Combating Electronic Violence Against Women in the Philippines

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For the past two decades, the rise of ICTs has generated new forms of violence. Such violence happens online or via mobile phones, and women are the first victims. According to UN Women, nearly 75 percent of female Internet users worldwide have been exposed to online threats and harassment.

The Philippines are no exception. Electronic violence against women or eVAW is on the rise, and more and more suffer from it. In Manila, 70% of the complaints about online or mobile abuse come from women.

Definition of eVAW

eVAW refers to any violence against women perpetrated using ICTs. Such violence often causes a lasting mental, emotional or psychological distress.

There are several forms of eVAW:

— **Electronic Harassment:** This is the most common form of eVAW in the Philippines. Most of the time the harassment comes from a former partner who wants to take revenge. It can also come from strangers willing to exert control over their female victim. They send threats or communications with sexual undertones. Or they publish false accusations through blogs, online forums, or via mobile phones.

— **Cyber Stalking:** ICTs have made stalking much easier and more prevalent than before. In the Philippines, this is the second most widespread form of eVAW. [Tracking someone's phone has become quite easy](#) (even without their permission). On a smart phone, it requires an installation of a tracking app, which can be done in five minutes. Even if the person owns a regular cell phone, it is still possible to install a tracker. This puts some women in a precarious situation.

— **Unauthorized Distribution of Videos and Images:** Sex videos and images have been proliferating online. With a smart phone, it is very easy for a man to record intimacy unbeknown to his partner. It is even easier to post these records online to harass, humiliate or bribe a woman. This does not happen to celebrities only.

— **Cyber Pornography and Prostitution:** The Philippines are sometimes considered as a "cyber sex hub." About [25 percent of the population](#) lives below the poverty line. It is no surprise that prostitution is flourishing. In 2013, there were about [500,000 prostitutes](#), mostly women. Some are now forced to engage in cyber sex or pornography in exchange for money. The situation is aggravated by the craze for pornography among Filipinos. [The country places 15th](#) in adult website Pornhub's global traffic on mobile devices. And it ranks 26th when it comes to watching it using a computer.

Laws Aren't Everything

The [Foundation for Media Alternatives](#) is a key player in the battle against eVAW.

Founded in 1987, FMA is a well-established Filipino nongovernment organization. Its goal is to empower the Philippines' civil society through the media. In the 2000's, it contributed to opening the access to the Internet. In particular, it developed a free email service for NGOs.

In 2009 FMA decided to commit against the rising eVAW issue in the Philippines by becoming involved in the global initiative "[Take Back the Tech! To End Violence Against Women](#)." At the time, there was a pressing need for more adapted laws. The Philippines were already considering violence against women as a crime, but electronic violence was not targeted as such.

Furthermore, more awareness was required. The victims often had no idea how to deal with these offenses. "Laws […] do not always prove to be effective deterrents in the commission of crimes, explained [Lisa Garcia](#) from FMA. The anonymity that the Internet provides emboldens malicious citizens to commit damaging acts without fear of discovery in spite of laws. This means more advocacy and education are needed to address issues of violence and rights abuses through technology."

Taking Action Against eVAW

That is why FAM's first priority was to [raise awareness about eVAW](#). It targeted the general public by featuring programs on the radio and television. It also reached representatives of public, academic and civil organizations. In total, FMA has trained more than 1,000 people.

In 2013, FAM took its struggle against eVAW one step further. It reinforced its advocacy action by launching the [eVAW Mapping Project](#). This [Ushahidi-based tool](#) aims to collect accurate eVAW data. Women report incidents by SMS or emails, and the software aggregates them into a map. FMA then conducts a trend analysis and data visualization. It eventually shares this data with the authorities and policy makers.

Safer Electronic Spaces for Women

Since 2009, FMA has managed to take the struggle against eVAW in the Philippines one step further. Today, eVAW is recognized as a form of cybercrime and more women are aware of their rights and able to report this violence.

Look more here:

https://aboutphilippines.ph/media.html - https://aboutphilippines.ph/humanrights.html