

## Cases of Domestic Violence against Women in One Municipality in the Philippines: Input for a Proposed Barangay Action Plan

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### Abstract

The research aimed to assess the cases of domestic violence against women (VAW) in selected barangays in the Municipality of Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines and develop an action plan to enhance the VAW services of the barangays. Descriptive-qualitative research method was employed where documentary analysis and respondent interviews were used to gather data. Permission from concerned agencies and local government units (LGUs) was sought to use and analyze records and other relevant data regarding cases of violence against women. Consent and approval before conducting interview among victims and survivors of violence against women were carefully sought with utmost confidentiality. Results showed that physical abuse of women is the most common recorded case. Other reported cases include psychological abuse, threatening, abandonment of children, child support issues, child custody, and economic abuse. Cases of domestic violence against women occurred because of perpetrator's dependence on illegal drugs, jealousy and presence of third party in their relationship, perpetrator's influence of alcohol, unemployment and provocation of the intimate partner. Barangay respondents provide services in addressing VAW in compliance with the Magna Carta of Women and Republic Act 9262. Certain conditions and challenges regarding VAW services of barangay were observed during the conduct of this study.

**Keywords:** *domestic, violence, women, cases, action plan*

### Introduction

States have clear obligations under international law to address violence against women. States are required to exercise due diligence to prevent acts of violence against women, to investigate such acts and prosecute and punish perpetrators, and to provide redress and relief to victims. The requirement to adopt and implement national action plans to address violence against women is set out in international and regional human rights instruments and policy documents.

Forms of violence against women vary according to the social, historical, economic, cultural and political contexts of different countries, and the conceptualization of policy must respond to these. Manifestations of violence against women are often multiple, interrelated and/or recurring. Women can experience violence in the family, in the community or at the hands of the State, with some forms of violence such as trafficking and in situations of armed conflict extending into further settings. Women's experience of violence is shaped by cultural norms and the social, economic and political context in which they live. Factors such as women's race, ethnicity, caste, class, migrant or refugee status, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or HIV status will also influence the forms and nature of violence women suffer.

The home is often the most dangerous place for women and many live in daily fear of violence. Rosche and Dawe (2013) asserted that one in three women experience physical or sexual violence from men, usually known to them, in their lifetime. Research over more than 30 years from around the world clearly indicates that domestic abuse as understood and defined is primarily perpetrated by men against a female partner of

ex-partner. It is therefore a gender issue. This imbalance, according to Orr (2007) requires explanation rooted in analysis which posits that men are biologically and irredeemably “hard-wired” for coercive controlling behavior that the links between the individual behavior of some men and prevailing social structural conditions must be examined.

Gluck (2012) stated that 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.

The United Nations and governments around the world recognize that action plans on Violence Against Women (VAW) can play a valuable coordinating role in concerted, sustained efforts to address VAW. The multi-sectoral National Action Plans (NAPs) and the adoption and enforcement of national laws are two of five key goals that the UN Secretary-General’s UNITE to End Violence against Women that campaign hopes to achieve worldwide by 2015.

Anchored on these premises, the researchers aimed to assess the cases of domestic violence against women in selected barangays in the Municipality of Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines and develop an action plan to enhance the VAW services of the barangays. Through this descriptive-qualitative inquiry, the researchers are directed to contribute to the enhancement of existing strategies in the implementation of Republic Act 9262 in the barangay levels. Development of sustainable plans to address issues of domestic violence against women and children, as part of this study, is expected to intensify the promotion of gender equality and elimination of violence against women in the grassroots. Further, this study is directed to raise the level of campaign in the protection of victims and survivors of VAW and to provide assistance for their social reintegration towards building sustainable gender responsive communities.

The researchers attempted to assess the cases of domestic violence against women in selected barangays in the Municipality of Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines.

Specifically, this study aimed to: know

1. Determine the types of cases of domestic violence against women.
2. Find out the causes of domestic violence against women.
3. Ascertain the services provided by the barangay government units in addressing the cases on domestic violence against women.
4. Identify the problems and challenges encountered by the respondent barangays in implementing VAW policies.
5. Develop an action plan to enhance the VAW services of the barangays.

## **Methodology**

This study applied the descriptive-qualitative research method. The researchers used documentary analysis and interview to gather data. The subjects of the study were victims and survivors of violence against women from the ten selected barangays in the municipality of Santa Cruz, Laguna, Philippines. Involvement of officials and staff of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development (MSWD), Municipal Police Unit Officers, and barangay officials which includes barangay captain, barangay secretary, barangay health workers, barangay public safety officers and VAW Desk officers was contributory in this research inquiry. Permission from concerned agencies and local government units (LGUs) was sought to use and analyze records and other relevant data regarding cases of violence against women. Consent and approval to conduct interview among victims and survivors of violence against women were carefully sought with utmost confidentiality. Frequency count, percentage and ranking were used in analyzing the data.

## **Results and Discussion**

The following summarizes the results of the documentary analysis conducted from records of respondent barangays, Office of the Municipal Social Welfare and Development and Municipal Police Unit. Data from interviews conducted with these agencies as well as from victims and survivors of violence against women were also analyzed and presented.

The type of reported cases of domestic violence against women among the selected barangays is presented the table shown below.

**Table 1. Types and Number of Reported Cases of Domestic VAW**

Barangay	Type of Domestic VAW	No. of Reported Cases
A	Physical Abuse	15
	Economic Abuse	3
B	Physical Abuse	7
	Physical Abuse (with recorded case of Molestation)	1
C	Physical Abuse	9
	Psychological/ Verbal Abuse	4
	Threatening	12
	Abandonment of Children	10
	Child Support Issues	14
D	Physical Abuse	10
	Abandonment of Children	5
	Economic Abuse	2
E	No Recorded Case	0
F	Physical Abuse	13
	Physical Abuse (with recorded case of Molestation)	1
G	Physical Abuse	6
	Psychological abuse	3
H	Physical Abuse	9
	Child Support Issues	7
	Child Custody	2
I	Physical Abuse	10
	Child Custody	4
J	Physical abuse	8
	Economic Abuse	5

**Table 2. Percentage of Reported Cases of Domestic VAW**

Type of Violence Against Women	Total Number of Reported Cases	Percentage
Physical Abuse	87	54.40 %
Physical Abuse (with recorded case of Molestation)	2	1.30 %
Economic Abuse	10	6.30 %
Psychological/ Verbal Abuse	7	4.40 %
Threatening	12	7.50 %
Abandonment of Children	15	9.40 %
Child Support Issues	21	13.10 %
Child Custody	6	3.80 %
Total	160	100 %

Based from the gathered data from respondent barangays, physical abuse of women is the most common case of domestic VAW with 87 reported cases. Other reported cases include psychological abuse (7 cases), threatening (12 cases), abandonment of children (15 cases), child support issues (21 cases), child custody (6 cases), and economic abuse (10 cases).

Based on the interviews conducted, cases of domestic violence against women in the barangays happened because of the following reasons:

1. Perpetrator's dependence on illegal drugs;
2. Jealousy and the presence of third party in their relationship;
3. Perpetrator's influence of alcohol;
4. Perpetrator's unemployment and;
5. Provocation of the intimate partner (i.e., nagging of the female)

Research points to many causes of domestic violence, but all of these causes and risk factors 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 in which the person was reared. For instance, a child's exposure to their father's abuse of their 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 a norm.

According to the gathered data from respondent barangays, the researchers found out that all respondent barangays had established a VAW desk. This is in compliance with the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Magna Carta of Women, which provides the establishment of a VAW desk in every barangay to ensure that violence against women cases is fully addressed in a gender-responsive manner.

In one of the evaluated barangays, the officer of the day concurrently acts as the VAW desk officer. According to Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2010-1 entitled "Guidelines in the Establishment of a Violence against Women (VAW) Desk in Every Barangay," the barangay captain shall designate a VAW desk person who is trained in gender-sensitive handling of cases, preferably a women barangay councilor or woman barangay public safety officers. In cases where there are no trained personnel, ensure that the person assigned shall undergo basic gender sensitivity training and orientation on anti-VAW laws.

It was also observed that some barangays have separate room for investigation of cases of VAW while some make use of the Barangay Captain's office as a venue to conduct investigations. Some barangay halls have dedicated rooms which can be used as counselling room and shelter for victim-survivors when necessary.

Certain problems and challenges regarding implementation of VAW policies and services of barangay were observed during the conduct of this study. Gender sensitivity training (GST) and orientation on Republic Act 9262 were conducted particularly to barangay officials and staff only. Information dissemination is very limited as observed that most of the respondent barangay do not conduct similar training for their constituents. It is also noticed that some barangay staff like barangay health workers and barangay public safety officers, especially those who are newly appointed/hired and members of the sitio neighborhood associations (SNO) have no awareness on the VAW-related laws and issues. There are also limited informative materials used to campaign elimination of VAW in the barangay while some barangay has no available materials for this concern. Although there is an existing VAW Desk Officer in all the respondent barangay, some staff like barangay public safety officers are not fully aware on the procedures and protocols in handling cases of VAW. Based on available barangay documents, it was also observed that some barangays have no existing or updated action plan regarding VAW. While the barangay development/strategic plans exist and budget and procurement plans allocate provision for health, livelihood, recreation and sports development, these plans do not clearly emphasize services as intended for the elimination of VAW in the barangay. These constraints, according to the respondent barangays, are attributed to limited assistance provided by the local government unit. There are also limited partnerships and collaboration of

the barangays with the non-government organization (NGOs) and private institutions to campaign the elimination of violence against women in the barangay level.

The table below presents the proposed action plan to enhance the VAW services of the barangays.

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Strategies/ Activities</b>	<b>Expected Output</b>	<b>Persons/ Agencies Involved</b>
To disseminate information on VAW and provide orientation on VAW services provided by LGUs/ barangays based on R.A. 9262	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct seminar/ training in the community/ barangays about R.A. 9262</li> <li>• Conduct Gender Sensitivity Trainings for community members</li> <li>• Produce leaflets, flyers, newsletters, guide manuals, primer, posters and other printed and electronic information materials on VAW</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Sensitive, Trained/ Oriented barangay officials and staff and community members about R.A. 9262</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barangay Officials and staff</li> <li>• Community members</li> <li>• Academic Institutions</li> <li>• MSWD Official and Staff</li> <li>• Local Police Unit/ Barangay Public Safety Officers</li> </ul>
To enhance and update knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) of VAW Desk Officers and other barangay officials in handling cases of violence against women and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct Gender Sensitivity Training for Barangay Officials and Staff</li> <li>• Re-orientation on R.A. 9262 for Barangay Officials and Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender Sensitive, Trained/ Oriented barangay officials and staff and community members about R.A. 9262</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barangay Officials and staff</li> <li>• Academic Institutions</li> <li>• MSWD Official and Staff</li> <li>• Local Police Unit/ Barangay Public Safety Officers</li> </ul>
To provide legal aid, consultation and other services to ensure justice and speed resolve of matter on violence against women and children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct free legal assistance and consultation about VAW among community members, victims and survivors of VAW</li> <li>• Re-orientation on R.A. 9262 for Barangay</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trained/ Re-Oriented barangay officials and staff and community members about R.A. 9262 focused on the legal aspect and procedures/ protocols in handling VAW cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representatives from Public Attorney's Office</li> <li>• Barangay Officials and staff</li> <li>• Community members</li> <li>• Academic Institutions</li> <li>• MSWD Official and Staff</li> </ul>

	Officials and Staff focusing on legal aspect and procedures/ protocols in handling VAW cases		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Police Unit/ Barangay Public Safety Officers</li> </ul>
To ensure the health and well-being of victims and survivors of VAW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct free medical assistance in the community/ barangay</li> <li>Provide free psychological consultation/ assistance and counselling</li> <li>Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of health condition of victims and survivors of VAW</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physically fit, mentally and psychologically sound/stable community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipal Health Officer and Staff</li> <li>Barangay Officials and staff</li> <li>Community members</li> <li>Academic Institutions</li> <li>MSWD Official and Staff</li> <li>Local Police Unit/ Barangay Public Safety Officers</li> </ul>
To alleviate poverty and provide assistance toward economic independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct Livelihood and skills training among community members</li> <li>Introduce community members to possible institutions for livelihood funding and financial assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financially and economically independent community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipal Livelihood Office</li> <li>Barangay Officials and staff</li> <li>Community members</li> <li>Academic Institutions</li> <li>MSWD Official and Staff</li> <li>Local Police Unit/ Barangay Public Safety Officers</li> <li>Livelihood Funding Institution</li> </ul>
To facilitate professional and social reintegration of victims and survivors of VAW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct seminar on responsible intimate relationship and parenthood</li> <li>Observe the annual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible intimate partners</li> <li>Responsible parents</li> <li>Socially adjusted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barangay Officials and staff</li> <li>Community members</li> <li>Academic Institutions</li> <li>MSWD Official and Staff</li> </ul>

	celebration of Women's Month and Campaign Against VAW		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Police Unit/ Barangay Public Safety Officers</li> </ul>
To ensure sustainable administration of R.A. 9262	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct Annual GAD Strategic Planning and Budgeting for Barangay Officials and Staff</li> <li>Inclusion of GAD supplies, materials, equipment and facilities in the annual procurement of barangay</li> <li>Prioritization of purchase of GAD supplies, materials, equipment and construction of facilities to address VAW issues</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Municipal Budget Office</li> <li>Barangay Officials and staff</li> </ul>

The above stated action plan aims to enhance VAW services in the barangay. The proposed action plan focused on key points in the elimination of VAW in the grassroots. It includes information dissemination, knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) on VAW, legal services, health care services, poverty alleviation and economic independence, social reintegration of VAW victims and survivors, and sustainable administration of anti-VAW laws in the barangay level. Various strategies and activities for each objective was presented to serve as guide for anti-VAW implementers. Concerned agencies and individuals were identified for each strategy in order to distribute tasks, responsibilities and extent of participation. Expected output/ outcome for every strategy is also ascertained to provide future direction and attainment of the objectives.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In light of the foregoing findings, the researchers arrived on the following conclusions:

1. Physical abuse is the most common recorded case of domestic violence against women. Other reported cases include psychological abuse, threatening, abandonment of children, child support issues, child custody, and economic abuse.
2. Cases of domestic violence against women in the barangays happened because of perpetrator's dependence on illegal drugs, jealousy and the presence of third party in their relationship, perpetrator's influence of alcohol, anger and provocation of the intimate partner.
3. Barangay respondents provide services in addressing VAW in compliance with the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Magna Carta of Women and R.A. 9262. This includes establishment of a VAW desk, designating a VAW desk person among barangay officials and staff and dedicating a separate room for investigation of cases of VAW and for counselling purposes.

4. Certain problems and challenges regarding implementation of VAW policies in barangay were observed during the conduct of this study. Some of these constraints include lack of trainings and information regarding R.A 9262, Magna Carta for Women and gender-related mandates, limited informative materials used to campaign elimination of VAW in the barangay, no existing or updated action plan regarding VAW, limited allocation and assistance provided by the local government unit and limited partnerships and collaboration of the barangays with the non-government organization (NGOs) and private institutions to campaign the elimination of violence against women in the barangay level.
5. The proposed action plan focused on key points in the elimination of VAW in the grassroots. It includes information dissemination, knowledge, skills and attitude (KSA) on VAW, legal services, health care services, poverty alleviation and economic independence, social reintegration of VAW victims and survivors, and sustainable administration of anti-VAW laws in the barangay level.

Committed towards strict implementation of the provisions of Republic Act 9262 and the Magna Carta for Women, it is suggested that the local government unit of Santa Cruz, Laguna, through its Municipal Gender and Development Unit, may conduct review and enhancement of the existing anti-VAW action plans for its constituent barangays. The said review is suggested to be conducted with collective and inclusive participation of different stakeholders in the municipality. Since the proposed action plan presents significant key points to end VAW in the barangay level, the researchers suggest its presentation to the Municipal Gender and Development Unit for possible review and adoption. Partnerships, linkages and networking with NGO's, other LGU's, academe, clergy, civil society, private institutions and other national government agencies for capacity enhancement and development are very much needed in the campaign to eliminate VAW. It is then recommended that public-private partnerships and collaboration be established to intensify implementation of VAW-related laws geared toward developing sustainable gender-responsive communities.

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