CONDITION AND CAPABILITY OF VILLAGE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW) DESK

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Abstract - Violence Against Women (VAW) is a persistent social concern. In response, laws were enacted which mandate the creation of Barangay (village) VAW Desk. However, despite the mandate, several barangays have not yet set-up a facility or room to cater the needs and provide services for VAW victims. Through descriptive-survey method, the study aimed to assess the condition of village VAW Desks and the capability of VAW officers. The study involved 59 barangays and 59 VAW Desk Officers in Baguio City, Philippines. Findings showed that all barangays have established a VAW Desk and have appointed a VAW officer, however, not entirely observes the prescribed environment, furniture, equipment, monitoring tools, references and promotional materials, supplies, personal amenities, and transportation utilities under Barangay VAW Desk Handbook. Nonetheless, the level of awareness of VAW officers on VAW Desk function and on the protocol in handling VAW cases reported by the victims themselves and as reported by a community member is Fully Aware. Barangay is the nearest and the most accessible unit that can provide immediate action and services for victims of VAW. Thus, each barangay must enhance its preventive and response mechanism through calibration of the different Village VAW Desks.

Keywords - Violence Against Women, VAW Desk

I. INTRODUCTION

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a persistent social concern which is often overlooked, excused, or denied. To address the problem, United Nations has adopted the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The convention maintains several policies to ensure that State parties are binding in the goal of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women especially VAW. Provisions on support and services for victim-survivors of VAW are among the mandated measures. These services are easily provided through creation of facilities such as Gender desk or focal points. According to United Nations Population Fund, an ideal gender desk should have a separate room for survivors so that privacy is secured, a transportation means, a free telephone line, a camera and basic forensic equipment to collect evidence needed for prosecution and a secure record storage space (as cited by Ndungu, 2016). However, this ideal desk is far from realization. In fact, some countries have few or do not have facilities that are conducive for gender-based violence (GBV) clients or are gender blind (Global Network of Women's Shelters, 2011; Joshi, 2017; UN Women, 2018; Ndungu, 2016;). Furthermore, service providers from these facilities are insufficient and lacks thorough knowledge on the legal process and support services needed by victim-survivors (Krol, 2017) and that there is a quick rotation of focal persons which caused disruption in the implementation of programs and plans for VAW (Essayag, 2017). In the Philippines, the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act of 2004 or Republic Act (RA) 9262 and the Magna Carta of Women or RA 9710 were enacted to address VAW in the country. These laws mandated the creation of VAW Desk in every barangay (village). VAW Desk is a barangay-level facility which serves as a frontline service provider to victim-survivors of VAW and is managed by a VAW Desk Officer (Philippine Commission on Women, n.d.). Although 90% as of August 2018 have already established Barangay VAW Desks nationwide, still a remainder of 10% is yet to set-up (National Economic and Development Authority, 2019). The percentage still denotes thousands of barangays. Moreover, there are still VAW Desk that are not operational (Capistrano, 2017). Several research were conducted on VAW-related laws (Bermillo, 2017; Caparas & Amparado, 2012; Hadap, 2014;Junco, 2014), and experiences of victim-survivors (Bernarte, et al., 2018; De Dios, et al., 2009; Milo, 2010), however, actual conditions of VAW facilities and the capability of VAW Officers were not addressed. In connection with the mandate and gap in literature, the study aimed to assess the conditions of village VAW Desk and the level of knowledge of VAW officers on the functions and on the protocols in handling VAW cases. Findings of the study will improve the delivery of services for victim-survivors of VAW since the study will be an eye-opener on the important details on the establishment of VAW Desk.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

The descriptive-survey method was used to assess the condition of Violence Against Women Desks and capability of VAW Officers.

2.2. Population and Locale of the Study

VAW officers of the different barangays were the respondents of the study. Complete enumeration of

the 128 VAW Officers was done. Among them, only 59 Barangays and 59 VAW Officers voluntarily participated in the study. The study was conducted in Baguio City, Philippines.Baguio City is a chartered city located at the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Philippines. It was selected as the locale since it recorded the highest number of VAW cases in the region (See, 2018).

2.3. Research Instrument

Researcher-made questionnaire was used in data gathering. Items are based on the mandated set-up of VAW Desk prescribed under Barangay VAW Desk Handbook and the functions and protocol prescribed by Joint Memorandum Circular No. 2010-2or the Guidelines in the Establishment of a Violence Against Women (VAW) Desk in every Barangay. The questionnaire has two parts. The first part is a checklist that contains items that determined the condition of VAW Desk as to location and room;furniture and equipment;monitoring tools, references, and promotional materials; and supplies, personal amenities and transportation utilities. The second part is composed of 31 indicators and used 4-Point rating scale (See Table 1)in order to determine the level of awareness of the respondents on the VAW Desk function and on the Protocol in Handling VAW Cases. The instrument undergone validation and was pre-tested in another municipality outside the locale of the study. The result was subjected to Cronbach's Alpha and yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.915 which shows that the instrument is reliable.

2.4. Statistical Treatment

Quantitative data was tabulated and was analyzed using Percentage and Weighted Mean. The percentage was used to determine the number of barangays that possess the required items for VAW Desk. Weighted Mean, on the other hand, was used to determine the mean values of the level of awareness of VAW Officers on the functions and protocols in handling VAW cases.

Numerical Value	Statistical Limit	Descriptive Equivalent (DE)	Interpretation
1	3.26-4.00	Fully Aware	Fully knowledgeable, can apply to work and can share knowledge
2	2.6-3.25	Aware	Understands and can apply to work but not confident to share knowledge
3	1.76-2.5	Less Aware	Familiar but do not fullyunderstands
4	1.00-1.75	Not Aware	Never heard

Table 1. Four-Point Rating Scale

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Location and Room of VAW Desk

As gleaned in table 2, most of the indicators are above 75% which entails that most of the barangays conform with the required location and conditions of a VAW room. However, it is noticeable that indicators 'It is open for 24 hours.' and 'It has an alternative entrance and exit that is separate from the main entrance of the barangay hall.' are 52.5% and 32.2% respectively. This means that only half of the total barangays implement around the clock accommodation for VAW related casesand that few barangays have separate access to the VAW rooms. This implies that residents will have to seek help in other venues or have to wait for the next working day to seek help. Further, the privacymechanism is compromisedsince victims are noticeable upon entry to the barangayhall. This is not a situation in other countries since some have establishedfacilities that alreadyhave separate entrance and provide constantservices for women and is open for 24/7 (UN Women, 2011).

	Indicators	% N=59
1.	The VAW Desk is located within the barangay hall or near it.	100
2.	Its location is situated in a place where the confidentiality, privacy and safety of the client will not be compromised.	91.5
3.	It is open for 24 hours.	52.5
4.	It has a separate room where the intake interview can be conducted.	86.4
5.	It has an alternative entrance and exit that is separate from the main entrance of the barangay hall.	32.2
6.	The people inside could not be seen from the outside.	81.4
7.	It can be locked from the inside.	89.8
8.	It is well-ventilated, clean and orderly.	94.9

Table 2. Percentage of Barangays that Complies to Location and Condition of VAW Desk Room

Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that all the barangays have established their corresponding VAW Desk within or near the barangay hall. This means that VAW Desks in Baguio City are visibleto the residents and certainly accessible within the village.

3.2. Furniture and Equipment

Furniture and equipment are a must in a VAW room. As shown in table 3, only tables and chairs are 100%. Filing cabinet or storage area (89.8%), camera (84.7) and computer (76.3%) follows while sofa bed, folding bed, or mat (40.7%) and tape or voice recorder (45.8%) have the least percentage. This entails that all barangays already maintain tables and chairs while physical and digital file storage mechanism and camera for documentation purposes are almost available in all barangays. However, less than half of the barangays own bed materials and recording mechanism. The result entails that victims who need temporary shelter during nighttime will not be sleeping comfortably in some villages.

Absence of bed and bed capacity is certainly a serious problem in shelters or facilities for women (Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, 2017).

On the other hand, tape or voice recorder are not acquired by some villages. According to some of the VAW Officers, smart phones are used since it has built-in recording mechanisms.

Indicators	% N=59
1. It has table and chairs.	100.0
2. It has filing cabinet or storage area.	89.8
3. It has sofa bed, folding bed, or mat.	40.7
4. It has computer for logging in and monitoring VAW cases.	76.3
5. It has camera to be used in documenting cases of violence, especially in capturing physical proofs.	84.7
6. It has electric fan or air conditioning unit.	54.2
7. It has television.	55.9
8. It has tape or voice recorder.	45.8

Table 3. Percentage of Barangays that Complies to Furniture and Equipment in a VAW Room

3.3. Monitoring Tools, References and Promotional Materials

Materials for promotion, references, and monitoring are mandated in the VAW Desk Handbook. As presented in table 4, 'Logbooks' (98.3%), 'important forms' (88.13%), and 'VAW Desk Handbook' (86.4%) are the topped three materials. The result signifies that several barangays retain materials necessary for monitoring and references. It means that VAW Officers are provided with essential forms for keeping records and for responding to VAW cases. This means speedy assistance in securing protection orders and referrals for VAW victims in their village. On the other hand, IEC materials (52.53%)have the least percentage. This indicates that few barangays are engaged in information dissemination about VAW which contributes to the low awareness of the public on the issue and its legal parameters (Hadap, 2014).

Indicator	% N=59
1. It has important forms (VAW DocS, Intake Form, Referral Form, Feedback Form and BPO Application Form)	88.13
2. It has Logbooks.	98.3
3. It has Directory of Service Providers.	81.4
4. It has VAW Desk Handbook.	86.4
5. It has Communication and advocacy plan.	69.5
6. It has IEC materials (Anti-VAW posters, Banners, Leaflets and Brochures)	52.53
7. It has Flowchart on anti-VAW services.	71.2
8. It has Flowchart on how to apply for a BPO.	71.2
9. It has a simple chart showing a summary of VAW cases in the barangay as well as the number of cases that the Barangay VAW Desk had attended to.	59.3

Table 4. Percentage of Barangays that Complies to Monitoring Tools, References and Promotional Materials

3.4. Supplies, Personal Amenities and Transportation Utilities

Of the enumerated items under table 5, power source (89.8%), clean water supply (86.4%), and first aid kit (79.7) are the items that are beyond 75%. The figures are decent as it means that almost barangays maintain the said items. However, the figure also implies that there are still barangays which fail to sustain a 24/7

power and water supply and an emergency medical kit. Victims need immediate medical assistance particularly when the cases are physical violence. Thus, the findings indicate that some villages cannot provide immediate first aid measures and that victims who are far from the central business district must travel more distance (Edwards, 2015). In this instance, it is more troublesome since 'vehicle' (52.5%)got the lowest percentage. This suggests thatthere are barangays that relies on public transportation which entails longer waiting hours. In fact, one of the VAW Officers stated that they have to wait for a taxicab in order to transport one victim to the hospital. Also, the said village that possess transportation rely on the private vehicles of their respective village officials.

	Indicators	% N=59
1.	It has basic materials needed for evidence collection and preservation.	69.5
2.	It has clean water supply available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.	86.4
3.	It has first aid kit.	79.7
4.	It has food for the immediate need of the victim-survivor.	61.0
5.	There are clothing and beddings	60.15
6.	It has toiletries.	62.53
7.	It has vehicle that can be used during cases of emergency.	52.5
8.	It has a power source available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.	89.8

Table 5. Percentage of Barangays that Complies to Supplies, Personal Amenities and Transportation Utilities

3.5. Level of Awareness of VAW Officers on VAW Desk Functions

VAW Desk functions are the enumerated indicators under table 6. As shown in the table, the level of awareness of Barangay VAW Officers on VAW Desk functions is Fully Aware with a GWM of 3.6. The result denotes those personnel assigned in the VAW Desk fully understands the functions of the facility, thus, confidently capable of performing the important tasks. Moreover, 'Keep VAW case records confidential and secured.', 'Ensure that onlyauthorized personnel can access VAW case records.', and 'Assist victims of VAW in securing Barangay Protection Order (BPO).' are the items with the highest and have the same Weighted Mean (WM) of 3.7 descriptively interpreted as Fully Aware. These indicates that VAW Desk Officers are highly knowledgeable on the nature of confidentiality of VAW cases and are readily willing to protect victim-survivors through the protection orders. This is not the case though in some countries since protective measures for women suffering abused are not enforce or unavailable (Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, 2017).

	Indicators	WM	DE
1.	Respond to gender-based violence cases brought to the barangay.	3.6	FA
2.	Record the number of gender-based violence handled by the barangay.	3.5	FA
3.	Submit a quarterly report on all cases of VAW to the DILG City Field Office.	3.6	FA
4.	Submit a quarterly report on all cases of VAW to the City Social Welfare Development Office (CSWDO).	3.6	FA
5.	Keep VAW case records confidential and secured.	3.7	FA
6.	Ensure that only authorized personnel can access VAW case records.	3.7	FA
7.	Assist victims of VAW in securing Barangay Protection Order (BPO).	3.7	FA
8.	Assist victims of VAW access necessary services.	3.6	FA
9.	Develop the barangay's gender-responsive plan in addressing gender-based violence, including support services, capacity building, and referral system.	3.4	FA
10.	Coordinate with and refer cases to government agencies, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), institutions, and other service providers as necessary.	3.5	FA
11.	Address other forms of abuse committed against women, senior citizens, women with disabilities, and marginalized groups.	3.5	FA
12.	Lead advocacies on the elimination of VAW in the community	3.5	FA
13.	Perform other related functions as may be assigned	3.5	FA
	GENERAL WEIGHTED MEAN	3.6	FA

Table 6. Level of Awareness of VAW Officer on VAW Desk Functions

Of the functions, only 'Develop the barangay's gender-responsive plan in addressing gender-based violence, including support services, capacity building, and referral system.' got a WM of 3.4. Although described as Fully Aware, this function is the lowest which means that Officers has lesser certainty on the said functions. Nonetheless, this function requires close coordination and inputs from different officials and agencies concern with VAW. The Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children (IACVAWC) is the council created to develop comprehensive programs for victim-survivors (PCW, n.d.)

3.6. Protocol for the Initial Contact on reporting or accompanied VAW victim-survivor

The procedures when a VAW victim-survivor reports or is accompanied in reporting to the barangay are the items enumerated under table 7. The same table also shows the level of awareness of Barangay VAW officers on the said procedures.

Barangay VAW Desk Officers in Baguio City are Fully Aware of the protocol for the initial contact on reporting or accompanied VAW victim-survivor as indicated by the GWM of 3.5. VAW Officers are entirely knowledgeable in handling VAW situations and can secure the immediate needs and protection for victim-survivors. As reflected in the table, indicators 'Making the victim-survivor (and children, if applicable) comfortable in a safe and private room.', 'Assessing the situation by getting initial information to determine the risks on hand.', 'Facilitating referral to the nearest medical facility if immediate medical attention is needed.', 'Conducting an investigation by the Punong Barangay/Kagawad in a gender sensitive, non-judgmental manner and in a language understood after the victim-survivor has stabilized.', and 'Assisting the victim-survivor to file application if she decides to have a BPO.' have the highest and the same weighted value of 3.6. This invalidates a news article stating that GAD focal persons are not knowledgeable on how to properly handle VAWC-related cases (rbvillar, 2014).

Conversely, the indicator that got the lowest value is 'Not applying mediation, settlement, conciliation, arbitration to cases of VAWC'. The weighted mean 3.3 is nearly Aware. Still, VAW officers understands that any attempt to influence the victim to give up her legal action or application for protection orders is prohibited. This is clearly stated under the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA 9262 wherein a corresponding administrative liability is provided for failure of compliance. However, in distant areas where there is no Social Welfare and Development Office, cases are left to be settled using the traditional justice system (Catajan, 2016). The said traditional system is a peace process whichembodies the concept of Restorative Justice. Similarly in other countries, several service providersoffer mediationwith the aim of restoring family relationships (Krol, 2017) and prefer to resolve such cases through payment of compensation("Women's and Girls' Rights", 2017).

INDICATORS	WM	DE
1. Making the victim-survivor (and children, if applicable) comfortable in a safe and private room.	3.6	FA
2. Giving the victim-survivor water and other immediate needs.	3.5	FA
3. Assessing the situation by getting initial information to determine the risks on hand.	3.6	FA
4. Facilitating referral to the nearest medical facility if immediate medical attention is needed.	3.6	FA
5. Conducting an investigation by the Punong Barangay/Kagawad in a gender sensitive, non-judgmental manner and in a language understood after the victim-survivor has stabilized.	3.6	FA
6. Informing the victim-survivor of her rights the remedies available and the processes involved particularly in relation to the BPO.	3.5	FA
7. Assisting the victim-survivor to file application if she decides to have a BPO.	3.6	FA
8. Recording the incident using the National VAW Documentation System barangay form.	3.5	FA
9. Assisting the victim-survivor in getting her belongings if she desires to be in a safe shelter.	3.5	FA
10. Referring the victim-survivor to a shelter/women's center or to the CSWDO if she desires to be in a safe shelter.	3.5	FA
11. Assisting the victim-survivor to file for a temporary protection order (TPO) or permanent protection order (PPO).	3.5	FA
12. Reporting the incident within four hours to the PNP and the CSWDO.	3.5	FA
13. Not applying mediation, settlement, conciliation, arbitration to cases of VAWC	3.3	FA
GWM	3.5	FA

Table 7. Protocol for the Initial Contact on reporting or accompanied VAW victim-survivor

3.7. Initial Contact to Victim-Survivor of VAWC reported by a Community Member

Protocols in dealing with situation where the complainant is a concern citizen are the items enumerated under table 8. As gleaned from the table, the general weighted value is 3.5 which is described as Fully Aware. This result denotes that VAW Officers are highly knowledgeable of the procedures in handling VAW cases reported by a community member. VAW Officers are the focal person in-charge of entertaining VAW-related cases irrespective of who is the complainant since Violence Against Women is considered as a public crime. Moreover, 'Verifying the information.' and 'Facilitating the rescue of the victim-survivor when necessary to ensure her safety, and when applicable the safety of her children.' are the indicators with similar and with highest value. Indeed, since the case is not reported by the victim herself, confirmation and rescue are a must. The full awareness of VAW Officers on matters of handling VAW cases reported by others can be attributed to the fact that they have been acting as VAW Officers for the previous term. According to Memo Circular 2018-144issued by the Department of the Interior and Local Government, appointed VAW focal persons are encouraged to be retain since they have been provided with trainings and have gained skills, knowledge, and experiences in handling VAW cases.

Indicators	WM	DE
1. Verifying the information.	3.6	FA
2. Seeking assistance from the PNP if needed.	3.5	FA
3. Assessing the situation.	3.5	FA
4. Facilitating the rescue of the victim-survivor when necessary to ensure her safety, and when applicable the safety of her children.	3.6	FA
5. Informing the victim-survivor about her rights, and remedies available particularly the BPO and its processes	3.5	FA
6. Assisting the victim-survivor to apply for a BPO if she so desires.	3.5	FA
7. Referring victim-survivor for medical care, and temporary shelter and other needs when needed based on the assessment done;	3.5	FA
8. Recording the incident using the National VAW Documentation System barangay form.	3.5	FA
9. Reporting the incident within four hours to the PNP and the CSWDO if not done earlier.	3.5	FA
10. Assisting the victim-survivor for rape, trafficking in persons and other cases which do not fall under the jurisdiction of the barangay to file a complaint at the PNP Women and Children Protection Center or the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).	3.5	FA
GWM	3.5	FA

Table 8. Initial Contact to victim-survivor of VAWC reported by a community member.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The condition of VAW Desk in the city is far from ideal. The local government must improve the delivery of services for VAW victim-survivors by ensuring around the clock accommodation and establish a helpline purposively for VAW-related cases. Also, implement retention policy for VAW Officers who have been actively engage in VAW advocacies and responses. Barangay is the nearest and the most accessible unit that can provide immediate action and services for victims of VAW. Thus, each barangay must enhance its preventive and response mechanism through calibration of the different Village VAW Desks.

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