

CASES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: TOWARDS A PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION

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Abstract

This study determined the cases of violence against women in selected barangays of Tarlac City. In this research, the following questions were answered. What is the description of the cases on violence against women? What are the causes of violence against women? What support/assistance to women is provided by the LGUs? What plan of action is proposed to improve the VAW services of the barangays? The methodologies used in the present study were qualitative and descriptive researches. The researchers used documentary analysis and interview to gather data. The subjects of the study were violence against women survivors from the selected ten (10) populous barangays of Tarlac City. Physical abuse, mental abuse, threat, abandonment of children, child support issues, child custody, psychological abuse, economic abuse, and rape were the recorded cases among the evaluated barangays. The researchers found out that a VAW desk was established in every respondent barangay. This is in compliance with Section 12 D, Rule IV of the Rules and Regulations Implementing the Magna Carta of Women, which provides for the establishment of a VAW desk in every barangay to ensure that violence against women cases are fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner.

Keywords: *Violence against Women, Cases of Violence against Women, Barangay VAW Desk*

The home is often the most dangerous place for women and many live in daily fear of violence. One in three women will experience physical or sexual violence from men, usually someone known to them, in their lifetime.^[1]

Research over more than thirty years from around the world clearly indicates that domestic abuse as understood and defined is primarily perpetrated by men against a female partner or ex-partner. It is therefore a gender issue. This imbalance requires explanation rooted in analysis which posits, not that men are biologically and irredeemably 'hard-wired' for coercive controlling behaviour but the links between the individual behaviour of some men, and prevailing social/structural conditions must be examined.^[2]

Domestic violence against women by men is 'caused' by the misuse of power and control within a context of male privilege. Male privilege operates on an individual and societal level to maintain a situation of male dominance, where men have power over women and children. In this way, domestic violence by men against women can be seen as a consequence of the inequalities between men and women, rooted in patriarchal traditions that encourage men to believe they are entitled to power and control over their partners.^[3]

The United Nations and governments around the world recognize that National Action Plans (NAP) on Violence against Women (VAW) can play a valuable coordinating role in concerted, sustained efforts to address VAW. The implementation of multi-sectoral NAPs and the adoption/enforcement of national laws are two of five key goals that the UN Secretary-General's *UNiTE to End Violence against Women* campaign hopes to achieve worldwide by 2015.^[4]

This study determined the cases of violence against women in selected barangays of Tarlac City. Specifically, the study answered the following: What is the description of the cases on violence against women? What are the causes of violence against women? What support/assistance is provided to women by the LGUs? What plan of action is proposed to improve the VAW services of the barangays?

Methods and Materials

The methodologies used in the present study were qualitative and descriptive researches. The researchers used documentary analysis and interview to gather data.

The subjects of the study were violence against women survivors and victims from the ten (10) populous barangays of Tarlac City. These barangays were as follows: Carangian, Maliwalo, Matatalaib, San Isidro, San Miguel, San Rafael, San Roque, San Vicente, SapangMaragul, and Tibag.

Results and Discussions

Description of the cases: In Table 1, the type of reported cases of violence against women among the barangays is presented. Based on the gathered data, physical abuse of women is the most common recorded case.

Table 1 - Types of Reported Cases of Violence Against Women Among the Barangays

| Barangays | Types of Cases |
|---------------|--|
| Carangian | Physical Abuse |
| Maliwalo | Physical abuse |
| Matatalaib | Physical Abuse, Mental Abuse, Threatening, Abandonment of children, and Child Support Issues |
| San Isidro | Physical Abuse, and Abandonment of children |
| San Miguel | No Recorded Case |
| San Rafael | Physical abuse (with a recorded case of Parricide) |
| San Roque | Physical abuse and Psychological abuse |
| San Vicente | Physical abuse, Child Support (Economic Abuse), Rape, and Child Custody |
| SapangMaragul | Physical abuse, Psychological abuse, and Rape |
| Tibag | Physical abuse and Economic abuse |

Mental abuse, threat, abandonment of children, child support issues, child custody, psychological abuse, economic abuse, and rape were the recorded cases among the evaluated barangays.

Cases of Violence against Women: Presented here are two cases of violence against women recorded in two different barangays in Tarlac City. All indicated names here are fictitious or are not the real names of the persons involved in the actual incidents of violence against women.

Case 1: The story of Clark and Beth

Clark and Beth have been together for more than 15 years. In the early years of their marriage, Clark and Beth were as sweet as any lover can be. But as the years passed by, the sweetness of the couple was not sustained because Clark became dependent on illegal drugs. Arguments of the couple became frequent especially when Clark was under the influence of drugs. Beth tried to cope up with this situation because of their baby and she tried to encourage Clark to stop using



illegal drugs. Rather than reversing the situation, Clark became more aggressive and he started hitting Beth. Their situation became worse when Clark, besides being a drug dependent, also had extra marital affair. From then on, he did not provide for his family needs and he stopped working due to the use of illegal drugs. He continued with his vices and he kept on asking money from Beth from time to time. Beth was employed with good pay. In order to save their marriage, she tried to provide for the family needs. She even bought Clark a car and a personal gym at home to show how much she loves him. But Clark did not refrain from his vices like the use of illegal drugs and seeing his other woman. Whenever the couple argued Clark often beat Beth. After the beating, Beth usually acquired bruises, cuts, and black eye. When Beth could no longer endure her sacrifices, she reported the case to the barangay officials for them to take action. Due to the severity of the case it was endorsed to the Philippine National Police (PNP) and they took action. For the first time, Clark was sent to jail and Beth underwent counseling at the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD). Due to the kind heartedness of Beth and for the sake of their child, she dropped the case against her husband and he was set free.

Clark tried to change his ways but he returned to his usual vices after several days. He started beating his wife again whenever they argued. Beth reported the case for the second time, so Clark was sent back to jail while she again attended counseling services from CSWD. Before the counseling ended, Beth withdrew the case and again Clark was set free with the promise that he would be a changed person. Just like other promises, Clark's promise was again broken.

Every time Beth was abused, the case was reported to the barangay so that from time to time, Clark got incarcerated. But due to Beth's soft heartedness, she would allow her husband to be released from jail.

After 14 years, the second child was born, a manifestation of Beth's love despite the abuses she received from Clark. After giving birth, Beth bought a motorcycle for Clark. To reciprocate Beth's love and efforts, Clark agreed to enter the drug rehabilitation center to be healed and with the hope that their relationship will improve. Before completing his medication, Clark pleaded to be released from the center. Beth agreed hoping that her husband would become a renewed person.

After the acquired freedom, Clark failed again to be true to his promise and he again used illegal drugs. Beth was always forced to give him money for his everyday expenses and for his vices. But with two kids to take care and to provide for their needs, Beth often refused to give him money which resulted to his beating her.

One night at about 10:00 o'clock in the evening, an intense argument of the couple occurred. Clark went home under the influence of illegal drugs. He forced Beth to give her money. Having no money to give, Beth received beating from Clark. The fight between the couple lasted for several hours. About 2:00 o'clock in the morning, their daughter woke-up due to the intense fight of the couple. She heard her mother shouting "sigepatayinmonaako!" After few minutes, the child heard her mother saying "tama na, tama na!" At this point, the child checked on the situation and she saw his father stabbing Beth. Due to fear, the child ran back to her room to hide with her baby brother. After the stabbing, Clark threatened her daughter. He took a shower and then left the house. After Clark left the house, the daughter had an

opportunity to ask help from neighbors. The barangay officials responded with the Philippine National Police.

Investigation showed that Beth received 33 stab wounds which resulted to her death. The 14-year-old daughter received counseling from CSWD due to trauma. The daughter and son of Cindy now live with her parents in another province.

As per interview with the officials of the barangay, Clark is still at large.

Case 2: The story of George and Cindy

George and Cindy were live-in partners for 12 years. Both were professionals and had an above average income level. The couple owned a building and two houses. They had three children. Despite having three children and material possessions, George did not want to settle solely with Cindy.

In 2012, the problem between the couple began. Cindy found out that George had an affair with another woman. Sometimes, the other woman was brought by George to the house adjacent to the house where the legal wife lived with their three (3) kids. Most of the time, after having pleasure with his mistress, George upon going home would still force Cindy to have sex with him. Whenever she refused George would beat her, usually at her thighs and abdomen, so that bruises could not be seen by others. Time and again, George would hit her even though Cindy would ask permission to see a friend or to go to the mall. Whenever Cindy nagged, she was beaten by George.

Experiencing worse situation, Cindy reached a point when she wanted to end her relationship with George. She was not able to do it because all her savings from being an OFW were exhausted in the construction of a building. To settle her problem, Cindy requested George to divide their property between them. Unfortunately, George did not agree to the idea. This is the reason why Cindy still stayed with George.

Twice this year, Cindy went to the barangay hall to unburden and to have consultations with the VAW officer regarding her case. The officer advised her to have the matter officially recorded at the barangay and at the PNP. Due to the social status of the couple in society, Cindy requested that the matters should not be put on record either at the barangay or PNP. She did not want their names to be the talk of the town. Cindy's request was granted by the barangay VAW officer. With Cindy's helpless situation, their relationship continued. On the second visit of Cindy at the barangay, she left a letter stating that in case something bad happened to her, George would be the primary suspect. The case of George and Cindy is still unsettled.

Causes of Violence Against Women: Based on the interview conducted, the cases of violence against women in the barangay occurred because of: dependence on illegal drugs; jealousy and the presence of a third party in the marital relationship; the influence of alcohol; anger; and provocation of the marital partner (nagging of the female).

Research points to many causes of domestic violence, but all have one underlying commonality: the abuser feels the need to exert complete control over his or her partner. A strong predictor of domestic violence in adulthood is domestic violence in the household where the person was reared. A child's exposure to his father's abuse of his mother is the strongest risk factor for transmitting domestic violence from one generation to the next. This cycle of domestic violence is difficult to break because parents have presented violence as the norm.^[5]



Support/Assistance Provided by the LGUs to Women: Based on the gathered information from the different barangays, the researchers found out that all have VAW desks. Section 12 D, Rule IV of the Rules and Regulations Implementing the Magna Carta of Women, provides for the establishment of a VAW desk in every barangay to ensure that violence against women cases are fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner. The researchers observed that some barangays had separate room for investigation while some made use of the Punong Barangay's room as a venue to conduct investigations. Victim-survivors were even provided safe shelter when requested.

In one of the evaluated barangays, the officer of the day also acted as the VAW desk officer. According to the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2010-1 entitled "Guidelines in the Establishment of a Violence Against Women (Vaw) Desk in every Barangay," the punong barangay shall designate a VAW Desk person who is trained in gender-sensitive handling of cases, preferably a woman barangay kagawad or woman barangay tanod. In cases where there are no trained personnel, he ensures that the person assigned shall undergo basic gender sensitivity training and orientation on anti-VAW laws.

Based on the records of the evaluated barangays, protocols were observed in handling VAW cases. The VAW officer of the barangay endorsed some VAW cases to the PNP and CSWD whenever necessary. Barangay protection orders were issued if found necessary and upon the request of the victims. For grave offenses by the perpetrators, the cases were endorsed to the PNP women's desk for immediate action.

There were cases wherein the survivor-victims went directly to the PNP VAW desk to report their cases. Light offenses were often endorsed back by the PNP officer to the barangay VAW desk officer for immediate action.

The Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children (VAWC) Act (RA 9262) mandates the punong barangay or in his/her absence the barangay kagawad concerned or on duty to take immediate action upon being informed of a violent incident and is mandated to issue a Barangay Protection Order (BPO) on the date of filing after ex parte determination of the basis of the complaint. Take note that all forms of amicable settlement under the Barangay Justice System such as mediation, settlement, conciliation, arbitration shall not apply to cases of VAWC.

Proposed Plan of Action: Presented in Table 1 are the proposed plans of action to improve the VAW services of the barangays. The following are the proposed strategies: conducting training and development for the barangay officials and barangay police; giving assistance to barangay GAD planning and budgeting; showing adherence to protocol in handling VAW cases; and having information dissemination.

Table 1 - Proposed Plan of Action to Improve VAW Services

| Strategy | Brief Description |
|--|--|
| 1. Conducting trainings and seminars for the barangay officials and barangay police. | Through the Center for Local Governance of the College of Public Administration and the Gender and Development Office, Tarlac State University may establish a partnership with the Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Health, and Philippine Commission on Women on the conduct of training and development for the barangay officials and barangay police. |

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|---|--|
| 2. Giving assistance to barangay GAD planning and budgeting | The Gender and Development Office of the Tarlac State University may assist the barangay officials in their GAD planning and budgeting to ensure the inclusion of activities/projects for the protection and promotion of respect for human rights. |
| 3. Showing adherence to protocol in handling VAW cases | Through the Center for Local Governance of the College of Public Administration and the Office for Gender and Development, the Tarlac State University may help the barangay to adhere to protocols in handling VAW cases by training the VAW desk officers and by providing a flow-chart based on the guidelines set by law. |
| 4. Having information dissemination | With the help of barangay officials, the Center for Local Governance of the College of Public Administration and the Office for Gender and Development of the Tarlac State University may provide a seminar or orientation to the barangay residents during the conduct of the barangay assembly. Topics related to gender and development as well as to violence against women and children may be presented in the assembly. The Gender and Development Office of the Tarlac State University may conduct a regular gender sensitivity orientation to all the employees of the university and its students. |

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions are reached. Physical abuse of women is the most common recorded case of VAW in selected barangays of Tarlac City; Cases of violence against women in the barangay occurred because of: dependence on illegal drugs; jealousy and the presence of a third party in the marital relationship; the influence of alcohol; anger; and the provocation of marital partner (nagging of the female); All barangays established VAW desks which is in compliance with Section 12 D, Rule IV of the Rules and Regulations Implementing the Magna Carta of Women.; The evaluated barangays observed protocols in handling VAW cases.

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