggested.
10. In the preparation of facing the New Normal, women fisherfolks and other women sectors should be given opportunities to earn through other sources of income.

Before answering the Key Informant Interview, the respondents were requested of their consent to use their answers and names in the documentation.

III. CONCLUSION

Awarding of Certificates of Participation took place to formally end the activity. Participants received a simple token of appreciation awarded by the OIC- CHR MIMAROPA- Mindoro Provincial Office, Atty. Estrella C. Baltazar.

A photo opportunity also took place after the activity. Words of gratitude and appreciation was also delivered to the women fisherfolks. It was also an opportunity to hear the message of the Municipal Mayor, Joselito Malabanan. He has made mention of how he showed importance to the women and girls in his municipality. He also gave emphasis on preventing violence against women. Justice should be fair

to everyone. To end his speech, he thanked Atty. Baltazar for sharing her knowledge and sharing the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights.

Certificate of Appreciation is also awarded to Mayor Joselito Malabanan in grateful acknowledgement of his presence and making the activity possible.

As an additional presentation, Atty. Baltazar briefly discussed the LGBTI Community and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identify Expression. She also gave examples of such gender expressions; (transman, transwoman, transsexual under the umbrella of transgender). She reiterated the importance of gender expressions to avoid violence and discrimination. CHR- Dignity of all.

The program formally ended at 12:30 in the afternoon.

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