

**Protecting Women and Children:  
A Handbook on Community Based Response to Violence\***  
*Maria Leny E. Felix; Regina Dela Paz-Ingente*  
*Center for Reproductive Health, Leadership and Development, Inc.*  
E-mail: [lenyf@pacific.net.ph](mailto:lenyf@pacific.net.ph), [r\\_ingente@skynet.net](mailto:r_ingente@skynet.net)

## **PART I: Looking Through the Context of Violence**

### **What is violence against women and children?**

At first Manolo that violence is only committed when you beat or hit a woman or a child. "I have never punched or kick my wife," he said, "but yes I frequently scolded her and my children in front of other people, and I thought there was nothing wrong with that. It was only after attending a gender-sensitivity orientation that I realized I was psychologically abusing my wife and children."

Our sharing sessions with the community women in Davao City and Sorsogon also illustrate this outlook. Luz, a 45-year old health worker related that in their community, women are expected to be submissive to men. "It has been a practice to serve the men families," and being yelled at and cursed by your husband is considered normal. I used to regard violence against women as purely physical or someone who got beaten up or *nabugbog*."

Many people share the same perception. They equate violence solely with the physical aspect. But as Manolo, Luz and other women discovered, what constitutes violence against women and children includes harmful physical, sexual and psychological acts causing immediate and long-term injuries on their health and well-being.

To understand the meaning and dimensions of violence against woman and children, let us consider some definitions and perspectives on the concept.

### ***Violence against women***

The United Nations *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* in 1993 defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life."<sup>1</sup>

\*An excerpt from Part I of the handbook "Protecting Women and Children: A Handbook on Community Based Response to Violence"

---

<sup>1</sup> The definition and key concepts of gender-based violence were taken from Children's *Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls* by the UNICEF Innocenti Digest, p.6 and the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, General Assembly Resolution on December 1993.

In the 1995 Philippine Plan for gender-Responsive Development, “all forms of violence inflicted on women on account of their gender” are considered violence against women Because “they constitute violation of a woman’s personhood, mental and physical integrity or freedom of movement.”<sup>2</sup>

Gender-based violence against women encompasses:

- Spousal battering
- Sexual abuse of female children
- Dowry-related violence
- Rape, including marital rape
- Female genital mutilation
- Nonspousal violence
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in school
- Trafficking of women
- Forced prostitution
- Rape in war

Note the emphasis on the word gender, which means that women are the main victims of violence while most perpetrators are men. Because they are female, have lower status and with less power in the society than men, women are easy targets of violent acts.

Here are the forms of violence against women:<sup>3</sup>

*Domestic violence* occurs within the family, and this includes wife beating, marital rape, child abuse, incest, sibling, sibling violence, abuse of elderly and disabled relatives, abuse by in-laws, and abuse of female household help;

*Institutional violence* is deemed perpetrated by the State when there is neglect of basic social services, political discrimination, sexual abuse in institutions, political violence in which rape and sexual abuse are used to suppress dissent, legal violence found in anti-women legislation, and violence suffered by women due to political conflicts;

*Occupational discrimination* is manifested through sexual harassment, gender-biased employment practices and gender harassment, which is marked by “hateful, aggressive, and demeaning behavior expressed toward someone on the basis of that person’s gender”;<sup>4</sup>

*Violence in media* takes place when women are portrayed as sex objects; and

---

<sup>2</sup> Based on the work of Ermii Amor T. Figueroa Yap (1998), *The Economic Costs of Violence Against Women*, p.1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Taken from Peter Rutter (1996), *Sex, power and boundaries, Understanding and Preventing Sexual Harrasment*.

*Public sexual abuse* pertains to prostitution (including child prostitution), sex trafficking and the sale of women for marriage.

### Domestic violence

In Many communities, the most pervasive form of violence is domestic or partner abuse. Many women often experience battering from their husbands, live-in partners or boyfriends. When someone “is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical, sexual or psychological behavior by her partner in order to coerce her to do something he wants without concern for her rights,” she is considered a battered woman.<sup>5</sup> Although there are some women who also abuse their partners or exhibit violent behavior, majority of domestic violence-related cases are committed by men.

What are the common scenarios in abusive relationships? Let us take a quick look at the stories of several women based on our focus group discussion with some midwives from Butuan City, Agusan del Norte:

“My neighbor’s husband is a drunkard. Whenever he goes home drunk, he would quarrel and beat his wife which makes their children very upset and scared. He would call her stupid, ugly and crazy. Eventually, she thought she was really worthless and useless.”

Norma revealed that this is not an isolated case in their neighborhood. She cited the story of another woman who nearly lost her life and property when her husband poured gasoline outside their house to set it on fire. Luckily, the people in the neighborhood responded to the woman’s call for help.

One of the women whose husband is also a drunkard spoke from experience on how it is to be a victim of domestic violence and to constantly live in fear. “*Agwantahon kapalaran mo. Magampo ka, magnovena ka* (Endure it because it is your fate. Pray, pray and ask the Lord’s help), this is what my family and friends would tell me whenever I ask their advice.”

From these accounts we understand that women could experience either one or all of these forms of domestic violence:<sup>6</sup>

*Physical abuse* where there is a pattern of physical assault and threats used to control the woman. It includes punching, hitting, choking, biting, and throwing objects at her, kicking and pushing and using a weapon such as a gun or a knife. Physical abuse usually escalates over time and may end in the woman’s death.

---

<sup>5</sup> Quoted from Rachele Layda, (2002), *Girlfriend Battering Gender in Violence its Socio-Cultural Dimensions*, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> Draws much of the ideas from Population Reports (1997), *Ending Violence Against Women*, and Chapter 18 on *Violence Against Women of Where Women Have No Doctor* (1997), pp.312-325.

*Sexual abuse* or the control of the woman sexually. This can include demands for sex using coercion or the performance of certain sexual acts, forcing her to have sex with other people, treating her in sexually derogatory manner and/or insisting on unsafe sex.

*Emotional abuse* of the undermining of the woman's self-worth because she is subjected to continued mistreatment through verbal abuse. It can include criticisms, threats, insults, belittling comments and manipulation on the part of the batterer.

Psychological abuse which is the use of various tactics to isolate and undermine a partner's self-esteem causing her to be more dependent on and frightened of the batterer. It can include such acts as:

- Refusing to allow the woman to work outside the home
- Withholding money or access to money
- Isolating her from her family and friends
- Threatening to harm people and the things she love
- Constantly checking up on her

### ***Child abuse***

“My 12 year old sister died of brain injuries and internal hemorrhage. She was badly beaten by my father when she told him that we had no food because our mother was not home yet. This enraged him, so he hit her on the different parts of her body causing severe injuries. She tried to attend school the day after the beating but had to be rushed to the hospital where her injuries later proved fatal. I was only 10 years old at that time.

When my sister died, my mother filed a case against my father and I was the witness. Our neighbors told me not to testify because he was still my father. My father's relatives also asked me to be loyal to him because I could not change the situation anymore...my sister was already dead. But I was the only one who saw what he did to her...

I love my father but my sister died because of him. I told the court how he beat her, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment. I still think about him, and sometimes I want to visit him in jail.”

-Guia's Story<sup>7</sup>

The story of Guia's sister is just one of the numerous cases of child abuse in our country. Everyday, we hear heartbreaking accounts of children who were maimed or killed because of violence inflicted on them. They are either beaten by their relatives, molested or raped by strangers or persons known to them, prostituted, and exploited in the workplace.

In section 3, Article I of Republic Act No. 7610 we note that “children refers to persons below eighteen (18) years of age or those over but are unable to fully take care of

---

<sup>7</sup> From an interview with a child victim-survivor of domestic violence in Davao City.

themselves or protect themselves from abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation or discrimination because of a physical or mental disability or condition.”<sup>8</sup>

What do we mean by child abuse? It refers to the maltreatment of the child, whether habitual or not. When someone is doing or has done any of the following, then child abuse has been committed:<sup>9</sup>

- Psychological and physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment;
- Any act by deeds or words which debases, degrades or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being;
- Unreasonable deprivation of his basic needs for survival such as food and shelter; or
- Failure to immediately give medical treatment to an injured child resulting in serious impairment of his growth and development or in his permanent incapacity or death.
- 

Jenina’s story illustrates how a child has been physically, sexually, and psychologically abused:<sup>10</sup>

I was adopted by my paternal aunt and uncle when I was orphaned at five years old. By the time I was seven, my uncle started telling me I owed him and my aunt my life. He also started touching me in ways that made me feel bad and dirty. I hated it when he touched me accidentally in my private parts. The accidental touches increased as I approached puberty.

One evening he entered my room and told me to keep quiet. Then he raped me. He kept saying he saved me from a life without parents. My body hurt all over, and I wanted to shout that had I had a choice when I was a year old, I would have chosen the life of an orphan over the life he had given me.

I cannot remember how often he raped me. What I do remember was getting pregnant the first time at age fourteen and being brought by my aunt to an office where my urine was tested positive for pregnancy. A man in a white gown crushed several white tablets and made me drink it with orange juice. Soon afterwards, I had cramps in my abdomen, bled a lot, and then passed out.

Little did I realize I had an abortion. I told my aunt that my uncle had raped me. She got very angry, and said I was ungrateful and that I was inventing things. She said she would send me away if I told anyone about what I had told her.

I told my Sunday School teacher who believed me and gave me the strength to file a cases against my uncle. Unfortunately, our relatives forced me to

---

<sup>8</sup> As provided for in the Department of Justice's Special Committee for Children, Republic Act No. 7610, as amended "Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act" Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 7610, as amended.

<sup>9</sup> From the paper of Lourdes Balanon, Bureau of Child and Youth Welfare of the Department of Social Welfare and Development on *Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer*, presented during the National Conference on Child Abuse, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> From an interview with Jenina (not her real name) a victim-survivor in Davao City.

withdraw the case after my uncle promised it would never happen again. I withdrew my complaint and returned home. People who had helped me and sheltered me got very angry and said they would not help me again. What could I do, I had no other family.

I went back home where in the course of five more years, I became pregnant three more times. Three more times, my aunt brought me to the same place where I was made to take the same white tablets with the same orange drink. How I hate orange juice and men in white gowns!

I finally did file the case against my uncle a year ago. He is now in jail. What kept me strong? It was knowing people I love believe I was telling the truth. Since then some of them have disclosed that they too have been raped but have not told anyone about it.

They tell me that should I win my case against my uncle, then they would have also won. I am happy to have friends. I have to be strong because one day I will become a doctor and take care of abused children too. I am happy with this thought.

As exemplified in the story of Jenina, the main forms of abuse inflicted against children within or outside their homes include:<sup>11</sup>

*Physical abuse* or child battering which is any act resulting in non-accidental and/or unreasonable infliction of physical injury to a child such as lacerations, fractures, strangulation, human bites and similar acts.

*Psychological abuse* or harming the child's emotional or intellectual functioning through verbal assaults which includes but is not limited to cursing, belittling, rejecting and other similar acts. These can be:

- rejection and isolation by constantly criticizing children, scolding them unreasonably, teasing or treating them coldly or depriving them of a normal social life by locking them up at home;
- threats through the use of threatening words or severe punishment, making them afraid, uneasy and insecure; and
- deception by giving them incorrect ideas and concepts that deprive them of proper learning, which may lead to inclination to solve problems through violence, promiscuity or drug abuse.

Sexual abuse or the employment, use, persuasion, enticement, or coercion of a child to engage in, or assist another person to engage in, sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct or the molestation, prostitution, or incest with children.

Sexual abuse can involve fondling, masturbation, oral, vaginal or anal contact. It is not necessary for sexual intercourse to occur for it to be considered

---

<sup>11</sup> *Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer*, presented by Lourdes Balanon, Bureau of Child and Youth Welfare of the Department of Social Welfare and Development during the National Conference on Child Abuse, pp.4-5.

sexual abuse. Sexual abuse is also the use of a child for prostitution, pornography and exhibitionism.

Incest, sexual abuse occurring within the family, although most often perpetrated by the father, stepfather, grandfather, uncle, brother or other male in a position of family trust, may also come from female relatives...Incest takes on the added psychological dimension of betrayal by a family member who is supposed to care for and protect the child.

-WHO 1997

Besides these three main forms, children encounter other types of abuse, which destroys them and threatens the social fabric of our society. When parents, guardians and custodians neglect a child or unreasonably deprive her/his basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, education, medical, general care and supervision, there is child abuse.<sup>12</sup>

If we employ or permit children below 15 years of age to work in any public or private establishment without the guidance of their parents or guardians or employ minors as artists, actors, actresses, entertainers and the like without a work permit, then child labor is being practiced which is a form of child abuse.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, when a person engages in buying and selling a child for money or for any other consideration including barter, he/she is involved in child trafficking which is also child abuse.<sup>14</sup>

The story of Mic-mic and Shirley<sup>15</sup>

Mic-mic and Shirley are the third and the fourth of thirteen children from three different fathers. Born a year after another, they help their mother, now age 42, sell vegetables in the market.

They have known no home other than the marketplace. Neither of them nor their siblings finished gradeschool. They have worked in the market all their lives, selling plastic bags and spices, and washing vegetables sold by other vendors.

Until their mother started gambling and playing bingo, Mic-mic and Shirley used to give her all their income. But because no money was left for food or milk, they started keeping some of their income from their mother. This enraged her so much she started beating them up.

---

<sup>12</sup> Rules and Regulations on the Reporting and Investigation of Child Abuse Cases Department of Justice Special Committee for Children, Republic Act No. 7610, as amended "Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act" Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 7610, as amended, p23 and Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer, presented by Lourdes Balanon, Bureau of Child and Youth Welfare of the Department of Social Welfare and Development during the National Conference on Child Abuse, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Appropriate modifications were made on Tambayans's (1999) Case Study 1 on Mic-mic and Shirley, p.30.

"Why did she have all these children, only to leave them under our care?"

The beatings and neglect grew worse so that one day, they ran away and sought refuge at the Tambayan where they finished a Basic Sewing Course. They are actively participating on the center's various activities where their leadership, creativity and resourcefulness are put in good use.

### **Understanding the roots of violence**

You are probably asking these questions:

Why is that women and children are principal victims of violence in our society? Why are sexual assault and rape, wife and partner battering, and child abuse mostly committed by men? Most literature say that "it's all about power" or a manifestation of unequal power relations between men, and women and children.

### ***Prevailing notions on gender violence***

Before delving into conceptual explanations about the causes of violence against women and children, we will share with you examples of widely held ideas about men, women and children, pattern of relationships and the origins of abuse based on our field research:

Virgie's insight is a typical example. "Our community has very traditional values. Unlike the men, women are expected to care for the children, so the household chores and sacrifice for the family. I grew up believing that I should never complain, that I should obey my parents, especially my father because he is the head of the family." She said that little has changed in their community where incidents of wife or partner battering and child abuse by male members in the family are still prevalent. The men are still considered primary decision-makers and more knowledgeable than the women.

In Davao City, a 17-year old girl-child was nearly raped, with the perpetrator hitting her breasts with a piece of wood. When the neighbors learned about the incident, she was blamed for coming home late at night. According to conventional thinking, women and girls are not supposed to stay out late.

In many communities, most rape victims get little support from their families and the community. More often than not they are thought to have brought misfortune on themselves. It is commonly believed for example that skimpy and revealing clothes invite and provoke sexual attacks.

One of the women leaders in Barangay Cawayan, a coastal community in the Province of Albay expressed that poverty or *pagtios* is the usual reason why women are beaten by their husbands or partners. Most of the people where she lives are landless or *nakikidakit sana* with a lot of children to feed and their only source of income is fishing. Scarcity of food and basic necessities breed despair and irritability within the family. When the man comes home without money

and/or drunk, the woman is likely to nag him, which then leads to violent quarrels. Usually the woman and children are at the receiving end of emotional and physical abuse. " Don't discount marital rape, it happens especially when the husband is drunk," said the woman leader.

In Upper Bonga, another barangay in Albay, people generally distance themselves from marital or familial conflicts including domestic violence based on the traditional norm that a private matter is best left to the parties involved. "*Dai kit alabot na magdudot, iriwal pamilya o mag-agom, pribadong bagay yan*" (We have no business meddling in family quarrels or disputes between husband and wife, it is a private matter).

"Its natural for parent to discipline their children because they know what's best for them." This was the assertion of the father in a barangay in Davao City after he has beaten-up his 15-year old son unconscious, causing hematoma, sprains and contusions. "I want to make him a real man, not a homosexual," says the father. Despite the mother's complaint, the father was not charged with physical injuries because the policeman, who happened to be a friend of the perpetrator, treated the assault as a domestic concern and advised the family to settle the matter privately.

These examples are mere snapshots. But in general, many men, women and children have been raised to think:

- Being a man entitles them to certain things -- to a submissive wife, to sons, to making all the decisions in the family
- Men have to be strong, aggressive, dominating and must have authority over women
- Women and girls are the property of men
- Intolerance, jealousy and nagging of women provoke violence
- Battered women have done something to cause the battering
- Rape or sexual assault are committed by mentally ill perpetrators
- "Seductive women and children are prone to sexual assault
- Because they own their children, parents have a "right" to do whatever they think is best for them
- Children are duty-bound to serve their parents
- Children are immature so they need to be disciplined
- Violence happens only when the man is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs
- Violence only occurs in poor families
- Domestic or family violence is a private matter

### ***Conceptual mapping of the roots of violence against women and children***

Taking into account these prevailing notions, we now take you to a conceptual mapping of what causes violence against women and children. Our discussion will focus on the concept of "patriarchy" and "interrelation of biological, psychological, socio-cultural, economic and political factors" to explain the origins of violence.

### *The concept of patriarchy*

Let us consider the long held belief that "men are by nature superior" and "women are the weaker sex". Throughout history, men, women and children have been conditioned to think and behave within the context "patriarchy". Men are taught to be aggressive, dominating and to exercise authority over women. Women, on the other hand, are taught to be submissive, dependent upon men and to sacrifice for the family's welfare. Children are taught to respect authority and to completely obey their parents, especially the father. The famous line then and up to now is, "You are just a child, so you have to obey your parents."

In a patriarchal system, there is an imbalance in the distribution of power between men and women. Tojos and Abuda, in their 'Handbook on Domestic Violence', explain that as a social structure, patriarchy "is constructed, reinforced and perpetuated by socio-political institutions put in place by men and thereby ensures that men, by virtue of their gender, have power and control over women and children."<sup>16</sup> As to male violence upon women, Sobritchea and Israel, in their article, "A Review of Conceptual Frameworks and Studies of Family Violence," suggest that "this comes from exercise of male power and male desire to maintain such power."<sup>17</sup>

How is inequality between men and women manifested in a patriarchal system?<sup>18</sup>

Here are some examples:

- Infidelity or practice of polygamy (having more than one spouse/partner) is generally accepted by society for men, but not for women. Cultural norms also put into the woman's hand the primary responsibility of managing her fertility, e.g. use of contraception or birth spacing, yet sexual activity among couples are primarily controlled by men. This is a *double standard* in favor of men.
- Compared to men, women are expected to do or supervise household chores, take care of the children, and at the same time contribute to the family income. We call this *double or multiple burden* on the part of the woman.
- Men and women are expected to perform the "fixed roles" assigned to them by society ("mother cooks in the kitchen, father goes to the office" or "a real man can discipline his wife, a good woman is submissive and obeys her husband"). This is *gender stereotyping*.

---

<sup>16</sup> From Leticia Salvador-Tojos and Anna Zita B. Abuda's, *Handbook on Domestic Violence*, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> From Carolyn I. Sobritchea and Lorna Israel's, *A Review of Conceptual Frameworks and Studies of Family Violence* in *breaking the Silence: the Realities of Family Violence in the Philippines and Recommendations for Change*.

<sup>18</sup> Key ideas from the discussion were taken from Leticia Salvador-Tojos and Anna Zita B. Abuda's, *handbook on Domestic Violence*, p.9.

In domestic violence, power and control is the core issue. Although abuse is mostly committed by men and directed at women and girls, it can likewise be done to any less powerful household member such as male children and elderly persons by the abuser who could also be a female family member. The wheel below illustrates how power and control are used in a relationship and result in abuse:<sup>19</sup>

Given the incidents of violence at home, we often ask why women stay in abusive relationships. A number of factors explain this but definitely a battered woman does not enjoy being kicked, humiliated or sexually assaulted. Here are some of the explanations given by abused women in Davao City:

"I have no choice, I have to accept his weakness because we've been married already for 20 years, and I think this is my fate." Here, the woman feels trapped in the relationship.

"If I leave him, how will I support myself and the children?" This is economic dependence on the part of the woman.

"He has been abusing me for 15 years; now I feel incapable of moving on with my life." A long pattern of abuse can so wear out the woman emotionally that she can no longer imagine any escape.

In general, these are the reasons why abused women live in violence at home:<sup>20</sup>

*Fear and threats.* The man may have told her, "I will kill you, kill the children, kill your mother...if you try to leave." She may feel she is protecting herself and others by staying.

*No money, and no place to go.* This is especially true if he controls the purse and has restricted her from seeing friends and family.

*No feeling of protection from the law or community.*

*Shame.* She may feel the violence is somehow her fault, of that she deserves it.

*Religious or cultural beliefs.* She may feel it is her duty to keep the marriage together, whatever the cost.

*Hope for change.* She loves the man and wants the relationship to continue. She just hopes there is some way to make the violence stop.

*Guilt about leaving the children with no father.*

The use of power and authority, particularly in sexual abuse cases, is also evident in child abuse where the perpetrator uses his/her powerful and dominant position in the family to exercise control over the children. Being young and dependent on their parents

---

<sup>19</sup> From Chapter 18 on *Violence against Women* of Where Women Have No Doctor (1997), pp.317.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 321.

for all of their basic needs, the children occupy a subordinate position in the family, making them vulnerable to abusive family members.

In her 'Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer', Balanon emphasized that "respect for authority is a 'value' in our society and our family structure supports this". The father is generally regarded as the head of the family and wields power and authority over its members who are expected to be loyal to him."<sup>21</sup> Essentially, the powerfulness of the wife lessens her capacity to protect her children against abuse. There are instances when the mother is forced to ignore the abuse or sometimes becomes abusive herself. Thus, the link between woman and child abuse.

A study made by the World Health Organization in 1997 likewise reveals that many societies are generally unwilling to acknowledge the extent of child sexual abuse. There are attempts to downplay the prevalence and nature of child abuse, and that victims or mothers are often blamed by the violence.

The study also points out that "accusations against the child include the idea that the child invites the abuse or that she imagines it". The mother may be blamed for "causing the abuse by refusing to have sex with the abuser, or for 'colluding' by not realizing or reporting what was going on."<sup>22</sup>

#### Interrelation of various factors

This framework explains that the incidents of battering, incest, rape, verbal abuse and humiliation among women and children are products of interrelated biological, psychological, socio-cultural, economic and political factors. Sexual assaults and rape, for example, are said to be motivated by imbalance in power distribution and take place in a culture where men are socialized to view women as a means of satisfying all their needs, particularly emotional and sexual satisfaction. The lack of community action to prevent or stop abuse further emboldens the abusers to continue with violent acts. The case of Maya, Lenlen and Rina is an example:<sup>23</sup>

Last September 17, 1997, three girls named Maya, 14, Lenlen, 16 and Rina, 15 were brought to General Santos City to work as house helpers. They were recruited by a certain Tessie, who was introduced to them by their friend Jojo in Rizal Park the night they went to a disco.

Upon arriving in General Santos City, they were asked to have their hair curled and their nails painted red. The next day, however, they were sent back to Davao City. When queried by the Tambayan staff about their trip, they said that they were looking for work so they can rent their own place rather than stay in the

---

<sup>21</sup> *Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer*, presented by Lourdes Balanon, Bureau of Child and Youth Welfare Of the Department of Social Welfare and development during the National Conference on Child Abuse, pp.4.

<sup>22</sup> This World Health Organization article (1997) on domestic violence provides clear discussion on the impact of wife/spousal abuse to children.

<sup>23</sup> An enlightening *Case Study on Child Trafficking* written by Tambayan, Center for the Care of Abused Children in Davao City (1999), p.37.

streets. "We are tired of living in the streets," said Rina. The next day, the staff learned that they went to Luzon instead of General Santos City.

From Tarlac, a province in Luzon, Rina called the center that she was doing well in her work as house help but had to stay a full year as she still owes the recruitment agency P 1,500.00 for her fare and travel expenses. She sadly informed the staff that Lenlen was kicked out by her employer after being accused of stealing, and is now hanging around with street children in Tarlac. Maya, the other girl was not allowed to go with them. Instead she was sent by the recruitment agency to a *casa* or a brothel in Bulacan and now works as a sex worker.

As in woman abuse, the cases of child abuse show the interplay of most of these factors. Poverty-stricken families, for instance, are more prone to domestic violence as the quarrels between spouses/partners oftentimes result in violence to children as well. The other factors which put children at risk include characteristics of the parents, physical condition of the child, lack of support systems in the community, stresses brought about by unemployment, poor housing and prolonged illness or accidents within the household.<sup>24</sup>

Pornographic materials or the way media portrays women and children in tabloids and TV programs could also increase the likelihood of abuse, especially sexual assaults and rape.

Here is Kathleen's story:<sup>25</sup>

Kathleen was 17 years old when she was sexually molested by her uncle. Her parents could not afford to send her to school, so with their consent she decided to stay with her aunt and uncle who owned a small store in one of the cities in Bicol. As soon as her classes in the afternoon ended, she would go home to do her household chores while her aunt and uncle tended the store. Sometime later, Kathleen noticed her uncle's strange and malicious behavior towards her. There was that one time while washing the dishes when she sensed her uncle standing behind her trying to smell her hair and seemingly wanting to touch her. Instinctively, she had grabbed a knife by the sink, whereupon her uncle abruptly left the kitchen. In another incident, when her uncle put his hands around her and pressed her against the wall she bravely brushed off his hands and dashed out of the house.

A more serious incident occurred later when her uncle came home early and she found herself alone with him. Her uncle said he was tired from his work and wanted Kathleen to do him a favor, by way of a massage in his room. Obediently and naively, she followed him to his room. To distract her from his intentions, he started conversing with her. Soon she noticed him brushing and

---

<sup>24</sup> *Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer*, presented by Lourdes Balanon, Bureau of Child and Youth Welfare of the Department of Social Welfare and Development during the National Conference on Child Abuse, pp. 9-11.

<sup>25</sup> From *Violence Against Women in the WHSMP-PC Pilot Communities of Albay: A qualitative Study* undertaken by the Ateneo Social Science Research Center, Ateneo de Naga University (2000), p.32.

touching her breasts from time to time. Startled, she stopped massaging him. On her way out of the room, her uncle warned her about telling her aunt or anyone. Afraid of creating trouble, she kept the matter to herself. The next time it happened however, she angrily pushed him away and left his room.

To avoid repetition she decided to drop by the store before going home. Still fearful of further assaults she disclosed the incidents to another aunt who promptly advised her to leave the place and go home to her parents for safety reasons, which she did.

A research done by Population Reports on domestic violence likewise affirmed that "violence against women results from the interaction of factors at different levels of social environment." Many cases of abuse show that they take place at the following levels:<sup>26</sup>

*At individual level:* being male, witnessing marital violence as a child, absent or rejecting father, being abused as a child, and alcohol

*At the level of the family and relationship:* marital conflict, male control of wealth and decision-making in the family.

*At the community level:* poverty, low socio-economic status, unemployment, associating with delinquent peers, lack of social support or isolation of women and family.

*At the societal level:* norms granting men control over female behavior, acceptance of violence as a way to resolve conflict, notion of masculinity linked to dominance, honor, or aggression and rigid gender roles.

The UNICEF's study of abuse among women and girls in various countries also emphasized the interrelation of these factors. It adapted the work of Heise on "Factors that Perpetuate Domestic Violence" to clarify their causes.<sup>27</sup> These are as follows:

#### *Cultural*

- Gender-specific specialization
- Cultural definitions of appropriate sex roles
- Expectations of roles within relationships
- Belief in the inherent superiority of males
- Values that give men proprietary rights over women and girls
- Notion of the family as a private sphere and under male control
- Customs of marriage (bride price/dowry)
- Acceptability of violence as means of resolving conflict

#### *Economic*

---

<sup>26</sup> Population Reports (1997), *A Framework for Understanding Partner Abuse in Ending Violence Against Women* (1999), p.8.

<sup>27</sup> The *Causes of Domestic Violence* are fully explained *Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls* by the Innocenti Digest (2000), p. 7.

- Women's economic dependence on men
- Limited access to cash and credit
- Discriminatory laws regarding inheritance, property rights, use of communal lands, and maintenance after divorce or widowhood
- Limited access to employment in formal and informal sectors
- Limited access to education and training for women

#### *Legal*

- Lesser legal status of women either by written law and/or by practice
- Laws regarding divorce, child custody, maintenance and inheritance
- Legal definitions of rape and domestic abuse
- Insensitive treatment of women and girls by police and judiciary

#### *Political*

- Under-presentation of women in power, politics in media and in the legal and medical profession
- Domestic violence not taken seriously
- Notions of family being private and beyond the control of the state
- Risk of challenging status quo/religious laws
- Limited organization of women as political force
- Limited participation of women in organized political system

### **Impact of violence on health and development**

We could not measure the extent of injuries for it varies from person to person, but certainly the abused suffers and sustains physical and psychological trauma. Moreover, the negative consequences of violence affect not only the victims-survivors, their families and immediate community, but societal development as well.

In 2001, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women revealed the following statistics on violence against women and children:

- A total of 6,697 gender-based crimes against women and 5,790 child abuse cases have been reported to the Philippine National Police in January to July 2001
- On child abuse cases, rape registered a total of 2,162 or 37% of all crimes committed against children during the first seven months of the year. It is slightly higher by eight percent than the 1,993 cases of the same period last year. This was followed by 1,112 or 19% cases of physical injuries.
- Out of the reported cases against women, 3,878 or 58% were physical injuries, higher by 21% compared to the 3,080 cases of the same period last year. This was followed by rape with 1,073 or 16%, which is higher by 37% to the 676 cases of the same period last year.

- Sexual abuse accounts for 60% of all crimes committed against children. Physical injuries, on the other hand, are high on violence against women.
- Seventy percent (70%) of both women and children have experienced sexual and physical abuses from their perpetrators within the domestic confines of their homes.
- Every 24 hours, an average of nine (9) children were raped, while five (5) women were physically battered in the country.

What we see in this data is just a small fraction of the entire picture of violence against women and children, yet the impact on the community health and development is immense. In the following discussion, we shall explore the effects of violence on women and children's health, family as an institution, community organization and social development.

### *Effects on women and children's health*

Eloisa, an 18-year-old girl from Bicol grew up without experiencing the love of a father. She was one year old when her parents separated. Shortly after that, her mother got married again. She learned to like her stepfather, but kept her distance from him to avoid antagonizing her mother. Eloisa has been a witness to a lot of quarrels. Later, without finishing her secondary schooling, she left Bicol and went to Manila to work. Life was not easy for her in Manila either. Eloisa was subjected to verbal abuse by her employer who called her names and accused her of stealing whenever something was missing. Her difficult situation was compounded by the news that her stepfather had abandoned her mother for another family. Out of depression and with no one to talk to, perhaps wanting to escape her miserable experience, Eloisa committed suicide by raiding and near-emptying her employer's medicine cabinet.<sup>28</sup>

Most studies conclude that violence seriously affects women's physical and mental health, and sometimes end in death. As a result of severe prolonged abuse, women are likely to suffer a variety of illnesses and on-going high level of fear. Generally abused women suffer most, if not all, of the following health problems:<sup>29</sup>

#### *On physical health*

- Physical injuries including deep lacerations and wounds due to hacking, stabbing and gunshot, bruises, contusions, hematoma, retinal hemorrhage and black-eye
- Body and muscular pains, arthritis due to intermittent hitting, punching, boxing, slapping and kicking

---

<sup>28</sup> This story was taken from *Violence Against Women in the WHSMP-PC Pilot Communities in Albay: A Qualitative Study* undertaken by the Ateneo Social Science Research Center, Ateneo de Naga University (2000), p.31.

<sup>29</sup> Consequences on Women's Health is discussed by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (2001).

- Partial/permanent disabilities such as paralyzed fingers, loss of hearing and eyesight
- Broken bones and teeth, fractured jaws, hairline skull cracks
- Chills, fever and infections
- Headaches and migraine due head-banging and hair-pulling
- Heart problems including breathing difficulties, chest pains and palpitations

*On mental and emotional health*

- Fears, anxiety, nervousness, phobias
- Sleeping disorders (insomnia and over-sleeping), nightmare
- Shame, guilt, self-blaming, loss of self-esteem and self-confidence
- Crying spells, mood swings, lethargy
- Suicide attempts

On reproductive health

- Reproductive and urinary tract infections including cervicitis, chronic vaginitis, nipple pains and urinary continence
- Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV/AIDS
- Abnormalities/disruptions in menstrual cycle
- Unwarranted/unplanned pregnancies
- Unsafe abortion due to unwanted pregnancies
- Chronic and abdominal/pelvic pains

Victims of child abuse, on the other hand, may suffer any, if not all, of the following health consequences or the abuse may lead to:<sup>30</sup>

- Strong feelings of hopelessness, anger, shame or guilt
- Angry or aggressive behavior
- Nightmares and other fears, bed-wetting, thumb-sucking and other emotional problems
- Extreme shyness, quietness or withdrawn behavior
- Injury and death
- Inability to concentrate in school
- Illness like asthma, stomachaches, headaches and difficulty in breathing
- Eating disorder
- Vaginal pain, bleeding and discharge for sexually abused children
- Adolescent pregnancies due to risk-taking sexual behavior
- Unwanted pregnancies (in cases of sexually abuse children)

The links between wife or partner and child abuse are also evident such that:<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> *Child Abuse in the Philippines: A Situationer*, presented by Lourdes Balanon, Bureau of Child and Youth Welfare of the Department of Social Welfare and development during the National conference on Child Abuse, pp. 10-12 and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC).

- Children who witness the violent behavior of their father or their mother's partner toward their mother are being emotionally abused.
- There is 30 to 40 percent overlap between children who witness wife assaults and children who experience direct physical abuse themselves.
- Women are often abused during pregnancy, and miscarriage sometimes results.
- Abuse and the resultant trauma and stress on the mother lessen the coping resources that mothers have available for parenting. This can result to less effective parenting by the mother, and neglect or child abuse in some cases.
- A pattern of physical and emotional abuse of mother by the father or other male partner is common in families which children are sexually abused by the father or the male partners of the mothers.

### ***Consequences of violence in the family***

As a social institution, the family is threatened by violence. Whether the abuse is domestic in nature or has taken place outside the home, the effects harm the family members psychologically, emotionally, physically and economically. In many families that have experienced violence, the consequences include:

- Mixed feelings of hatred, fear, sadness and pity towards the victim and perpetrator-family member
- Feelings of isolation and shame
- Loss of respect for the perpetrator and family
- Disruption of normal family life and relationships
- Dissolution of marriage or break-up of family
- Decreased productivity and social interaction
- Financial difficulties, especially when the abuser abandons the family or when a family has filed a case in court (especially in sexual assaults or rape cases)
- Disruption of children's schooling and other social activities

### ***Repercussions to the community***

The community is shielded from all forms of violence taking place inside or outside the homes. Incidents of rape and sexual assaults among women, especially girls or children that have taken place within the confines of the neighborhood create fear and insecurity among families. The usual question is, "Are our children still safe on this community?" peace is also absent in the community when women and children are battered and sexually abused within their homes. The case of Shiela's family illustrates this point.<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> From *Wife Abuse - The Impact on Children* by the National Clearing House on Family Violence, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Initial report on the Process Documentation of VAW Strategy in Region V by Rosalinda Crescini-Tablang, WHSMP-PC.

Shiela has endures Billy's (her husband) beatings for 16 years. She is financially dependent on him, although sometimes she also contribute to the family income by gathering seaweed and making hats. She does the household chores and takes care of her seven children (two from her former husband, and five with Billy). Her husband works odd jobs. According to the neighbors, he is a jack-of-all-trades and he really works hard to support his family. Sheila also thinks that Billy is doing his best to provide for the family.

The problem starts when Billy gets drunk, which happens every night. Whenever he is drunk, he would beat his wife and their children. There were many occasions when he nearly killed his wife. One time, he used a hammer and a bolo to it Shiela. Many times Shiela and her children had to run out of the house to avoid being hacked. But there was an incident when the youngest child was hit with the knife, and had to e brought to the health center for treatment. It was there that the local officials realized that Shiela and her children had long been in grave danger from her violent husband.

The community and their immediate neighbors had been very concerned about Shiela's situation but Billy's violent character deters them from intervening. Although no formal charges for physical injury has been filed against him, the barangay officials arrested him for disturbing the peace in the community and subsequently reprimanded him for abusing his family.

Many communities still treat violence within the family as a private matter, the repercussions extend beyond the household such as:

- Disturbing peace n the community through display of violent attacks on the woman and children in the neighborhood or noise created during heated quarrels between the husband and wife.
- Any form of violence on women and children has the potential of being treated as embarrassment to the community or can make the residents fell unsafe in the place.
- Creating impression that violence is a reasonable way to solve problems (especially among young children).
- Enhancing the false belief that men are superior to women, and that women deserve to be beaten.
- Lessens the opportunity of women and children (victims) to participate in community development activities because they are frightened, embarrassed, afflicted with illness or believe that they are worthless anyway.
- Affect community cohesion because families with history of abuse may decide to isolate themselves, or community members may have mixed feelings on how to deal with the abusers or the abused family members.

### ***Impact on societal development***

Based on studies, violence against women and children create undue burden socially and economically which affect the development process. According to the estimate of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (2001), this could cost some P67

million to the economy. Beyond money, however, is the cost of how we damage women and children's sense of safety and well being and their potentials of contributing productively society.

Here are some of the costs of violence:

- Women and children who have been physically and sexually assaulted require health services, thus increasing health care costs.
- Women who were raped, sexually molested or physically injured will be forced to temporarily stop or in some cases permanently cease from working, thus affecting family income.
- The increase in incidents of violence against women and children will require the state to allocate additional budget for health care services, criminal justice system (police, prisons, rehabilitation centers, public prosecutors, judges), shelter for the abused, counseling programs and rehabilitation projects for the victims-survivors and perpetrators.
- Productivity loss to the market due to absence from work.
- Opportunity cost to the community such as loss of productivity, reduction of income and higher monitoring costs.
- Social costs such breakdown of family and communal relationships, and social unrest.