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MAKING HOMES SAFER FOR WOMEN



The homes are supposed to be the safest place at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. But in many cases, this is the scariest place to be as women are stuck inside their homes with their abusers. This is what we call shadow pandemic.”

These are the words of DILG Undersecretary Marjorie N. Jalosjos, the Chair of the DILG Central Office (CO)’s Gender and Development (GAD) Focal Point System, during her opening remarks at the webinar entitled **“Shadow Pandemic Recovery and Response: An Anti-Violence Against Women (VAW) Webinar for Barangay VAW Desk Focal Persons in the National Capital Region (NCR).”**

Organized by the DILG CO’s Public Affairs and Communication Service (PACS), the said webinar was attended by more than 800 participants as part of the National Women’s Month Celebration 2022.

“Shadow pandemic” refers to physical, verbal, sexual, psychological and economic abuse and harassment suffered by women who were forced to remain at home with their abusers during the lockdowns as stringent mobility measures were imposed to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The home, which is supposed to be a safe haven, became a place of torture for women and girls who, more often than not, are unwilling or unable to report their abuse.

HELP NOW A CALL AWAY

To make it easier and safer for the victims to report, Philippine National Police (PNP) PLt Col Herlyn Kristine Lazaro said that the PNP Women and Children Protection Center (WCPC) has an ISO 9001:2015 certified specialized unit mandated to protect women and children against abuse, violence, cruelty, exploitation, discrimination and other forms of gender-based violence.



The PNP WCPC maximizes social media to broadcast its advocacy, conducts house visitation, and intensifies cyberpatrols. From March 2020 to March 17, 2022, the center rescued some 557 victims and arrested 88 suspects in 120 operations.

Lazaro said that women suffering from abuse can call hotline numbers 09666755961 (Smart) and 09197777377 (Globe) for assistance. They can also e-mail WCPC at alengpuliswcpc.didm@pnp.gov.ph.

Likewise, Emergency 911 National Office Public Information Officer Lou Daryl Andes explained that they are now receiving and responding to VAW calls. The additional service was the result of a joint memorandum circular signed by the DILG, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Department of Justice.

The 911 hotline also provides psychological first aid and survivor-centered care to VAW patients. Concerned national government agencies, local government units (LGUs), and other entities respond to VAW incidents and strengthen local structures addressing VAW.

From December 7, 2021 to February 2022, 911 office received 287 violence against women and children (VAWC) calls, with the NCR logging the highest number of calls at 124. Region IV-A is next with 52 and Region III is third with 23.

For her part, resource speaker Maria Cleofe Gettie Sandoval, a lawyer and professor who provides legal support, training, technical expertise on gender, law, and policy, lamented that only 1/3 of victims seek help.

She said the remedies available to victims are barangay or provincial protection orders; filing a criminal case; or filing a civil case including legal separation or annulment.

GAD BUDGETING

Meanwhile, DILG Malabon Cluster Head Alvaro F. Fabon Jr. explained that VAW focal persons can make use of the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development 1995-2025 when preparing their respective annual GAD plan and budget.

He said that LGUs can use this 5% annual GAD Plan and Budget (GPB) for programs and activities that aim to increase the economic empowerment of women; protect and fulfill women’s human rights; and promote gender-responsive governance.

Among the essential elements of GPB are the creation and strengthening of the GAD Focal Point System (GFPS); capacity development on gender mainstreaming; and the institutionalization of the GAD database.

Finally, as DILG and LGUs take strides in protecting women from violence, VAW cases will hopefully be reduced. ■ **Edgardo S. Tugade**

DILG-CO Quality Policy

We, the DILG-Central Office, imbued with the core values of Integrity, Commitment, Teamwork and Responsiveness, commit to formulate sound policies on strengthening local government capacities, performing oversight function over LGUs, and providing rewards and incentives. We pledge to provide effective technical and administrative services to promote excellence in local governance and enhance the service delivery of our Regional and Field Offices for the LGUs to become transparent, resilient, socially-protective and competitive, where people in the community live happily.

We commit to continually improve the effectiveness of our Quality Management System compliant with applicable statutory and regulatory requirements and international standards gearing towards organizational efficiency in pursuing our mandate and achieving our client's satisfaction.

We commit to consistently demonstrate a **“Matino, Mahusay at Maasahang Kagawaran Para sa Mapagkalinga at Maunlad na Pamahalaang Lokal”**.