

Pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement between Commission on Human Rights Region 1 (CHR1) and Philippine National Police (PNP)—Police Regional Office 1 thru its Women and Children Protection Desk (WCPD) and the Human Rights Action Office (HRAO), the following cases concerning children were referred. The table below shows the number of child cases filed with the PNP segregated by month and per province.

Month	Provinces				
	Ilocos Norte	Ilocos Sur	La Union	Pangasinan	Total
July	4	15	11	65	95
August	9	11	9	59	88
September	6	12	9	64	91
October	7	19	10	48	84
November	4	10	8	39	61
December	7	8	11	44	70
Total	37	75	58	319	489

With respect to the crimes committed, the following are the cases filed and under investigation by the PNP. *(Please refer to Annex I.)*

The records from the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) Region 1 also states that for the period covered no minor was placed in their custody.

For the 2nd semester, physical monitoring of Bahay Pag-asa and other Youth Care Facilities suspended in compliance to the “Guidance for Bahay Pag-asa and other Youth Care and Rehabilitation Facilities handling CAR and CICL During the COVID-19 Pandemic Situation” of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council (JJWC.) But nonetheless, monitoring was still undertaken thru letters and attaching a copy of the Liham Mula Kay Tantan for the children and CHR Monitoring BPA Form-COVID 19 for the Center Head. The following were the number of children at the custody of the Centers, to wit:

	Number of Residents
BAHAY PAG-ASA YOUTH CENTER, Laoag City, Ilocos Norte	6
CRISIS INTERVENTION CENTER (CIC), Candon City, Ilocos Sur	3
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER FOR YOUTH (RRCY), Urayong, Bauang, La Union.	110
BAHAY PAG-ASA YOUTH HOME CENTER, Urdaneta City, Pangasinan	3

III. Regional Human Rights Issues/Concern

From the foregoing data, the major issues that surfaced are the following:

- a. Increasing number of sexual abuse cases in the region;
- b. The impact of COVID-19 to the cases of children pending in court and to their mental or psychological well-being;
- c. The impact of COVID-19 to the monitoring process.

IV. Assessment, Findings and Conclusions

The number of sexual abuses among children in Region 1 remains. Of the twenty-eight (28) cases resolved involving minors, twenty-six (26) are for violation of the right to protection of honor and reputation. Same is also true for other legal services (OLS) wherein 24 out of the 47 involved rape and other sexual abuses on children.

Despite of the strong campaign for child protection and prevention of child rights abuses, the number of cases still increased. PNP-PRO1 data shows that the cases involving children almost doubled for the second semester. The 252 complaints received from January to June rose to 489 complaints. (*Please see Annex 2*). Still, the highest number constitutes sexual abuses on children. There were 172 cases of Rape/ Violation of RA 8353, 100 cases of acts of lasciviousness & other sexual abuses, 43 cases of Statutory Rape, 40 cases of Incestuous Rape, and 11 cases of Attempted Rape. The pandemic may have a strong role for the increase of these cases inasmuch as the people are required to stay and observe curfew ordinances. Domestic violence is taking its toll especially with cases of incestuous rape from 19 during the 1st semester to 40 cases for the 2nd semester. Physical Injury/ Abuse in relation to RA 7610 & RA 9262 is also relatively high with 67 cases recorded.

Most of the provinces in Region 1 opted for Modified General Community Quarantine, (MGCQ). But still, implementation of border protocols remains strict. They would require Swab Results or even Anti Gen which comes with a price. This has become a great burden to the parents of the children in Bahay Pag-asa in addition to the JJWC Guidelines prohibiting face-to-face visits to the Center. The result of the Liham Mula Kay Tantan would reveal that many of the children are worried or sad. Some of the reasons mentioned are, *“Due to the threat of Covid-19 Pandemic and they worry for the safety of their families; For not seeing their families for how many months; No visit from family; Hearing of their cases is taking too long; and Unsure when they will be able to go home.”* We can infer from such answers that the pandemic has a great impact on the mental and psychological well-being of every child. The ‘*e-dalaw*’ may be the safest and most convenient way for communication at present but still it is not sufficient for the children.

Due to the pandemic, monitoring the rights of children-deprived of liberty is also greatly affected. The no face-to-face guideline is a struggle because we cannot really look into condition of the children and the actual set-up of the Center if they are still compliant with the minimum standards required by the rules. But we are hoping that no abuse and exploitation will be done to them especially in this time of crisis.

V. Recommendations

From the foregoing discussions, the following are the recommendations, to wit:

Government Center, Aguila Road, Capitol Hill, Sevilla, San Fernando City, La Union
Telefax No. (072) 607-8706 *Email Add: chr1sflu@yahoo.com*

Situationer: July to December 2020

1. Heightened advocacy and information dissemination of children's rights and protection specially on sexual abuse cases; and
2. Continuous monitoring of Bahay Pag-asa and youth care facilities to ensure that the rights of children deprived of liberty are protected and upheld at all times;

Prepared by:

ATTY. YOLANDA A. SALANGA
Focal Person for Children/Youth

Reviewed by:

ATTY. ANNA LEAH T. ROMERO
Attorney V

Approved by:

ATTY. HAROLD D. KUB-ARON
Regional Human Rights Director

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