

Manila Women's Forum

A Network of Women Professionals

October 2007

Help for Female Victims of Abuse and Violence

By Raynah Sivaraman

The talk on September 17, 2007, at the Manila Women's Forum, began with a somber reminder that women across the spectrum—poor, middle-class, rich, uneducated, professionally qualified, minors, adults—are all vulnerable to various forms of abuse, rape and violence. What they crucially need in such times of mental, emotional and physical distress, is good legal assistance, counseling and medical aid. Often, they also need a

temporary place to stay so as to be just out of harm's way.

In Manila, there are two groups, the Women's Crisis Center (WCC) and Women's Legal Education, Advocacy and Defense (WomenLEAD) that have as their mission, evening were Salvacion Baaco-Pascual of WCC and Attorney Claire Angeline P. Luczon, Executive Director of WomenLEAD Foundation. Both these women are earnestly involved in the work they do and shared the approaches they adopt, the goals

they work towards both in individual cases, and, on a wider scale, in local communities (barangays), the government and the legal system.

Women's Crisis Center (WCC)

Salvacion shared with us that WCC, established February 19, 1989, is the first feminist crisis center in the Philippines that introduced the
(Continued on page 2)



(Above) Atty. Claire Luczon (standing), Executive Director of WomenLEAD, speaks to the group at the Manila Women's Forum meeting last September 17 (photo at left)

NEXT MWF MEETING ■ **When:** 6:30 p.m. Monday 2007 October 15. **What:** Jane Walker will speak about the Philippine Community Fund (PCF), which uplifts families and children working on dumpsites in the Philippines. Her organization educates more than 400 children in Manila's notoriously impoverished district of Tondo—some of the poorest streets in Asia. Jewelry from PCF's livelihood program will be on sale, and a special video produced by a fellow MWF member for PCF will be shown. **Where:** Natasha Davis' home, 10 Beaterio St., Urdaneta Village, Makati City. **Bring:** Something to share for the potluck dinner. **October meeting:** Monday, 2007 November 12.

(Help... from page 1)

practice of feminist counseling and piloted the first hospital-based crisis center in 1996. It serves victims-survivors (women/children) of abuse in intimate relationships, rape, incest, domestic violence, sexual harassment, prostitution and trafficking. Through its "HelpLine" that can be accessed Mondays through Fridays, 8am - 6pm and Saturdays, 9am-5pm WCC provides counseling, and legal and medical referrals. In its "Temporary Shelter," WCC accommodates female victims and survivors confronting security risks and who have limited resources for a maximum period of 3 months. WCC's Shelter accepts mothers with children—the age limit for girls being 12 years and boys 10 years. WCC also provides feminist counseling (both individual and group), legal, medical and

accompaniment assistance, as well as educational sessions and livelihood and skills development for survivors. Its Raquel Edralin-Tiglao Institute for Family Violence Prevention (RETIFVP) organizes knowledge gained from WCC experiences and shares skills for prevention and intervention in the field of Violence Against Women (VAW). As the training arm of WCC, it conducts trainings for other organizations, local government units, schools and corporations.

WCC is now one of the lead organizations in the advocacy work for the passage of pro-women laws and a member of the Technical Working Group that drafted the Implementing Rules and Regulations of R.A. 9262 or "The Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004."

WCC's special projects include the Women's and Children's Crisis Care

and Protection Unit at East Avenue Medical Center; National Network of Family Violence Prevention Programs; Working Towards Healing, Recovery, and Empowerment of Children Survivors of Abuse; and, Elimination of Violence Against Women Advocacy Project.

The Women Crisis Center is located at 3/F, Emergency Room—Trauma, Annex Building, East Avenue Medical Center, East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. Helplines (632) 922-5235/926-7744; wccmanila@pacific.net.ph; www.wccmanila.org

WomenLEAD

Atty. Claire Angeline P. Luczon is a committed women's rights advocate who gave up her job with Congress to join the WomenLEAD Foundation in 2001. The Women's Legal Education,

(Continued on page 4)

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

Occurrence

Statistics about intimate partner violence (IPV) may vary because of differences in how different data sources define IPV and collect data. For example, some definitions include stalking and psychological abuse, and others consider only physical and sexual violence. Data on IPV usually come from police, clinical settings, nongovernmental organizations, and survey research. However, most IPV incidents are not reported to the police.

Types of IPV

Physical violence or threats of physical violence. This entails the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury, or harm.

Sexual violence or threats of sexual violence. This entails: (a) use of physical force to compel a person to engage in a sexual act against his or her will, whether or not the act is completed; (b) attempted or completed sex act involving a person who is unable to understand the nature or condition of the act, to decline participation, or to communicate unwillingness to engage in the

sexual act, e.g., because of illness, disability, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or because of intimidation or pressure; and (c) abusive sexual contact.

Psychological or emotional violence. This is caused by acts, threats of acts, or coercive tactics. Psychological/emotional abuse can include, but is not limited to, humiliating the victim, controlling what the victim can and cannot do, withholding information from the victim, deliberately doing something to make the victim feel diminished or embarrassed, isolating the victim from friends and family, and denying the victim access to money or other basic resources. It is considered psychological/emotional violence when there has been prior physical or sexual violence or prior threat of physical or sexual violence.

Stalking. In addition, this is often included among the types of IPV. This refers to repeated behavior that causes victims to feel a high level of fear.

IPV is a serious problem that is common in many societies. Violence by an intimate partner is linked to both immediate and long-term health, social, and economic consequences. Factors at all levels—individual, relationship, community, and societal—contribute to the perpetration of IPV.

Risk Factors for Victimization

Individual Factors. These include: prior history of IPV; being female; young age; heavy alcohol and drug use; high-risk sexual behavior; witnessing or experiencing violence as a child; being less educated; unemployment; for men, having a different ethnicity from their partner's; for women, having a greater education level than their partner's; for women, having a verbally abusive, jealous, or possessive partner.

Relationship Factors. These include: couples with income, educational, or job status disparities; dominance and control of the relationship by the male.

Community Factors. These include: low social capital—lack of institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a community's social interactions; weak community sanctions against IPV (e.g., police unwilling to intervene)

Societal Factors. Traditional gender norms (e.g., women should stay at home and not enter workforce, should be submissive).

Source : <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm>

“What happened?” instead of “What’s wrong with you?”
That’s what most women would probably want to hear when they go to someone or somewhere for help as victims of violence and abuse.
And, we also found that there’s such a thing as IPV - that’s “Intimate Partner Violence.”



1 OCTOBER 2007

KaWoMeNaN

Selected and edited by
Beulah Pedregosa Taguiwalo

Abuse and violence against women

The most important step we can take is to educate women about abuse, so they can recognize it when it happens and take immediate steps to get away from their abuser and get help.

What is abuse?

Abuse can take a variety of forms. Abuse can occur when a partner mistreats a woman physically, emotionally, or verbally. It can happen during dating, in a marital or cohabiting relationship, or among divorced couples. Abuse does not have any socioeconomic, racial, or religious boundaries.

As the New York Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence states, domestic abuse is “a pattern of controlling and coercive behavior that could be physical, sexual, economic, emotional, and psychological abuse.”

What are the different types of abuse?

Physical abuse is considered to be any aggressive physical behavior against another person, such as pushing, pinching, squeezing, shaking, biting, slapping, punching,

kicking, and throwing objects or using a weapon.

Sexual abuse occurs when a woman is forced to participate in sexual activity of any kind.

Psychological and verbal abuse can be manifested through accusations of infidelity, threats of suicide, threats of harm to others, and other accusations aimed at causing emotional pain.

Financial abuse occurs when a woman has no control or decision-making authority over the use of the family’s money, or has no access to money for personal use.

While psychological, verbal, and financial abuse may not leave any visible injuries, they still can have far-reaching consequences for women and their children.

How many women are affected by abuse?

According to the American Medical Association [in 2003], one in four women in the United States reports being abused in a physical, sexual, or emotional manner by a partner or spouse. These abusive behaviors can cause injury, disability, homelessness, and mental health disorders such as depression, eating disorders, and anxiety. In addition [it is estimated] that abuse results in the death of more than 1,400 women each year.

What can we do about the problem of abuse?

There are a variety of resources to help abused women and their children. However, the most important step we can take is to educate women about abuse, so they can recognize it when it happens and take immediate steps to get away from their abuser and get help.*

From <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/> where all text materials are in the public domain.

[*Here in the Philippines, victims of violence and abuse against women may contact the Women’s Crisis Center at (632) 922-5235 or (632)926-7744 or email them at wccmanila@pacific.net.ph

Women, Abuse, and Depression

Studies show that women molested as children are more likely to have clinical depression at some time in their lives than those with no such history.

In addition, several studies show a higher incidence of depression among women who have been raped as adolescents or adults. Since far more women than men were sexually abused as children, these findings are relevant.

Women who experience other commonly occurring forms of abuse, such as physical abuse and sexual harassment on the job, also may experience higher rates of depression.

Abuse may lead to depression by fostering low self-esteem, a sense of helplessness, self-blame, and social isolation.

There may be biological and environmental risk factors for depression resulting from growing up in a dysfunctional family.

At present, more research is needed to understand whether victimization is connected specifically to depression.

From <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

The term “intimate partner violence” (IPV) describes physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. It can occur among heterosexual or same-sex couples and does not require sexual intimacy.

IPV can vary in frequency and severity. It occurs on a continuum, ranging from one hit that may or may not impact the victim to chronic, severe battering. Repeated abuse is also known as battering.

“Violent acts against women don’t end with visits to the emergency room,” said Dr. Julie Gerberding, CDC Director in a press release dated April 28, 2003. “Intimate partner violence costs women and their families a high-price financially, physically and emotionally. We must continue to do all we can to prevent the pain, anguish and health problems that result from intimate partner violence.”

Spiritual Abuse

According to some, one more type of IPV is spiritual abuse. This entails using the spouse’s or intimate partner’s religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate them; preventing the partner from practicing their religious or spiritual beliefs; ridiculing the other person’s religious or spiritual beliefs.

(Help... from page 2)

Advocacy and Defense (WomenLEAD) Foundation was founded in 2000 by nine feminist advocates who all wanted to advance the rights and welfare of women and children through feminist strategies for law reform and women's empowerment. WomenLEAD provides legal services for women, campaigns for law reforms and conducts trainings for the sexual and reproductive empowerment of Filipino women and girl-children.

The role played by WomenLEAD is of critical importance when dealing with the legalities of rape and abuse, since macho viewpoints have generally prevailed and flourished in legal circles. Atty. Claire gave some disturbing examples of how easily a sexist police officer or judge could interpret, or rather misinterpret, evidence in cases of rape and violence. She also defined the two kinds of rape—by penetration; or by sexual assault—and how “no satisfaction of lust” (no penetration) in a sexual assault could be misinterpreted by many to mean “no rape,” and excuse the perpetrator.

While WomenLEAD also deals with issues of trafficking of persons that victimize the poor, gullible and uneducated, the most numerous cases (51%) involve rape. WomenLEAD provides legal representation in cases of rape, incest, sexual harassment, domestic violence, child abuse, trafficking in women and girl-children, prostitution, and various forms of discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation. Atty. Claire

explained that while her foundation has won about 75% of the rape cases it handled, 10% have been lost while 15% just disappear. “Disappear” actually means that the women themselves lose interest in pursuing the case. This is often taken to positively signify that the woman has “healed,” or that the process of healing has allowed her other options to get on with her life, rather than mere legal redress.

The absence of a divorce law—the Philippines and Malta are the only countries in the world that don't have one—often aggravates the gender imbalance and causes more problems for women. However, an annulment law does exist in the Philippines. “Annulment” requires proof of psychological incapacity prior to marriage, while curiously allowing the “psychologically incapacitated” partner to re-marry! Besides, an “annulled” marriage still allows for the children of the marriage to have legal status, making it a kind of contradiction.

Besides Feminist Counseling and Legal Representation, as well as Psychosocial Referrals to partner NGOs, WomenLEAD also conducts Training and Legal Education on various issues on women's human rights to raise awareness among women in communities, partner organizations and other stakeholders. Among its major projects is its Comprehensive Paralegal Training Program for women. It also conducts Campaigns, Media and External Linkages and has a Research, Publications and Library Resources program that is primarily responsible for conducting research in the areas of

human rights, law, religion, culture and feminism as they impact on women and girl children.

Considering that the Philippine National Police report of 2005 indicates a whopping 10,000 reported cases of abuse and violence against women in that year alone, one cannot but acknowledge that the work done by Salvacion Baaco-Pascual of WCC and Atty. Claire Angeline P. Luczon of WomenLEAD and their colleagues is both urgent and vital. ■

Manila Women's Forum

Manila Women's Forum (MWF) is a cross-cultural network for women. It provides opportunities to build friendships, to talk to women of various cultures, and to share information about resources. Our meetings are intended to provide intellectual stimulation and lead to personal and professional development. All women are welcome to join. The current officers are **Lisa Lumbao**, Chair, Programs, Treasurer, and Newsletter. **Cecilia Leung**, Programs. **Lisa Stuart**, MWF Membership Message Board Moderator. **Beulah P. Taguiwalo**, Newsletter, Website.

Cost of membership is P300 per year. Members receive a copy of the current mailing list in addition to the newsletter, which is also sent to non-members. A contribution is collected at each monthly meeting: P20 for members, and P40 for non-members. Please contact Lisa Lumbao at Tel. 813-0168, or at lumbao@mozcom.com for more information about MWF.

Visit our website – a work in progress
www.geocities.com/manilawomensforum

MWF Newsletter
c/o Lisa Lumbao
26-B Casa Real Townhouse
Real St., Urdaneta Village
Makati City 1225