

The **VIRUS** called **VIOLENCE** during Pandemic

One of the most alarming consequences of the pandemic is the rise of gender-based violence (GBV). Children and adolescents, particularly girls, are confronted with violence and abuse, as a result of prolonged lockdowns.

PCW reported that as of October 31, 2020, there are **14,721 Gender Based Violence** WHICH pertains to violations of 8 laws – anti-violence against women and children law, anti-rape law, revised penal code provisions against acts of lasciviousness and concubinage, anti-photo and video voyeurism law, anti-trafficking persons law, anti-sexual harassment law, and the safe spaces law.

Watchdog groups had warned of an increase in such incidents because stay-at-home measures are locking in victims with their abusers.

Somewhere else in an undisclosed province in locked-down Luzon, a yellow house hid a similar horror – a 25-year-old woman making 7 kids do lewd acts in front of a webcam. Four of the kids were her own children. The youngest victim was just 3 years old.

A woman, who only wished to be identified as Amanda, decided to leave her husband after he began physically abusing her. She said her husband's moods went from bad to worse after he lost his job due to mass retrenchment.

There were also incidents of **inhumane punishments for curfew violators**, like ordering them to dance and kiss on live streaming video, putting them in a coffin and a dog house, letting them squat for 300 times (Darren Penaredondo, 28, caught for breaking curfew after going out to buy water in General Trias city, south of Manila, the reason for his eventual death.

While there is a need to enforce public order, publicly humiliating persons, especially when there are minors involved, and forcing them to do degrading, inhumane acts should never be an option.

Women face fear, uncertainty, heavier domestic care, limited movements, and economic constraints during the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) to prevent the spread of COVID-19, but instead of easing their burden, **perpetrators of sexual harassment double their suffering.**

A Philippine National Demographic and Health survey said in 2017 that one in four Filipino women aged 15-49 has experienced physical, emotional or sexual abuse by their partner or husband.

Sadly, authorities revealed in June that this statistic has risen since Covid-19 lockdowns began in March last year and the reported abuses is yet still rising till this date.

Impacts of VAW

VAW strikes the personhood of women

It does not only affect women's physical and reproductive health, but specially their mental and emotional state. It has caused women to feel ashamed and to lose their self-esteem. It threatens women's personal security.

VAW limits human development

It jeopardizes women's health and curbs their capacity to participate in social development. Working women's productivity decreases due to frequent absences resulting from VAW. VAW is responsible for one out of every five healthy days of life lost to women of reproductive age.

VAW further drains the country's financial resources

The Philippines spent an estimated P6 billion pesos in 2002 to treat VAW survivors. This amount covered the medical treatment of VAW injuries, psychological therapies and programs for survivors, maintenance of shelters, cost of legal and court proceedings to prosecute perpetrators, training costs of service providers, and other indirect social costs to family members of VAW survivors and perpetrators.

VAW is an issue of governance

A state promotes good governance when it makes available effective remedies to eliminate VAW in the homes, in the communities and in the state.

Mechanisms to Address VAW

- [Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children](#)
- [Inter-Agency Council Against-Trafficking](#)
- [Local Committee on Anti-Trafficking and VAW](#)
- [Barangay VAW Desk](#)

VAW Hotlines

- [VAW Hotlines during Community Quarantine](#)
- [VAW Service Providers in Region 7](#)
- [Hotlines for Overseas Filipino Workers](#)

What you should do if you are abused

Otherwise, your choices come down to the specifics of your situation. Here's what you can do:

- **Accept that the abuse isn't your responsibility.** Don't try to reason with your abuser. You may want to help, but it's unlikely they'll break this pattern of behavior without professional counseling. That's their responsibility.
- **Disengage and set personal boundaries.** Decide that you won't respond to abuse or get sucked into arguments. Stick to it. Limit exposure to the abuser as much as you can.
- **Exit the relationship or circumstance.** If possible, cut all ties. Make it clear that it's over and don't look back. You might also want to [find a therapist](#) who can show you a healthy way to move forward.
- **Give yourself time to heal.** Reach out to supportive friends and family members. If you're in school, talk to a teacher or guidance counselor. If you think it will help, [find a therapist](#) who can help you in your recovery.

Don't You Know That?

“Online sexual abuse and exploitation of children is a silent pandemic that has permanent, and devastating effects on children's mental health and psychosocial well-being,” said Atty. Alberto Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines.

Muyot added, the pandemic is **no longer a health crisis** but a **child rights crisis** that must be addressed with urgency.

Local government units, schools, and communities to strengthen the protective and legal services to ensure that children are safe from online sexual abuse and exploitation with the theme "Bagong Normal: Ligtas na Internet for All,”

