

DOCUMENTATION REPORT

FGD on the Plight of Women-fisherfolk and girl at risk of Trafficking

WOMEN FISHERFOLK

The CHR 9 interviewed 20 participants-respondents women fisherfolk from Zamboanga City in the FGD on the Plight of Womenfisherfolk and Girl at risk of Trafficking. Respondents were housewives and married to fishermen who used to hunt and catch fish in areas such as Sta. Cruz Island, Sumarik, Layag-Layag Tagtabun, Sumatra, Mariki, Linungan, Banalipa, Sinunuc, Baliwasan, and Paseo. Respondents' role was to market and sell the catch of their husbands. As such they identify themselves as women fisherfolk.

Respondents main issue is the inconsistency of their income as it is dependent on how good their catch for the day is and the COVID 19 outbreak worsen their situation, as they observe decrease in demand and the effect of quarantine measures prompted law enforcers to be stricter in their fishing activities requiring them additional permits under the new normal. Moreover, even when they have a catch, they have a hard time selling them because of restriction to movement and decrease in demand. One of the respondents manifested that they even peddle their catch to the nearby Christian community hoping that they will earn more.

Their participation in decision making is also limited as they are not encouraged to speak up. Their only participation is to sell their catch and do house chores. Despite their limited participation respondents still believe that they are given enough attention in the sector they are in because they feel that they are secured with the presence of law enforcers in sea and land. Moreover, they are able to receive other assistance as well to include financial assistance during medical emergencies and food supplies from LGU during the pandemic.

Generally, respondents manifested that there are no GBV in their community. However, one of the respondents allegedly witnessed some "Bisaya women" akyat barko while others say they heard similar stories in their community but there are no proofs to that effect. On the other hand, when they were asked about the possible cause of such violence, their general perception was towards women being at fault and that the same may be due to the effects of the Pandemic on their mental health (quarantine and low income). One of the respondents also shared that maybe women were forced to engage in "akyat barko" as a means of their survival.

The respondents' recommendation was for the Government to provide them with assistance as to materials, machines and boat so that they will be able to sustain themselves and not borrow from others. They also highlight the importance of lectures, seminars and skills workshops on women's rights so that they will be empowered. Moreover, they hope that this Pandemic end as it greatly affected their way of life and means of livelihood.

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES:

PNP TRAFFICKING UNIT

Per PNP WCPC-MFU records - traditional trafficking case for 2020 in Region 9, they were able to conduct 8 operations which resulted to the rescue of 118 victims. Five (5) of which were male of legal age, 110 were female of legal age and 3 female minors. This report also included the arrest of two (2) female of legal age engaged in trafficking in person and the successful filing of ten (10) cases. Further, there were no cases of OSEC in Region 9. However, there were reported cases in other areas in Mindanao as such they were able to conduct 14 operations

against OSEC which resulted to the rescue of 57 victims of which 48 were minors and 9 were of legal age. 11 suspects were arrested and 27 cases were filed.

When asked about trafficking incidents in the fishing communities within their areas of responsibilities, they responded that there are still no reported incidents in such areas. Their main operations are in port areas of Zamboanga City as it is well known to be the main transit point in and out of Malaysia. Although they did receive a report of alleged "akyat barko" in Baradero (shipyard) here in Zamboanga City but the women are allegedly bar workers. Accordingly, their operation failed because the alleged suspects were tipped off that there will be police operation on the said night.

Currently PNP WCPC-MFU has no programs directly intended for women fisherfolk or any other programs in fishing communities but they express willingness for a joint education campaign with CHR in fishing communities as they recognize that indeed there is a high probability of trafficking case, in such areas.

Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) Regional Office 9

BFAR 9 has disaggregated data of fisherfolks in the region. Per records, there are 68,000 registered women fisherfolk in the region but BFAR 9 recognizes that there are fisherfolk that are not yet registered in Fish'R or as in the case of fishing association in DOLE or SEC. BFAR 9 continues to provide support and services to fisherfolks in Region 9 especially during the COVID 19 pandemic. Support and Services provided were training on seaweed farming and value adding, shellfish culture, urban aquaculture/aquaponics, fish processing techno demo and intervention projects such as provision of seaweeds propagules, seaweeds farm implements, fishing gear and paraphernalia's such as fish gear, hook and line gill nets and FRP boats.

BFAR 9 has no data on Gender Based Violence among the Fishing communities in the region but Programs and Policies for women fisherfolk are always incorporated in the BFAR 9 GAD Plan and Budget. One of the programs implemented was Seminar on R.A 9262 or Anti Violence against Women and their Children. It is noteworthy, that during the said activity some participants shared that they were victim of VAW such as physical violence and infidelity but did not report the same to Barangay or other agency concerned. BFAR 9 recognizes women fisherfolk as a sector but as observed they are restricted to decision making considering that most of fisherfolk religion are Islam as such as per their culture and tradition the husband decision shall always prevail.

Fisherfolk are greatly affected by the COVID 19 Pandemic because their income is dependent upon the catch, harvest that they had for the day. According to BFAR 9, while restrictions were implemented the production of fisherfolk on aquaculture and capture increased even during ECQ. They continued on their fishing activities (municipal and commercial) considering that fish production is basic commodity and raw materials for canned sardines.

Areiyne Phelle Hamac
Documenter