

## **BREAKING THE SILENCE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN INITIATIVES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND COLOMBIA.**

Rompiendo el silencio: un análisis comparativo de las iniciativas sobre violencia contra las mujeres en Filipinas y Colombia

**Rosalynn Mae Soper, Juan Camilo Fagua, Alpha Sophia Tinga, Chantrea Agosto, Raizen Serrano, Prudencio Timothy Cordeta & Eda Sofia Figueroa.**

### ***Abstract***

Violence against women is an alarming and widespread human right issue that disproportionately affects developing countries. The Philippines and Colombia both record high numbers of instances of VAW, with causes rooted in economic to social and cultural. In response to the issue, the countries have launched initiatives and established organizations that aim to provide support to affected parties. However, an evaluation of these initiatives reveals significant gaps: the root causes and main drivers of VAW are not being adequately addressed. these projects are more responsive than preventative. Further methods must be considered and core issues such as norms and poverty need progress.

**Keywords:** Violence, Women, Gender

### ***Resumen***

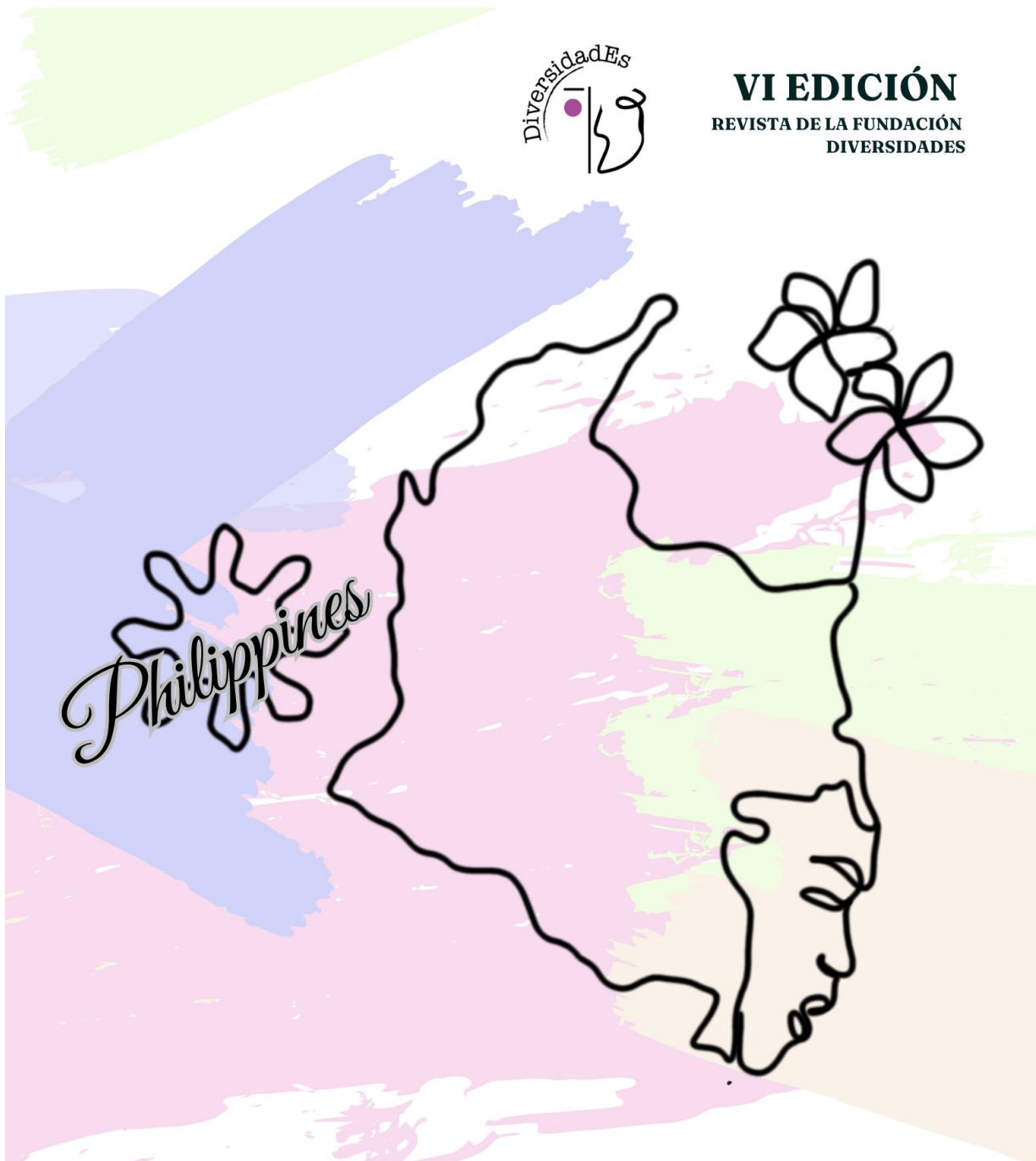
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**Palabras claves:** Violencia, Mujer, Género

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**Keywords:** Violence, Women, Gender

## ***Resumen***

La violencia contra la mujer es un problema de derechos humanos alarmante que prevalece en los países en desarrollo. Filipinas y Colombia registran un alto número de casos de violencia contra las mujeres, con motivos que van desde lo económico hasta lo social y cultural. En respuesta al problema, los países han lanzado iniciativas y establecido organizaciones que tienen como objetivo brindar apoyo a las partes afectadas. Luego de la evaluación, se encuentra que aún faltan estas iniciativas; los desafíos de raíz y los principales impulsores de la violencia contra las mujeres no se están abordando activamente, ya que estos proyectos son más receptivos que preventivos. Por lo tanto, se deben considerar otros métodos, siendo necesario avanzar en temas fundamentales como los estándares y la pobreza.

**Palabras claves:** Violencia, Mujer, Género



## **Resumo**

A violência contra as mulheres é uma questão alarmante e generalizada de direitos humanos que afecta desproporcionalmente os países em desenvolvimento. As Filipinas e a Colômbia registam números elevados de casos de VCM, com causas enraizadas no âmbito económico, social e cultural. Em resposta à questão, os países lançaram iniciativas e criaram organizações que visam prestar apoio às partes afectadas. No entanto, uma avaliação destas iniciativas revela lacunas significativas: as causas profundas e os principais impulsionadores da VCM não estão a ser abordados de forma adequada. Esses projetos são mais responsivos do que preventivos. Outros métodos devem ser considerados e questões fundamentais como as normas e a pobreza precisam de progresso.

**Palavras-chave:** Violência, Mulher, Género

## **1. Introduction**

Violence against women (VAW) is a gender-based human rights violation that has severe and far-reaching effects on the physical health, mental well-being, economic development, and overall quality of life of women and their communities. In developing countries, this issue is worsened by both lapses in governance and aggravating circumstances such as poverty and social convention. The Philippines, usually labelled as one of the more gender-equitable countries in Asia, unfortunately suffers from the highest rates of violence against women. In Colombia, domestic violence and intimate violence are prevalent issues. In order to draft protective legislation, the core causes of violence against women in both countries and government policies and organizations, as well as their implemented projects, will be analysed and contrasted. This study shall answer the following research questions: What are the main drivers/causes of violence against women in Colombia and the Philippines? What issues or challenges give rise to the prevalence of violence against women in Colombia and the Philippines? How have the governments of Colombia and the Philippines addressed violence against women? Have the policies and programs had sufficient impact in mitigating the issue? How can these governments improve to mitigate violence against women?

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Philippines**

The Anti-VAWC Law established an Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and Children (IAC-VAWC) is a cooperative project between multiple government agencies in the Philippines with

the goal of eliminating violence against women. The main agencies involved are the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the Commission on Human Rights (CHR), and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC). Even with the council in place, gathered data from the Philippine National Police (PNP) records show that more than 2/3 of the 12,000 domestic violence instances that were registered in 2021 involved women as the victims. Around 5,339 incidents involving women have been recorded nationwide in the first half of 2022. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority as of 2018, in the Philippines, 19% of women have been victims of physical or sexual violence, but only 6% report it to a formal source. Shame and stigma, lack of knowledge or access to resources, mistrust of health professionals, financial hurdles, cultural norms and religious beliefs, and fear of the offender are all common reasons for not reporting instances of violence (Palermo et al., 2013). One of the most alarming reasons in the country as well is the fact that victims do not believe that reporting instances will get them any help at all. Factors that affect VAWC in the country have poverty and economic factors as the top reason (Garcia, 2020). Women with lower incomes are more likely to experience violence personally. Due to a lack of economic opportunities, women turn to prostitution, which fosters sexual harassment. In families, violence happens when the husband has complete control over the finances and domestic decisions, which is typical in the country.

## 2.2. Colombia

Ley 1257 de 2008 is Colombia's principal law on VAW. Similar to the Philippines, it is also a cooperative effort between multiple government agencies in order for the Colombian government to provide

protection, legal, and health services to women who are victims of violence. The ministries involved are The Ministry of Communications, The Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Despite this law is in place, VAW is still a prominent problem in the country. According to a study conducted by UN Women in Colombia, 33.3% of Colombian women have been victims of different forms of violence, from physical violence to sexual violence. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, VAW has increased to 63% (2021). Furthermore, gender-based violence (including violence carried out by armed groups) continues to be a pervasive and serious issue in the country. The lack of training and lack of implementation of treatment protocols hinders both women and girls from seeking post-violence medical and legal assistance from the government. Moreover, those who commit VAW and other gender-based crimes aren't being held accountable by the government. (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

## 3. Review of Related Literature

To provide a comprehensive and critical analysis of the existing research and literature about VAW, the researchers classified related studies into four themes, such as drivers and forms of VAW in the Philippines, mechanisms addressing VAW in the Philippines, drivers and forms of VAW in Colombia, and mechanisms addressing VAW in Colombia.

### Drivers and Forms of VAW in the Philippines

A significant body of literature articulated many factors that perpetuate VAW in the Philippines. Bernarte et al. (2018) intended to depict the present condition of VAW in the Philippines by conducting a

series of face-to-face interviews with informants from the PNP, Women and Child Protection Center, and barangay women's desk. After an analysis of data accustomed to the use of a coding sheet, the authors found that family, economic, social, socio-cultural, and socio-political factors play a huge role in the occurrences of VAW in the Philippine context. The inherited culture of male dominance in the family, marital instability, and relational conflict contribute to familial aspects. The lack of social services inducing women to resort to dangerous jobs like prostitution, along with financial dependence, comprise the economic factors. Social aspects include media and educational portrayal of women as powerless. Finally, sociocultural and socio-political factors involve the prioritization of male leaders in governance and religious prohibition of contraception. In line with Bernarte's findings on educational portrayal, Yoon & Bor (2020) examined the nexus between women's education and their risk of gender-based violence (GBV) compared with the relationship between the education of their partners and the women's risk of experiencing GBV. Utilizing the data gathered by the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) in 2017 and multivariate logistic regression for analysis, the scholars found that the education of male partners is as much of a crucial factor as women's own education in relation to their likelihood of experiencing violence. As such, they ascertained that partner selection based on male education levels serves as a protective factor to avoid GBV and recommended the operationalization of policy initiatives that aim to increase awareness of males about safe behavior, VAW, and abolishment of traditional gender roles. With the purpose of the causality of partner intoxication to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against women, Kerridge & Tran (2016) derived data from a nationally representative survey in the Philippines

from 2013 and analyzed them through multinomial logistic regression and three dependent variables, such as physical, sexual, and emotional violence. Their study revealed that partner intoxication was significantly correlated with three dependent variables of IPV against women, urging public health organizations and government agencies to reduce IPV through altering societal beliefs that promote IPV and implementing alcohol reduction programs among men to reduce IPV. The research directly advanced that partner intoxication perpetuates cases of VAW. Some researchers scrutinized VAW through the lens of natural disasters that commonly occur in the Philippines. Molin (2018) aimed to know how humanitarian actors in the country work with men and boys to prevent the perpetration of post-disaster GBV in Manila through gleaning information from peer-reviewed academic journals and reports published by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), UN agencies, and government authorities within the last 10 years. They supported this information with data collected from 18 interviews with local and international humanitarian professionals. The study revealed that factors including men's loss of livelihood, absent feelings of power and masculinity, lack of coping mechanisms to deal with new gender roles, stress and trauma, jealousy towards women, and tensions in intimate relationships exacerbate GBV. Moreover, perpetrators of GBV commonly hold the desire to regain a sense of masculinity and use power and privileges to abuse individuals holding a lower societal position. Dynamics between climate disaster, gender, and violence in the Philippines and Vietnam were the focus of the research of Nguyen & Rydstrom (2018). Leveraging qualitative ethnographic data gleaned from fieldwork and surveys conducted in 2015, the authors saw an increased VAW during and after Typhoon Haiyan. On the other hand,

pre-typhoon strategies in Vietnam preempted GBV. Although occurrences of calamities between the two countries varied in terms of impacting the state of GBV, the authors found that cases of violence in the Philippines were prolonged by the silence of women who refused to ask for help from authorities who usually stimulate the culture of acceptance concerning IPV, irrationally justifying that male-to-female violence happened because a woman failed to manage her family well. Diverging from the rich body of literature about varying contexts and drivers of VAW, Labrague et al. (2022) tackled how it manifests in different forms in Samar, Philippines. To provide a comprehensive account of the women victims of domestic violence, the authors conducted semi-structured audiotaped interviews in collaboration with the Social Welfare and Development. They transcribed data from encounters with female victims and determined four themes of domestic abuse that they experienced: sexual, physical, emotional, psychological, and economic. While inferring that VAW negatively affects women's self-esteem and threatens their personal security, the academics advanced that it also affects the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of children in the household.

### **Mechanisms Addressing VAW in the Philippines**

Previous studies evaluated mechanisms offered by the Philippine government and NGOs to address VAW in the Philippines. Garcia (2020) looked into the current legislation, actions, and policies carried out by the UN Women, relevant NGOs, academics, and government agencies in relation to VAW through face-to-face interviews with focal people and representatives of the aforementioned institutions. By analysing data using the Public Health Model and the Integrated Ecological Model, the

scholars found inadequacy and unresponsiveness of government services despite the existence of laws and services to address the issue. In areas where government services are deficient, non-government organizations and academics play a role in enforcing initiatives. The study also revealed the lack of central data to consolidate government services, posing a challenge for academics to fully evaluate mechanisms intended to mitigate VAW. Lastly, it identified factors concerning VAW, such as protective factors deemed to be positive aspects of culture that must be leveraged and risk factors of negative cultural aspects inducing violent behaviour. Protective factors include age and economic empowerment, joint decision-making, urban settings and tight-knit communities, strong policies, government support, internalization of law and family values, internet, and technology. Risk factors involve younger age, the cycle of violence, low educational attainment, segregative educational system, *beso* culture, husband, or wife domination in the household, rural and urban settings, the stoical stereotype of a Filipino woman, high valuation of family, the culture of silence, sex as a taboo subject, internet, and technology. Consignado et al. (2022), on the other hand, conducted a multi-level assessment of the status of VAW desks in terms of policies and legislation, set up, and officers through surveys with 105 VAW desk officers and interviews with five local officials in Calamba, Laguna. The study's quantitative approach unveiled the lack of equipment and resources to address VAW cases, the ambiguous qualifications of desk officers, the unclear orientation of desk officer roles and responsibilities, and the lack of financing schemes to support barangays with low incomes.

## Drivers and Forms of VAW in Colombia

Several research papers investigated the drivers and forms of VAW in Colombia and focused on IPV. Seeking to understand the challenges faced by displaced Colombian women in Ecuador, Keating et al. (2021) employed methodological triangulation, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the issue. Their study revealed that the lack of legal residence and documentation, housing insecurity, economic stress apparent in financial instability and underemployment, social isolation, loss of support networks, and previous experience of violence contributed to the GBV experienced by Colombian women. Results emphasized the need for migration-related IPV prevention and response programs and international development efforts to alleviate poverty. Friedemann-Sanchez & Lovaton (2012) further reinforced the link between IPV and economic well-being by scrutinizing the role that domestic violence plays in perpetuating poverty. They used descriptive analysis, intra-household bargaining framework, and bivariate probit model to draw insights from the 2005 DHS. The study argued that IPV has cascading effects on the social, economic, and health status of females, trapping them in poverty by diminishing their productivity at work and minimizing their financial contribution to the household. Additionally, it forwarded that domestic violence of a male is largely associated with the maltreatment he experienced from childhood. Using a three-stage stratified cluster sample from 2005 DHS for Colombia similar to the previously tackled studies, Assaad & Levison (2017) found that IPV negatively affected the educational outcomes of victim's children in terms of increasing the non-attendance of the average child and reducing conditional grade advancement. Other studies tackled

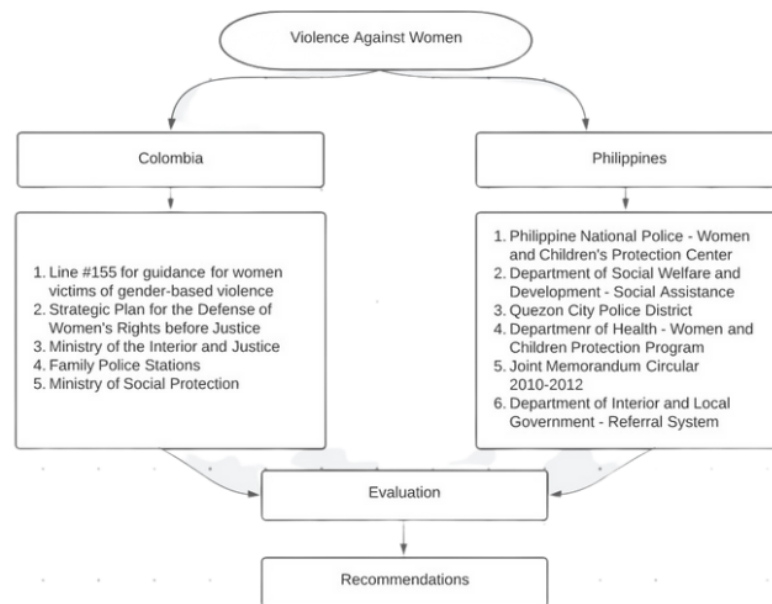
VAW in varying contexts like armed encounters and transportation or mobility. Aiming to examine the correlation between conflict and domestic violence, Rieckmann (2014) examined data on conflict intensity from Programa Presidencial de Derechos Humanos y Derecho Internacional Humanitario in 2003 and 2004 and information from Colombian DHS from the years 2004 to 2005. After statistically exploiting local differences in fight intensities and differences in behavioural patterns revolving around domestic violence, the academic asserted that armed encounters exacerbate the risk of VAW as it becomes a means of venting stress, and intense conflicts induce societal acceptance of violence. The findings of the study indicated that domestic violence tends to become cyclical as children who are victims of it become dysfunctional in forming relationships with no healthy example of peaceful conflict resolution, increasing the probability of them becoming violent to family members in later life. Seeking to comprehend the relationship between GBV and mobility in Manizales, Colombia, Del Mar Rodas-Zuleta & Escobar (2022) quantitatively measured the changes in travel choice and behaviours of women caused by violent incidents through self-reported surveys analysed using a chi-squared statistical test. They later revealed that women tend to use private modes of transport (i.e., cars, motorcycles, or taxicabs) because of GBV incidents reported occurring during public transit, walking, and bike riding, further limiting their access to opportunities and rights to the city. Another context researchers looked at was seeing through new expressions of VAW in Colombia, deliberately burning victims with acid in particular. Restrepo-Bernal et al. (2014) described the clinical and psychic-pathological characteristics of eight Colombian women who were victims of this new expression of VAW by conducting a non-

structured psychiatric interview in compliance with the diagnostic criteria of the Statistic and Diagnostic Manual of interdisciplinary health professionals. After careful analyses, the scholars learned that the common reason behind attacks of male aggressors was jealousy and revenge due to rejection of sexual or love advancements or pretensions. Moreover, the incidents induced suffering, rejection, and social isolation as permanent scars of aggression.

### Mechanisms Addressing VAW in Colombia

Because most academic sources online focus on the drivers and forms of VAW in Colombia, the researchers only found one study that evaluated the mechanisms addressing the issue in the country. To qualitatively evaluate health providers' readiness and role in policy implementation in Bogotá, Colombia through interviews with 46 doctors, nurses, and social workers among five public hospitals' emergency departments, Morse & Decker (2019) unveiled inadequate capacity building and undermined policy implementation. They discovered that health providers in Bogotá possess high levels of awareness about sexual violence, which should be reinforced by equipping providers and hospitals with the resources they need to provide quality care to VAW victims. Additionally, they highlighted that healthcare institutions fail to operationalize mandated district and national policies due to a lack of resources. Interestingly, despite these shortcomings, health providers in Bogotá exhibited high levels of awareness about sexual violence.

## 4. Conceptual Reference



The figure above shows the conceptual reference of the study, revolving around the study's main topic—violence against women. Branching out from the prime issue are five government services from Colombia and six government services from the Philippines. After looking at how each mechanism works to protect the rights of women, the researchers will evaluate them and provide recommendations to reinforce insights from this study and the positive aspects of each service to help women.

## 5. Methodology

Primary and secondary data through government-provided information, first-hand documentation and incident reports, news articles from reputable agencies, as well as existing research in the field

of GBV will be collected and then will be studied with diagnostic and prescriptive analysis. The causes, challenges, and response to violence against women in both countries will be defined in turn and will be used to prescribe possible legislative solutions to aid in the alleviation of the original issue.

## **6. Results**

### **Colombian Government Services Addressing VAW**

In Colombia and the Philippines, through different government instances, different programs are promoted in support of women facing gender violence from different public aspects to find useful support for each case. Five Colombian government services and five Philippine government services that address VAW are developed below.

#### **Line #155 for guidance for women victims of gender-based violence**

Through this service channel of the Presidential Counsel for Women's Equality, operated by the National Police, Colombian men and women will be able to communicate 24 hours a day and from any operator to receive care and guidance on issues related to gender violence. Those who communicate will be treated under reserve by specialized personnel who will provide them with clear and complete information on Women's Rights, Types of violence of which they may be victims, Guidance to make a complaint, Legal and health care, Institutional offer available by the National Government, Mechanisms in place to prevent, minimize and eliminate violence against women. In the

event of recording calls reporting cases in progress, it will be redirected to the National Police line 123 so that the necessary support is available for immediate attention.

### **Strategic Plan for the Defense of Women's Rights before Justice**

This plan considers three areas of work: the protection of women against intra-family violence, the dissolution of marriage unions and labour discrimination, developed through 116 actions, aimed at strengthening the actions of the Government of Colombia in support of the women's rights and equality; and implement new measures that improve the test and exercise of the rights already provided for by Colombian legislation (Avila, 2010). The execution of these 25 acts was carried out in 2009 through an agreement signed between the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana and the Autonomous Community of Madrid.

### **Ministry of the Interior and Justice**

Within the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, the construction of a valuable experience called the National Houses of Justice Program has been found, which works through 44 offices in 40 municipalities where the attention of formal and non-formal justice operators is offered. The Directorate of Access to Justice with the support of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and Agency for International Development (AID), executed the Project for Integral Attention to Intrafamily and Sexual Violence in 20 Houses of Justice (2003-2008), with the purpose of incorporating and applying a methodology of attention to these problems that mainly affect women, defining a route of comprehensive care, as well as the role of the Houses in matters of gender-based violence

and sexual and reproductive rights, promoting a process of integration with municipal authorities and with the community.

### **Family Police Stations**

According to Ministerio De Justicia y Del Derecho (n.d.), family police stations exercise a function strictly established by law since the issuance of Law 575 of the year 2000, which gave them the power to issue protection measures to victims of domestic violence, complemented today with Law 1257 of 2008 in which it extends its radius of action to the violence against women in both private and public spheres. It should be noted that in the current circumstances, these agencies do not comply with national coverage or with the physical, professional, and administrative infrastructure necessary to provide comprehensive care to this important and delicate situation of violation of women's human rights. Faced with the current conditions and limitations of the Family Commissioners, a pronouncement was presented through the signing of a manifesto signed at the meeting of commissioners held on July 10 and 11 within the framework of the regulation process of Law 1257 of 2008, in which they raise, among other issues, the need to determine a governing entity at the national level that is competent to coordinate all the actions of the family police stations and that draws a technical line regarding their minimum requirements to function; the need to guarantee professionalized financial, physical, and human resources that guarantee effective and quality care, since they do not have psychosocial teams; and the clear definition of competences in the territorial order.

### **Ministry of Social Protection**

According to Ministerio De Justicia y Del Derecho (n.d), has two information systems for health surveillance: the Public Health Surveillance System - SIVIGILA (Created by decree 3518 of 2006) and the Integral Social Protection Information System - SISPRO, which include epidemiological variables by sex, but which they do not specify the subject of Violence Against Women, in addition, they do not work in an articulated manner with other information systems such as the Prosecutor's Office, Legal Medicine, National Police, Family Commissioners, among others, which prevents obtaining consolidated information on violence based in gender and against women and therefore demands the creation, articulation, and consolidation of a national registration, monitoring and follow-up system, as ordered by Law 1257, which precisely must be led by this Ministry.

### **Philippine Government Services Addressing VAW**

#### **Philippine National Police - Women and Children's Protection Center**

The Philippine government adopted various mechanisms to enforce the law through several agencies. Garcia (2020) provided specific details and programs the Philippine government and agencies initiated. One is the Women and Children's Protection Center of the Philippine National Police initiated a Women's Desk Management in police stations nationwide that serves as a reporting centre for related cases. It improved reporting services at a local level, making it more accessible. Despite aspirations of providing better services for victims, general distrust has been observed and negative stereotypes and risk factors persisted. There is hesitation in accepting cases and fear of retaliation both from the staff



and police officers. Service providers and the police remained to express gender insensitivity and victim blaming in handling cases. This program presents a need for improved government services in terms of stronger policies and effective management of service providers to improve the response and its conception from the public.

### **Department of Social Welfare and Development - Social Assistance**

The Department of Social Welfare and Development, as one of the agencies mainly involved in this policy, provides social assistance for VAW victims. Even with the fact, most VAW reports come from the Philippine National Police in NCR, DSWD NCR shelters for victims have a relatively small population. Not all cases need relocation, however, those who do not avail of this temporary shelter is also another situation. There is a problem in the lack of resources for this program. A respondent stated the lack of infrastructure and shelters. Another issue is about how the program lacks the operational capacity and resources to accommodate more people. It presents that the demand for these services does not meet the capability of these shelters, including public and private services. Even the DSWD stated their need for improvements in the program. The other services still need to be re-evaluated, strengthened, and established. While there are issues in meeting the demand for these services, a greater demand is still considered because of lack of awareness about these services including the victims' rights. Moreover, improving the accessibility of medical services is necessary in different areas. These issues highlight the importance of support from private foundations and organizations, and the government itself. There is also a lack of coordination, making it difficult for victims to seek the

help they deserve. If these concerns are not addressed, this may lead to public distrust and hesitation of victims to acquire these services (Garcia, 2020).

### **Quezon City Police District**

The local police also took an initiative to provide better services for the victims of Violence Against Women (VAW), an example is the Quezon City Police District (QCPD). The QCPD created a central Protection Center, making the reporting simpler and services more accessible. This serves as an example for 81 other cities, pushing local governments to take the same initiative in improving local services. As observed from the previous projects, both the Philippine National Police's Women and Children Protection Center (PNP-WCPC) and Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) admitted the shortcomings of their services that substantiate gender-based violence is not a priority of the government. Among the respondents, only the QCPD respondents from this study shared insights that present Gender-based Violence as one of the priorities in their local government. The cases are taken seriously and making the effort to take action in addressing the cases (Garcia, 2020).

### **Department of Health - Women and Children Protection Program**

Another project is the Women and Children Protection Program headed by the Department of Health. Brought by augmenting population of women and children consulting for violence, rape, incest, and other related cases, Administrative Order 1-B or 'Establishment of Women and

Children Protection Unit in All Department of Health (DOH) Hospitals'. Based on 2016 data, 8,000 cases were served through the established WCPUs in the Philippines. Through its socialized scheme, the DOH provides medical assistance to victims in DOH-retained hospitals or in coordination with LGUs or other government health facilities. The program presents prevention, intervention, and response. Primary prevention in ceasing occurring cases of violence; early intervention for victims to be identified and provided support; and response to violence by holding perpetrators accountable, ensuring accessibility of connected services (Department of Health, 2018). In terms of elimination of violence against women and children and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence, Republic Act No. 10354 entitled 'The Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Acts of 2012' serves as a protection (Department of Health, 2018). The Department of Health (2018) provided more specific details regarding this program. The program components are violence and injury prevention, and mental health. It has various partner institutions, some of them include government agencies and departments like Philippine Commission of Women, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Interior and Local Government, World Health Organization, and UNICEF.

### **Joint Memorandum Circular 2010-2012**

Consignado et al. (2022) explained another policy adopted by local government units. The Joint Memorandum Circular 2010-2012, providing guidelines for setting up a barangay level VAW Desk. It orders the barangay captains to designate an area within the barangay hall for the VAW desk. They should provide necessary furniture and fixtures, but not limited to, table, chairs, separate filing cabinet, and logbook for

record-keeping of cases. The desk officer must be designated through a barangay ordinance or an Executive Order (EO), trained in gender-sensitive handling of VAW cases offered by the city government through the CSSYDO, PNP and DILG. The VAW desk should also have a separate room for intake interviews. In observing its effectiveness and efficiency, respondents state that most of them submit monthly reports. A barangay is required to prepare and submit quarterly accomplishment reports within ten working days of the ensuing month to their City or Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer and City or Municipal Local Government Operations Officer. To ensure desk officers are fit for the job, they presented suggested characteristics. Some of them are the nature and dynamics of gender crisis intervention, empathy, non-judgmental, genuine concern for clients, confidentiality, and most importantly, commitment to VAW and family violence. This is to assure the victims are faced with desk officers who are sensible and knowledgeable. There are also problems encountered. Not all VAW desks are in separate rooms for intake interviews given the limited space of barangay halls and budget is limited for VAW desk offices. There are also concerns with incomplete basic equipment and tools in barangays. The issue in prioritization in the barangays in the GAD budget allocation is also observed as a cause for these deficiencies.

### **Department of Interior and local Government - Referral System**

The DILG's referral system entails advantages, such as the quality of welfare system; improving assistance and protection to victims-survivors of violence; it is important in facilitating services provided meet the needs of both the victims and the survivors while assuring their

recovery and reintegration; a feedback mechanism between and among agencies to ensure services are provided; provide a channel for exchanging competencies to enhance the capacities of service providers; and achieve rational use of resources for efficiency and effective delivery of services. It entails the process of coordinating services resulting in expedited service access, coherency, and tracked referrals between agencies or organizations. These referrals and outcomes are recorded. A feedback loop is also adopted as a system for both the referring parties and agencies to check the provision and effectiveness of service. The system can also identify gaps to bridge the steps taken by agencies and organizations in the network.

## **7. Mechanism Evaluation**

### **Colombia**

#### **Line #155**

Line #155 has demonstrated that it is a dependable resource for women suffering from gender-based violence in Colombia, offering crucial support and assistance to victims. However, more needs to be done to tackle the root causes of violence against women, including gender inequality, and provide adequate resources to support the agency's work.

#### **Strategic Plan for the Defence of Women's Rights before Justice**

The main goal of Colombia's Strategic Plan for the Protection of Women's Rights before Justice was to lessen violence against women in the nation. However, it's not without its challenges, as Colombia is still facing significant challenges, such as the fact that many Colombian

women who are abused are not aware about the services available and there are cultural barriers at play. In conclusion, Colombia's Strategic Plan for the Defence of Women's Rights before Justice is a good step in the right direction in addressing violence against women in Colombia, but more needs to be done in order to address the underlying causes of VAW.

#### **Ministry of the Interior and Justice**

When it comes to the effectiveness of the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, it has made some progress. They have also created specialized courts that primarily deal with cases of violence against women and created a national hotline for women to report incidents of violence. Overall, Colombia's Ministry of Interior and Justice has made big progress in combating VAW.

#### **Family Police Stations**

The Family Police Stations (Comisarías de Familia) in Colombia are also not free from Colombia's ongoing issues in the fight against VAW. One significant issue is the lack of resources available to the family police stations, including personnel and equipment. And as a result, the quality and effectiveness of the services offered by the stations may be impacted by their lack of resources. Moreover, there is still the issue of women who may be discouraged from seeking assistance from the family police stations due to cultural hurdles and social stigma associated with reporting acts of abuse. Overall, while Colombia's family police stations have been effective in offering aid and support to VAW victims, additional funding is required to address the issue and increase these stations' capacity to offer comprehensive and effective care to women in need.

## **Ministry of Social Protection**

The Ministry of Social Protection in Colombia has taken several steps to address violence against women in the country. The Ministry has two health surveillance information systems that help against VAW, namely the Public Health Surveillance System - SIVIGILA and the Integral Social Protection Information System - SISPRO. While these systems include epidemiological variables by gender, the main problem is that they do not specifically indicate incidents of violence against women, which makes it hard to properly address cases of VAW.

## **Philippines**

### **Philippine National Police - Women and Children's Protection Center**

When it comes to the PNP's Women and Children's Protection Center's effectiveness, they have made some progress against VAW in the Philippines. The agency has a several programs and efforts aimed at reducing VAW, which include the Women and Children's Station in police stations around the nation. This station in particular helps women and children who have experienced violence get access to support services and gives immediate aid. In conclusion, the Philippine National Police - Women and Children's Protection Center has taken initiatives in addressing VAW in the country. The agency must then continue to collaborate with other government agencies and non-governmental organizations to strengthen its capacity and ensure that women and children in the country have access to effective and quality support services.

### **Department of Social Welfare and Development - Social Assistance**

The agency's primary issue is the lack of resources made available to them, as well as lack of coordination in some of their programs. In conclusion, DSWD has been effective in battling VAW but lacks the funding to address other underlying causes of violence and ensure that the women who are victims of violence and abuse have access to quality support services.

### **Quezon City Police District**

Local police departments, such as the QCPD, have also taken steps to improve treatment for VAW victims. The QCPD established a central Protection Center to simplify reporting and make services more accessible. This also acts as a model for 81 other cities and also encourages other local governments in adopting the same steps to improve local services. Recognizing the shortcomings of both PNP-WCPC and DSWD, the government must take notice of what the local agencies are doing in combating VAW despite their limited resources.

### **Department of Health - Women and Children Protection Program**

The Women and Children Protection Program is a very good attempt to combat VAW as it shows that they have initiative in preventing harm, intervention to abuse, and responding to the problems at hand. The project's plans and tactics involve implementing primary prevention measures to address the root causes that affect women and children's health, and to build a community that is sensitive to gender issues. The project also focuses on improving service delivery by building collaborative partnerships. Advocacy and social mobilization are used to expand the project's reach and impact. Research and innovation are employed to tackle current and emerging issues.

## **Joint Memorandum Circular 2010-2012**

The Joint Memorandum Circular 2010-2012 has been proven effective by those who have used the VAW desk, and they are required to submit monthly reports. However, the challenges encountered by the Joint Memorandum Circular is that some barangays have limited space and do not have enough funds to properly implement the VAW desk. To conclude, proper funding and the commitment from the local governments are crucial steps towards combating VAW in the Philippines.

## **Department of Interior and local Government - Referral System**

The benefits of having a referral system include improving assistance and protection for victims-survivors of violence; facilitating services provided meet the needs of both victims and survivors while assuring their recovery and reintegration; providing a feedback mechanism between and among agencies to ensure services are provided; and providing a channel for exchanging competencies to enhance the capacities of service providers. In summary, the DILG's Referral System is a good step in combating VAW in the Philippines as its system puts an emphasis on the importance of collaborations between different agencies and services that is essential to providing quality and effective services to women who are victims of violence.

### **8. Conclusion**

#### **8.1. Legislation is responsive more than it is preventative**

Upon further assessment, the legislation is aware of the issue and has set out measures as a way to provide protection to the women affected. Examples of which are the Department of

Social Welfare and Development - Social Assistance (The Philippines), and Line #155 for guidance for women victims of gender-based violence (Colombia). This grounds the fact that there is action towards the mitigation of these issues. People are equipped with the knowledge of what to or to who to contact lest they find themselves in these situations. However, it is important to point out that these actions fall under the positive approach. This means that these systems will only be able to work or move once the action is done. While that is not a problem, it is not the best way to approach the issue given that it is contingent on fixing the issue after it happened—after the violent action was done. This is where the need for preventative measures comes in. This means that there will be more proactive approaches that focus on mitigating the issue before it happens. In the long run, this can lead to the further reduction of VAW cases.

#### **8.2. Lack of laws and services to address the issue**

While it has been established that, at the very least, the legislators are doing things in regard to the issue, it is still not enough. The reason for this is that while it is good that the legislators are acknowledging that there is an issue, it still does not provide the utmost protection and can still leave a lot of women in danger. The reason for this is that laws are needed when it comes to legitimizing the protection of women. It means that there is a direct set of consequences if a person were to do such acts. It further condemns the act because it will be seen as something that should not be done within their society. Not to mention, passing laws that directly address the issue of violence against women can be seen as a preventative approach that can

lead to the mitigation of further cases. Therefore, to be able to reduce the amount of violence against women, the addition of laws ensures a proactive action that protects women in both societies.

## **9. Recommendations**

### **9.1. Early gender education projects**

The problem of violence against women has been a cultural problem in both countries for many years and although it is true that in recent years the greatest advances have been made in different areas of society to mitigate this problem, this is only the beginning of a long road to achieve a society with safe and happy women, one of the changes and programs that the two countries must carry out is a preventive one, where through government entities such as the Ministry of National Education, among others, propose and develop education programs for Colombian and Filipino boys and girls where the concept that men and women have the same rights, capacities, and dignity is planted, since gender violence has been culturally accepted over time, if it is teaching children that this type of belief is incorrect, the scheme of machismo and oppression towards women will break the cycle of incorrect learning to which children have been subjected generationally. Generating awareness in children and adolescents, we will have people capable of refuting and socially eliminating sexist behaviours and beliefs in the short and medium term, mitigating the effects of machismo in both countries and promoting future generations to grow up and live without these beliefs that so much harm has been generated to

women throughout history. Such an ambitious project will only be possible if the national education organizations provide all their efforts in educational spaces and resources constantly to generate a real change in the social culture of Colombia and the Philippines.

### **9.2. Control the impulse to existing projects**

In the case of Colombia and the Philippines, the problem is not the lack of action plans to help combat gender violence against women, but rather their effectiveness. The national governments of both countries must allocate a sufficient amount of fixed resources to promote and sustain the proposed programs so that they are socially useful, since generating new bills and different initiatives in government bodies will solve the problem for us. If the previous issues are not handled optimally. Through the generation of new resources in the expansion and maintenance of existing programs and with greater control in terms of allocation of resources and quality of services provided by the prosecutor, the comptroller, attorney, ombudsman, among others. Other control entities towards the existing programs, the expected changes of these programs will be seen when they were created, impacting society and providing women with real support tools in case of suffering gender violence.

### **9.3. Improve public transport conditions**

As evidenced in previous research presented, women use private transportation more than men due to its lack of safety for women, but this measure is not the solution to eliminate gender violence. Since only those women who have the economic

capacities to do so will be able to use private transportation, women of low and medium income who cannot use private transportation consistently will continue to be vulnerable to violence, it is proposed to continue promoting protection programs for women in public transport such as the creation of buses only for women in the case of Trasmilenio in the city of Bogotá, more security personnel in the portals, whereabouts, and public transport stations to prevent harassment and sexual and physical violence, these being the most frequent types of violence in this type of transportation. Maintaining support networks through physical points in some stations in which psychological and judicial support is received in case of suffering gender violence.

#### 9.4. Protection of the migrant population

As previously mentioned, the migrant population is highly vulnerable to gender violence, since having instability and deficiencies in their standard of living, they are the ideal type of person for labor, sexual, physical, psychological, and monetary exploitation. Where, in the desire to meet their basic needs, they agree to do jobs and tasks they do not want, with unfair working hours and wages below that received by the local population. The government of Colombia and the Philippines has the obligation to effectively help this type of population by offering programs where they can settle quietly in these countries, in the case of Colombia mainly for the Venezuelan population residing in this country, with living conditions dignified and protecting women from being the target of future attacks and forced activities, supplying all their rights so that their development in the new

country is as expected, having programs to promote existing programs to help gender violence, so that if an immigrant person suffers from this type of violence, they have the same guarantees of protection from the receiving country.

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