



Republic of the Philippines  
**COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**  
**Regional Office VII**  
**Cebu City**

**DOCUMENTATION REPORT**

**ON THE**

**“FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) FOR COMMUNITY  
WOMEN ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN FISHERFOLKS  
AND WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK OF TRAFFICKING AND  
OTHER FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)  
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC”**

**HELD AT SITIO SALVADOR, BARANGAY TANGKE,  
TALISAY CITY, PROVINCE OF CEBU**

**ON OCTOBER 12, 2020.**

## COVID-19 AND WOMEN FISHERFOLKS

Like many of the marginalized sectors, women fisherfolks are among the worst hit by the economic impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic. With a substantial number of fisherfolks already living below poverty line, suffering from reduced catch, and constrained by restrictive government policies and absence of support, the economic havoc brought about by the pandemic has rendered fisherfolks, especially women fisherfolks further vulnerable and marginalized. Thus, a Focus Group Discussion was conducted as there but untold stories, with the many fishing communities in the country and the months long quarantine. There are many stories on the ground on the impact of the pandemic on especially women fisherfolks.

## COURTESY CALL TO TALISAY CITY MAYOR



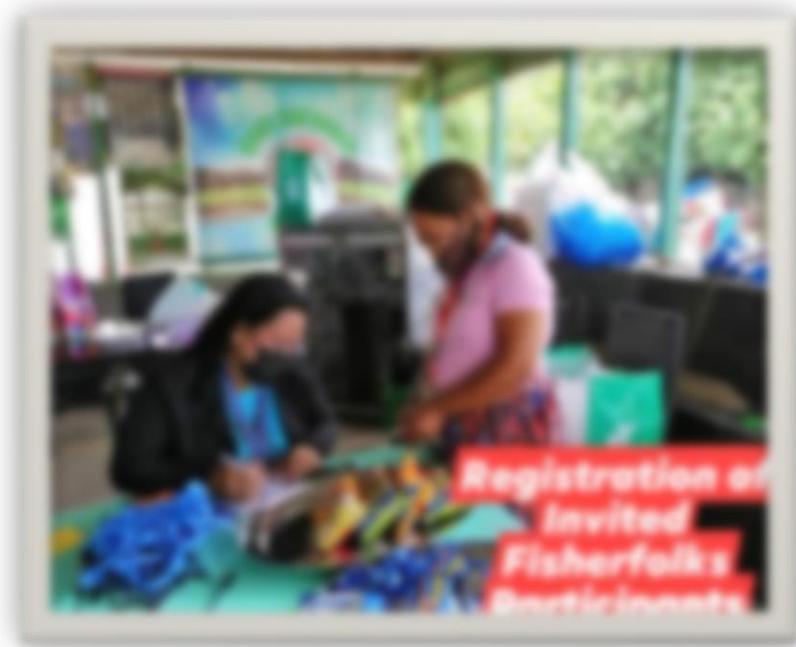
It has always been practiced in the COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS to be courteous to a local chief executive, prior to the conduct of activity in their areas. Thus, the Regional Gender Focal-Special Investigator Maria Voy A. Belen had a courtesy call to Hon. Gerald Anthony V. Gullas, Jr., on October 12, 2020 at Talisay City Hall prior to the conduct of the activity. The token of appreciation was given by the CHR Investigator to Mayor Gullas. The CHR was grateful for the full support of Mayor Gullas to the said activity conducted by the Regional Gender Focal Person, Special Investigator, Maria Voy A. Belen.

## THE VENUE

The venue suited for the activity where the women fisherfolks were excited to meet the Regional Gender Focal.



Thus, the Regional Gender Focal – Special Investigator, Maria Voy A. Belen conducted: “A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN FISHERFOLKS AND WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK OF TRAFFICKING AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC,” HELD AT BARANGARY TANGKE, TALISAY CITY, CEBU ON **OCTOBER 12, 2020**.



During the registration, Investigator Belen acted as Secretariat of the Activity, hands on with the physical arrangements and venue decorations. In this way, she said, that women fisherfolks would be eager to participate if the place is nice to look at.

The Registration started at 11:00 in the morning and they were gathered to have lunch at the venue. The fisherfolks were so glad on that day.

### **INVOCATION**



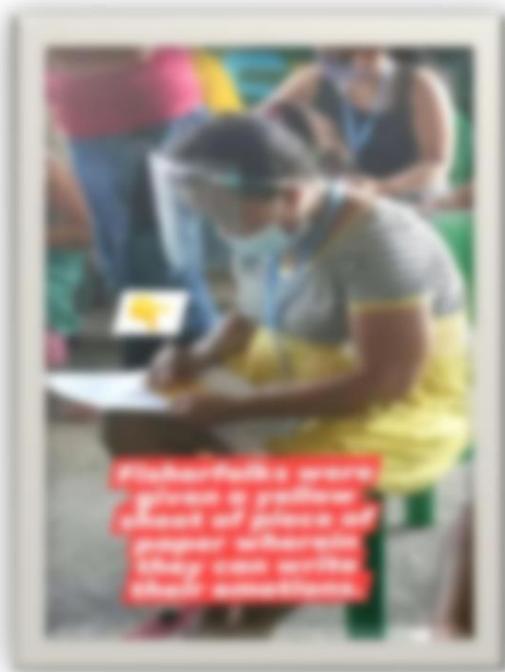
Prior to the conduct of the said activity, there was necessary coordination made by the Regional Gender Focal –Special Investigator Maria Voy A. Belen to the concerned government agency, barangay and the city of Talisay. The Department of Agriculture Personnel, Ms.Apple Jane Into, led the Invocation.

## WELCOME REMARKS

The Punong Barangay of Tangke Talisay City Honorable Antonio Cabrera gave the Welcome Remarks and thanked the CHR for choosing their barangay for the said activity.



## THE “FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) PROPER



The focus group discussion was started with a short prayer and self-introduction among members of the women fisher folks. They were given a yellow activity sheet which each member can write their emotions prior to the start of proper discussion. In just less than fifteen minutes, they were able to collate their emotions and had their free discussion. Majority of the members were happy of the attention extended by the Commission on Human Rights to their associations. It was their first time to experience a gathering of information dissemination about their own rights. One vendor uttered, that she was thankful to the CHR for the opportunity to have joined the said activity. They were happy, because they said that the activity had no cost on their part. It was freely given by the CHR as part of their time-task schedule. They were able to receive at the end of the activity a token of appreciation.

One of the fish vendors fearlessly shared her emotions to the entire group and I quote: **“I am happy, because the CHR is present today in our barangay. I am happy, because I am part of the group today. I am grateful for your presence today, Ma’am I feel like “ENERGETIC”, a while ago, I was so sleepy. I am happy now, because I would be given the opportunity to know my right being a fish vendor. I am happy to know the purpose of this FGD,”** Respondent A said.



During the **“getting to know you”** portion of Investigator Belen, she reminded the fisher folks not to downgrade one’s own self. **“Do not call yourself as LAB-ASIRA, and MANGINHASAY. Always be proud of yourselves,”** Investigator Belen was quoted.

### **THE QUESTION AND ANSWER**

CHR: Who among you here have heard our agency? Are you aware of our agency, the COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS?

Respondent A: We are aware of the agency, Ma’am but we do not know the location of your office, Ma’am.

Investigator Belen discussed a little background of their official time-task functions being the Regional Gender Focal –Special Investigator. She gave a quick background why the FGD was brought about. She mentioned that the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) is designated as a Gender Ombud under the Magna Carta of Women and discussed the the topic on” Women fisherfolks under the Magna Carta of Women. She also mentioned that the Magna Carta of Women

(RA 9710), enacted in 2009, reiterates the protection of women and girls from all forms violence. It also identified women fisherfolks as among the marginalized sectors. Under said law, women fisherfolks are defined as women who are:

“directly or indirectly engaged in taking, culturing, or processing fishery or aquatic resources. These include, but are not limited to women engaged in fishing in municipal water, coastal and marine areas, women workers in commercial fishing and aquaculture, vendors and processors of fish and coastal products, and subsistence producers such as shell-gatherers, managers, and producers of mangrove resources, and other related produce.”

As a Gender Ombud, they are mandated to monitor compliance with the government in terms of its obligations to women, especially to those who are victims of violence. Then Investigator Belen gave their office address as well as their telephone numbers as the women fisherfolks were very eager to know. Investigator Belen informed all the participants, that the conduct of the proceedings will be recorded. Consent forms were distributed to all the fisherfolks. The information reflected on the consent forms were discussed thoroughly by Investigator Belen.



As mentioned by Investigator Belen to quote, “please do not turn the pages first. We will answer all the necessary questions together. This consent form is in ‘Tagalog Language.’ It is easy to decipher the information. The CHR will only ask data according to the guidelines from the central office. There are needs which the government cannot provide. If the central office can

identify a genuine answer. The CHR will call you. This tape recording will not be used against any of the participant. This is for purposes of documentation and report only,” end of quote.

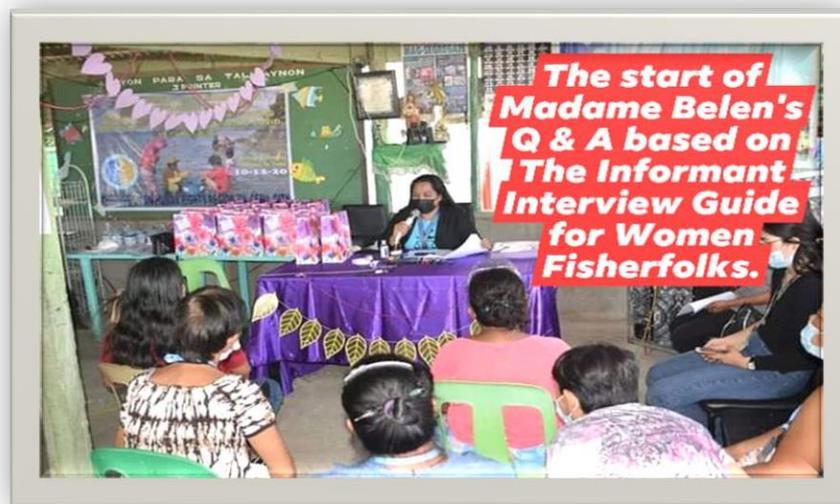
As part of their protocol, if in any case there will be part of the FGD recording that the Commission wish to publish in their reports, the concerned participant will be notified to request for their permission. This was also stipulated in the participants’ consent form as discussed by the facilitators before the conduct of the discussions.

Investigator Belen has already informed the participants about the details on the consent form. The participants were given ample time to affix their signature. The consent form was collected for safekeeping purposes. This is also to protect the privacy of the participants.

### **Objectives of the Activity:**

1. To render visible and document the roles and tasks undertaken by women fisherfolks in the households 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 productions; 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.

### **INVESTIGATOR BELEN’S QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS BASED ON THE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW TOOL FOR WOMEN FISHERFOLKS**



## **1. ROLES**

CHR: I want to know the daily expenses of your family. How much is your daily expenses? Can you still buy the essential goods for your family?

Respondent C: Yes, Madame. We can still buy our essential items.

Respondent D: Our income is 100 pesos per day.

CHR: Is there any government agency or private institutions who have helped you to augment your livelihood since the start of the pandemic?

Respondent E: Yes, Madame. There is certain government agency that reaches out to us. It was the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources.

Respondent F: Madame, as senior citizen fish vendor. I experienced financial difficulty. It doubles my worries in terms of money in this time of pandemic. I cannot easily sell my product to the market. Most of our previous customers do not have money as well. We have dried fish available. We can sell this to the market. One of the problems I encountered was nobody wants to buy our product. We also receive helped from the office of the Mayor and from the barangay.

## **2. ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION AND RECOGNITION**

CHR: How were you able to manage your daily task, your everyday work?

Respondent G: **“MANINGKAMOT MAKU KUARTA. MANGANKAT...DATA-DATAHAN.”**

Respondent H: We were able to manage our task daily, by borrowing money from others. If we can borrow a little amount of money, we can perform our daily livelihood. “Mangankat me og Isda, Ma’am. Amo ni data-datahan.”

Respondent D: On our part Ma’am, we need to pay cash on a daily basis.

CHR: Meaning, there should be “ASSURANCE,” of payment?

Respondent I: We need to be honest in dealing with our payment, so that we can still borrow money or fishing materials from them. So, honesty is still the best policy.

CHR: Apart from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and the Department of Agriculture. Who else decided to help you in terms of livelihood? Is there a non-government organization?

Respondent J: None, Ma’am. Labi na bag-o pa among grupo.

Respondent K: We received one sack of rice from the office of the city mayor, Ma’am.

CHR: In Bantay Dagat, males are involve. Were there any women who actively participate in this activity?

Respondent L: No, Ma’am only males. They need to protect our fishing area from illegal fishing.

CHR: Were you able to get adequate support from other government agency or individuals?

Respondent M: We received help from the barangay, Ma’am. Our Mayor Sam is also supportive to our association.

Respondent N: We were not able to receive “FINANCIAL HELP.”

Respondent O: We tied-up from other government agency. The problem of helping them

financially is...the Commission on Audit will not allow to allocate capital for fish vendor. A matter of thirty thousand (30k), this was disallowed by COA. On our part, here in Department of Agriculture, we gave them materials to be used for fishing. Our “Mananagat na Lalaki,” they were able to receive help from our agency. We were able to distribute materials for fishing, but not in terms of monetary. As for “Females Manangat,” sad to say, they were not able to receive any help from our agency.

Respondent P: We overheard this from other fisherfolks. The other barangay like Barangay Tangke, they received an amount of five thousand pesos (5,000.00). How come in our own barangay no amount of money were distributed?

Respondent O: No financial help receive other than fishing materials.

Respondent Q: Ma’am, we heard this news from our friends. Some of them received a livelihood project, especially in Barangay San Roque. (Loud Voice, Outbursts of Anger)



### **3. ACCESS TO INFORMATION, RESOURCES, AND FOOD PRODUCTION.**

Respondent R: Our households were able to receive “AYUDA,” from the government.

CHR: Did you hear about this SURE COVID AID?

Respondent S: Yes, Ma’am. The fisherfolks can loan from the Department of Agriculture worth twenty five thousand pesos (25k ). Only the “MANANAGAT” is allowed to ask for a loan payable within ten years.

Respondent T: They were the first person to know the said loan application. Personally, we were not able to know the loan agreement. There were no projects being implemented and no projects being introduced to the local government.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: If there is a loan agreement, such loan agreement should not pass through on the hands of individual fisherfolks. The processing of this loan agreement must went through an organization. As of today, we do not want to confirm the said loan. We need to know first the guidelines of the loan agreement.

#### **4. EXPERIENCES OF MARGINALIZATION, STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION**

CHR: You have to be thankful, despite of less help received from the government. At least you were still able to provide food for your family three times a day. Is the barangay doing their job? I want an honest answer. How is the treatment from the barangay?

Respondent U: They were not able to give us update. How they were able to disseminate the information, when in fact we do not have access to internet. We cannot afford to buy cellphone and we were not techy savvy. We do not know how to create the Facebook account.

Respondent K: **WALA JUD MI KLARO NGA TABANG MAAM WA MI MAKADAWAT UG SAP.**

#### **5. TRAFFICKING AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

CHR: Who among you here were able to hear of any violence of a woman, a friend, relative in your neighborhood or members of your family?

Respondent V, wife of an officer of the Fisherfolks Association, was honest enough to admit her horrible experience with her husband.

Respondent V: Ma'am, I was able to experience violence from my husband few years back then even before the pandemic, I experienced domestic violence from my husband, Ma'am. **HE PUNCHED ME SEVERAL TIMES, ALMOST EVERYDAY. I WAS MADE LIKE A COW, MY HEAD WAS BANGED ON THE WALL AND I HAD "BLACK EYES, BRUISES."**

Respondent W: (Cried) **MY STORY WAS UNFORGETTABLE. ONE TIME WHEN MY HUSBAND WENT HOME FROM FISHING, HE ASKED ME FOR FOOD. WE DID NOT HAVE A GOOD DINNER BECAUSE WE HAD NO MONEY. I SHOWED TO HIM THE BOWL OF VEGETABLE SOUP AND HE ASKED ME TO HEAT IT. WHEN IT WAS DONE, HE Poured THE BOILING SOUP ON MY FACE. IT WAS PAINFUL AND I GOT BURNS.**

Respondent X (daughter of Respondent V): **MY FATHER BEAT UP MY MOTHER VERY OFTEN SINCE I WAS A CHILD.** But my mother was able to free herself and left my father.

Respondent X: **IF THERE WERE CASES OF ABUSE IN TERMS OF HOUSEHOLD CHORES, “MY HUSBAND WILL THE TOPNOTHER AS HE NEVER HELPED ME IN OUR HOUSEHOLD CHORES. I WAS LIKE HER NANNY.”**

Respondent Y: **My husband is a “HABITUAL ALCOHOLIC. HE COMES HOME DRANK AND WE FOUGHT. WHEN THIS COVID-19 EXISTS, HE TEMPORARILY STOPPED”**

Respondent N: **I EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL PROBLEM. MY HUSBAND IS HOT-TEMPERED. I WILL NEVER DENY THAT HE USED TO HIT ME!**

Respondent Z: I did not experience domestic violence...”MAGSINABTANAY ME DUHA.”

Respondent I: Our neighbor knows it, I was not able to experience violence. “Palangga ko sa ako bana.” We have problems which I cannot deny. We have financial problems, because of unstable job. We do not know sometimes where to look for food and how to provide essential items for our family.

Respondent R: **I WAS ABLE TO EXPERIENCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. MY HUSBAND HAD THE TENDENCY TO PUNCH ME ON ORDINARY DAYS. PRIOR TO PANDEMIC, HE USED BE A DRUG ADDICT. LATELY, AS I OBSERVE, ESPECIALLY NOW IN THIS TIME OF PANDEMIC...”NA USAB AKO BANA RON, DILI NA SIYA ADIK, HINAOT UNTA DI NA MUBALIK UG SUYOP.”**

Respondent L: **“MY HUSBAND USED TO PUNCH ME IF WE QUARREL I ALWAYS HAVE BRUISES. I AM LIKE A PUNCHING BAG!”**

**CHR: We encourage you to report any form of abuses to our office, to the barangay, or to the police.**

Based on the discussion among the community women, many of them did not experience reporting or referring GBV victims to their VAW Desk Officer because barangay officials would laughed at them or tell their stories to others. Although there is less referrals made by these community women, those complainants who seek the assistance from the barangay are given assistance according to the BHW, who attended the activity and even said that some victims have to go to the Police or DSWD, they will accompany them. No trafficking issues were ever mentioned.

## **6. GENERAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**CHR: What is the effect of COVID-19 in your economic status?**

**Respondent 2: “PAIT KAAYO, NAAPAY GIGATAS MGA BATA.”**

**Respondent S: I WAS ONCE A VENDOR IN CARBON MARKET. SINCE, THE START OF PANDEMIC, I WAS NOT ABLE TO SELL MY PRODUCTS BECAUSE OF DIFFICULTY IN TRANSPORTING MY DRIED FISH GOING TO CARBON MARKET UNTIL NOW. WAJUD PA MI PANGINABUHI. LISOD JUD MI KAAYO.**

**Respondent 3: KARON LANG MAM MIGAWAS KO KAY AMONG BALAY NAARA SA DUOL NANGLAWD AKONG BANA UG AKONG ANAK PERO WALA! “NANGUHA OG TIEMPO KASO WAY KUHA NGA ISDA. AKO BANA OG ANAK NGA GRADE 7**

**MANGISDA FROM 8:00AM TO 2:00PM...WALAY NADALA KARON ISDA...SO, WALAY SUD-AN. WALAY KITA”**

Respondent L: **“WE KEEP ON WORKING HARD TO EARN A LIVING, AND YET OUR INCOME CANNOT SUFFICE OUR DAILY NEEDS.”**

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Respondent 4: I want to receive a capital from the government, Ma’am. I want a capital for me to start a small business. I want to receive a capital for our livelihood.

Respondent M: **I ALSO WANT TO RECEIVE ADEQUATE AMOUNT OF MONEY TO START A BUSINESS. I AM EVEN WILLING TO RECEIVE FIVE THOUSAND PESOS FROM THE GOVERNMENT. WE DO NOT HAVE CAPITAL FOR OUR BUSINESS SINCE THE PANDEMIC.**

Respondent F: I hope the twenty five thousand pesos loan agreement will soon be realized. I want to avail the twenty five thousand loan good for ten years to pay. The SURE COVID AID.

Respondent 3: I hope the twenty five thousand pesos loan will be realized. I like to avail the said loan from the DA.

Respondent 5: Our newly formed organized be registered with BFAR after we will complete with our requirements so that we will be able to receive the same benefits as the ones who were already registered under the BFAR. They received bancas and other financial aide. We also want to have those aide Ma’am!

Respondent 6: **OPPORTUNITIES FOR US WOMEN FISHERFOLKS SO THAT WE WILL NO LONGER BE DEPENDENT WITH OUR HUSBANDS OR PARTNERS. IN THIS WAY, WE WILL EMPOWER WOMEN FISHERFOLKS TO KEEP FIGHTING IN ORDER TO LIVE AND TO INDEPENDENT WOMEN.**

Despite the many provisions on the empowerment of women fisherfolks in the Magna Carta of Women, it is clear that many issues remain. Implementation of these provisions remain

to be seen and subject to continued monitoring. In the face of the continuing marginalization and invisibility of women fisherfolks.

Before the distribution of the care packs and tokens for the women fisherfolks a group picture was taken. The community women thanked the CHR for the said activity and are hoping for another activity in the future.

Certificates of Appreciation were then given to the participants as well as their tokens.



## TOKENS



The Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with the community women of Barangays San Roque and Tangke, Talisay City, Cebu, ended at 4:00PM.

***END OF DOCUMENTATION***

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**OCTOBER 28, 2020**

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“FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN FISHERFOLKS AND WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK OF TRAFFICKING AND OTHER FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC”

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