



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

DOCUMENTATION REPORT
ON THE
**“FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) FOR GOVERNMENT
SERVIDE PROVIDERS 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 BAC OFFICE, NEW TALISAY CITY HALL,
TALISAY CITY, PROVINCE OF CEBU**

ON OCTOBER 16, 2020.

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. One of the key sectors identified by the Magna Carta of Women are women fisherfolks. As such, in its mission to ensure that no one is left behind, conducted a two-day focus group discussion in Region VII specifically in the city of Talisay, Province of Cebu. Held last October 16, 2020 for government service providers and civil society organizations took part as stakeholders.

While the women fisherfolks 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.

Through this sectoral monitoring, the Commission, as Gender Ombud contributes in ensuring that no one is left behind. We will render the voices and experiences of women fisherfolks visible, we will make visible their many roles as fisherfolks, we will inquire into their participation and inclusion in government programming, particularly covering this period of pandemic. Through recommendations from the women fisherfolks themselves we will work towards a better new normal.





These were the participants of the “FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN FISHERFOLKS AND WOMEN AND GIRLS AT RISK OF TRAFFICKING AND OTHER FORMS OF GBV DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND NEW NORMAL.”

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PROPER (FGD)



The Commission on Human Rights always respects and promotes the freedom of religion. Thus, it is appropriate to start with a prayer first before the conduct of a particular activity.

Special Investigator Maria Voy A. Belen, Regional Gender Focal facilitated the FGD and she reminded all the government service providers and CSOs, that the activity was on record so as not to violate the privacy of each participant.

Investigator Belen discussed a little background the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) as a Gender Ombud under the Magna Carta of Women and discussed 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."

Special Investigator Maria Voy A. Belen, Regional Gender Focal gave a quick background why the FGD was brought about and then presented the general objectives for the conduct of the FGD 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;

In addition, the following are more specific objectives of the focus group discussion:

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.



The said activity was well-represented by the invited government service providers, to wit:

1. Situationer of women fisherfolks.

CHR: How many members of the women fisherfolks do we have in our list?

JANE (DA): We do not have a particular number of women fisherfolks as of this time, because we combine the male fisherfolks and women fisherfolks. Women fisherfolks were not separated from men.

MIRA (BARANGAY GAD FOCAL): Yes, we do have list of women fisherfolks who were victims of domestic violence. They experience physical, mental, financial abuses from their husband. I do not have a copy with me. **PERO KATO DUNA MI GI SETTLE MA'AM KAY AMO RA POD SILA GI SETTLE.**

CHR: The victim of abuses and the perpetrators should not be settled under the Violence Against Women. Actually the cycle of abuse still continues, because of forgiveness from the victim. We should follow the law.

SOLANA (CSWDO): DILI JUD DAPAT NATO NA SILA ESETTLE BITAW KAY MANGANAD NG MGA BANA UG PARTNERS. KASAGARAN MA'AM DILI MAN GUD MUTOG-AN UNYA DILI MUTINGOG DILI NALANG PUGSON.

All participants were given the opportunity to voice out their policies and programs being implemented on its own agencies and office

2. Policies and Programs

RODERICK (LGU) : On our part Ma'am Belen, we actually identify areas which considered vulnerable to human trafficking. During disaster, we acknowledge the efforts done by all women. Women are more empowered, nowadays. If there were disasters, it is instinct to a certain mother to think first of the safety of her own child. The rights and need of these children were being protected by women especially by their mother.

CHR: The other day, when we had our focus group discussion with women fisherfolks. They made mentioned of the Shore COVID-AID. The fisherfolks can ask a loan from the Department of Agriculture amounting to twenty five thousand pesos (25k). This is payable within ten years.

JANE (DA): Personally, I have no idea about the twenty five thousand pesos loan. In our agency, we can only help them with fishing equipment. We can provide fishing materials, but not in terms of monetary. The Commission on Audit will allow us to release money intended for "Monetary Loan Agreement." I am hesitant to discuss this matter, because it is not included in our guidelines to release money for our women fisherfolks. There were helped being extended to them and that is to receive fishing materials. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources asked us to release the official list of fisherfolks. They were considered as registered fisherfolks. It includes the male fisherfolks also.

ANA (BFAR): Our office has already established a GAD. It is part of our training to emphasize the equal treatment of all gender. During the livelihood project, any local government unit interested of our projects, we welcomed them to have a partnership with us. We had our livelihood project for women most especially for women who reside in remote area or in an island. We also

had our Day Care Center. All projects must be in accordance to the COA guidelines. We need to validate first the projects.

JANE (DA): We decided to conduct a proposal to create training on the production of Bangus. This is for women livelihood. This will be implemented next year 2021.

CHR: What about the programs of the Women Federation?

MELISSA (WOMEN FEDERATION): We had our federation of women since 2002. There were three thousand active members. We do have livelihood projects. We want these women to be equipped with skills and capabilities. It helped them to boost their confidence and to be economically independent. They were no longer afraid of domestic violence. We also have “Ice Cream Making” and “Bugasan” livelihood. The bugasan livelihood was sponsored by our vice-mayor. The funding of ice cream making was from the local government unit. There were twenty-two active barangay members.

CHRISTY (PNP-WCPD): Prior to pandemic, we had our weekly TV program for children. This was sponsored by a private organization.

MIRA (BARANGAY GAD FOCAL):: We have our “Water Refilling Station Livelihood.”

RODERICK (LGU): The City of Talisay constructs a center for women and children. We even institutionalized the GAD. We practiced referral system. We even posted a tarpaulin in our building which serve as information dissemination on the rights of women and children. We monitor the creation of GAD. The high incidence of abuses for our women came from Barangay San Roque.

CHRISTY (PNP-WCPD):: According to our record, the high incidence of domestic violence came from Dumlog, second is from San Roque.

3. COVID-19 Impact and program

JANE (DA): These women fisherfolks shall be categorically separated from men fishersfolks. These women fisherfolks should be registered in order to formulate a certain association. Women fisherfolks should build its own identity. These women should be enlisted in the official master

list of fisherfolks for them to be registered as a legit association. It is easy to identify problems encountered by these women, if they are categorically enlisted as “women’s fisherfolks.” The rights of these women should be recognized according to the needs of its associations.

SOLANA (CSWDO): Monitoring of Violence Against Women Desk. There were situations wherein the VAW Desk in a certain barangay is not functional. The privacy of the VAW Desk workspace in the barangay level and other government agency must be observed. In some situations, due to lack of facilities and funds, the privacy of the VAW Desk workspace is at stake. The confidentiality of the cases cannot be observed due to lack of VAW Desk workspace. ‘DAPAT NAAY KAUGALINGON SPACE ANG VAW DESK, ANG NAHITABO NA HINANG NGA MULTIPURPOSE, DAGHAN NA NUON MO AMBIT, DAGHAN NA MAKABALO SA ISSUES.’

CHRISTY (PNP-WCPD): This VAW Desk must have assistance from the barangay. We should strengthen our partnership from the our agency (PNP) down to the Barangay level. Any report of abuses must be reported first in the barangay level before it will be forwarded to our agency. We need the help of the personnel from the barangay level to assist the victim. Once, the victim decided to file for a complaint of abuses against her husband, the record from the barangay will be forwarded to us in the PNP. We need to have cooperation from the barangay level. This is to monitor the cases of number of abuses for women and to validly record the data of abuses.

YEYEN (SP-COMMITTEE ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN): The Violence against Women from other agency (PNP), their own personnel may lack of capability to handle the cases of abuses. In our office, we do have a plan to educate these personnel from other agency on how to handle the situation of abuses. Since, it it pandemic, we cannot at this time continues with our project.

ANA (BFAR): To strengthen the registration of Fishing Boat. The government agency in-charge of the registration should see to it, that these operators will abide the rules of the government.

JANE (DA): To strengthen the registration of Fishing Boat. The Department of Agriculture encourages the pump boat operators to always register their fishing boat. This is to avoid the use of fishing boat to transport children from different islands.

JEROME (LGU): THE CONSTRUCTION OF CENTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN WAS AMONG THE PRIORITY PROJECT OF TALISAY CITY. THE GENDER AND

DEVELOPMENT WAS ALREADY INSTITUTIONALIZED. THE RECORDS CAN NOW EASILY BE GATHERED. REFERRAL SYSTEM WAS BEING PRACTICED IN OUR CITY. THE VICTIMS CAN EASILY REPORT ANY FORM OF ABUSES. WOMEN FROM THE VULNERABLE SECTORS CAN EASILY REPORT THIS INCIDENT BECAUSE THEY WERE GUIDED OF THEIR RIGHTS. THE INFORMATION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS WERE VISIBLE IN A CERTAIN BARANGAY HERE IN TALISAY. THESE RIGHTS WERE POSTED ON A TARPAULIN. THE PURPOSE OF REFERRAL SYSTEM WAS TO ALLOW THE VICTIM TO PROPERLY REPORT THE INCIDENT OF ABUSES TO THE PROPER AUTHORITY.

ANA (BFAR): We provide a livelihood project for the women fisherfolks and we capacitate them, the male and females. This project focuses on the importance of gender equality. On the part of our office's concern, **WE HAD OUR DAY CARE CENTER NGA DIIN ANG MGA ANAK SA AMONG MGA EMPLEYADO NGA BABAE DIHA IBILIN ANG MGA BATA SAMTANG GA TRABAHO SILA. UG KUHAON NA KINI HUMAN SA TRABAHO;**

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: WE CREATED A PROJECT WHICH FOCUSES ON CASH AND FOOD SUBSIDY. WE CANNOT DIVULGE THIS TO OUR FISHERFOLKS AT THIS TIME, BECAUSE WE ARE STILL GATHERING THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS FOR PROFILING. THIS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY NEXT YEAR 2021. THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FORMULATED A PROPOSAL ON "FISH PROCESSING." This will focus on the livelihood project for women fisherfolks. We choose Barangay Biasong, because it is where the fish cage located. "Ang pagtraining sa mga asawa sa mga mananagat, sa kani "bangus" livelihood. Mao nani ang livelihood sa mga kababainhan."

MIRA (BARANGAY GAD FOCAL): WE HAVE NO LIVELIHOOD PROJECTS MAM BUT SA FEDERATION ANG MIHATAG NAMO AND THIS WILL AUGMENT THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF EVERY WOMAN. THEY HAVE OUR ICE CREAM MAKING WHICH WAS SPONSORED BY OUR VICE-MAYOR. THEY ALSO HAVE OUR "BUGASAN," WHEREIN OUR WOMEN CAN BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THEIR TALENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, APART FROM RECEIVING

A LIVELIHOOD FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT. The result of this livelihood is beneficial on the part of the women especially those women who experience domestic violence.

MARISSA (WOMEN FEDERATION): We have so many programs for the women Ma'am. **KANA AMONG GI LAUNCH NGA UG BUGASAN SA BARANGAY BARATO RA ANG MGA KILO SA BUGAS NGA NAK BENEPISYO GYUD ANG KADAGHANAN KARONG PANAHONA.** **ASIDE SA LIVELIHOOD, WE CONDUCTS TRAININGS SA MGA KAKABAENHAN.** The federation of women in our Barangay is composed of three thousand active members. Through this project, women would now be able to regain their confidence. They would no longer depend on monetary support from their partner or husband. They become economically independent.

RODERICK (LGU): MA'AM DUNA NA MI SP RESOLUTION NO. 836 NIADTONG SEPT. 11, 2020 NI AMONG GIPASA AND THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESOLUTION IS TO CREATE A PROGRAM THAT WILL ENHANCE, WIDEN AND STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OW WOMEN IN FARMING AND FISHERIES TO RECOGNIZE THEIR GREAT CONTRIBUTION TO UPLIFTING THE COMMUNITIES IN THE CITY OF TALISAY ESPECIALLY DURING THIS COVID-A9 PANDEMIC.

AMONG TUYO UG TUMONG DIRI SA TALISAY CITY NGA MAHATAGAN JUD UG DAKO NGA PARTICIPATION ATONG MGA WOMEN FARMERS AND WOMEN FISHERFOLKS, MA'AM UG SUGOD NA ANG SYUDAD KARON SA PAGBUHAT NIINING MAONG PROYEKTO PARA KANILA. HINAUT MAKATABANG KINI LABI NA NGA DAGHAN NA RON ANG WALAY MGA TRABAHO GIKAN NGA DUNA NA TAY PANDEMYA.

4. Recommendations

1. The women fisherfolks shall be categorically separated from male fisherfolks. They should register as “women fisherfolks”;
2. The registration of fishing boats must be observed in order to avoid the usage of this pump boat to any illegal means;
3. Identify the organization for women fisherfolks to easily monitor the incident of abuses and to properly disseminate the rights of women;

4. Privacy of VAW Desk Workspace in the Barangay Level. This is to preserve the confidentiality of cases being reported. The victim will no longer be hesitant to share her experiences of abuses, because nobody from the other barangay personnel can hear the incident.
5. The creation of own working space for VAW Desk Officer in any government agency;
6. Strengthening the partnership between the barangay personnel and the Philippine National Police VAW Desk Officers. These two offices from the government should work as one in order to validate the records of abuses for women;
7. Strengthening the assistance from the barangay level to the victim of abuses. The Barangay VAW Desk must consider the information drive on the rights of women;
8. The creation of “Federation of Women” which focuses on the livelihood trainings will be in partner with all the barangays of Talisay City not only in selected barangays;
9. Capability training for women to equip them with necessary skills. The purpose of this it to teach these women to be financially independent and
10. Capability training for barangay personnel who handles VAW victims or GAD.

These recommendations they say may help empower the women fisherfolks sector, specifically to address invisibility, undervaluation, and underrepresentation of these underprivileged women.

The FGD ended at 11:30 AM followed by the giving of tokens for the participants.

END OF DOCUMENTATION

OCTOBER 29, 2020