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***THE CULTURE OF PATRIARCHY AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE HUMAN
RIGHTS OF GIRL-CHILDREN IN CAGAYAN DE ORO AND CLAVERIA,
MISAMIS ORIENTAL: IMPLICATIONS TO POLICY FORMULATION***

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MISAMIS ORIENTAL: IMPLICATIONS TO POLICY FORMULATION**

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CWC	Council for the Welfare of Children
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSWD	City Social Welfare and Development
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ILOAC	International Labor Organization Age Convention
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
LGU	Local Government Unit
MOSCAT	Misamis Oriental State College of Agriculture and Technology
NCRFW	National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women
NSCB	National Statistical Coordination Board
PDHRE	People's Decade on Human Rights Education
PMHRE	People's Movement for Human Rights Education
PNP	Philippine National Police
PNPAVAC	Philippine National Plan of Action on Violence against Children
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNDRC	United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Educational Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights
UNFWCW	United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women
VDPA	Vienna Declaration and Program of Action
WCHR	World Conference on Human Rights
WHO	World Health Organization

Definition of Terms Used

Culture. In sociological and anthropological usage, culture expresses the totality of what is learned in society: the way a people collectively think, work, live, and make decisions to ensure survival or to facilitate human adaptation. It can also refer to the tools, technologies, social institutions, traditions, values, beliefs, and motivations common to one group of people (Hollnsteiner 1979).

Patriarchy. It is a system of male headship, male domination, male power—a system of controlling women through economic dependence, violence, and domestication—a system which assigns women to the private sphere of home and family and directs males to the public sphere of work and decision making. It is a set of beliefs and values supported by institutions and backed by the threat of violence. It lays down the supposedly “proper relations between men and women, between women and women, and between men and men. It imposes structures which make some work “naturally” men’s work and other work “naturally” women’s work. And it gives whatever in men’s work more value, more significance, more pay (Reardon 1996).

Human rights. These are rights that are essential to be able to live as human beings—basic standards without which people cannot survive and develop in dignity. They are inherent to the human person, inalienable, and universal. (UNCHR 1948).

Girl-child. A person below 18 years old, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood as younger than this age (UNICEF 1992). As referred to in this study, girl-children are those girls who are 10–17 years old.

Child abuse. This is the act of deliberately inflicting or causing to inflict physical injuries upon a child or unreasonably depriving him/her of basic needs for survival such as food, shelter, or a combination of both to a degree that, if not immediately remedied, could seriously impair the child’s growth and development or result in permanent incapacity or death. It includes any act that debases, degrades, or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being (Council for the Welfare of Children 1991).

Child labor. This refers to any work or economic activity performed by a child that subjects him/her to any form of exploitation or is harmful to his/her health and safety or physical, mental or psychosocial development (Congress of the Philippines 2003).

Corporal punishment. Any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light this may be. Most involves hitting (smacking, slapping, spanking) children with the hand or with an implement like whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, and others. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, burning, scalding, or forced ingestion like washing children's mouth out with soap, or forcing them to swallow hot spices (UNCRC 2006).

Economic activity. These are actions that involve the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services at all levels within a society (Azanza et.al. 2001).

Emotional abuse. This involves excessive verbal assault like cursing, derogatory remarks meant to belittle the child. This form of abuse also involves the withholding of affection or withdrawal from or rejection of the child by the parent/guardian/caretaker. This type of abuse is usually detected by its long-term effect on the child, i.e., the child exhibits behavioral and emotional problems. This means that the child has been subjected to this kind of abuse for many years before it can be detected and remedied. (Guerrero-Manalo 1997).

Environment. This is the aggregate of social and cultural conditions that influence the life of an individual or community. (The Free Dictionary, undated)

Family. The ideology of relatedness, which explains who should live together, share income, and perform certain tasks; it is an ideology that sets the standards of social and sexual relations. On the other hand, **household** is the organization of family members found to be living together. Filipino households usually include a nuclear or extended family and non-family relatives either working for the family as domestic helper or staying in the house as permanent guests (Guerrero and Sobritchea 1997).

Incest. This has been traditionally defined as carnal relations between siblings, between parents and children, and between blood relatives up to the fourth degree of consanguinity. It includes the concept of patriarchy and power (Caragay and Cayabyab 1997).

Live-in relationship. A living arrangement in which an unmarried couple live together in a long-term relationship that resembles a marriage (The Free Dictionary, undated).

Physical abuse. This may be defined as non-accidental injury inflicted by a caretaker (Tower 1989). It includes various forms of battering such as repetitive beatings; slapping of the face; mauling; hair-pulling; spanking; kicking and physically dragging the victim; inflicting wounds with the use of knives, pointed objects, and even guns; as well as deliberately burning various parts of the victim's body (Caragay and Cayabyab 1997).

Prostitution. This involves the granting of sexual access on a relatively indiscriminate basis for payment either in money or in goods, depending on the complexity of the local economic system. Payment is acknowledged to be for a specific sexual performance. Prostitution is a service that may be performed by either males or females and for either males or females although in practice in nearly all societies, acts of prostitution are commonly performed by females for males or by males for males (Sills 1968).

Participation rights. Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural, and political life. Participation rights include the right to express opinions and be heard, the right to information, and freedom of association. Engaging these rights as they mature helps children bring about the realization of all their rights and prepares them for an active role in society (UNICEF 1992).

Protection rights. These rights include protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and cruelty, including the right to special protection in times of war and protection from abuse in the criminal justice system (UNICEF 1992)..

Survival and development rights. These are rights to the resources, skills, and contributions necessary for the survival and full development of the child. They include rights to adequate food, shelter, clean water, formal education, primary health care, leisure and recreation, cultural activities, and information about their rights (UNICEF 1992).

Sexual abuse. "Occurs when dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents participate in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, and that violate the social taboos of family roles." It is the use of

children as sex objects for the sexual gratification of an adult or any person bigger or older. Classified as sexual abuse are inappropriate fondling (i.e., fingering), masturbation, intercourse (rape, incest), and buggery (anal intercourse). It also includes victims of prostitution or pedophiles and those children forced to participate in producing pornographic material (Guerrero-Manalo 1997).

Convention. A convention is a formal agreement between states. The generic term convention is synonymous with the generic term ‘treaty.’ Conventions are normally open for participation by the international community as a whole or by a large number of states (UNICEF 1992).

Declaration. This term is used for various international instruments. International human rights declarations are not legally binding: the term is often deliberately chosen to indicate that the parties do not intend to create binding obligations but merely to declare certain aspirations (UNICEF 1992).

Section 1: Introduction

Misamis Oriental is one of the five provinces in Region X, which is one of the six regions in Mindanao, Philippines known as Northern Mindanao. Misamis Oriental is the hub and industrial center of Region X. It has 24 municipalities and two cities – Gingoog City and Cagayan de Oro City.

Cagayan de Oro City is the fourth largest metropolitan area in the Philippines. It is the provincial capital and the center of Region X being the most populous and highly urbanized city in Northern Mindanao. With a population of 602,088, according to the census of 2010, the city is where the government's regional offices and other big establishments are found.

Claveria is the only municipality in Misamis Oriental located on top of a mountain with an elevation of 600 meters or 1,969 feet above sea level. As a result, the town has a cooler temperature ranging from 16⁰C to 22⁰C and even lower in higher areas. Claveria is also the largest among the 24 municipalities, comprising one-third of the total land area of the province. The Misamis Oriental State College of Agriculture and Technology (MOSCAT) is located in its town proper. As of the census of 2010, Claveria has a population of 47,713 and has 24 *sitios* or barangays, some of which are home to a group of *lumads* or indigenous peoples (IPs) known as Higaonon, comprising 2,258 people. Most of them, however, prefer to stay in the hinterlands, which could only be reached by foot. (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, undated)

Studies on Human Rights Violations

Many studies have been conducted on child abuse, domestic violence, and human rights violations in which the main sources of data were culled from records and documents in government and nongovernment agencies. These documents were mostly taken from complaints received and cases reported to the relevant agencies by and for the victims.

For instance, as per records taken from the Cagayan de Oro City Police Office under the Philippine National Police (PNP), 136 crimes had been committed against girl-children from January 2009 to April 2011, for a total of 28 months. They were categorized as follows: (i) rape, 59 cases to include five cases of incest; (ii) acts of lasciviousness, 20; (iii) RA 7610 (child abuse, exploitation, and discrimination), 28; (iv) other forms of child abuse and physical injuries,

27; and (v) abduction, 2 cases. Records at the City Social Welfare and Development (CSWD) also showed that from October to December 2010, a total of 43 girl-children were housed in their shelter, of which 13 were incest victims.

More such cases are not reported to any agency and, therefore, remain unrecorded and unknown to authorities. This observation is based on a survey that this researcher conducted in her four classes with a total of 200 college students at a university in Cagayan de Oro City where she taught Gender and Peace Education classes. Follow-up class discussions revealed that most of these students, who were still 15–16 years old, had personally experienced certain forms of child abuse while growing up, which they said had affected their self-esteem and self-confidence.

During regular class discussions, the students also confirmed this researcher's observation that there is an increasing incidence of girl-children getting pregnant and becoming mothers at a very tender age without partners to support the needs of the mother and the child. They said prostitution is getting rampant that even the city mayor had entertained the idea of legalizing the trade. Indeed, if one goes to a certain street close to a commercial area, the presence of female teenagers waiting for customers to pick them up could easily be observed.

This situation appears to be more pronounced among young women whose families belong to low socioeconomic status and whose parents may not know what responsible parenting means. In other words, their parents may just be living again the same kind of life lived by their respective parents and so the cycle goes on with the girl-children ending up as victims.

This condition greatly affects the growth and development of young mothers and their children alike, especially their daughters. This is generally taken as an issue on equality and consequently on human rights as spelled out in various laws created and implemented globally and locally. This may not be easily understood by others especially those who believe otherwise. Thus, there is a need for further research to look into this contention.

This research project is an attempt to respond to the many declarations already made during international, national, and regional conferences on women and children and to check if these declarations have resulted in a difference in the lives of young girls in the areas covered by this research. The Philippine government, being a signatory to these declarations, had instituted plans and programs in accordance to what were agreed upon. Laws and policies to protect women and

children had been passed and are now being implemented. Education and training, seminars, and workshops had been conducted nationwide for the last 15 years or so. However, it cannot be ascertained how effective were these in changing the lives of girl-children in Philippine society.

This study, although confined to the cited survey areas, could somehow provide enough data to help identify the gaps in the implementation of existing laws on women and children. It also provides some clues as to what other factors should be considered to make the laws more relevant and meaningful in the lives of children who are already disadvantaged because of poverty.

Study Objectives

How does a patriarchal culture affect the situation of selected girl-children in Cagayan de Oro City and in Claveria, Misamis Oriental? From the cases presented, what implications and recommendations can be drawn to protect the human rights of girl-children in the Philippines?

Specifically, this research

- (1) documented the experiences of the poor, powerless, and disadvantaged girl-children and identified human rights violations committed against them;
- (2) examined all aspects in the lives of girl-children to determine the factors that may have contributed to the kind of life that they live; and
- (3) identified the gaps in the implementation of the laws and policies specifically created for the welfare of girl-children.

Scope of the Study and Limitation

This study was limited to 75 girls aged 10–17 years old, 50 of whom are living in Cagayan de Oro City and 25 in Claveria, Misamis Oriental. The respondents are characterized as poor, powerless, and disadvantaged girl-children who were identified and referred to the interviewers by reliable informants. This study did not make use of cases already recorded and filed in shelter homes supported by government agencies and nongovernment organizations (NGOs). Hence, their life stories or the data culled from the interviews may be unknown as yet by social workers and police authorities.

The respondents came from two survey areas, a city and a rural area, and discussions were focused mainly on the human rights violations committed against them. No analysis was made on how they differed in their responses.

Conceptual Framework

Christianity has been one of the sources of patriarchal beliefs and practices. Religions, which are bible-based, follow the texts faithfully by its every word. The Bible, which Christians live by, puts the male or men in charge. It further states that women should be submissive to men and, thus, the separation of tasks. The assignment of some tasks to one sex and the exclusion of the other has been one method of stressing separate roles for male and female. The educational practice of training boys to become “manly” and girls to become “feminine” has been another. Within the church, the principal example of such separation has been in restricting the pastoral and government functions of the Christian community to men, and frequently females have been excluded even from such inconsequential liturgical functions as the lighting and extinguishing of candles. The ecclesiastical government was always in the hands of men (Rhys 1975).

Based on a supposed divine order that was thought to be discerned in the Scripture, the Church set forth what it regarded as absolute rights and obligations. One such absolute is the family. As in prior Jewish and Roman laws, Christianity saw the male as the natural head of his household. This held true without regard to the wealth or social status of the family. The wife owed obedience and deference to the husband. To both parents, the children owed unquestioning submission. As a consequence, often there have been abuses, as in any other kind of relationships (Rhys 1975).

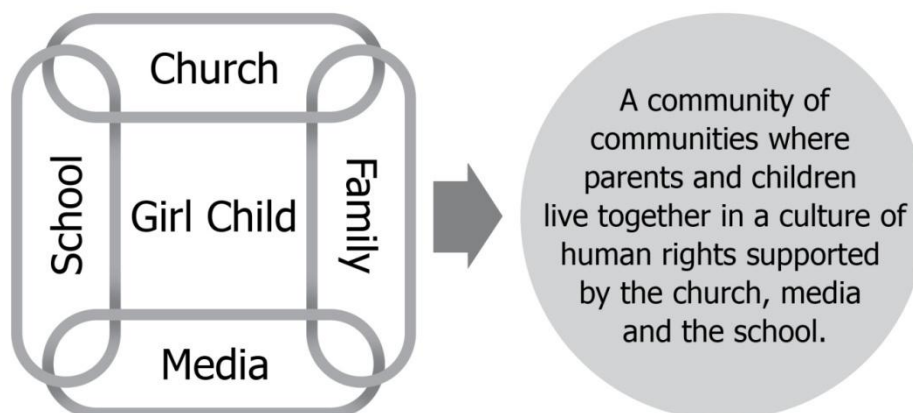
The Spanish colonizers introduced many patriarchal cultural values and practices in the country as a strategy for them to systematically attain their goals. All throughout the colonial decades, the culture of patriarchy had been at work in all aspects in the lives of Filipinos. Through the church, patriarchy was built into the structures of society; in the consciousness of men and women; integrated into the value system, world view, and socialization process; and reproduced in the family, school, in media, and in the laws.

Linked to this social system is the belief or the ideology that man is superior to woman, that women are part of men’s property, and hence, should be controlled by men. This belief forms the

basis of many religious laws and practices, and explains all those social practices that confine women to the home. Double-standard morality and laws that give more rights to men than to women are also based on patriarchy (Reardon 1996). Thus, the patriarchal system has been pointed as the cause of exploitation among women and girls who remain poor, powerless, and disadvantaged in many ways. It curtails their freedom to move and discover their own talents and skills, their potentials, and capabilities.

What this study envisions to see is the eventual transformation of the patriarchal system of beliefs into a culture that practices human rights, and the creation of communities where parents and children live together in a culture of justice and fairness, where everyone has gradually adopted human rights as a way of life. This concept is illustrated in Figure 1.

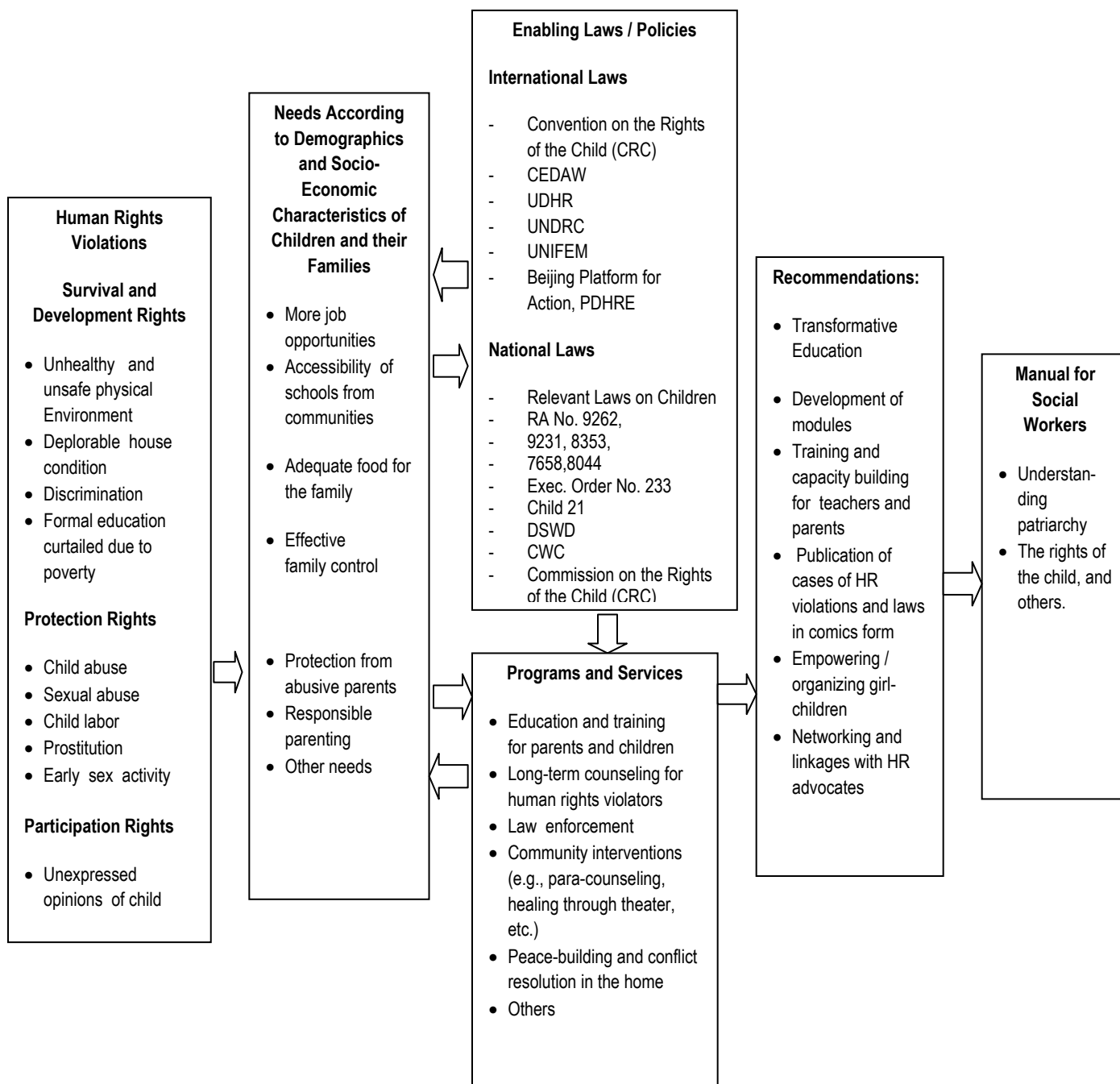
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The Analytical Framework by which this Conceptual Framework could be realized is presented in Figure 2. The framework identifies the human rights violations committed against girl-children that may have been caused by poverty but aggravated by the patriarchal belief system in the family and community. To protect girl-children from such human rights violations, international and national laws are now in place that, if strictly implemented through programs and services, could make a lot of difference in their lives. A number of activities that should be carried out are listed in the recommendations. These are supported with manuals and materials, which also contain the framework of patriarchy and the framework of human rights.

The framework was adapted from "Mapping of Existing Services and Resources for Children in Armed Conflict Situations," a research conducted by Dr. Carolyn I. Sobritchea as principal leader, and Dr. Maria Theresa Ujano-Batangan as principal researcher.

Figure 2: Analytical Framework



Methods of Study and Sources of Data

A. Data Collection

Data collection included the following: (i) review of related literature especially the laws and policies on children; (ii) individual in-depth interviews; and (iii) case studies of the life stories of 75 female children who, in one or more ways, had experienced child abuse. Initial activities done for this research include the following: search, review, and study of national and international laws, mandates, and covenants on the human rights of girl-children from the internet and from books, pamphlets, and manuals published by government and NGOs. Related literature and researches made as well as reports submitted to international conferences were also studied vis-à-vis the reality as observed in the environment.

The original plan was to interview abused girl-children already housed or being taken care of in centers by government agencies and NGOs. However, these centers do not allow the girls to be known and be interviewed by anyone even for research purposes only. Thus, it was finally decided to collect data from those girl-children who were similarly abused but had not reported their cases to the authorities either at the *barangay* or city level.

Four interviewers in Cagayan de Oro City and two in Claveria were hired as field researchers. A session was conducted to orient them about the human rights of the girl-children and to familiarize them with the flow of items to be asked and the ethics that should be observed. The interviewers had letters that they gave to parents to allow the child to be interviewed. Only parents whose children are still in school were given the letter as those who are already out-of-school had transferred residence. Being known to the interviewer and the referral, the parents also allowed the interview to be conducted in another place close to their home as the children themselves were timid to answer questions in the presence of family members. Besides, almost all of the respondents do not have enough space for visitors in their own homes. Before an interview starts, the girl is informed what the study is all about and what it could possibly do to help other girls in similar situations. The interviewers also asked the girl's permission to have the interview tape-recorded.

B. Research Instruments

The interview guide meticulously considered the many issues and concerns spelled out in the relevant laws and mandates but took care not to overwhelm the young respondents. The interview items, therefore, were focused on the following: (i) the human right of the girl-child to live in a safe and healthy environment, (ii) the right to education and freedom from discrimination, (iii) the right to protection from all physical or mental abuse, (iv) the right to protection from prostitution, (v) the right to enjoy economic benefits and to be protected from sexual exploitation, and (vi) the right to express an opinion. Also covered were issues and concerns listed in the *Beijing+10 Report* (Del Rosario 2005) particularly on dating and early sex activity culminating in teenage pregnancy and illegitimate births, and on girls being given more duties at home or being given feminized roles and tasks, like housework and child care.

As the respondents are very young, the items were made very simple and easy to understand. The topics were sequenced in such a way that their interest would not wane and the whole process would make them feel that they were just sharing with the interviewers their experiences and personal opinions about their life. The interview guide was initially done in Filipino, but realizing that these young respondents still have difficulty in understanding the national language, it was translated into Cebuano, their native tongue. However, for this report, the interview guide and the responses were again translated into English.

C. Data Processing and Writing of Case Studies

The tape-recorded interviews of girl-children were transcribed by the interviewers themselves. Results were tallied and tabulated, tables were constructed, and data were described using frequency counts, percentages, and ranks. From the transcriptions, life stories were written by writers who are speakers of the native language and at the same time good in the English language. Life stories were sorted out according to the following considerations: respondents who are (i) in-school, (ii) out-of school, (iii) working as domestic helpers, (iv) working in the sex trade, (v) already in a live-in relationship, (vi) victims of child abuse, (vii) victims of sexual abuse (incest and rape), (viii) victims of economic abuse, and others. Their life stories were used as the basis in determining what human rights were violated in analyzing the circumstances that could have caused such violations to happen and in identifying the gaps in the implementation of existing laws for the girl-children.

Section 2: The Situation of Girl-Children in the Philippines

Studies and literature on girl-children reveal the children's sad state in Philippine society despite efforts to respond to the mandates specifically created for them by government agencies, and by local and international nongovernment organizations (NGOs) that are concerned about their health and well-being. Although studies have been conducted, followed by monitoring, evaluation, and assessment, the results were unsatisfactory and have not yielded the desired outcomes. The following reports present a glimpse of the situation of girl-children in the country.

Types of Children's Rights Violations

The United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has compiled reports on the types of violations for the years 2006, 2007, and 2008. It also presented the number of child abuse cases reported, which have resulted in either a court decision or other types of follow-up, and the number and proportion of victims who have received counseling and assistance.

Of the types of abuses referred during 2006–2008, the four most reported cases were (i) sexual abuse (32%–38%), (ii) neglect (25%–31%), (iii) abandonment (12%–20%), and (iv) physical abuse (4%–10%). Victims of emotional abuse have not been included in the statistics until only recently (CY2008) and comprise less than 1 percent of the total cases. In all types of abuse except for being victims of armed conflict, females are more subjected to such treatments than males (UNCRC 2010).

According to the reports, since 2006, a total of 18,065 cases of child abuse in the Philippines were referred to the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) centers, which decreased from 7,606 cases in 2007 to 3,231 cases in 2008. Most cases of child abuse were experienced by female children (5,278 cases in 2006, 4,831 in 2007, and 2,243 in 2008) compared to male children (2,326 cases in 2006, 2,397 in 2007, and 988 in 2008).

Extent of Violence and Abuse Committed against Children

The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) had conducted a study on the violence against children in the home and in school. The study aimed to map in broad strokes the definition of Violence against Children (VAC) in the public school setting and the perception of children and adult stakeholders on the issue. The specific objectives were to (i) describe the issue of VAC in schools from the point of view of children, parents, school management, and school personnel (teaching and non-teaching) in the selected research sites; (ii) identify factors that support or deter violence against children in schools in the selected research sites; and (iii) recommend policy and program interventions to address VAC in schools, toward making schools more child-friendly.

The key findings of the study were as follows:

- (1) At least 4 out of 10 children in Grades 1–3, and 7 out of 10 in both Grades 4–6 and high school have experienced some kind of violence in school.
- (2) Verbal abuse is the most prevalent form of violence experienced by children at all school levels. This includes being shouted at and being cursed, ridiculed, teased, or humiliated.
- (3) The degree or gravity and incidence of abuse increases as the child graduates from one level of abuse to another.
- (4) Children experience violence both from their peers in school and from school personnel. While more forms of violence are experienced by older children from their peers, younger children more commonly experience certain physical and verbal forms of violence from adults.
- (5) Verbal sexual harassment is experienced equally by both female and male children.
- (6) There are more incidents of violence experienced by children in urban schools than by children in rural schools.
- (7) Physical and verbal forms of violence are accepted by children as part of discipline and seen as appropriate in certain situations.

- (8) Children generally prefer a more positive form of discipline such as being talked to and corrected or guided/counseled in response to offenses or violations committed in school.
- (9) Most public schools do not follow a standard way of addressing complaints on violence against children.

Thus, the process of handling complaints is vulnerable to the personal biases and arbitrary judgment of people in charge, resulting in children's distrust of the process (CWC 2009).

In its report on the State of the World's Children in 2007, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) examined the relationship between gender inequality and the situation of children. The report showed the extent to which societies discriminate against their women and how these affect their children's chances to develop and thrive. An estimated 1.8 million children across the globe are now involved in commercial sex work. UNICEF admits that consistent statistics in sexual abuse, exploitation, and trafficking in the Philippines are difficult to monitor, and urges more extensive study on the situation. It also reports that 12% of Filipino children between 5–14 years old are already involved in economic activity of some kind (UNICEF 2006).

Factsheet updates from the National Statistical Coordination Board (NSCB) state that DSWD had served a total of 5,692 cases on child abuse in 2004. Specifically, these cases are summarized in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1. Cases of Child Abuse Reported by DSWD in 2004

Types of Abuse	No. of Cases
Sexually abused	2,889
Neglected	1,164
Physically abused/maltreated	563
Abandoned	417
Victims of child labor	100
Sexually exploited	257
Others	302
Total no. of cases	5,692

On violence against women and girls, 5,374 cases were reported to the Philippine National Police (PNP) in 2005 as follows:

Table 2. Cases of Violence Against Women and Children from the PNP, 2005

Types of Abuse	No. of Cases
Physical injuries/wife battering	2,335
Rape	890
Acts of lasciviousness	526
Maltreatment/threats	219
Attempted rape	146
Incestuous rape	46
Others	1,212
Total no. of cases	5,374

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) also reported the following total of 4,232 cases of abuse against women and girls (NSCB 2006) disaggregated as follows:

Table 3. Cases of Violence Against Women and Children, DSWD, 2005

Types of Abuse	No. of Cases
Maltreatment/battering	1,217
Sexually abused	286
Involuntary prostitution	108
Illegal recruitment	95
In detention	54
Armed conflict	5
Others	2,467
Total no. of cases	4,332

The National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) had also released its Factsheet on Violence of Women and Girls. It revealed that the number of cases reported to the police increased six-fold—from 1,100 in 1996 to 6,505 in 2005. The highest recorded number of violence against women and children (VAWC) cases in the police department peaked in 2001 at 10,345. Both the 2005 police and social welfare records show that physical injuries/battering and rape are the most common types of reported VAWC cases. One in every three reported cases to the police is battering/physical injuries while 17.2 percent accounted for rape cases. Similarly, the social welfare department served a total of 1,217 cases of physical abuses/battering or 28.8 percent while sexual abuse cases accounted for 6.8 percent (NCRFW 2005).

In the Report on the Girl-Child prepared by Philippine NGOs for the Beijing + 10 Assessment of the Gains after the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, Dr. Rosario del Rosario presented the following:

“The Philippines is fourth among nine nations with the most number of children in prostitution. Each year, some 3,266 more Filipino children 15–18 years old are forced into the sex industry, mostly coming from semi-rural and urban areas, and are victims of incest and sexual abuse. Some groups estimate that 25 percent of all reported prostituted Filipino females are girls.

There is an increasing feminization and patterns of risk behaviors, such as drinking and early sex activity among adolescents, culminating in teenage pregnancy. More than 1.5 million girls aged 15–17 years give birth each year, and 25 percent of the total estimated illegitimate births involve teenage girls. Teenage girls make up 25 percent of those who die each year from pregnancy and childbirth. There seems to be an increasing incidence of violent sexual experiences among those currently out of school. Studies have shown that 95 percent of child victims of commercial sexual exploitation are out of school. In schools, gender-tracked skills training programs are still prevalent, and there are no information and education on health, sexuality and reproductive rights for girl students.

In a study, it was found that 76.7 percent of family and household violence cases were committed against girls. At least 32.8 percent of the abuses were repeated abuses that went on for a year or more. Incest accounted for more than 3 of 10 sexual abuse cases, and 55.6 percent of the reported perpetrators were family members and/or known to the children. A study on Filipino adolescents noted that a significant proportion of first sexual experiences among them involved force, which is tantamount to rape. Females, particularly younger ones, were the more likely victims.

Overall, girl-children still suffer from cultural, gender-tracked, and discriminatory practices. For instance, they continue to be given feminized roles and tasks, like housework, childcare, and homework. Girls are given more duties at home. One in every five Filipino children has had no early education, and only 15 percent of children 3–5 years of age attend some early childhood program in preschool, nursery, or day care. Eight in every 10 Filipino children are underweight, and malnutrition and infection affect more girls than boys in some regions of the country. Adolescent girls receive the least amount of nutrients compared to other household members, yet are made to do more domestic work than boys (Del Rosario 2005).”

All these facts and figures seem to indicate that nothing much have changed in the situation of girl-children in the country. This becomes a challenge for government and nongovernment agencies to continue with more vigor the effective implementation of projects for the women and girl-children, with their education and training programs, with their researches and advocacies on the rights of girl-children.

Section 3: Enabling Policies, Mechanisms, and Standards to Protect the Human Rights of Girl-Children

A study on human rights requires long preparation as it includes getting oneself familiar with the laws and policies, locally and globally, and determining if the articles stated there could provide answers to the questions and the harsh realities being experienced by girl-children in the study. It is also important to determine if these laws provide substance and directions in the

preparation of the instruments and in the whole study itself. Based on these perspectives, the following laws, policies, covenants, and declarations were used as references in this study.

International Covenants and National Laws and Policies on the Girl-Children

The human rights of children and the youth are explicitly set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child—the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. They are also contained in other human rights documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and other widely adhered to international human rights treaties and declarations.

International organizations had included in their main agenda the protection and the rights of girl-children as expressed in their mandates, which were also adopted in Philippine laws, the country being one of its signatories.

The following are selected statements from international covenants on the human rights of girl-children which are relevant to this study:

A. Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR)

“Everyone is entitled to the same rights without discrimination of any kind, everyone has the right to life, no one shall be subjected to torture or cruel or degrading treatment or punishment, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression, everyone has the right to rest and leisure, everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services, and everyone has the right to education.”

B. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child abolished all discriminations against children. It protects in the most comprehensive way all rights of children: political rights, civil rights, social rights, economic rights, and cultural rights. It adopted the principle of interdependence and indivisibility of children’s rights. A violation of one right is considered a violation of other rights. It also embraced the rule that all actions of a State concerning the child should consider

the “best interests” of the child. Pursuant to Article VII, Section 21 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, this Convention on the Rights of the Child became valid and effective in the Philippines in July 1990 upon concurrence of the Senate. The Philippines was the 31st state to ratify this Convention.

The guiding principles of the Convention include non-discrimination; adherence to the best interests of the child, the right to live, survival, and development; and the right to participate.

C. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

“The Convention affirms the reproductive rights of women and targets culture and tradition as influential forces in shaping gender roles and family relations.

State Parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women that are based on ideas of inferiority or on stereotyped roles for men and women to ensure that family education include the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in raising children (Article 5a).”

D. The United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (UNDRC)

“The child has the right to affection, love and understanding; the right to adequate nutrition and medical care; the right to free education; the right to full opportunity for play and recreation; the right to a name and nationality; the right to be among the first to receive relief in times of disaster; the right to learn to be useful member of society and to develop individual abilities; the right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood; and the right to enjoy these rights, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, nationality or social origin.

The child shall enjoy special protection and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interest of the child shall be of paramount consideration.

The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation. He/she shall not be subject of traffic in any form; the child shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age. He/she shall in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment, which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development.”

E. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

“Children and young people should be protected from economic and social exploitation. Their employment in work harmful to their morals or health or dangerous to life or likely to hamper their normal development should be punishable by law.

These rights provide all peoples to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development, (which) will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”

F. The People’s Movement for Human Rights Education (PMHRE)

“The indivisible, interdependent and interrelated human rights of children are freedom from discrimination based on gender, age, race, color, language, religion, ethnicity or any other status of the child’s parents; a standard of living adequate for a child’s intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual development; a healthy and safe environment; the highest possible standard of health and to equal access to health care; equal access to food and nutrition; free and compulsory elementary education, to equal access to readily available forms of secondary and higher education, and to freedom from all types of discrimination at all levels of education; information about health, sexuality and reproduction; protection from all physical or mental abuse and protection from economic and sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking; freedom from forced or early marriage; and freedom to express an opinion about plans affecting the child’s life.

Human rights are universal, and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights belong to all human beings including children and young people. Children and youth also enjoy certain human rights specially linked to their status as minors and to their need for special care and protection. Girl-children are particularly vulnerable to certain human rights violations, and therefore require additional protections.”

G. Other International Covenants

Many more international organizations expressed concerns for the protection and well-being of the girl-child. For instance, the International Labor Organization Age Convention, is concerned about the effective abolition of child labor and has set the minimum age of children to work that should not be less than the age of compulsory schooling, and in any case, shall not be less than 15 years. It also cited that the minimum age for admission to any type of employment or work, which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young persons shall not be less than 18 years.

The World Conference on Human Rights (WCHR), on the other hand, stressed the full development of the child’s personality, so that he or she should grow in a family environment that provides broader protection. The Vienna Declaration and Program of Action had emphasized that national and international mechanisms and programs should be strengthened for the defense and protection of children, in particular, the girl-children, abandoned children, street children, and economically and sexually exploited children. Exploitation and abuse of children should be actively combated, including addressing their root causes.

Agenda 21 specified that each country should combat human rights abuses against young people, particularly young women and girls and should consider providing all youth with legal protection, skills, opportunities, and the support necessary for them to fulfill their personal, economic, and social aspirations and potentials.

Philippine Laws on Children

Aside from the mandates discussed earlier of which the government is a signatory, the Philippines is not wanting in laws for the protection of girl-children as shown in the following:

A. Republic Act No. 9262

“An Act Defining Violence Against Women and their Children, Providing for Protective Measures for Victims, Prescribing Penalties Therefore, and for Other Purposes. This Act shall be known as Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004. The State values the dignity of women and children and guarantees full respect for their human rights. The State also recognizes the need to protect the family and its members particularly the women and children, from violence and threats to their personal safety and security.

In addition to their rights under existing laws, victims of violence against women and children shall have the following rights: to be treated with respect and dignity, to avail of legal assistance from the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO) of the Department of Justice, or any public legal assistance office, to be entitled to support services from the DSWD and LGUs, to be entitled to all legal remedies and support as provided for under the Family Code, and to be informed of their rights and the services available to them including their right to apply for a protection order.”

B. Republic Act No. 9231

“An Act providing for the elimination of the worst forms of child labor and affording stronger protection for the working child, amending for this purpose Republic Act No. 7610 as amended, otherwise known as the ‘Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination.’

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the State to provide special protection to children from all forms of abuse, neglect, cruelty, exploitation and discrimination, and other conditions prejudicial to their development including child labor and its worst forms, provide sanctions for their commission and carry out a program for the prevention and deterrence of and crisis intervention in situations of child abuse, exploitation and discrimination. The State shall intervene on behalf of the child when the parent, guardian, teacher, or person having care or custody of the child fails or is unable to protect the child against abuse, exploitation and

discrimination or when such acts against the child are committed by the said parent, guardian, teacher or person having care and custody of the same.”

C. Republic Act No. 9155

“It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the rights of all citizens to quality basic education and to make such education accessible to all by providing all Filipino children a free and compulsory education in the elementary level and free education in the high school level.”

D. Republic Act No. 8044

This is also known as the Youth in Nation Building Act, which also created the National Youth Commission. This body was tasked, among others, to plan, implement and oversee a national integrated youth promotion and development program. One of its components is the formulation and implementation of a Medium-Term Development Plan. The process of coming up with the plan is ongoing and advocacy efforts are being done to ensure that it is gender- responsive.

E. Republic Act No. 8353

Known as the Anti-Rape law, it imposes the death penalty to the offender when the victim is under 12 years of age or is demented. Death is also the penalty when the victim is under 18 years old and the offender is a parent, stepparent, guardian, a relative by consanguinity or affinity within third civil degree, or the common-law spouse of the victim’s parent. The Support to Rape Victims Act (RA 8505) guarantees protection and crisis assistance to women and children victims. This reinforces the programs of the DSWD for women and children who are in especially difficult circumstances.

F. Republic Act 8369

This Act created the Family Courts in 1997 and grants these courts exclusive jurisdiction over child and family cases. Under this law, the dignity and worth of individuals involved, especially women and children victims, are protected by assuring secrecy and confidentiality in all stages of the trial.

G. Republic Act No. 7658

“An Act Prohibiting the Employment of Children below 15 years of age in public and private undertakings, amending for this purpose Section 12, Article VIII of R.A. 7610. Except as otherwise provided in its Rules, children below 15 years of age shall not be employed, permitted or suffered to work, in any public or private establishment in the Philippines.”

H. Executive Order No. 233

“It is the policy of the State to promote the well-being and total development of children and youth, and to protect them from exploitation, abuse, improper influence, hazards and other circumstances prejudicial to their physical, mental, emotional, social and moral development.”

Structures and Mechanisms

There are laws and policies with all the necessary structures and mechanisms in place, to guarantee the safety and protection of children in the country. Some of these are already broad in scope and coverage. These impressively planned structures and mechanisms would surely make a big difference in the lives of children if given sufficient budget and complemented with committed and efficient personnel who would carry them out accordingly.

A. Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children 2000–2025

Also known as Child 21, this is a strategic framework that guides stakeholders in planning programs and interventions that promote and safeguard the rights of Filipino children (in the 21st century). It combines child rights (survival, development, protection and participation) with the child’s life cycle and advocates a more focused targeting of children as well as interfacing critical interventions at the various stages of a child’s development. The responsible bodies for Child 21 are the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), the Philippine Government, and UNICEF-Philippines.

B. The Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC)

The Council has been created under the Office of the President by virtue of Presidential Decree No. 603, also known as The Child and Youth Welfare Code, with primary functions among

others, to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of all laws relative to the promotion of child and youth welfare so as to formulate and evaluate policies, programs, and services for the development of the general welfare and protection of the best interest of children and youth. Its ultimate mission is to ensure protection of children against all forms of abuse and exploitation, to defend children's rights, promote their welfare and development, and ensure that they are given priority attention at all levels, both by government and by the civil society. The Council is an attached agency of the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

C. The Philippine National Plan of Action on Violence against Children (PNPAVAC)

The goal of PNPAVAC is to prevent and protect all children, especially those at risk, from violence and to ensure the recovery and reintegration of victim-survivors with their families and communities and facilitate the rehabilitation of perpetrators of violence. It involves the following areas for strategic action: legislation/policy development and implementation, social protection system, information management system, and monitoring and evaluation system.

1. Legislation/Policy Development and Implementation
 - a) Enactment or amendment of laws to fight and prevent violence against children in all settings (e.g., anti-corporal punishment of children law, age of sexual consent, child pornography).
 - b) Strict implementation of existing laws and policies.

2. Social Protection System
 - a) Education for parents, service providers, policymakers, children, and the general public.
 - b) Establishment of structures and mechanisms for children's participation in anti-VAC programs, policies, and other initiatives.
 - c) Ensuring involvement of parents and communities in the prevention, response and rehabilitation programs, law reform, and monitoring.
 - d) Provision of prevention, protection rehabilitation and re-integration services for children.
 - e) Capacity building for all who work for and with children and families.
 - f) Mainstream a multidisciplinary approach on the management of cases of VAC.

- g) Develop and mainstream a child protection policy within government and NGOs dealing with children (i.e., institutional procedures, standards of behavior).
 - h) Train/orient media people on guidelines for reporting on children's cases.
3. Information Management System
 - a) Ensure systematic data and information collection, reporting, and monitoring.
 - b) Conduct relevant research on VAC in different settings.
 - c) Ensure free and accessible birth registration.
 4. Monitoring and Evaluation System
 - a) Strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation at national and local levels.
 - b) Involvement of children, parents, and communities in the monitoring and evaluation of government policies and programs.

D. The Child Rights Center

The Child Rights Center is a unit of Philippine Commission on Human Rights (PCHR) that ensures that the status, rights, and interests of children are upheld in accordance with the Philippine Constitution and international instruments on human rights. It also works to “spearhead the investigation and initiate legal action for and in behalf of child victims of human rights violations, formulate policies, develop standards and indicators, conceptualize projects and programs that will ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of children in the Philippines, and to monitor government compliance with specific provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.” The Center also develops and implements awareness programs on children's rights. It conducts studies in aid of legislations, and links with government and NGOs for more effective ways to implement existing national and international laws and treaties. PCHR has created the Child Rights Center and the Child Rights Complaints Desks in all of its regional centers.

Although there is no specific law creating the Child Rights Center, the Juvenile Justice Welfare Act of 2006 recognizes its role in ensuring the rights of the child as articulated in the Philippine

Constitution and international treaties through monitoring. In 2007, PCHR also issued a resolution declaring itself as Ombudsman for Children. Both instruments lead to further strengthening the mandates of the Center.

As the ombudsman for children, the Child Rights Center functions as follows:

1. Represents the rights and interest of children.
2. Monitors and assesses the Philippine Government's implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. Promotes awareness of the various conventions on children's rights.
4. Advises and proposes to the government the adoption or amendments of laws, programs, and policies or measures in consonance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
5. Regularly prepares and submits a supplemental report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the status of children's rights in the Philippines.
6. Promotes child participation in all its programs and undertakings.
7. Works in collaboration and coordination with other stakeholders of children's rights.
8. Establishes structures to increase the knowledge of children of their rights and to facilitate regular consultation with them on issues concerning the realization of children's rights.
9. Undertakes, promotes, or publishes research on matters relating to the rights and welfare of children.
10. Assesses the impact on children of different policy options and to devise specific strategies in order to promote and protect the rights of children.
11. Initiates and/or implements analogous activities, programs, and policy directions that will safeguard the rights and interests of children.

Other functions of the Center include:

1. Provides legal assistance to children victims of human rights violations
2. Conducts education on the rights of the child.
3. Monitors government's compliance with its obligations in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. Conducts advocacy and lobbying activities.

5. Prepares position papers relative to pending bills in the Congress that have implications on children, and proposes amendments to existing legislations to become consistent with children's rights.
6. Provides financial assistance to children who are victims of violations.
7. Conducts jail and institution visitations to ensure protection of the rights of children.

E. The United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The Committee on the Rights of the Child under the Convention on the Rights of the Child of the United Nations had submitted its report to the United Nations Office of the High Commission for Human Rights as follows:

1. Creation of the Special Committee for the Protection of Children to oversee the implementation of a comprehensive program related to child protection rights.
2. The Family Violence Prevention Program of the Philippines includes preparing family members to manage resolution of conflicts within the context of family relations and protect children from an environment of violence.
3. Harmonization of Philippine laws with the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been the guide of the government in setting its legislative agenda for children. The constant challenge at the national level was strengthening coordination among agencies and local governments as well as capacity building of local government functionaries, especially the service providers.
4. Programs and projects were implemented in partnership with local governments and with NGOs and the communities, especially in areas where there were disparities in child rights indicators.
5. Advocacy and planning sessions had also been held with local governments to ensure that goals and targets were synchronized with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).
6. The Supreme Court has designated 71 regional trial courts as Family Courts as of December 2000.
7. A number of programs to provide continuing education for professionals on child rights were also carried out that included the basic principles of child rights, the handling of

child victims of abuse, family violence protection, and the psychological intervention for children affected by armed conflict.

8. The Council for the Welfare of Children continues to harmonize all acts concerning child rights.
9. There was a budget for each local government for matters related to children. There had been an increase in the budget for children in the various regions of the country.
10. There were effective mechanisms for monitoring violence against children, which also aimed to engage agencies for support and action and allowed for legal protection measures.
11. A six-year plan of action was also in effect, which developed guidelines for the establishment of local task forces to ensure law enforcement in the areas of surveillance, investigation, and arrests of perpetrators of child rights offenses.
12. On corporal punishment, this practice was prohibited although it was still being used by parents. Laws had been passed to impose heavier penalties, through the Family Code, with the hope of reducing such practices. Several workshops had been carried out to raise awareness about this practice.

Section 4: Results of the Study

This study was conducted to find out how a patriarchal culture affects the human rights of selected girl-children in Cagayan de Oro City and in Claveria, Misamis Oriental and to draw implications and recommendations to protect the rights of girl-children in the Philippines. Three specific objectives were presented:

- (i) to document the life experiences of the poor, powerless, and disadvantaged girl-children and identify human rights violations committed against them;
- (ii) to examine all aspects in the lives of girl-children in order to determine the factors that may have contributed to the kind of life they are going through; and,
- (iii) to identify the gaps in the implementation of the laws and policies specifically created for the welfare of girl-children.

Profile of Respondents and Issues Gathered

To establish baseline data about the respondents, tables 4 and 5 were used to show the respondents' place of residence, age, and religion. In Cagayan de Oro City, the respondents mostly come from the *barangays* along Cagayan de Oro River, such as Consolacion and Carmen, which are thickly populated areas and where mostly poor families reside. In Claveria, the respondents come from communities that are located 5 to 40 kilometers (km) away from the town proper as follows: Panampawan – about 5 km, Luna – 6 km, Lanise – 15 km, Mat-I –18 km, Man-ibay –29 km, Cebulig – 35 km, and Lunutan – 40 km. Table 4 shows the number of respondents in each area.

Table 4: Number of Respondents per Area of Study

Cagayan de oro City	No.	%	Claveria	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>
Consolacion	16	32	Mat-i	8	32
Lapasan	10	20	Lanise	6	24
Carmen	9	18	Luna	4	16
Divisoria	6	12	Lunutan	4	16
Macabalan	5	10	Panampawan	2	8
Macasandig	4	8	Aposkahoy	1	4
Total	50	100	Total	25	100

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Age and Religion

Age	CDO	%	Clav	%	Religion	CDO	%	Clav	%
10	2	4	2	8	Catholics	40	80	18	72
11	3	6	1	4	Protestants	6	12	6	24
12	4	8	5	20	Seventh Day Adv.	2	4		
13	8	16	2	8	Iglesia ni Cristo	1	2		
14	3	6	3	12	Mormon	1	2		
15	8	16	1	4	Jehovah's Witness			1	4
16	13	26	11	44					
17	9	18							
Total	50	100	25	100		50	100	25	100

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria.

On the first specific objective, a total of 75 girl-children were interviewed (50 in Cagayan de Oro City and 25 in Claveria, Misamis Oriental) from which life stories were written for each one of them (see Annex 1). These life stories were then processed to identify the human rights violations experienced by the girl-children while they are being raised by their parents in their homes. Tables show the common responses given for specific items.

Pertinent laws and policies are first presented followed by the data processed from the life stories of the respondents to allow easy checking if these entries corresponded. So as not to lose track of the facts and figures presented for every aspect of the girls' life, the factors that may have contributed to the kind of life they had experienced are discussed right after. This becomes the initial response to the second specific question in this study.

Grouping of issues and concerns was made in accordance with the guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as follows: (i) survival and development rights, (ii) protection rights, and (iii) the right to participate.

The CRC was made the basic reference in the presentation of human rights violations as it was the first instrument to incorporate the complete range of international rights to include (i) Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), (ii) UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child

(UNDRC), (iii) Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and (iv) The People's Movement on Human Rights Education (PMHRE), among others.

Being one of its signatories, the Philippine government had tasked agencies to come up with plans and programs for the protection of girl-children and to see to it that their projects and activities are always in compliance with the provisions of the Convention. Also, the principles of the Convention had been used as a guide in setting the country's legislative agenda for Filipino children. Thus, certain provisions in the Convention can also be found in the following laws: (i) The Magna Carta of Women (R.A. 9710), (ii) The Anti-Violence Against Women and Their Children Act of 2004 (R.A. 9262), and (iii) Republic Act No. 9231, among others.

Identifying Human Rights Violations Against Girl-Children

The CRC defines Human Rights as the rights that are essential for one to live as a human being. They are inherent to the human person, inalienable, and universal. In this study, human rights violations against girl-children culled from the life stories of the 75 respondents were identified based on the provisions in the CRC.

A. Survival and Development Rights

Survival and development rights are the rights to the resources, skills, and contributions necessary for the survival and full development of the child. They include rights to adequate food, shelter, clean water, formal education, primary health care, leisure and recreation, cultural activities, and information about their rights.

1. Physical and Social Environment

a). Pertinent Legal Provisions:

The UNCRC provisions include:

“State parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. The parent(s) or others responsible for the child have the primary responsibility to secure within their abilities and financial capacities, the conditions of living necessary for the child's development (Art. 27).

State parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life. State parties shall ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival and development of the child (Art. 6).”

State parties shall use their best efforts to ensure recognition of the principle that both parents have common responsibilities for the upbringing and development of the child. Parents, or as the case maybe, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interest of the child will be their basic concern (Art. 18).

b). Contributory Factors

As specified in the study, the respondents are poor and do not have adequate standards of living. Most of them live in shanties or in small houses while some of them live in a one-room affair area where they do not have even their own toilets, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Housing Condition of Respondents

Housing condition of respondents	CDO	%	Clav	%
Small house or shanties without any bedroom	20	40	10	40
Small house with 1 bedroom for parents	13	26	5	20
House with 2 bedrooms, for parents and girls	11	22	5	20
House with 3 bedrooms, for parents, for girls, for boys	4	8	5	20
Shanty has no walls, roof made of scrap plastic materials	2	4		
With no toilet inside the house	25	50	8	32
House with a toilet inside, also used for bathing	17	34	15	60
With toilet outside or adjacent to the house	8	16	2	8
For those with no toilets and bath in the house:				
Use neighbor’s toilet for a fee (P2.00)	18	36	5	20
Go to grassy areas nearby	4	8	3	12
Use container and throw waste into the river	3	6		
Take bath in the river or spring–by the public faucet	5	10	11	44

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria.

Deprived of basic necessities in life, the respondents' parents' main concern is to have enough food to eat every mealtime, which in most cases, is inadequate for the whole family. The respondents' physical appearance easily shows that most of them are undernourished and underweight.

Their houses are usually made of light materials and are built in crowded areas especially those in the city. If fire would start in one of the houses, it could raze all the other houses in the neighborhood as well. Some of them are built along the canal, which stinks all day. Some are located very close to the Cagayan River, which poses a problem as the river could become swollen during very heavy rains. In Claveria, a number of respondents have their shanties built on a piece of lot that they do not own. Usually, these are located along the road, near a hill, or a slopping area, a creek, or a river. It could also be dangerous for them especially during heavy rains as continuous rains could trigger a landslide.

For families living in a one-room house, the space is usually used as living and dining areas at daytime and as sleeping area at night. For big families, they are forced to sleep together side by side - parents, sisters, and brothers. Nobody can enjoy some privacy especially the parents who may do their thing when they thought the children are all asleep. Eventually, the children, young as they are, become aware what parents do to make them happy as a couple. This could somehow explain why children, boys and girls alike, get into sex with a partner even at a very young age.

The neighborhood itself is usually dirty with garbage all around. People do not seem to care about cleanliness in and out of their houses. The roads are not paved and become muddy during rainy days. Gossiping and consequently, quarrels in the neighborhood are witnessed by everybody and bad words and even bad manners are common for the children to pick up easily.

Most of the areas where respondents live are quite far from health centers, market, police stations, and playgrounds. Children are found playing along the streets, which could be dangerous especially during times when there are increased number of vehicles that are passing through.

The respondents stay in such an environment because their parents do not have regular means of livelihood by which they could improve their standard of living. Most of the respondents do not even know how much their parents earn in a day or in a week especially in jobs that are not done on a regular basis. What they know is that their parents' income is not enough to meet their basic daily needs. The problem is more pronounced in some families in which neither the father nor the mother has any job at all.

Table 7 shows the distribution of occupations of fathers and mothers in Cagayan de Oro City (CDO) and in Claveria. It also includes the number of cases where parents are no longer earning or contributing for the needs of the family.

Table 7: Occupation of Respondents' Parents

Father's Occupation	CDO		Claveria		Mother's Occupation	CDO		Claveria	
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
Construction worker	7	14	1	4	Laundry woman	9	18	9	36
Farmer	4	8	20	80	Farmer	2	4	10	40
Vehicle driver	4	8	0	0	Vendor	5	10	2	4
Car washer	3	6	0	0	Dressmaker	2	8	0	0
Security guard	2	4	0	0	Entrepreneur	0	0	2	12
Cigarette vendor	2	4	0	0	Manicurist		4	0	0
Mechanic, Welder	2	4	1	4	Bar	1	4	0	0
Laborer	2	4	0	0	Cook	1	4	0	0
Government employee	0	0	1	4	Junkshop worker or junk collector	1	4	0	0
In jail	3	6	0	0	In jail	0	0	0	0
Deceased	4	8	2	8	Deceased	2	0	1	4
Unknown/none	17	34	0	0	Unknown/none	27	44	1	4
Total	50	100	25	100	Total	50	100	25	100

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City

Table 7 shows easily how much money the respondents' parents earn in a day or in a week with the kind of job they do. It could be somewhere from P250 to P300 a day. Situations could be worse for families of respondents whose parents had already passed away (11) and for those whose fathers are in jail (3). Also, there are respondents in CDO who said that they do not know the occupation of their fathers (17) and their mothers (26) and this includes those whose parents had already parted ways. The respondents would not even know their whereabouts. The same is true with the 10 mothers in Claveria.

In such a situation, one wonders how the family survives, especially if there are many children in the family. With the high cost of living, the daily income of the parents may not even be enough to buy sufficient basic food for all family members. The responses of the girl-children indicated that they are really wanting of enough food to nourish their young bodies especially if they walk to school, study the whole day, and do the household chores once they get home. Most of the respondents in Claveria claim that they usually have boiled bananas or root crops like sweet potatoes and cassava for their meals with 'bagoong' or salted small fish for viand.

Despite small incomes, the number of children is still big in some families, as shown in Table 8. To have more than four children in a family with parents having no permanent jobs really bring problems of meeting the basic needs. The second column shows families with even 7 – 12 children each in the two survey areas.

Table 8: Number of Siblings of Respondents

No. of Children	CDO		Claveria		No. of Children	CDO		Claveria	
	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%	No.	%
1	3	6	3	12	7	4	8	7	28
2	6	12	3	12	8	4	8	2	8
3	8	16	4	16	9	3	6	1	4
4	11	22	1	4	10	1	2	2	8
5	7	14	7	28	11	1	2	1	4
6	7	14	5	25	12	2	4	1	4

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City

When some respondents were asked about the civil status of the their parents, 25 from CDO said their parents are still living together, 17 have parents who are already separated, 6 have a parent who already passed away, and 1 respondent does not even know who her father is. In Claveria, 17 of the respondents have parents who are living together, 5 of them have parents who had parted ways, and 3 had parents who already passed away (Table 9).

Table 9: Civil Status of Parents of Respondents

Respondents' Parents' Civil Status	No. of Respondents	
	CDO	Claveria
Parents still living together/married	25	17
Parents are already separated	17	5
A parent/ Parents had passed away	6	3
Does not know who her father is	1	0
Total	49	25

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City

In Table 10, the circumstances or reasons why parents of 17 respondents in CDO and 5 in Claveria are no longer living together under the same roof are shown.

Table 10: Reasons for Marital Separation

Reasons for marital separation	CDO	%	Clav	%
Father abandoned his family for another woman	11	22	2	8
Parents quarreled over financial and personal problems	8	16	3	12
Mother left, always being battered by husband	7	14	4	16
Mother left, partner irresponsible and a womanizer	3	6	2	8
Father left, mother eventually got another partner	2	4	2	8
Father left to work elsewhere and never came back	3	6	1	4
Mother left to work in Luzon and never came back	1	2	2	8
Father is in jail for raping his daughter/stepdaughter	3	6	0	0
Father is in jail for drug pushing	1	2	0	0
Father went away to evade arrest for a crime done	1	2	0	0

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

Couples separate not only for one reason. The common scenario is that the man comes home drunk after losing in gambling and without any money to buy food for their meals. This triggers the wife bad-mouthing the husband, which the husband cannot tolerate and ends up battering the wife. To make matters worse, the man may get another woman perhaps to prove to the wife that he is still attractive in the eyes of another woman and to make himself feel better. This case usually ends up in more quarrels and, finally, with the husband abandoning the family or the wife leaving the husband and the children behind. Sometimes, to get even with the husband, the wife eventually gets into a relationship, and in two cases under this study, with a younger man. This scenario holds true in CDO and Claveria, in both urban and rural setting.

This kind of social environment is not healthy for the respondents. They are greatly disturbed especially when the mother is physically battered, which eventually lead to the couple's separation. Living with only one parent also causes much stress, and emotional and mental anguish among the children who prefer that all family members live together despite their poverty.

However, even in families with parents still living together, the situation is almost the same simply because they have the same financial problems and family sizes. Parents quarrel, the wife is beaten up, but the wife generally endures the beatings for the sake of the children and family solidarity. Again, in such situations, the children are the ones affected, emotionally and mentally. Respondents claim that when parents quarrel, they could no longer focus on their school assignments and they could only cry because of mixed emotions. In many cases, even the children are likewise hurt or physically abused by either the father or the mother - even for small mistakes they have done or for things they failed to do.

Patriarchy is clearly illustrated in the experiences so far presented in this section. Patriarchy generally refers to social systems in which power is primarily held by adult men, and in which men oppress, exploit, and dominate women. It is a system in which the father holds authority over women, children, and property. Patriarchy is the result of sociological constructions that are passed down from generation to generation and these are more pronounced in societies with traditional cultures and less economic development (Lerner 1986).

As can be noted in Tables 8 and 10, the father who is expected to support the basic needs of the family even in terms of food and shelter had failed miserably. Even without regular income, he still begets more children, which already shows his power over the wife. As the children grow up, economic problems tend to double but the husband still asserts his power and authority over the wife by physically and emotionally battering her. Based from the interviews conducted, the husband eventually abandons the family and gets another woman whom he could easily subdue with less commitment and responsibility.

Having more children is also viewed as the result of what the church is advocating: family planning through natural means and not for the couple to use artificial means of contraceptives. As noted, the natural way is not effective for some couples as the wife cannot say 'no' to the husband who is drunk and who sees sexual intercourse as his only way to feel happy in the midst of poverty. Generally, the husband could not wait for several days when the wife is no longer fertile. Moreover, some parents also consider as desirable to have another child, especially if the couple do not yet have a son. Some parents see having more children as having more hands to help them earn a living.

It is simply ironic that despite poverty, many parents still beget more children whom they could hardly feed and educate. Because of extreme poverty, children - mostly girl-children - are forced to work as street beggars, domestic helpers, farm workers, and factory workers instead of finishing their secondary education. Viewed as additional hands to bring in income, poor parents depend upon them for the economic needs of the family.

Such a situation, including extreme poverty, would fall under the category of “Human Rights Violations” as defined in national and international mandates on women and children. The kind of relationships that exists in the situations cited above could mean one thing—that human rights violation is a normal occurrence in a patriarchal society.

2. Formal Education

Formal education refers to the institutionalized, hierarchically structured and chronologically guided educational system running from elementary to tertiary levels.

a). Pertinent Legal Provisions

R.A. 9231 provides for the following when it comes to formal education:

“It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality basic education and to make such education accessible to all by providing all Filipino children a free and compulsory education in the elementary and free education in the high school level (Congress of the Philippines 2001).”

Similarly, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has the following provisions:

“The child has a right to education and the State’s duty is to ensure that primary education is free and compulsory, to encourage different forms of secondary education accessible to every child and to make higher education available to all on the basis of capacity. School discipline shall be consistent with the child’s rights and human dignity. For children to benefit from education, schools must be run in an orderly way - without use of violence (Art. 28 of the CRC). Measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates should be taken (Art. 28-e of the CRC).”

c). Contributory Factors

Education is free in both elementary and secondary schools in the Philippines. In CDO, elementary and high schools are located in strategic places in every district, which are accessible by public transportation. In Claveria, there is an elementary school in every barangay, but since the houses are widely scattered, some children still have to walk a kilometer (km) to and from school. The location of high school is even farther for the respondents as it is located in Mat-i, which could be 1–5 km away depending on where the students live, and jeepneys, their means of transport, come only at one-hour intervals.

In this study, all respondents are of school age and, therefore, they should be in either elementary or secondary schools. But as Table 11 shows, of the 75 respondents, only 30 are in school (IS) - 17 in CDO and 13 in Claveria. The majority of them (45 respondents) are out of school (OS), either working as housemaids (13), working as prostituted girls (11), or already living-in with a partner (21).

Table 11: Current Status of Respondents in Formal Education

Current Status	CDO		Clav		Grade/Yr Level	CDO		Clav	
	No.	%	No.	%		IS	OS	IS	OS
In-school (IS)	17	34	13	52	Grade 2	0	1	0	1
Out-of-school-(OS)	33	66	12	48	Grade 3	0	3	0	1
					Grade 4	2	1	3	0
					Grade 5	1	5	1	1
Working	8	16	5	20	Grade 6	5	7	3	5
Prostituted	11	22	7	28	First year	1	7	2	0
					Second year	3	4	1	4
					Third year	3	2	1	0
					Fourth year	2	3	2	0
In a relationship	14	28	7	28	Total	17	33	13	12

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria.

Table 11 also shows that among the 17 girl-children in CDO who are in school, 8 of them are still in the elementary grades, and 9 are in high school. On the other hand, of the 13 girls in Claveria who are in school, 7 are in the elementary grades, and 6 in high school.

The respondents said that much as they would like to avail of free elementary and secondary education provided by the government, there are still other factors that forced them to quit schooling. Those who dropped out of school gave several reasons why they stopped schooling much to their desire to finish either elementary or secondary education (Table 12).

Table 12: Reasons Why Girl-Children Dropped Out of School

Reasons given	CDO	%	Clav	%
No money to pay for school obligations and class projects	33	66	10	40
Have to walk long distance, no transportation allowance	20	40	12	48
Inadequate time to study because of household chores	14	28	7	28
Cannot concentrate on studies with parents quarreling	14	28	11	44
Gets hungry in class, no food for breakfast	7	14	12	48
Was told by parents to stop schooling to help earn money	6	12	3	12
No allowance for lunch and snacks	5	10	11	44
Have to take care of younger siblings and sick mother	4	8	2	8
Got into a relationship and got pregnant	4	8	4	16
Got involved in bad circle of friends or “barkada”	2	4	0	0

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria.

What makes schooling difficult for the girl-children even if education is free is their parents’ poverty. Poverty was expressed in many ways by almost all respondents in this study: insufficient or inadequate food for the family at home; no school allowances for transportation fare and for lunch; and no money for school projects, school supplies, and other school obligations. A number of them even forego lunch, which made them feel weak during class hours.

Things are more difficult for the respondents in Claveria where schools, especially high schools, could be from 1–5 km from their homes. Walking becomes more difficult for the children during rainy days as the unpaved roads become muddy and slippery. Some of them do not even have slippers to protect their feet from the stony parts of the road. One has to consider that these children have to walk on this kind of road twice a day and five times a week while carrying their

school bags on their shoulders. In addition, some may have grumbling stomach due to hunger without assurance that they will have a good meal when they get home.

These circumstances greatly affect their quality of academic work while in school. Based on the interviews, these were basically the reasons why a big number of respondents dropped out of school despite their desire to continue and finish at least a secondary education. Some of them also claimed that they did get enough moral support from their parents as the parents themselves could not provide the money for the daily school allowance and school obligations.

Other occurrences in the home that emotionally and mentally bothered some girl-children are their fathers' frequent drinking and gambling even if they have no food to eat, their awareness that either the father or the mother is having an affair with another partner, and the mother being physically and verbally abused and battered by the father. They felt uncomfortable staying in their own homes and this affected their focus on their studies.

There are also parents or guardians who have decided that their children should stop going to school and instead must already work to earn money for the family. In CDO, four of the respondents were told to stop schooling at Grade 3 and to scavenge around garbage dumps for recyclable materials to be sold at junkshops. The money they got was used to buy rice for the family or in one case, by the aunt-guardian for gambling. One respondent only reached Grade 2 as she had to work and help the family earn money for their food. In Claveria, one female respondent also reached only Grade 2 level and was told by her parents to stop and instead plant rice and root crops for the family to have food to eat.

What also makes schooling unpleasant for some respondents were experiences in which they felt humiliated and discriminated against by their teachers and classmates. The respondents belong to very poor families and their inadequacies make them feel sensitive especially when hurting words are spoken in public. Some of them cited such experiences as the cause of their loss of interest in schooling and consequently, their dropping out of school.

Some teachers are not sensitive to the feelings of their pupils especially the poor. They give careless remarks perhaps to ventilate their anger or impatience with the attitude and behavior of the pupils without taking into consideration the effect of such remarks on pupils. The fact that these girls have not forgotten what their teachers had said to them only implies that they were

truly hurt and humiliated in the presence of their classmates. They feel that they had lost their self-esteem and the respect of their classmates as further proven by the classmates' behavior against them.

A respondent from Claveria claimed that her teacher threw the blackboard eraser at her to call her attention when she was not listening to her. Another respondent, also from Claveria, said that her teacher threw a piece of chalk at her while scolding her. She was not hurt physically but emotionally as she was embarrassed in front of her classmates. These two girls both claimed they were greatly humiliated by their teachers.

Table 13 shows the words and remarks hurled against 40 respondents that for them were humiliating and which they felt bad and could not forget even if these happened for quite some time.

Table 13. Humiliating Remarks from Teachers

Remarks from teachers	CDO	%	Clav	%
Bobo (stupid)	13	26	0	0
Lazy	2	4	0	0
Lustful, flirt	1	2	0	0
Hard-headed	1	2	0	0
Walang pakinabang (Of no use)	2	4	0	0
Has no manners	1	2	0	0
A witch (because of her hair)	1	2	0	0
That she comes from a broken family	1	2	0	0
That she stole P100 from her bag	1	2	0	0
That it's better for her to work as a housemaid	1	2	0	0
To stay away from her as she smells like spoiled fish	1	2	0	0
That she's already 14 years old and still in Grade 5	1	2	0	0
A flitting butterfly (for sitting on any vacant chair)	0	0	1	4
A thief (accused of stealing things lost in the room)	0	0	1	4
TOTAL	26	53	2	8

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria.

More teachers in CDO than in Claveria were found to be very tactless in addressing girls with hurting words, based on the responses of 53% of the respondents. In Claveria there were only two cases, one of which could be taken as just a joke from the teacher but then the child still took it seriously.

Some respondents who had been victims of teachers' verbal abuse observed that their naughty classmates seem to have the liberty to also humiliate them outside the classroom. Such experiences had become doubly painful for them such that they had thought of quitting school. They felt they were discriminated against by both teachers and classmates, which made them feel uncomfortable while attending classes. Table 14 shows the verbal abuses suffered by respondents from their classmates.

Table 14: Humiliating Remarks from Classmates

Remarks from classmates	CDO	%	Clav	%
flirt	3	6	1	4
prostitute	3	6	0	0
yawa - stupid, shit	3	6	0	0
balikbayan / matanda na (a drop-out who went back)	3	6	0	0
banana chips (what she usually eats for lunch)	0	0	1	4
negra / quick chow – dark skinned, kinky hair	3	6	1	4
pato - walks like a duck	1	2	0	0
stinks and smells like fish	1	2	0	0
always wearing the same dress over and over again	2	4	0	0
being blamed for things lost in classroom	1	2	0	0
they make her feel that her presence is not wanted	0	0	1	4
TOTAL	20	40	4	16

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria.

Some children are fond of giving careless remarks to annoy classmates whom they think are not as good as they are. They do not seem to care if they hurt other's feelings, unmindful that there are sensitive girls who take things seriously and if repeatedly done to them could force them to drop out of school. As shown in Table 14, the classmates had uttered more humiliating remarks than the teacher, that what the teacher had said had been replicated several times against the victims. The teacher and the classmates may not be aware of the fact that they have violated the rights of the girl-child.

As noted, many more teachers out there are very careless in blurting out humiliating words to their pupils. There could be several factors as to why they behave this way. As most of these cases happened in CDO where classes are generally too big and overwhelming for a teacher to handle, one would think that this behavior is brought on by worries on how to accomplish her daily objectives in her lesson plan, and still has to attend to students' misbehaviors. It could also

be that the teacher has her own personal and family problems that she could not set aside while working in the classroom so that she easily runs out of patience and tolerance.

Over and above all this, the teacher is also a product of a patriarchal society in which her system has already been conditioned that whoever has the authority and control over others can do whatever she wants to do with them. Just like a parent who easily scolds and whips her own child who does not obey house rules, the teacher feels the same way with the students under her power and authority. She does it to instill discipline and order in the classroom but the manner by which she does it could be causing some emotional pains in the students, which could be their cause for dropping out of school. Hence, the teacher must be informed that her behavior is no longer allowed by the mandates created for children.

B. Protection Rights

These rights include protection from all forms of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, and cruelty, including the right to special protection in times of war and protection from abuse in the criminal justice system.

1. Child Abuse

a). Pertinent Legal Provisions

The Philippines RA 7610, or the Special Protection of Children Against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination (Congress of the Philippines 1992) defines “child abuse” as:

“...the maltreatment, whether habitual or not, of the child that includes any of the following: (i) psychological and physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, sexual abuse, and emotional maltreatment. (ii) any act by deeds or words that debases, degrades, or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being, and (iii) unreasonable deprivation of his basic needs for survival such as food and shelter.”

In addition, pertinent CRC provisions on child abuse are as follows:

“The State shall protect the child from all forms of maltreatment by parents or others responsible for the care of the child and establish appropriate social programs for the prevention of abuse and the treatment of victims (Art. 19).

State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s), or any other person who has the care of the child (Art. 19).

State parties shall ensure that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Art. 37).”

As these provisions indicate, children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone who looks after them. In terms of discipline, the Convention does not specify what forms of punishment parents should use. However, any form of discipline involving violence is unacceptable. There are ways to discipline children that are effective in helping them learn about family and social expectations for their behavior – ones that are non-violent, are appropriate to the child’s level of development and take the best interests of the child into consideration (Art. 19).

b.) Contributory Factors

Child abuse seems to be very rampant among families in the survey areas as seen from the testimonies of almost all respondents. As young as six years old, some of them had received some spankings and as they grew older, they had experienced being whipped or beaten up by their parents.

Table 15 shows the types or nature of physical abuses experienced by most of the respondents in CDO and in Claveria. To differentiate certain terms used in this table, to ‘whip’ is to strike or punish with a lash or some other instruments; to ‘beat’ is to strike with repeated blows; to ‘box’ is to strike with the fist; to ‘spank’ is to strike with the open hand; to ‘slap’ is to give a sudden

blow with the open hand usually on the face; to ‘bash’ is to strike heavily or to give a smashing blow (Ballantine Books Staff 2001).

Table 15: Nature of Physical Abuse Experienced by Respondents

Physical abuses experienced by respondents	CDO	%	Clav	%
Whipped using				
• belt	17	34	10	40
• piece of wood	14	28	13	52
• broom	6	12	7	28
• bamboo strip, rattan	1	2	6	24
• slipper	1	2	1	4
• water hose, guava twig, iron rod	3	6	0	0
Beaten up using				
• stick or piece of wood	9	18	1	4
• belt	7	14	3	12
• broom	4	8	2	8
• fist and feet (punched and kicked)	1	2	1	4
• dustpan	1	2	0	0
Pinched sides and ears	1	2	2	8
Made to kneel on mongo seeds	1	2	0	0
Hair pulled	3	6	1	4
Neck strangled	3	6	0	0
Face slapped	3	6	4	16
Head boxed with the fist, bashed against the wall	1	2	2	8
Hanged from the wall	1	2	0	0
Thrown out of the window	1	2	0	0
Thrown out on the bed	1	2	0	0
Pushed her down the stairs, got a broken bone	1	2	0	0
Threatened of being killed with a bolo, ran after her	0	0	1	4

CDO= Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

These punishments inflicted on the girl-children seem to be more severe as compared with the misdeeds they had committed. Using belts and wooden sticks on their young bodies with the full force of a man could be harmful to these young girl-children. One of them recalled that she urinated while being beaten by her father. A respondent from Claveria claimed her stepfather slapped her and beat her up with a piece of rattan, so hard that she got a cut on her leg and blood came out. This same stepfather also attempted to rape her at age 7.

When asked where parents usually hit them, the most common answers are as follows: thighs, legs and feet (38), buttocks and back (28), and any part of the body (20). More severe punishments can be noted at the bottom of Table 15. It is unimaginable for a child to go through this kind of ordeal: hair pulled, neck strangled, face slapped, head boxed with fist and/or bashed against the wall, thrown out of the window or on the bed (like a pesky cat), and pushed down the stairs for which a girl got a broken bone. In Claveria, a respondent claimed that her stepfather ran after her with a bolo while threatening to kill her. It was good that some neighbors intervened so that the girl was able to run away. All these were not reported to the police or *barangay* centers.

Such heavy punishments are inflicted on the children by those whom they expect would love and protect them. As may be noted, most of the physical abuses were committed by the parents themselves. Of the 50 respondents, 41 had experienced physical abuse from either or both parents. Table 16 shows a breakdown of which parents inflict physical abuse to the respondents. CDO, 17 respondents claimed that they were victims of physical abuse from their fathers, 14 from their mothers, and 10 from both parents. In Claveria, 9 respondents have been physically abused by the father, only 1 was physically abused by the mother, but 14 by both of the parents, or a total of 24 respondents.

Table 16: Sources of Physical Abuse from Parents

Source of abuse	CDO	Clav
Father only	17	9
Mother only	14	1
Both parents	10	14
Total	41	24

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

It was noted, however, that those respondents who claimed that their mothers had also whipped or beaten them up happened to be those whose fathers had already abandoned them. In other words, when house rules are being violated by the children, the mother adopts the manner by which the man imposes discipline—through corporal punishment. The woman assumes power and authority over the subordinates and, therefore, perpetuates patriarchy in the family. In all these circumstances, whether parents are living together or had parted ways, it is the girl-children who suffer the most and whose rights are being violated.

In cases where parents had parted ways and had left the children under the care of relatives, the guardian's attitude and behavior toward the helpless children are no different. Having the power and control over them, the guardians often do the same things to the girl-children. There is one case in CDO and another in Claveria where the following had physically abused the respondents: stepmother, grandmother, foster mother, uncle, and brother's mother-in-law. In CDO, two brothers had hit the girls, and in Claveria, two stepfathers had committed physical abuses against their respective stepdaughters.

Along with the beatings, the respondents claimed that their parents would also shout some words at them that really hurt their feelings and the mental anguish stayed on for years. Mental abuse comes in the form of hurting words uttered in anger by either of the parents who usually do these acts without considering their children's feelings. The girl-children said they felt badly hurt especially when uttered by parents or by family members whom they expect would love and respect them. They felt unwanted, uncared for, and unloved that they felt like running away from home. Table 17 shows the words or phrases uttered by their parents whenever they scolded their girl-children.

Table 17: Hurting Words Uttered by Parents while Scolding the Girl-Children (with English translations)

Hurting words uttered	CDO	%	Clav	%
<i>Animal ka</i> (You're an animal) (by mother)	7	14	0	0
<i>Peste ka</i> (You're a pest) (by mother)	5	10	0	0
<i>Demonyo ka</i> (You're a devil) (by father)	5	10	0	0
<i>Prosti</i> (Prostitute) (by mother)	2	4	0	0
<i>Malandi ka</i> (You're a flirt) (by uncle)	1	2	0	0
<i>tamad</i> (lazy)	1	2	2	8
<i>sira / baliw</i> (crazy)	1	2	2	8
Stupid	1	2	2	8
<i>Tanga</i> (no common sense)	1	2	2	8
<i>pangit</i> (ugly)	1	2	0	0
bullshit	1	2	0	0
<i>Pabigat</i> (a burden)	1	2	0	0
<i>Walang kwenta</i> (a good-for-nothing person)	0	0	1	4
<i>Palamunin</i> (a burden to feed)	1	2	0	0
<i>Mangmang</i> (uneducated or illiterate)	1	2	2	8
Total	29	58	11	44

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

Aside from those words or phrases in Table 17, the girl-children claimed that either the father or the mother also gave some remarks, which badly hurt their feelings (Table 18).

Table 18: Remarks Made by Parents while Scolding the Girl-Children

Verbal abuse uttered	CDO	%	Clav	%
Father:				
It would have been better if he had killed her while still a baby.	2	4	0	0
It is better for him to have had no child.	1	2	0	0
It is better if she is gone as he is tired of whipping her.	1	2	0	0
It is better if she becomes a prostitute.	2	4	0	0
Learned that when she was born, her father had ordered her mother to throw her away.	0	0	1	4
Mother:				
Blamed the girl for her unfortunate life.	1	2	1	4
Shouted and told her to leave the house for good.	2	4	2	8
Told her that she's not their child.	1	2	1	4
Told her that she's grown-up but still behaves like a child.	0	0	1	4
Recounts sacrifices done, made her feel guilty.	0	0	1	4
Her misbehavior is sending her mother early to the grave.	0	0	1	4
Total	10	20	8	36

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

Remarks made by the parents, especially the father, reveal his sex preference for a child. A father would prefer to have a son, not a daughter whom he would rather have thrown away or killed. Another father preferred to have no child at all than to have the girl. Two fathers do not seem to find some economic benefits from the girl so they would rather have them work as prostitutes. Due to these remarks, the girls claimed to have felt unwanted and unloved especially when their parents themselves wanted them to leave the house for good.

These above-cited experiences are categorized as physical and mental or verbal abuse that affected the respondents' thoughts and feelings as well as their decisions in life. Some of them

had quit schooling knowing that their daily expenses are one of the causes of their parents' constant quarreling over money matters. A number of them had decided to live-in with their boyfriends just to escape the kind of life they had in their own homes even if they were not ready with the responsibilities of living as couples.

What have these girl-children done to merit being physically and verbally abused by their parents? Table 19 shows the reasons given by the girl-children. The first grouping is gender-related while the second grouping falls under cases where parents, mostly the fathers, would gamble and get drunk even if they have no money to buy food for the family. Their shame or guilt for being irresponsible is covered up by showing that they still have power and control over the children by physically and verbally abusing them.

Table 19: Reasons Why Girl-Children were Physically Abused

Reasons for Physical Abuse	CDO	%	Clav	%
Attributed to respondents-				
Failed to do household chores expected of them	27	54	25	100
Violated house rules, i.e., coming home late	22	44	17	68
Committed mistakes in doing household chores	13	26	2	8
Failed to take good care of younger sibling	6	12	4	16
Played with friends instead of working at home	2	4	1	4
Attributed to parents-				
When father comes home drunk	12	24	4	16
When mother comes home drunk	2	4	1	4
When father lost money in gambling/cockfighting	6	12	2	8
When parents have no money even to buy food	8	16	2	8
Whenever parents have family problems	1	2	4	16

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

It can be noted among the responses in Table 19 that there are two mothers in CDO and one in Claveria who also drink liquor and get drunk. These mothers have jobs and somehow support the needs of the family. Interestingly, these women already behave just like the men.

The girl-children were physically abused for failing to do household chores that they are expected to do or for just committing mistakes in doing them especially in taking care of the younger siblings. As quoted from the declarations made during the Beijing +10 Conference, “girls are given more duties at home or being given feminized roles and tasks, housework and child care.” This was proven to be true from the experiences of girl-children interviewed in this study. Whether it is in CDO or in Claveria’s far-flung barangays, the respondents claim they were expected to do all the household chores given by their parents, which are not imposed on the boy-children. These household chores are many and they come one after the other from morning until night, which understandably take so much of their time, aside from things they have to do like school assignments.

Taken as a norm of conduct, almost all parents in the city and in rural communities do the same thing when imposing discipline on their children. They had listened to the same lectures given by some priests that “to spare the rod is to spoil the child” and that the use of corporal punishment is consistent with the biblical perspective. Rural society or old folks in many communities still support related preaching of the church, claiming that discipline is needed to make the children morally and spiritually upright, while parents, especially the mothers, are accountable for their children’s misbehavior.

Also, even if some parents may not want to inflict physical harm on the children, they also do not know of any other way of instilling discipline except through corporal punishment, which their own parents and their parents’ parents had also done to their children. Thus, as sanctioned by the church, parents equate discipline with punishment and that children should physically feel the pain so they will remember and never forget what parents want them to do in life.

This is consistent with the concept that parents own the children, that they are their “property,” and whatever they want to do with them cannot be questioned by others. Some old folks would even tell the children that inasmuch as their parents gave them life they also have the right to take it back. The culture introduced by the colonizers to the Filipinos centuries ago is indeed very much alive in the ways some people still think and behave.

2. Child Labor

a). Pertinent Legal Provisions

R.A. No. 9231 states that:

“Child labor refers to any work or economic activity performed by a child that subjects him/her to any form of exploitation or is harmful to his/her health and safety or physical, mental or psychosocial development.”

On the other hand, UN CRC has the following provisions:

“The government should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or their education. Children’s work should not jeopardize any of their rights, including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play (Art. 32).

State parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child’s welfare (Art. 36).

State parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts (Art. 31).”

b). Contributory Factors

For respondents who are already out of school, a number of them are already working as housemaids to help augment their parents’ income and to be able to buy their own personal things, which their parents cannot provide. Things are more difficult for two respondents who already lost their mother. One was taken in by an aunt only to find out that the girl had to work as a housemaid without any compensation. Another girl was taken by her brother to stay with his mother-in-law as both their parents had passed away. This girl was also made to work like a slave without any compensation, not even a little money to buy her own personal things. When this girl was raped by two men, the woman filed a case in court and immediately agreed to a settlement, getting all the money without giving the girl even a few pesos.

Other respondents, some of whom are still studying, are already helping their parents earn some extra income by selling hotcakes and candies while in school. On weekends, they assist mothers wash clothes for other families, sell fish and vegetables at the market, work as dishwashers in eateries, or do some household chores for their neighbors. Some of them even go out after

school hours to scavenge garbage bins for recyclable materials, which they sell to junk dealers. They go around certain parts of the city even until late at night, which is quite dangerous for young girls. All the money that these girls get from such jobs went to the mother to buy food for the family or to pay for school obligations. It must be noted that they do these jobs over and above their own household chores and their school assignments. Table 20 shows the number of girls doing economic activities for the family.

Table 20: Economic Activities of Respondents

Economic activities involved in by respondents	CDO	%	Clav	%
Scavenge garbage bins for recyclable materials	6	12	0	0
Sell recyclable materials to junk dealers	6	12	0	0
Help mother do the laundry for other families	6	12	0	0
Work as dishwasher in an eatery during weekends	5	10	0	0
Sell candies and cigarettes at sidewalks, cockpit areas	3	6	0	0
Sell candies and hotcakes in school	3	6	1	4
Assist mother sell fish and vegetables at the market	2	4	0	0
Do household chores for a neighbor on weekends	2	4	6	24
Work on the farm during harvest time, sell produce	0	0	4	16
Stopped going to school and worked as housemaid	2	4	5	20
Stopped in Grade 3 and worked at a junkshop	1	2	0	0

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

The last two items in Table 20 are for respondents who already stopped schooling and are now working as housemaids and in a junkshop. A big portion of what they received from work goes to the parents to help support their siblings' schooling. They know that if they would not support their siblings' schooling, they would also eventually drop out of school.

Aside from the above cases on child labor and economic exploitation are the chores being done by all respondents in their respective homes. Household chores are assigned to girls and these are introduced to them even before they start going to school. It starts with simple things like watering the plants and cleaning the house and yard, and buying small items from a neighboring store. Even when they start going to school, they continue to do household chores, which now

include washing the dishes, going to the market to buy food stuffs, cooking rice and simple viand, washing and ironing the clothes, and keeping watch over their younger siblings. In cases when the mother has again given birth, caring for the whole household becomes an additional burden for these girl-children especially if they are the oldest in the family. They have to take care of the mother for a few days, which sometimes require them to be absent from classes. All these are expected of the daughters over and above the things they have to do in school. Their brothers are not expected to do them. They are only told to fetch water and to gather firewood for cooking.

Being depended upon by their parents to do almost all household chores greatly affects the girls' education, i.e., they would have no more time to work on school assignments. They also miss enjoying their early childhood years as they have no more time to play with their friends in the neighborhood. Many of the respondents claimed they were still of preschool age when spanked or whipped for playing with friends in the neighborhood instead of staying at home and helping their mother do some house chores. Hence, these girls must have not fully enjoyed their early childhood years as they were immediately immersed in doing household chores.

When already of school age, they were not allowed to come home late in the afternoon, which they could not avoid when they wanted to play with other children in the school grounds as there is not enough space to use as playground in the neighborhood. As most of them have no TV sets at home, they usually go to a neighbor's house after supper. Some of them claimed they were scolded and punished if they came home late in the evening watching their favorite TV shows. The punishments were done by the parents in the name of discipline to instill in their minds that as girls, they should already be home when night falls. They were usually whipped at the feet and scolded with words like they are acting as if they are prostitutes.

Ordinary Filipino families live according to what they believe in, according to prescribed norms in communities where they live. And so there is the father as the head and income earner of the family even if he has no permanent job. He makes the decisions and sees to it that his wife and children obey his words. The wife meekly assumes a subordinate role and performs traditional functions at home for her husband and children. When the children are big enough to help, the mother usually asks her daughter to take over some of her work, like looking after her younger brothers and sisters, washing the clothes, cooking their food, cleaning the house, and others.

People in the community do not see anything wrong with these routine; they view them as the daughter's training in preparation for that time when a man will someday take the girl in marriage. The sons, on the other hand, are not quite expected to do the household chores; and if they do, they are teased or ridiculed as "*bakla*" or gays in much the same way as the father would be branded as being "under-the-*saya* (skirt)" or subordinate to the wife if seen washing the clothes for the family even if the wife had just given birth to another child. Very early in life, the children, therefore, are socialized into the roles that tradition considers as appropriate for their sex. In the area of responsibility training, girls in the home are reared in domestic tasks and the boys in those tasks outside the household. This setup, however, is putting the girls in a disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the boys.

The above presentation of facts experienced by the respondents is quite contrary to Articles 31, 32, and 36 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As shown, the girls were clearly deprived of their right to relax and play, their education was jeopardized because they were burdened with household chores and asked to earn extra income for the family. Even CEDAW has stated that "State parties shall take appropriate measures to modify social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, which are based on ideas of inferiority or on stereotyped roles for men and women to ensure that family education included the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in raising children."

3. Sexual Abuse

"Child sexual abuse" is a form of child abuse in which an adult or older adolescent uses a child for sexual stimulation. Forms of child sexual abuse include asking or pressuring a child to engage in sexual activities, physical sexual contact with a child, and child pornography (WHO 2001).

a). Pertinent Legal Provisions

The CRC provisions on the prevention of child sexual abuse state that:

"State parties shall undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. For this purpose, State parties shall in particular take all appropriate

national, bilateral and multi-bilateral measures to prevent the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity (Art. 34).

Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect, and dignity of the child (Art. 39).”

The People’s Movement for Human Rights Education (PMHRE) includes protection of sexual abuse of children as an inalienable right of children in its declaration of the human rights of children:

“... protection from all physical or mental abuse and protection from economic and sexual exploitation, prostitution and trafficking; freedom from forced or early marriage; and freedom to express an opinion about plans affecting the child’s life.”

b). Contributory Factors

Of the 75 respondents in this study, there are 8 cases of sexual abuse, 6 of them in CDO and 2 in Claveria (Table 21). The first one was still 8 years old when her father brought her along to the sea to keep him company while fishing at night. It was there where he forced himself on her. This dastardly act went on for two years as the girl would be whipped hard if she did not want to go with him. It was discovered by the sister who found her when she was about to kill herself with a knife.

Table 21: Sexual Abuses Committed Against Respondents

Types of sexual abuses committed	CDO	%	Clav	%
Raped by the father at age 8 and went on till age 10	1	2	0	0
Raped repeatedly by stepfather in her room at age 14	1	2	0	0
Raped by her aunt’s cook in their kitchen at age 14	1	2	0	0
Raped by a neighbor in her friend’s house at age 15	1	2	0	0
Raped by two men in their neighborhood at age 15	1	2	0	0
A neighbor’s relative attempted to rape her at age 10	1	2	0	0

Stepfather raped her when left alone in house at age 11	0	0	1	2
Stepfather attempted to rape her at age 7	0	0	1	2

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

It can be noted that in all cases, the rapist or would-be rapist is known to the girl: a father or stepfather, a neighbor, a hired cook. Almost all of them used a knife and threatened to kill the girl-victim if she resists or shouts for help. The place is mostly right in their home, in the neighborhood, and in one case in the boat out in the sea. These are girls were helpless to prevent the crime from happening as they were overtaken by surprise or by fright. They did not even think that this dastardly act would happen as they were still very young and they look up to the father or stepfather as somebody who should protect them and not harm them.

Women and girls are seen by men as their property that they could use to make them happy. It stems from sermons in the church that says that Eve was taken from the rib of Adam and was given life to make him happy. This was interpreted by people that inasmuch as Eve was taken from Adam's rib, a part of a man's body, then woman is a property of man. This also explains why physical and emotional battering are being done by some husbands to the woman thinking that as his property he can do anything to her. This contention was supported by another verse in the Bible, which is usually used by priests in officiating marriages in church that says, "wife, submit yourself to your husband. Husband, love your wife as Christ love the Church." In most sermons that followed, the priest would advise the wife on what to do to make her husband happy, to always follow what her husband wishes or expects her to do. The priest rarely explains what the husband should do for the wife and his family. Perhaps it was difficult to equate Christ's sacrifice and giving His life for the salvation of the people and to what the husband can do for his family.

4. Prostitution

Prostitution is the act or practice of providing sexual services to another person in return for payment. The person who receives payment for sexual services is called a prostitute (Sills 1968). For feminists, they are "prostituted women/girls" as they were only forced by circumstances to go into this trade and that no woman or girl would go right into this job only for pleasure.

a). Pertinent Legal Provision

The CRC states:

“State parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and prevent the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practice (Art. 34).”

b). Contributory Factors

There are 11 respondents who were found to be working in the flesh trade. All of them are from CDO, none from Claveria. Understandably, people in Claveria know each other and prostitution would not prosper in such an environment. Of the 11 respondents, 3 are 15 years old, 6 are 16 years old, and 2 are 17 years old but most of them had been in this job for a year or so. As to their religion, 10 of them are Roman Catholics and one is a Mormon.

As to their grade or year level, 3 of them stopped schooling when still in the intermediate grades while 7 reached the first two years in high school. One had graduated in high school. She was actually fooled by a politician who promised to send her to college provided she would give regular sexual services to him and to no other. The politician, however, has several young girls like her and he calls them his “scholars.”

Nobody among the respondents seemed to have been forced to become prostitutes but once they had decided to join the trade, a pimp would take charge of them in looking for customers. For the first-timers, the pimp would ask for a much higher pay from the first customer and would always get a percentage out of every transaction. They narrated experiences they had while attending to customers, which made them feel cheap and less human but they still continue to work not knowing other means by which they could earn money to support those who depend on them. They are willing to leave as soon as they are given and assured of a decent job elsewhere. They are equally concerned of other girls who are also getting into this trade. One of them said that they also need a seminar on human rights and when asked for the number of possible participants, she said, at least there are one hundred of them.

Table 22: Reasons Why Girl-Children Get into Prostitution

Reasons	CDO	%
Fast and easy way to get much money	8	16
Anyway she's no longer a virgin	5	10
To buy herself new clothes and personal stuff	4	8
To get away from father's cruel treatment and control	4	8
Was influenced by neighbors who are already in the trade	3	6
Had difficulty getting a job being elementary graduates	2	4
To support the needs of sick mother and siblings	2	4
To support needs of child after partner abandoned them	2	4
To support needs of child after she left her cruel partner	1	2
What she earns in a month as maid, she earns in 1 night.	1	2
Fooled by a politician who offered to send her to college	1	2

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City

As Table 22 shows, some of the respondents gave more than one reason why they became prostituted girls and one big factor came out: extreme poverty. A girl who would like to buy some new clothes and other personal items for herself, which her parents could not afford, would be tempted to join other girls whom she knew are already looking good with the money earned from the trade. A girl who works hard and long every day as a housemaid and only gets less than P2,000.00 a month would be tempted to work in the flesh trade if she could earn the same amount during the night. The money she got could already buy a lot for the needs of her mother, siblings or her own child whose father had abandoned them. These are their alibis to people in the neighborhood who look down on them and call them bad names. These girls have learned to dismiss all those stares and words, which were initially painful to accept but later on they learned to shrug off because they only want to survive and be useful to their loved ones.

Eleven girls are into flesh trade and like all other respondents in this study, all had been victims of child abuse, of their father's cruelty while growing up. All of them had wanted to get out of an unhappy family life where they had also known poverty and want, where they had witnessed

quarrelling between parents, and the battering of the mother. They felt frustrated to live in that kind of environment, which is inconsistent with what is being taught in school about a happy family. They stayed home being still too young and were still in school but when they were told to stop, they left their homes to venture on getting a job and fend for themselves. However, as other respondents had claimed, it was difficult to get a job if they have not reached high school or even if they are high school graduates. They observed that even college graduates have difficulty getting decent jobs, and concluded it would be more difficult for them.

Another factor that made girls go into prostitution is the belief that a girl who is no longer a virgin already loses her chance to be taken as a wife by a man who would also love and respect her. Cases like these are girls who had already lived-in with a man who eventually ran away from his responsibility of raising their child. The belief that the woman must be a virgin before marriage is one of the teachings in the Roman Catholic and Christian religions and almost all of them grew up with this particular precept. They have been raised in a family and community where people talk about the pros and cons about virginity as lectured by their priests or pastors. The girl then who loses her virginity by giving-in to the sexual desires of her boyfriend would tend to believe that she's no longer clean and therefore, not worthy to become a wife of a decent man.

This could be the same attitude of those who had been victims of incest and rape. However, in their desire to help the mother and siblings with their financial problems, they end up in the prostitution trade. This is aptly supported by a Filipino maxim, "*kung saan ka nadapa, doon ka na rin babangon,*" literally translated as "where you had fallen down, that's where you also get up."

5. Girl-Children with Live-In Partners

Having live-in partners is a living arrangement in which a couple live together without the benefit of common law or church marriage, and mostly without the blessing of their parents.

a). Pertinent CRC Provisions

There are no specific provisions in the CRC which pertains to girl-children with live-in partners. Inasmuch as there are several such cases among the respondents, it appears that this phenomenon is only the effect of all the human rights violations they had gone through with their respective parents, a way to rebel and escape from the authoritarian rule of the father over his children.

b). Contributory Factors

Among the respondents, those who got into sexual relationships were very young. There are 14 of them in CDO and 7 in Claveria (Table 23). In CDO, one girl is only 13 years old, 2 are 15 years old, 5 are 16 years old, and 6 are 17 years old. In Claveria, all of them are 16 years old. During the interview, it was revealed, however, that most of them have been living-in with their respective partners for a year or so. As to their religion, 11 of those in CDO are Roman Catholics, 2 are Seventh-Day Adventists, and 1 is a Protestant. In Claveria, 5 of them are Catholics and 2 are Protestants.

Table 23: Distribution of Respondents with Live-in Partners by Age and Religion

Age	CDO	Clav	Religion	CDO	Clav
13	1	0	Roman Catholics	11	5
15	2	0	Seventh Day Adventists	2	0
16	5	7	Protestant	1	2
17	6	0			
Total	14	7	Total	14	7

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City, Clav = Claveria

Among the respondents, nobody was literally forced by their parents to get into a relationship at an early age. However, of the 75 respondents, 21 of them have already their respective live-in partner - 14 in CDO and 7 in Claveria. Most of the reasons given are: (i) to escape the kind of life they have had with their parents especially the physical abuses inflicted on them, and (ii) they already got tired and frustrated pursuing an education with much difficulty because of poverty.

Almost all girls who entered into this live-in relationship may have been happy at the start but later, they felt some sense of frustration and regret. In most cases, the partner is equally young, also a school dropout, and without a permanent job. Hence, the young man found it difficult to

cope with the demands of family life especially when financial problems set in. In Table 24, we find statements made by the girls about what their respective partners did to them

Table 24: Life of Respondents with Live-In Partners

Life with live-in partners	CDO	%	Clav	%
Verbally abused her, called her names	3	6	0	0
Physically abused her; had slapped her	6	12	0	0
punched her, and kicked her	2	4	0	0
pulled her hair	2	4	0	0
beat her up	3	6	0	0
strangled her by the neck	2	4	0	0
hit her on the head and arms with his fist	1	2	0	0
They quarreled because of his being irresponsible	3	6	3	12
of money problems	2	4	2	8
of jealousy, still flirts with other girls	5	10	4	16
brought home a girl and they slept together	1	2	0	0
still goes out with friends	4	8	2	8
He drinks and gambles	3	6	4	16

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

Most of the respondents found out late that their partners were like their fathers in many ways, and even worse in some instances. These girl-children eventually realized that their life has become a cycle of problems and difficulties, of poverty and want. Consequently, most of these young couples parted ways with the girl having an additional burden—taking care of her baby by herself. When asked to assess the factors why they got into an early relationship, their statements were as follows (Table 25):

Table 25: Why Girl-Children Get into Live-In Relationships

Reasons for living-in with partners	CDO	%	Clav	%
Had dropped out of school, nothing else to wait for	14	28	1	4
Believes there's nothing more to do but settle down	14	28	0	0

Just want to get away from a very strict father who:	12	24	0	0
Beats her especially when drunk or had lost in gambling	9	18	2	8
Physically and verbally abuse her when drunk	11	22	1	4
Parents quarrel due to money problems	4	8	0	0
Parents separated, did not know where to stay	0	0	3	12
Already in a relationship and became pregnant	10	20	2	8
Was courted at a young age (10-15 years) and	0	0	0	0
accepted a boyfriend after a very short courtship	12	24	2	8
Feels she loves her boyfriend very much	2	4	0	0
Influenced by friends who have also live-in partners	2	4	0	0

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

Most of those who entered into a live-in relationship are already out of school for financial reasons. Their grade or year level in school before they dropped out of school are as follows: for CDO: 1 stopped at Grade 3, 3 at Grade 5, and 3 at Grade 6. The rest were at different year levels in high school and one had finished high school. In Claveria, 1 girl reached Grade 3, 3 girls stopped while in Grade 6, and 3 are in second year high school.

Consequently, they got bored staying at home while attending to household chores and taking care of their younger siblings. For them, this kind of life seems to lead them to nowhere and it would be better for them to start their own family. They believed that even if they do the same chores and take care of babies at least they are already starting to make a family of their own. Some of them also wanted to leave their parents' house because the space is getting smaller for them to stay together as they are all growing big. As discussed earlier, parents have no privacy in their houses and their children must have secretly watched them making love. Out of curiosity, these children may have also wanted to find out how they would feel about it.

One of the two respondents who claimed that they had fallen in love with a guy was only 14 years old then and her mother had strongly objected to that relationship. The mother beat her up with a stick, slapped her, and did not allow her to go out of her room but the girl still managed to get out and run away with her boyfriend.

Moreover, these girl-children were still very young and were not even in their teens when they started entertaining suitors and boyfriends, which consequently made them experience sex and got pregnant. Once the girls became pregnant, the parents would allow them to go into a live-in relationship (without any legal documents), which consequently resulted in illegitimate births of children. Some of these girl-children would find out later that they are just going through the same pattern of life that their parents had experienced. As their responses revealed, they could not help but compare the vices and other behavior of their partners with those of their fathers.

Fathers and sons or sons-in-law have, of course, the same attitude and behavior in dealing with the women in their lives because they all grow up in the same culture, conforming to the same values and norms of conduct. The girls have to live through the same situations as their mothers and it may take years to change the cycle but if something is done about it, eventually some positive changes may change the lives of girls in the next generations.

C. Participation Rights

Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, and political life. Participation rights include the right to express opinions and be heard, the right to information and freedom of association. Engaging these rights as they mature helps children to realize all their rights and prepares them for an active role in society (UNICEF, undated).

1. Respect for the Views of the Child

Participation in the family is a need as well as a right. Children need to be involved in their family's decisions for healthy social and cognitive development.

a). Pertinent Legal Provisions

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that:

“The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child. The child has the right to

express his or her views, obtain information, makes ideas or information known (UNCRC 2009).”

“State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Art. 12).”

b). Contributory Factors

Respondents were asked what they would tell their parents if given the chance and the liberty to speak out their thoughts and feelings about how they should be brought up in the family. Surprisingly, each one of them said a lot about unpleasant experiences that they suffered in silence from the hands of their father and in his absence, the mother. They seem to have just kept everything in silence knowing that parents would not listen or accept opinions and suggestions from them and instead, they might be punished all the more. Having been assured that what they will say would be treated with utmost confidentiality, that their parents would never know that they had given such observations about them, they gladly complied with the request.

Table 26: Thoughts and Opinions of Respondents About Parenting

	CDO	%	Clav	%
On child abuse				
Parents must not physically and verbally abuse children	33	66	17	68
Fathers should not use corporal punishment to discipline	25	50	15	60
Children will learn to behave properly through counseling	23	46	14	56
Parents must not be so strict in dealing with children	17	34	10	40
Parents must not scold and spank them for little mistakes	11	22	8	32
On their education and basic needs				
Parents must see to it that children finish schooling	32	64	22	88
Parents must look after the basic needs of their children	23	46	18	72
Parents must make children feel loved and cared for	23	46	17	68
Children must be fed well, given enough food to eat	10	20	11	44
Girls must not be fully depended upon to do house chores	10	20	9	36
Young girls must be given freedom to play with friends	10	20	9	36
On their emotional needs				
Children must be given the chance to express feelings	9	18	8	32
Parents must show concern over children's health	8	16	6	24
Parents must not have too many children, must have family planning	9	18	7	28
Parents should not abandon their very young children	5	10	4	16
Parents should not only think of their own happiness	3	6	2	8
Parents should not run away from their problems	3	6	2	8
On their parents' behavior				
Fathers should not smoke, gamble, and get drunk	10	20	8	32
Parents should serve as good models for their children	7	14	3	12
Parents should also respect the dignity of own children	6	12	3	12
Parents must attend Bible studies to know what's right	5	10	2	8
Parents must have some sense of humor	3	6	2	8

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

The thoughts and opinions expressed by the girls in Table 26 show that they have many things to tell about their parents, things which could have improved their home life if only parents were open to listening to what their children have to say about every situation or issue that affected them.

The first group of responses fall under the same issue—that of physical and verbal abuse. This seems to be what had touched them the most, so it was the first thing that came out of the minds of the majority of respondents. The statement that got the most number of responses pertained to physical and verbal abuses but the next four other responses were also related to this. The girls stated them repeatedly in many ways: physical and verbal abuse, corporal punishment, scolding and spanking, not to be so strict, and preference for discipline through peaceful means, like counseling. They must have gotten a lot of these that their responses reflected their resentment toward such abuses from their parents. Some girls said they were whipped but they never fully understood what their fault was and were never given the chance to explain why their so-called misdeeds happened. One girl said that she “detests even her father’s loud voice when scolding them as she got traumatized by it over a period of time.”

The second group of responses shows the children’s concern over their education and their basic needs. They consider education as their hope to a life with better future. Hence, they resented obstacles that hindered them from attending school such as lack of money for school projects, and food and transportation allowances. They resented doing household chores including taking care of their younger siblings as these left them no more time to work on school assignments. They said that household chores should not hinder them from going to school and studying their lessons. One of them said that very young daughters should not be depended upon to do heavy work load at home and be punished if they failed to do them. They also do not like to be forced to work while they were still very young as this deprived them of the liberty to play with their friends in the neighborhood. All these made them feel that their parents do not love and care for them.

The observations given by the girl-children reveal a lot about the other gender issues (children’s emotions and parents’ behavior) that needed to be looked into by gender advocates both in government and non-government sectors. These also reflect the many things that must be attended with regard to responsible parenting and women’s rights. If these are not addressed

properly, then there will be no end to human rights violations against children from parents who vent their frustrations and guilt for failing to face the challenges that come with responsible parenting. The situation also speaks of the failures of parents in carrying out their roles and responsibilities as stewards of their children's future.

The above thoughts and feelings expressed by the girl-children were natural feelings that came out from the experiences that they had gone through. These were freely uttered but not in the presence of their parents because they feared they would be further punished for expressing their views and feelings. Young as they are, they seemed to know more about the do's and don'ts of responsible parenting.

A lot more were said but not all statements were listed in Table 26. The full texts could be found in their life stories and these stories reveal their other issues and concerns. For instance, a girl who said her mother should not have abandoned her when she was still very young had said in full, "If life with the husband is intolerable, she can leave him but as a mother she must not abandon her children to fend for themselves." This statement divulged the mother's reason for leaving her family: she cannot take anymore the physical and emotional abuse she was getting from her husband. On the other hand, mothers' decision to run away from a cruel husband greatly affected the helpless children. According to one respondent, "mothers should not leave the children like puppies."

Two girl-children, both incest victims, said that fathers should not only think about their own personal happiness and that "mothers should prevent situations where incest can happen to her daughter" and that "fathers should not sexually abuse their daughters, that's a very grave sin against God." A girl who was physical abused by the father had said in full that "mothers should not leave their children alone by themselves in the hands of the father who is always drunk and who beats up the helpless children."

2. The Right to be Heard

Participating in the family at his own level teaches the child that he can make positive changes in his/her environment. These practices enhance self-esteem, build confidence, and develop social and cognitive skills. Helping a child participate according to his/her age and abilities is characteristic of a democratic style of child-rearing (Covell 2010).

a) Pertinent Legal Provisions

The CRC provides for children's rights to be heard in the following clause:

“When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making (Art. 12).”

b) Contributory Factors

It took much time to process the statements of these 75 respondents to find out their common thoughts and feelings but these were just too important to be set aside. It is quite unbelievable that these girl-children, appearing to be so naïve about life, have given very significant and valuable observations about the child-rearing practices of their parents. Collectively, their statements are a litany of the human rights violations that they experienced. They may not be aware of it but what they said already correspond to several provisions in the laws on human rights for girl-children. What they only knew is that they were not happy with what their parents had been doing to them and that they deserve to live a better life.

Table 27 summarizes some of the respondents' 'warnings' to their parents because of the cruel treatment given to them as children.

Table 27: Reasons Why Parents Should Not Maltreat Their Children

Reasons not to maltreat children	CDO	%	Clav	%
They (children) might get angry and run away from home.	4	8	5	20
They could keep the bad feelings till they grow old.	3	6	0	0
They could report to the police and put their parents in jail.	1	2	2	8
Parents will also grow old and experience karma.	3	6	0	0
Children might commit suicide/parricide.	1	2	1	4
They might lose interest in their studies.	1	2	0	0
They might rebel, go with boyfriend, and get pregnant.	1	2	2	8
They could seek freedom elsewhere.	1	2	0	0

CDO = Cagayan de Oro City; Clav = Claveria

The statements given by the respondents in Table 27 above suggest that girl-children can also get fed up with the way their parents mistreat them and expressed their wish to retaliate. For two children to say that they might commit suicide or parricide is something quite serious to consider. Also, 9 of them, 4 in CDO and 5 in Claveria, said that they might run away from home or report the incidents; 3 said they could ask the police to put their parents in jail; and 3 said that they might rebel, go with the boyfriend, and get pregnant. These responses seemed to suggest that those girls already living-in with a partner did this to get even with their parents.

It becomes clear, therefore, that Filipino families practice the culture where children are not allowed to participate in conversations of adults even over matters that could be affecting them. It is even a practice in some families that children are being sent out of the living room whenever visitors come to discuss some important matters with the parents. The children are admonished not to get involved in adults' conversations thus suppressing them to express their thoughts and feelings about certain matters.

It is also part of Filipino culture that only the father and in his absence, the mother or grandparents, have the right to give counsel or guidance to their children and never the other way around. Children are taught in the church and in school that they should love and respect their parents and to talk back to parents is a sign of disrespect. To avoid being scolded, children would rather keep their thoughts and opinions to themselves even if they knew that they can

contribute to the solution of a family problem. To express their thoughts and feelings could be taken as arguing or disagreeing with the parents' decisions. They are aware of the fact that only the father has the sole power and authority to run the affairs and make decisions for the family for as long as the children are still dependent on him for their basic needs. They cannot do anything but follow, even blindly, what the father decides to do.

In a patriarchal culture, the children are trained not to interfere in conversations of adults more so to express their opinions and give suggestions to parents on how parenting should be done. Inasmuch as the girls themselves have experienced maltreatment and abuse from their parents but do not have a venue to express them, they gave so much of their thoughts and feelings when asked to do so in confidence. It was unbelievable to note that what they had expressed, revealed so much of their parents' irresponsibility as parents, their difficulties in going through life because of poverty and human rights violations because of the autocratic or patriarchal ways of their parents.

Gaps in Implementing the Laws and Policies for the Welfare of Girl-children

Based on the enabling international covenants and national laws on children in Section 3, it appears that there are more than enough laws and policies created to protect girl children. The government, in compliance with the agreements signed with several international organizations had already designated agencies and bodies to take charge of the implementation of these laws.

It can be noted that The Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children (PNSFPDC) 2000-2025; the Philippine National Plan of Action on Violence Against Children (PNPAVAC); and the Child Rights Center (CRC) already have the structures and mechanisms as well as plans and programs, some of which were already being implemented nationwide. These are very comprehensive and very promising for the future of girl-children in the country.

Results of this research show, however, that more things are required to resolve issues especially on child abuse, sexual abuse, or violence against children in general. For lack of time and authority to investigate, this paper could not categorically point out how the mandated functions of the three bodies are being carried out and where are the gaps in the flow of implementation. One notes that despite all these laws and mechanisms in place, these have not yet penetrated

CDO and Claveria, or even the whole of Region X. As clearly seen in this study, the human rights of girl-children in the survey areas are still being violated.

Violence against girl-children will go on unless the root cause of the problem is properly addressed. To quote from the assessment of the Baha'i Faith, "a relentless epidemic of violence against women and girls– perpetuated by social norms, religious fanaticism, and exploitative economic and political conditions – continues to wreak havoc in every corner of the world. As the international community struggles to implement laws to protect women and girls, it is evident that a massive divide still separates the legal apparatus and the culture – embodied in our values, behaviors and institutions – required to stem the epidemic" (Baha'i International Community 2006).

Section 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary and Conclusions

This study looked into how a patriarchal culture affected the situation of selected girl-children in Cagayan de Oro and in Claveria, Misamis Oriental. What the study proved was that poverty and patriarchy makes the physical and social environment of the children an unsafe and unhealthy place to live in.

As it is, the root causes of all these abuses and exploitations, as proven in this study, are happening right in the homes of these children where the perpetrators are the parents themselves. The presence of child abuse, child labor, sexual abuse, prostitution, gender biases, stereotyping of roles, domestic violence, subordination, discrimination, and other similar oppressions are strong manifestations of the presence of patriarchy in the country. As the PMHRE pointed out:

“Patriarchy has prevailed, reinforced by cultural values derived from systems of male dominance. It has been so commonly and continually practiced as to appear natural rather than a humanly constructed social order that is both changing and changeable. Patriarchy has become more an ideology and belief system than the explicit social and political systems of earlier times.”

As discussed earlier, the culture of patriarchy was brought in by the Spanish colonizers to achieve their goals, carried out through the church, enforced and perpetuated through the family, and taught in schools through textbooks, school policies, and procedures although these are being gradually toned down and errors being rectified. The patriarchal laws of the land are also slowly disappearing and more gender-friendly ones are taking over. The media, however, still continue to propagate and magnify the claws of patriarchy through its print and mass media, in the movies and TV commercials, as capitalists make use of women and girls’ bodies for profits.

These four strong factors—the church, family, media and school—should be the focus of attention of assigned agencies in the implementation of their plans and programs. Proper interventions should be made to systematically curtail the proliferation of human rights violations against girl-children with the cooperation and commitment of all stakeholders.

Thus, girl-children continue to suffer in life because of discriminatory religious and cultural beliefs, which are handed down from generation to generation. These ways of thinking, believing, and behaving contribute to the girls' loss of self-esteem and self-confidence and thus affect the full development of their talents and skills, their potentialities, and capabilities.

Moreover, some parents are also quite young to be parents of teenage children because they themselves had married young, and they have not completed higher education because of poverty and similar circumstances. They only depended on the belief system in the community, in the sermons of priests and pastors in the church. As quoted from the researcher's article, "the essence of life and virtue lay in abiding by the rules of a patriarchal society. Their lives were dictated by norms set by people who had been colonized both in mind and body. They based the roles of men and women on some teachings in the church and rules perpetuated by the old folks who, in their unlettered wisdom told the young to obey these rules, so as to be accepted members of the community (Alindogan-Medina 1994).

There is no data in this study that pertains to the effect of media in the attitude and behavior of men toward women and girls. However, it could not be denied that people — men and women alike — are regularly exposed to how low women are being portrayed in movies, television shows, and TV commercials. Nothing much has changed from the time this researcher made a study in early 1990s on this aspect. Women are still being portrayed as simple housewives whose main role is to make her husband and children happy by doing household chores like cooking and serving them good food, washing their clothes and bedding, etc. The movies still portray women as weak, submissive, and dependent on men. Indeed, media portray lots of gender biases and stereotyping of roles, attitudes, and behavior.

As the study showed, the social and cultural patterns of conduct for boys and girls as instituted by the church and society are implemented by the family. Family education and training are still geared towards domesticity of girls who are tasked to take charge of work inside the house and the boys whose works are done outside. This is evident of patriarchy, of man's power and authority over the girls whom they consider as a sex object and their property which they could

use to make them happy as inspired by the teachings in the church on why Eve was created by God.

All of these affect the ways of thinking, believing and behaving of people toward women and girls. This is what is known as the culture of patriarchy, which continues to flourish as long as there are institutions that support and sustain them. Patriarchy will continue to exist as long as the media do not change their ways of treating women and girls for the sake of huge profits in business, as long as the church preaches that women are subordinates of men, that a wife should submit herself to the husband, that woman was taken from Adam's rib, and therefore, a property of man created to give him happiness.

To conclude, the existence of poverty and the culture of patriarchy greatly affect the human rights of the 75 girl-children in Cagayan de Oro City and in Claveria, Misamis Oriental. It can also be assumed that if such human rights violations were experienced by the respondents in the two survey areas, it could also be the case in the other towns and provinces in Region X and in other regions as well.

Recommendations

Since the patriarchal culture is deeply entrenched in the Filipinos' belief system, values, attitudes, and behavior, it would take a concerted effort among the following government agencies and bodies to work for its eradication and consequently, its transformation into a culture that respects and protects the human rights of girl-children. These agencies include the following:

1. Department of Education (DepEd)
2. Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)
3. Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC)
4. Philippine Commission on Human Rights (PCHR)
5. Child Rights Center (CRC)
6. Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children, 2000-2025 (PNSFPDC) or Child 21.
7. Philippine National Plan of Action on Violence Against Children (PNPAVAC)
8. Philippine Commission on Women

9. Department of Health

These and other stakeholders should collectively work toward the systematic eradication of the culture of patriarchy in the family, church, media, and in school. This might take years to resolve this centuries-old condition but it is very possible and it can be done. Priority projects could be as follows:

1. Creation or amendment of laws and policies found to be necessary based on the results of this study

A Core Group could request selected legislators to go over the laws and policies on girl-children and identify the gaps from which amendments could be made. Or, the Core Group could review their respective functions and identify those amendments of laws and policies on children. Below are two examples:

- a. The Philippine National Plan of Action on Violence Against Children has a major unit called the Legislation/Policy Development and Implementation and its major function is the “enactment or amendment of laws to fight and prevent violence against children in all settings (e.g., anti-corporal punishment of children, etc.)”
- b. The Child Rights Center has also stated two functions: “To advise and propose to the Government the adoption or amendments of laws, programs and policies or measures in consonance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child” and “to prepare position papers relative to pending bills in the Congress that have implications on children, and propose amendments to existing legislations on children.”

2. Inclusion of Human Rights Education as a separate subject even in the last three grade levels in the elementary school (Grades 4-6)

Appropriate curriculum enhancement, books and teaching materials should be prepared for this purpose, keeping in mind the eradication of the patriarchal belief system through human rights education.

3. Integration of girl-child rights in Social Studies/Social Science course in high school and in higher education

The following topics can be made part of the contents of the social studies curriculum, if they do not yet exist, or reinforced further by updating content and providing gender statistics and disaggregated data.

- a. Human Rights of Children
- b. Responsible Parenting
- c. Laws on Women, i.e., VAW, CEDAW
- d. Peace and Conflict Resolution
- e. Harmonious Partnership of Parents and Children
- f. Gender Fair Education
- g. Gender-fair interpretation of Certain Verses in the Bible
- h. Sex objectification and Commercialization of Women in Mass and Print Media
- i. Economic Cost of Domestic Violence
- j. Understanding Poverty and its Consequences

4. Integration of adult education in schools

In cooperation with the School's Parent-Teachers' Association in every community and city in every province, an Adult Education Class could be regularly conducted, focusing on the topics mentioned above especially for parents who have not finished secondary and tertiary education.

5. Empowerment of children

The Core Group could work together in assisting the girls in every school district in organizing and empowering themselves, in guiding them to come up with their own advocacy campaigns, and in taking collective action to eradicate human rights violations most especially on corporal punishment. This could be done through theater and arts, holding seminars and workshops, and other consciousness-raising activities. The PCHR, through its Child Rights Center, could be the lead agency for this and should be given more budget and committed personnel to carry out its

mandated functions which, if efficiently implemented, would surely do a lot for the progress and development of the children. These functions are:

- a. Work in collaboration and coordination with other stakeholders of children's rights;
- b. Establish structures to increase the knowledge of children of their rights and to facilitate regular consultation with them on issues concerning the realization of children's rights;
- c. Conceptualize projects and programs that will ensure the protection and promotion of the rights of children in the Philippines, and to monitor government compliance with specific provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- d. Develop and implement awareness programs on children's rights; and
- e. Promote child participation in all its programs and undertakings.

6. Leadership from the schools

The school can help a lot because it is found in every community and has direct contact with the children and consequently, their parents. The school can work on the following:

- a. Review school policies and regulations vis-à-vis the international and national mandates on the child. The teachers themselves should be made aware that they may unconsciously be violating human rights of children or reinforcing patriarchal values and attitudes.
- b. Teachers should watch out for indicators among pupils who are possibly dropping out of school and to come up with interventions to avoid such things to happen.
- c. Sex education should be taught in class with the goal of avoiding early sex relationships among students, getting into live-in arrangements with their boyfriends, and begetting illegitimate children.

7. Advocacy

There should be stronger advocacy against sex commercialization and violence against women and children in television, in its programs, and in commercial advertisements, which are broadcast in every home to all viewers regardless of age.

8. Information education

Preparation and publication in comic form of human rights violations against girl-children such as corporal punishment, child abuse, sexual abuse, child labor, and prostitution should be encouraged. Every case should be accompanied with relevant laws and the penalties that go with them.

9. Partnership with the church

The Core Group should come up with approaches, strategies, and techniques where the clergy would also become gender-friendly and for them to realize the effects of a patriarchal society on the minds and in the hearts of men and women in particular and to the whole society in general.

For all these recommendations to be realized, new policies relevant to the systematic implementation of each project should be formulated by the Core Group to be institutionalized through legislation.

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