

# Piloting a Community-Based Male Participation Program for Gender and Development

Gail Tan Ilagan

## Introduction

It has long been recognized that men and women equally share the burden of productive and reproductive roles (CEDAW 1979; ICPD 1994). However, programmed efforts for gender equity have overwhelmingly focused on protecting and empowering women and their children. Women groups drew strength and justification from these international declarations such that, in many countries, gender work came to be synonymous with women's rights work. With a feminist perspective fueling these efforts, most of these gender transformative movements proceed from the assumption of the need to first take apart the pervading patriarchy in order to usher in the full enjoyment by women of human rights, freedom of choice, decision, and self-determination.

Towards this end, the Philippines, like many other countries, enacted many pro-women and, by extension, pro-children laws in the last generation. Consider the following: Republic Act (RA) 6955, RA 7610, RA 7877, RA 8505, RA 8353, RA 8972, RA 9208, and RA 9262.<sup>1</sup> These laws came into effect from 1990 to 2004, proof of growing institutionalization of societal response against structural and economic violence against women and children (VAWC). Proceeding from the assumption of systemic gender inequity, these laws favor women and recognize them as potential victims to be protected, as constituents whose social participation needs to be encouraged, or as citizens whose access to public service ought to be enhanced. The institutional adjustments under these laws therefore have been designed to focus primarily on improving the lived experience of women and children in Philippine society.

New laws – especially ones that prescribe new ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and interacting – have a way of criminalizing what used to be acceptable behavior. With the laws cited above, in particular, figures would consistently show that they generally criminalize men: White slavers, labor exploiters, human traffickers, sexual predators, and doers of violence are usually proven to be men and their usual victims are women and children.

Today, all local government units (LGUs) are mandated to allocate five percent of their respective internal revenue allocation (IRA) for gender and development (GAD) work, following the budget legislation pushed by the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW).<sup>2</sup> Many LGUs utilize the GAD budget to fund information dissemination, gender training, livelihood projects, and other capability building activities for women, mostly mothers, as well as institution building for service agencies and women's organizations. Also evident today are the presence of functional women's organizations and halfway houses ran by government agencies or by nongovernment organizations (NGOs), the integration of gender in the formal education curricula, and *pro bono* professional services for counseling and medico-legal assistance for women and children in all walks of life.

In the years since these women laws have come into effect, however, many government functionaries and service providers have come to recognize that for these laws to work according to the underlying principle of gender equity, it is not enough to empower victims and provide holistic institutional response to redress the violation of their rights. There is a dawning realization for the need to assist men to transform their ways of thinking, feeling, acting, and interacting to encourage them to become – insofar as women laws and child laws are concerned – law-abiding citizens. The eventual transformation of male violent behavior is perceived to work to decongest the justice system and ensure that homes are safe and ideal for the unfolding of human potential that resides therein.<sup>3</sup>

Transforming men's perspectives toward gender equity would require, at the very least, the articulation of a national policy for engaging men and keeping them involved. However, no clear programming guidelines on engaging men in gender equality were provided until the United Nations Fund for Population Agency (UNFPA) released in 2000 a prescriptive document that set direction on “partnership with men

in reproductive and sexual health and rights” (PMRSH).<sup>4</sup> This was soon followed by the publication of the UNFPA Strategic Framework on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment (<http://www.unfpa.org/public/publications/pid/400>), which outlines engaging men and boys in gender equality as one of the six priority areas to be pursued.<sup>5</sup>

The crafting of gender and development policy in the wake of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and Children (CEDAW) in 1979 had finally resulted in the enactment of pro-women laws in the Philippines beginning 1990. Women's rights groups that unceasingly lobbied for the passage of these laws could attest to the personal hardships and formidable impediments that had to be overcome. Equally slow is our society's response to the 2000 exhortation to engage men and boys in gender equality. Nearly a decade after it was officially articulated, the idea still has to gain ground. Still, the call evidently did not go unheard. This paper looks at a pioneering effort at responding to this call.

### Apprehending the problem

Davao City, with its population of 1.3 million accounting for almost a quarter of the resident population in the resource-rich Davao Region, is the regional center of Philippine South. In the last few years, the prestigious Asiaweek Magazine had consistently ranked it among “the most livable cities in Asia.” The city's total land area of 244,000 hectares is ideally situated in a fertile typhoon-free zone. It is perhaps the most peaceful city in Southeast Asia with a monthly crime rate of 0.8 cases per 10,000 persons.<sup>6</sup>

Local governance has long prioritized gender and reproductive health (RH) issues. Davao City has the distinction of having been the first LGU to adopt a Women and Children's Code in 1997. A vibrant interoperability between public service institutions, NGOs, and women and child rights groups characterizes Davao City's response to gender inequality and injustice. Today, Davao City continues to break ground in working out ways to correct domestic violence and gender inequity through a community-based pilot project that seeks to enhance male involvement against all forms of gender-based violence.

The Health Management and Research Group Foundation, Inc. (HMRG) is a non-stock, non-profit organization registered with the

Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) on 28 July 1998 with the goal to improve the quality of life of communities through the critical understanding of health issues, implementation of relevant health programs, and improvement of people's awareness and participation.<sup>7</sup> It provides primary health care services to beneficiaries through a health insurance package that affords unlimited medical consultation, diagnostic tests, and discounted rates on generic medicines. It also collaborates with several government agencies and NGOs to deliver its primary health care programs for TB DOTS,<sup>8</sup> RH (STI/HIV), and adult immunization. The HMRG also engages in and provides technical assistance for health research and program evaluation. It was through a research engagement that HMRG came to recognize the need for a male participation project.

In 2000, the De La Salle University (DLSU) chose the cities of Iloilo and Davao for a participatory action research on Filipino men and domestic violence. It tapped the HMRG to conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) among married men in four Davao City barangays. The HMRG was also tasked to undertake training and counseling for men in the barangays who were identified to be trapped in the cycle of domestic violence. The research involvement ran for two years, but at its culmination, the four barangays continued to seek the assistance of the HMRG for trainings and counseling on gender- and RH-related concerns. Responding to this expressed need even without the assurance of external budget support, the HMRG affirmed its commitment to engage men in the communities through the project called Men's Responsibilities in Gender and Development (MR GAD).<sup>9</sup>

### Rising to the challenge

Funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) allowed the fledgling MR GAD to conduct in 2002 a participatory action research to assess the burden of domestic violence in Barangay Tibungco, a relocation community with multicultural residents. The research findings revealed that the prevalence of verbal abuse was 37.6 percent, with 22.6 percent of the participants admitting to having resorted at least once to physical violence. Armed with these findings, the HMRG proposed to seriously engage male participation in the effort to address domestic violence. The proposal was accepted

by the community and plans were made for the formation of MR GAD Advocates among the Tibungco residents.

In 2003, a grant from the Ford Foundation allowed the HMRG to expand its MR GAD project to Barangays Calinan and Daliao, both relatively large peasant villages in the Third Congressional District. Two years later, the *Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst* (EED) provided supplemental funds that further expanded MR GAD to Barangays Riverside, Toril, Sasa, and Panacan. Additional funding support was provided by CordAid in 2007.

### Setting up the drawing board

While acknowledging that socialization to dominant patriarchal prescriptions may be a strong factor that gives license to violent male response under certain circumstances, MR GAD saw the need to examine further the situational context in which violent male behavior occurs. By reviewing literature on domestic violence, MR GAD program staff identified three factors to Filipino male behavior that correlate with their risk for committing domestic abuse against their wives and partners. These are family planning/responsible parenthood, risky lifestyle, and sexually transmitted diseases. These three issues are often implicated in marital disputes that set off violence in the home. In cultures of patriarchy, men have more decision in sexual relations, number of children, and division of labor. Macho prescriptions also find acceptable male risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drugs, multiple sexual partners, and unsafe sexual practices.

The conduct of profiling researches in the communities indeed validated that domestic violence implicated issues in the home involving family planning/responsible parenthood, STIs, and men's risky lifestyle. MR GAD sought to address this constellation of factors to male violent responses through an information, education, and communication (IEC) campaign that would make men listen, participate, and be actively involved in discussing how these male behaviors impact on the lived experiences of women and girls and, ultimately, on harmonious family relations.

Again, MR GAD went back to the communities to examine how best to design and deliver interventions. It found that content-wise, previous GAD-related IEC campaigns which were mostly carried out by women's groups did justice to the issues of gender and RH rights,

the cycle of violence, pertinent laws, mandated institutional actions, as well as the legal, remedial, and support services that abused women could access. There were, however, gaps found in terms of conveying appropriate information to male constituents on the cross-cutting issues of domestic violence, family planning/responsible parenthood, risky lifestyle, and STIs. Some crucial elements in the delivery of IECs – such as the gender of the facilitator and the delivery of information – were indicated to impact less favorably on getting men to be receptive and involved in the propagation of value prescriptions.

Lorna Pandapatan, GAD focal person in Barangay Sasa, shares her observation of male reaction to female resource speakers on these topics:

“The men are not quick to accept (what the speaker says). They are not sold out, even if the resource speaker is a lawyer or a judge. I notice that even the barangay officials are not totally comfortable at these events. They would leave just as soon as it was polite. But the men become more participative when the speaker is another man, especially when Atty. Romeo Cabarde facilitated a gender sensitivity training here.”

She further observes that when men are the resource speakers, the male participants ask a lot more questions and are more willing to share their views on the topics for discussion. Of the MR GAD trainings, in particular, she thinks that *mas masabtan sang mga lalaki* (men could better understand) what is being discussed.

After identifying the information gaps and the most promising strategy for talking to men in the communities, MR GAD sought to clarify its target beneficiaries by identifying the male sectors that needed to be reached for interventions. As was intended by the proposed pilot program, men trapped in the cycle of violence were to be prioritized. It was easy enough to identify them through complaints of domestic abuse and violent behavior lodged against them with the barangay government unit. To address the concerns of male doers of violence and to effect their transformation towards more gender equitable behaviors, however, the program found that there was a need to capacitate support agencies for the provision of appropriate counseling and educative services to these men.

An examination of these service agencies revealed these to be generally male-dominated structures also. It seemed prudent therefore to expand the target beneficiaries of the proposed male participation program to include male frontline service providers – the elected and

traditional leaders, the community peace and security complement, social workers, and health services personnel. Further profiling on the training needs of the local leaders and service providers revealed that there was lack of coordination between and among them on cases involving domestic violence. There were also misconceptions about allowable actions under the law, as well as lack of confidence in delivering appropriate counseling to victims and perpetrators of violence, as well as to couples in crisis.

The initial MR GAD design that resulted from this assessment of community needs and resources proved to be the enduring framework for the program. The framework lends to uniformity of application in the pilot barangays, while at the same time proving its flexibility to adjust to the training needs of the audience and take advantage of peculiar opportunities in the community that could be optimized in the furtherance of program objectives.

### Laying the groundwork

MR GAD uses a three-level approach in its work with the communities.

*Working with key leaders and influential personalities in the community.* Key leaders who are generally men and are mandated to implement gender-related laws like RA 9262 are engaged to become MR GAD Advocates. There are six MR GAD Advocates in each pilot barangay, headed preferably by the Barangay Captain (local chief executive) himself. Recruited to volunteer also are the chairpersons of the Committee on Health and the Women and Children's Committee, members of the *Lupon Tagapamayapa*<sup>10</sup> and *purok*<sup>11</sup> leaders.<sup>12</sup>

Program inputs for MR GAD Advocates improve their knowledge and skills to handle the gender and RH concerns of the men in the community and to craft policies and institute reforms in the areas of gender and RH. In involving these influential men, the assumption is that they are in the best position by virtue of their official function to mainstream gender and RH in the legislative and executive branches of government at the local level.

As force multipliers in the task of reaching out to men and boys in the community, Peer Counselors are constituted from male volunteers

in the community. Peer Counselors are capacitated to facilitate one-on-one and small group discussions (SGDs) on the four cross-cutting issues of domestic violence, family planning/responsible parenthood, risky lifestyle, and STI. As such, they form the backbone of the IEC campaign delivery to the grassroots and provide the mechanism for sustainability of efforts at value prescriptions for gender equity and responsible male behavior.

*Working with service providers.* The program seeks to enhance the capacity of service providers and to strengthen the referral for available services related to prevention of and protection against domestic violence. Frontline agencies that address cases of domestic violence include the City Social Services Development Office (CSSDO), Philippine National Police (PNP) – Women’s Desk,<sup>13</sup> Barangay Health Centers, Lupon Tagapamayapa, and other barangay committees and functionaries such as the Barangay Committee for the Protection of Women and Children (BCPWC) and the GAD focal person. These are also institutions and functionaries mandated by law to assist victims of domestic violence. MR GAD also engages faith-based organizations and schools.

In addition to the enhanced referral system, MR GAD inputs also aim at capacitating service providers to deliver educative and counseling services to male doers of violence, as well as to couples in crisis.

*Reaching out to where the men and boys are.* Men from different puroks are identified and trained on gender and RH through SGDs. Fora are also conducted in the workplaces and in the schools in an effort to break the male culture of silence on seemingly taboo topics like STIs, sexuality, and family relations and surface male discourse that would provide a better understanding of the context in which male violence in the community occurs.

An early socialization IEC campaign has been specifically designed to target male youth. Through youth camps, leadership trainings, and SGDs, MR GAD works with Peer Counselors to foster an articulation of gender sensitivity and the adoption of responsible male behavior among the next generation.

## The MR GAD blueprint for mainstreaming male participation

In the six pilot barangays, the following steps were followed by the HMRG in delivering its MR GAD project:

### 1. *Identification and selection of partner barangay.*

At this stage, HMRG levels off with barangay officials on the selection criteria and the nature of the project. Once the commitment of the LGU is secured, a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on the partnership is drawn up and signed.

### 2. *Selection of MR GAD Advocates.*

The HMRG assists the LGU to appoint MR GAD Advocates who would attend capability building trainings, liaise with community-based clientele, implement the GAD budget and the RA 9262, develop a MR GAD advocacy plan, officiate in the quarterly assessment held by service providers, and act on the recommendations made during these assessments for the general improvement of service delivery on gender and RH. The MR GAD Advocates also oversee the conduct of the MR GAD Peer Counselors who handle trainings and SGDs in their communities.

### 3. *Capacity development for MR GAD Advocates.*

Once identified, the MR GAD Advocates undergo a series of trainings to enhance their knowledge and understanding of issues related to gender and RH, leadership and teambuilding, advocacy, counseling, interpersonal communication, anger management, GAD budgeting, and RA 9262.

### 4. *Integration of the gender and RH service providers at the communities.*

With the MR GAD Advocates now capacitated to perform their functions in their respective communities, serious attention could now be focused on assessing the delivery of gender and RH services provided by the agencies of first contact of victims and doers and violence. SGDs are held in the communities to bring out problems and concerns in service delivery by agencies of first contact. The sharing of concerns facilitates network interoperability and enhances the referral system in the community. The monitoring and feedback of results to the MR GAD program interventions could now be done on a quarterly basis.

##### 5. *Establishment of a counseling center.*

Counseling is a crucial ingredient to allow men to facilitate behavioral change in other men. The program encourages the establishment of a counseling center where counseling sessions, SGDs, and screening could be done with privacy and confidentiality. Since not all of the barangays have counseling facilities, the need for it is underlined to initiate a collaborative effort at resource identification and mobilization for its provision.

##### 6. *Monitoring and evaluation.*

Together with the MR GAD Advocates, the service providers, and the Peer Counselors, the program periodically identifies indicators to measure the relative attainment of objectives. These periodic monitoring provides useful feedback for planning and recommending timely adjustments in service delivery. As a result, new tools are developed, pre-tested, and integrated into the program's strategic methodology.

#### **Restructuring male perspectives, transforming communities**

In breaking ground at implementing a male participation program for gender and development, the MR GAD experience provides crucial lessons at resolving programmatic concerns for mainstreaming male involvement policies, designing interventions, and documenting outcomes and emerging gaps. This section highlights key observations drawn from case studies on two MR GAD pilot barangays – Sasa and Panacan.<sup>14</sup>

Data gathering for these case studies was undertaken during the 2008 Christmas break and in the summer of 2009. Key informant interviews of MR GAD staff and government officials and FGDs among various sectors in the respective communities were conducted. Program reports and documents were reviewed. In the barangays, data sources include barangay profiles, population data, barangay ordinances, and pertinent records on VAWC cases.

#### *Barangay Sasa*

Barangay Sasa is a coastal village in the Second Congressional District nine kilometers north of downtown Davao City. There are eighty puroks distributed in nine clusters within a land area of 639 hectares (Barangay Sasa Profile, n.d.) Five residential clusters are classified as depressed areas.

Since the settlement of Davao in the early 1900s, Sasa had served as the entry point for seagoing vessels. Later, a pier was constructed in Km 10 which underwent several renovations and expansions to make it the major southern port it is today. Two smaller ports operate from Sasa to service tourism and trade to and from the Island Garden City of Samal across Davao Gulf.

Also located in Sasa is the Davao International Airport, which lies contiguous to the old airport.<sup>15</sup> The airport and the wharf have attracted major oil companies, processing firms, and food manufacturers to set up shop in Sasa. The employment opportunities these companies provide have in turn attracted workers in search of jobs, helping to make Sasa one of the most populous barangays in Davao City.

In 2005, the barangay population stood at 44,000, with annual growth projected at 2.5 percent. Catholics make up eighty percent of the population, with Lumad (16%) and Muslim (4%) residents making up the minority. There are about three females to every two males. About forty percent of Sasa residents are under eighteen, with close to sixty percent of them not in school. An estimated eighty percent of Sasa families earns between PhP90.00 and PhP200.00 per day.<sup>16</sup>

As can be inferred from the demographic data, there is the likelihood of a higher incidence of female-headed households amid conditions of relative poverty and low literacy. A dependency ratio of 77.68 percent (NCSO 2000) suggests a heavy burden on the family income earners, with economic hardships likely to be aggravated by high rates of unemployment or underemployment and lack of job security. Generally, these are conditions that accompany unmet gender and RH needs.

Indeed, even before the HMRG's engagement in Sasa, various personalities and organizations saw the need to engage the community in public discourse on RA 9262 and other women laws, risky lifestyle, family planning, and related issues. In the last ten years alone, researches on social problems such as child labor, child rights violations, human

trafficking, prostitution, and domestic abuse had been done in Sasa by various universities and interest groups. Rights-based NGOs like the Bathaluman Crisis Center, Lawig Bubai, Luna Legal Center, and WOMENet have established presence in the barangay for the delivery of their respective services.

### *MR GAD in Barangay Sasa*

The MR GAD program officially tied up its partnership with Barangay Sasa in 2006, with the enthusiastic support of Barangay Captain Mario C. Reta and the GAD focal person Lorna Pandapatan, who also happens to be a member of the Barangay Council. Reta was among the first MR GAD Advocates because he was convinced that the barangay needed this project to serve the needs of men and boys among his constituents.

Pandapatan discloses that since 2006 the barangay had realigned its GAD expenditures in line with MR GAD program thrusts. Portions of its GAD budget were allocated for trainings and activities to engage men and boys in the community and to provide capability building training, resource sharing, and networking among local government agencies, service providers, and youth organizations. Pandapatan says,

“We still have to deliver skills training to improve the livelihood opportunities for our constituents. We try to apportion the barangay’s GAD budget so we can serve everybody. But, of course, MR GAD trainings are a priority. The people ask for it. They want to participate and they keep asking us when the next one will be. We find ways to hold the MR GAD trainings as scheduled.”

Later, MR GAD inputs were even extended to faith-based organizations, a strategic move that evolved from the barangay leadership’s concern to involve them in the work of supporting the counseling needs of men and couples in crisis. MR GAD’s trainings and discussions in the community also proved popular among women’s groups, such that in Sasa, these are seldom exclusively for male participants only. The training workshops, which have so far been directed to local government functionaries, faith-based groups, and even women, youth, and gay organizations, feature huge attendance and active participation.

It would be fair to say that MR GAD changed the climate for community discussion of male behaviors. Without challenging the inputs of previous efforts at educating for gender and RH rights of women and girls, MR GAD solicited the male perspective and injected this into community discourse. Opening up this discourse to the multisectoral audience in the community made the residents come to better understand the dynamics of gender relations and appreciate the bigger context from which problems in family interactions emerge.

Beyond making participants passive recipients to IEC interventions, there is evidence that MR GAD inputs have made inroads in raising community awareness and converting participants to commit to support men and boys to adopt gender equitable behaviors. MR GAD Advocates – like *Kagawad* Danny Olalo, for example – have sought to develop their capability to deliver the MR GAD modules even without the supervision of MR GAD staff. This enhanced capability of the community-based resource persons have allowed for the conduct of more MR GAD activities in the barangay, thereby expanding the reach of the IEC campaign. This development also bodes well for sustaining the propagation of MR GAD’s efforts and intentions well past the completion of the MR GAD pilot project.

MR GAD Advocates and Peer Counselors expressed that they are now more confident to engage VAWC cases that are officially brought to their attention. They have even adopted the policy of seeking out these men in their homes and encouraging them to seek counseling. At the barangay level, an ordinance had been passed requiring recipients of barangay protection order (BPO)<sup>17</sup> to come to the Barangay Hall for counseling on the Wednesday after BPO receipt. According to Pandapatan, there is a very high compliance because *wala na gukuran* (there is no need to run after them) as men willingly report in for counseling.

“They know that they have nothing to fear,” she adds.

Without excusing violent behavior, MR GAD encourages paracounselors to really listen to what men in crisis have to say. Such has allowed barangay functionaries to appreciate the dimensions of male experience that are tied up with their violent response. In so doing, space is created for men to identify their stress, examine their responses, process their feelings, and find nonviolent alternatives to similar situations in the future.

*Some remarkable notes on the Barangay Sasa MR GAD experience*

**Changing hearts.** Self-report and anecdotal comments are perhaps the quickest way to assess for a change in attitude among barangay functionaries. According to MR GAD Advocate Danny Olalo,

"I remember the seminar held at the Alexian Brothers. I think there were only two women there, most of the participants were male. We found the prescriptions hard to accept; in fact, we argued, but in the long run we appreciated the aims of MR GAD. We saw that it would be good if during counseling sessions with men we do not give inputs that require men to be men... kings. There were some of us who were not sold on the equality thing; it was a struggle. But we appreciate that it is mostly women and children who suffer and that's why their rights are protected by the law. Through MR GAD, there is increased understanding of the law and why it is that way. When we interview women who batter their husbands, we can tell them that it is not right for women to do that. In the same way, we can tell the men who violate women that it is not right for them to do that."

Barangay officials now prioritize the counseling of women in crisis. Women complainants find that access to empathetic and appropriate counseling can now be had from various capable sources. In this regard, MR GAD had been instrumental in reshaping the views of male service providers to let go of biases and really give women complainants a fair and empathetic ear. At the very least, VAWC victims in Sasa can expect assistance through information about their rights under the law, rescue from situations of violence or the threat thereof, and referral to appropriate service agencies that would address their peculiar needs.

By clarifying procedures prescribed for service providers by RA 9262, MR GAD interventions have enhanced interagency networking and referral systems, thereby improving the overall capability of different sectors in the community to co-manage cases as they arise. Standard forms for reports were designed for use in the pilot barangays to ease documentation and data management of these cases.

In particular, the barangay had evolved procedures to make certain that families in crisis get financial support. In instances when a BPO is issued to a male doer of violence who happens to be the sole breadwinner, the barangay checks how much support the man could realistically extend to the family during the mandatory separation. When needed, the barangay endorses the request to the Integrated Gender and Development Office (IGDO) of the city government for financial assistance to the family.

**Reaching out to families and individuals in crisis.** For couples in crisis, the law quite clearly states that local government functionaries should not undertake mediation for reconciliation at any time during the fifteen-day BPO period. However, it is the experience of the barangay for women complainants to express the desire to talk to their partners within this period or to request to withdraw the VAWC case they filed. This expressed need often puts barangay officials in a quandary as the BPO, once issued, could not be withdrawn. However, recognizing the need for a community-based resource to respond to the counseling needs of couples in crisis, the barangay capacitated faith-based organizations to process couples who evince the need for marital counseling during the BPO period.

With the help of MR GAD Advocates, the project had been able to extend its training for counseling to faith-based groups serving the various denominations that are represented in the barangay. Today, among the most active MR GAD movers in the community are the church leaders in St. Joseph Parish,<sup>18</sup> the pastors of Jesus is Lord flock and the Foursquare Church, and the Muslim *imam* who incidentally is also a member of the Lupon Tagapamayapa. Pastor Ray Palomar, who works with the barangay on referrals for marital counseling, shared that MR GAD trainings improved his grasp of the complexity of issues involved in marital disputes. Today, he says: "We welcome couples in need of counseling. Sometimes, it's the men who come to us."

**Starting them young.** As force multipliers in the effort to facilitate the social transformation of men and boys towards gender equity, Peer Counselors have been engaged among the youth organizations in the barangay. MR GAD trainings and youth camps have capacitated them for leadership roles and have provided them IEC activities. They now work in the communities to work an early socialization agenda on their peers, especially those at risk to be victims and perpetrators of gender-based violence.

**Evolving new applications.** A peculiar human characteristic is the ability to appropriate the lesson from experience and customize its application to address one's peculiar needs. Because the Sasa Wharf is a major transit point in Mindanao, the barangay has a legitimate concern for violations of RA 9208 (Anti-trafficking of Human Persons Act). To

this end, the Task Force Pantalan<sup>19</sup> has been organized to put in place mechanisms to enforce the law. Among those deputized to monitor, apprehend, and prevent traffickers is the Visayan Forum, an organization of stevedores operating in the wharf. The police had trained them to identify, report, and handle apprehension of traffickers, as well as to assist and secure the victims. To further enhance their skills at handling their deputy role, the barangay conducts MR GAD gender sensitivity training (GST) for the Visayan Forum members. GSTs and training for counseling have also been extended to men in the Philippine Port Authority office and in the Philippine Coast Guard.

*Identifying gaps in domestic violence discourse.* Through counseling male doers of violence, barangay officials and other service providers have come to realize that domestic violence is seldom unidirectional. In situations of domestic conflict, women, too, draw from an arsenal of violent behaviors as a response. What men have disclosed in these counseling sessions is that in the environment of intimate relationships, men also suffer abuse in a variety of forms. They have reported having been abandoned by their wives, scalded with boiling water in the presence of their children, or subjected to verbal and emotional abuse over religious and other differences.

Evidently, these counseling sessions have served the purpose of increasing the barangay officials' understanding of the nature and dynamics of domestic violence. If not for these counseling sessions, men would not have the venue to air their side and to hint at their need for psychosocial interventions. Through their disclosure, local authorities and service agencies can better adjust their delivery of services and respond more effectively to the needs of individuals and families in crisis.

Indeed, the highlights of MR GAD experience in Sasa demonstrate that space has been created for men and boys to access community services that are more responsive to their gender and RH concerns. With MR GAD's input, the efforts of various key agencies in the community have been put in sync to ensure a more effective co-management of VAWC cases.

### *Barangay Panacan*

Located fourteen kilometers from downtown Davao City, Barangay Panacan lies further north of and adjacent to Barangay Sasa. It was among the original barangays created with the declaration of Davao as a chartered city on 01 March 1937.

With a total land area of 1,018.99 hectares, Panacan is home to a resident population of 28,047 (as of May 2000). Population records show that those under seventeen years old constitute 41.71 percent, while those above sixty-five years old make up less than three percent. NCSO figures also reflect a high dependency ratio (78.83%) and a growth rate (1.28%) much lower than the city average (2.83%).

The main highway connecting Davao City to Panabo City traverses Panacan, making it more accessible to overland transportation. Subdivisions are beginning to sprout along the route, accounting for the increasing residential land use (now at 50%) in the barangay.

The biggest employers of Panacan labor are government and private institutions engaged in fishing, farming, entrepreneurship, and transport. With its proximity to the Davao International Airport and the Sasa Wharf, several foreign manufacturing, pharmaceutical, and food processing firms have been set up in Panacan.

### *MR GAD in Barangay Panacan*

By 2006, Panacan's concern for gender rights and RH needs of its constituents was already emphasized by its support to various NGOs that educated on these matters and provided services in the community. These groups include Lawig Bubai, Kinaiyahan Foundation, Bathaluman Crisis Center, IWAG Dabaw, and Development of Peoples Foundation (DPF) Anak Gender Watch that were organizing in Panacan and actively promoting their respective IEC campaigns. Because of their similar intentions, these NGOs had, to a certain extent, converged to form a loose network. As a result of their combined efforts, many community residents were educated on their rights under the law and were then more receptive to engage the law for the protection of their rights. The barangay officials adjusted, opening up the community discourse on gender and RH concerns.

Rolando Borja, a member of the barangay's Lupon Tagapamayapa, also engaged in community efforts to address VAWC and RH issues through his work with the DPF, a local NGO committed to promoting gender rights. However, despite his background in development work, Borja concedes that he needed help. In an FGD held last December 2008, he shared that he found it difficult to counsel men when they said, *Ako mismo doer of violence... pero ang problema mismo wala ko kabalo unsay buhaton nako...* (I am a doer of violence... the problem is I don't know what to do). He felt helpless faced by this expressed need because there was nowhere at that time that he could refer the men for assistance.

Borja had heard about the MR GAD project in Calinan, Riverside, Toril, Daliao, and Sasa. He was most impressed with the methods used by MR GAD in facilitating a paradigm shift at the grassroots level. It was Borja who initially brought up to the barangay officials the possibility of partnering with the HMRG for MR GAD to help meet community needs that turned up with frustrating frequency during Lupon Tagapamayapa and Barangay Council meetings.<sup>20</sup>

Barangay Resolution No. 009A, Series of 2007, dated 12 January 2007 formalized Barangay Panacan's MOA with the HMRG. Relative to HMRG's male involvement program thrusts, the resolution rationalized the engagement in recognition of a shared concern for VAWC and RH in the community. The MOA authorized the HMRG to conduct research, organizing, and related training/workshops anent to VAWC and RH, pledging barangay support to the conduct of the same. The barangay council also agreed to facilitate the formation and implementation of MR GAD advocacy team and RH network of service providers, including the formation of community-based counselors. For its part, the HMRG welcomed the prospect of working with Barangay Panacan because of its demonstrated openness to network with organizations and to support efforts at fostering gender equitable prescriptions.

### *Complementing women's initiatives*

In 2004 when RA 9262 was put into law, Barangay Panacan was fortunate to have the Bathaluman Crisis Center<sup>21</sup> conduct seminars and information dissemination in the community. In the next year, Panacan was also selected to host the city-wide seminar on the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) for RA 9262. By 2006, however, barangay

officials became acquainted with the procedural changes that went with the implementation of the law. While they found that the rule eliminating the taxing conduct of mediation for couples in crisis lessened their workload in processing complaints, they were soon finding confusion and difficulty with the paperwork and referrals involved in mandatory BPO issuances.

The procedural problems mainly involved women complainants who would file cases in the heat of the moment only to demand, cajole, or plead to have the BPOs withdrawn some days later.<sup>22</sup> They found the need to validate complaints and to clarify the woman's commitment to engage the law. However, RA 9262 clearly stipulates that BPO issuance should be immediate upon the woman's complaint, giving barangay officials no legal room to counsel the women or draw corroborative evidence of her complaints before issuing the BPO.<sup>23</sup> The Lupon Tagapamayapa and the barangay officials, on the other hand, found it difficult explaining to the men why they now had to be removed from their domicile when their partners had reported them for domestic abuse.

It was soon recognized that within the context of post-domestic violence action prescribed by the law, the counseling needs of couples and of the male doers of violence were not being met. While women's rights NGOs were quick to respond and had established mechanisms to address the various needs of the women victims, service providers hesitated to counsel couples in conflict lest this be construed as mediation which, under RA 9262, was also prohibited when undertaken by representatives of government instrumentalities like the PNP, health centers, CSSDO, and Lupon Tagapamayapa.

They observed that the men, after having been legally ejected from their homes, were to be seemingly left to fend for themselves as there is no government housing facility where they could temporarily stay while the BPO was in force. The performance of this duty weighed heavily on the conscience of many who were mandated by law to enforce the BPO. Rather than seeing this in the light of bringing justice to the perpetration of human rights violation upon women and children, some functionaries interpret this ejection as a human rights violation inflicted upon men, especially in cases where the ones issuing the BPO have knowledge of the law being used without due cause by the accuser.<sup>24</sup>

These experiences of implementing RA 9262 raised questions on the responsiveness of the law to the lived experience of domestic

violence. While it was intended to provide for the physical protection of women victims, it does not provide protection for men when they are wrongly accused, when they are deprived of shelter, and when they need to unload their troubles and confusion. Also, it was observed that where violence featured as a patterned response, many couples rejected the prospect of separation – even temporary ones – that are invoked for the physical protection of women. Increasingly, the personnel in agencies of first contact on VAWC cases felt the need to improve their knowledge and skills to effectively respond to the needs of men who had been subjected to the environment of domestic violence.

### *Jumpstarting to beat the deadline*

With the MR GAD project set to culminate in August 2009, the program staff immediately set to work to help Barangay Panacan meet its articulated need for enhanced male participation in gender and RH concerns. As proof of the barangay's commitment, the government functionaries including Barangay Captain Apostol and three Kagawads (Orlando Caday, Reynaldo Abad, and Willie Ordaneza) immediately volunteered to become MR GAD Advocates along with Antonio Plarizan, a member of the barangay police, and Lupon Tagapamayapa Rudy Abing.<sup>25</sup>

With equal speed, six Peer Counselors were identified by purok leaders for their community involvement and social awareness. They were referred to Panacan GAD Coordinator Emily Tumanda for MR GAD capability building interventions. Among these youth leaders are January Cutin, who belongs to the Panacan Relocation Youth Association, and Jared Paul Verona of the LuzVille Subdivision Youth Organization.

Panacan benefited from the experiences of MR GAD in the earlier pilot barangays. The HMRG was able to advise on alternatives that could be adjusted by the Panacan to meet similar needs. Interagency coordination among service providers – CSSDO, Lupon Tagapamayapa, medical and legal institutions, and the Barangay Police – was significantly enhanced with the adoption of the systematic procedures, an innovation that was a product of work in other pilot communities.

For its part, the barangay council provided strong support to maximize the conduct of MR GAD training workshops and seminars within the barangay, thereby strengthening the capacity of community-based human resources to articulate more effective means of addressing domestic violence, gender rights, and RH concerns. Business establishments opened up their workplaces to the message of MR GAD. Similarly, high school administrators and teachers, purok leaders, functionaries, and barangay staff, were also reached and successfully engaged in dialogue over these social problems.

In an interview with Remy Caday on 06 May 2009, she revealed that, "The barangay GAD budget used to focus on women and children. Now, we have rationalized allocation to include the needs of the BCPC<sup>26</sup> and persons with disability (PWDs). There is a separate budget for the elderly so we don't have to draw on the GAD budget. For now, we also utilize the barangay's GAD budget to do joint activities with MR GAD."

She also disclosed that Panacan recently passed a resolution that requires doers of violence to present themselves at the barangay for counseling. These counseling sessions are handled by the MR GAD Advocates. Because of the increased number of counseling sessions being done at the barangay hall, Panacan recognizes the need for a separate counseling room. For the moment, Barangay Captain Apostol willingly makes his office available when a man needs counseling. In anticipation of future needs, however, the barangay has proposed renovation of the barangay hall and had allocated funding for the construction of a separate counseling room.

### *Some remarkable notes on the Barangay Panacan MR GAD experience*

*Hear the men.* In its work in Panacan, MR GAD proves to be acceptable to the women's groups that have established presence in the community. MR GAD is perceived to provide complementary input by addressing its services – first and foremost – to cater to the needs of doers of violence. MR GAD encourages men to modify behavior and restructure cognitive schemata that are at the root of the male violent response. It also hopes to influence women, barangay functionaries, and service providers to be more receptive of the views of men and to believe men to be capable of social transformation. MR GAD believes

in the power of education and espouses the notion that what has been learned in terms of violent responses can be unlearned.

Borja shares that his extensive exposure to feminist gender work had almost convinced him that *kung unsa and lalake, mao na gyud na gya* (men could not change). However, his experience with MR GAD has shown him countless times how a male-sensitive counseling style could actually influence men to adopt more peaceable conflict resolution techniques. He avers that men become more capable to direct their actions and really meet their responsibilities as the type of husbands and fathers that could support the healthy growth and development of their wives and children.

*Hear the boys.* Being a Peer Counselor taught nineteen-year-old January Cutin to be socially aware:

"Because of MR GAD, we become educated in issues like STI, HIV, and AIDS and also to exercise control and handle ourselves better in terms of sexual issues... We talk about sex differences and gender differences... in the end, it doesn't matter if you are a man or a woman. According to the law, if you do harm to someone, you have to face the consequences."

Fellow Peer Counselor Jared Verona agrees that MR GAD activities taught them the development of leadership and teamwork and equipped them to be more ready to face the challenge of counseling on domestic violence, gender relations, and RH rights. Cutin and Verona clarify how their new roles create a ripple effect in the community. Knowing more about domestic abuse, family planning, STI, and men's risky lifestyle, they now find themselves with something substantial to say when these matters come up for discussion among peers. They feel more confident in reaching out to community youth who are at risk of STI, sexual exploitation, and abusive intimate relations. In advocating healthier lifestyles and gender equality, Peer Counselors model behaviors that redefine interactions across gender, creating an advocacy among people their age to opt for more responsible behaviors.

Cutin further shares that his advocacy extends to his own family. He says,

"My parents fight... sometimes, my mother does not agree with the decisions my father makes. My father insists that because he is the man, he has the right to make decisions. But after weighing his reasons, I thought he was wrong. So I told them that it would be

better that he share the burden of decision making with my mother. I think they were surprised when I said that.

"Oh, I also told them about using condoms and pills. My mother is pregnant again. There are already seven of us and she's pregnant again. So I suggested that maybe they should start using condoms or pills after. I showed them my supply of condoms. My brother, who is gay, also gave my mother pills."

*Hear the women.* Panacan residents Felisa Llavan, Erlinda Masicampo, Jessebel Casas, Evelyn Tumanda, and Lalaine Maul are all officers of women organizations in their respective puroks. One morning in December 2008, they sat down with HMRG's Camilo Naraval and Barangay Secretary Remy Caday to give their observations on the implementation of the MR GAD project in Panacan. They acknowledged that they had all heard about the MR GAD program. They demonstrated their knowledge of the activities undertaken by MR GAD and the purposes for these. They were also able to identify who participated in these trainings and workshops, since they had attended at least one MR GAD activity themselves. Overall, the women had the impression that MR GAD was responsive to felt needs in the community. In particular, one discussant has this to say about community response to cases of RA 9262 before and after MR GAD came to Panacan:

"...the rights of women are championed, but in so doing we neglect to see that we do not do right by men. We don't tell them what they can do to avoid resorting to violence. We refuse to understand why they became violent. MR GAD has helped us much because now we can give men inputs on how best to avoid violence. In the end, these problems in the community would be lessened."

Seemingly in agreement, another participant opines,

"If we think about it, husbands are human, too. They have rights as husbands. We have to listen to how they feel. Men are capable of being hurt also, and if no one listens to them, they could go crazy just like anyone else. Even the most macho who tries not to show his feelings, deep inside he feels very strongly when things do not go right. Sometimes, that is why they lash out, because they don't know how to deal with what they feel inside."

The women also talked about some of the cases of domestic abuse that they came to be acquainted with in the course of their community work. Most remarkable was their mention of men who had been or were

being abused by their wives. Caday remembered a case where the wife threw hot water at her sleeping husband before rushing to the barangay and getting a BPO against him. There were other cases that the women cited where the force of RA 9262 was used to threaten the husband on top of the abuse he had suffered in the hands of his partner. For example,

“We have a neighbor who would not feed her husband when he got home late. She would hide the pot. He really was to be pitied. The wife does that because she says that if her husband would hit her for starving him, she would run to the Barangay (and file a case for violation of RA 9262).”

The women have come to recognize that domestic violence results from interactive processes, and that it is seldom solely about men setting out to direct abuse at their women. Although physical violence is more associated with male response, both men and women have their own repertoire of violent and abusive behaviors which either could draw on in situations of marital dispute. And while it is more common for women to use forms of psychological abuse such as incessant nagging, passive aggressive posturings, and the silent treatment, there are cases when they resort to physical abuse also.

According to the community women, men are justified in their view that the law is biased in favor of women. They see the need for the law to treat men and women fairly because the employment of RA 9262 could cause families to permanently break up.

“Men are sometimes not aware of what they do. Not until they come up against RA 9262. When a man turns violent, he goes to prison. The family breaks up,” says one participant. She finds hope in the interventions of MR GAD:

“It’s a great help to them both... If MR GAD were expanded, it would bring about immense change in the community. The men would know to be careful and to adjust their behaviors so that the couple would understand one another. This is especially true when men have undergone counseling.”

They also see the need for force multipliers in the barangay who would be equipped to handle counseling for men. For now, they say that “...there are many who do counseling for women, but for the men, it is only Kap (BC Apostol), the kagawads and the members of the board.”

The community women also observe that, before MR GAD interventions, the immediate alternative women could think about in cases of domestic abuse was to leave their husbands. These days,

they observe that women in their puroks are grateful about MR GAD interventions because

*...waay nabungkag ang ila pamilya. Lipay sila kaayo kay at least nagbag-o ang ila bana, nakasabot, nakabalo mo-adjust. Ug sila pod nga mga babaye kabalo na pod sila mo-adjust. Kay kun kita man gud nga mga babaye nagsalig lang pod ta kay naay balaod unya di pod mag-adjust sa atong batasan, maguba man pod ang atong pamilya.”* (Their families stay together. They are very happy because at least their husbands have changed their ways to become more understanding and to adjust. Women, too, now know that they have to adjust. If women just think that we have RA 9262 on our side and that we don’t need to make the necessary adjustments, it is possible for our families to break apart).

### Foundations for future male participation programs

Future programs to engage men and boys in gender equality have much to learn from the programmatic elements evolved and implemented by the MR GAD project. Presently below are some of the key strengths that are proposed to form the bedrock of similar programs:

*Opening up the community discourse on domestic violence in the communities.* In Philippine society, domestic violence is still often treated as an issue better left in the confines of the home and family. In seeking to turn the issue from personal to political, popular discourse on domestic violence had largely been fuelled by the feminist discourse that prescribes concerted attempts to alleviate conditions for women and children. This had commendably resulted in the crafting of laws that redefined policies and rearranged institutional structures and responses for the protection of women and children.

MR GAD does not dispute that men are the major actors in gender-based violence. This has indeed been validated by reported incidents of domestic violence in the pilot barangays. To address the issue of violence, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has often been quoted to encourage the rest of us to speak to the mind of the doer. And so, while recognizing the right of the victim for justice and the need for doers of violence to take responsibility for the harm they caused, MR GAD further pursues the agenda to speak to the mind of the doer of violence in the hopes of bringing about a more lasting change in his behavior.

The experience of the MR GAD project has opened up in the community itself where it matters most the bigger discourse on domestic violence. This allows men, women, and youth, as well as service providers and government functionaries to collectively examine socialization to gender roles, Filipino male psychology, family relations, and related social morbidity issues that have been implicated in the propagation of this culture. In the course of discussions, they revisit the roots, examine the consequences, and collectively construct new cognitions and prescribe the transformation of male violent behavior.

The liberal atmosphere for public discussion of issues surrounding men's responsibilities in domestic violence makes possible a better comprehension of the Filipino male perspective. Armed with this knowledge, women can better adjust the roles they take in family relations and frontline personnel in gender and RH service delivery can now provide the climate to enable men to seek help when needed and to take responsible actions for their gender and RH concerns in the venue of their homes and immediate community. Local and non-traditional leaders now feel confident and committed to counsel individuals in crisis.

*Employing the men-talking-to-men strategy.* The MR GAD project found that men in the communities were more likely to open up to other men on issues about their violent behavior. Also, when influential men in the community voluntarily engage to be gender champions, this creates a ripple effect among other men, which facilitates further community acceptance of the program and widens the reach of the interventions.

The men-talking-to-men strategy should ideally convey empathy and the unswerving belief in the individual's capacity to transform his relationally destructive ideations, perceptions, attitudes, and actions. Also, care must be given to avoid male bashing and blaming when educating for RA 9262, in particular, especially since many men in the community perceive this to have an underlying bias for women.

However, social change is usually subject to the inertia of tradition. A resistance to novel prescriptions to behavior is expected, especially when such requires overhauling a whole constellation of thinking, acting, feeling, and interacting. Given this, MR GAD used non-accusatory, non-judgmental, and non-confrontational discussions that appeal both on the affective and rational level and, in so doing, it was

able to demonstrate promising gains at converting men and boys to hew to more gender-equitable values. Also, when discussions on the cross-cutting issues of family planning, risky lifestyle, gender relations, and STI are kept objective and empathetic, men could better accept their role as major actors in domestic violence and make the conscious commitment to handle themselves more responsibly.

*Mainstreaming gender and RH concerns.* Males dominate in occupying key local government positions that decide on program implementation, budget allocation, and resource mobilization at the grassroots. Until barangay officials are educated to adopt a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive framework, the gender- and RH-related concerns of their constituents may not be given appropriate attention. Thus, IEC inputs on their roles as stipulated by laws, gender and RH concerns, and capability building trainings on counseling and anger management are necessary to effect their appreciation of these issues.

Records show that cases filed under RA 9262 have consistently declined in the six pilot areas since the implementation of the law in 2004. Some barangay officials noted that women in the community now hesitate to invoke the law because its use automatically requires the issuance of a BPO. In addition, the program also documents cases of women expressing their desire for alternatives to the BPO, such as those that would bring about a more lasting change in male attitudes towards inflicting further violence in the home.

The wariness that barangay officials felt about counseling men – lest the act be construed as violation of the non-mediation clause of RA 9262 – had been overcome by inputs on defining and differentiating counseling and mediating. This clarification had resulted in the adoption of mechanisms found by the communities themselves to observe the law, while at the same time addressing the very real needs of men through capacitating community-based service providers and the passage of ordinances that legitimized the delivery of counseling to men at the barangay hall.

Some frontline personnel have noted in the conduct of the procedures for processing complaints of domestic abuse, the laws tend to favor women and their needs at the expense of the men. They report that during the first year of the promulgation of RA 9262, many trivial cases were filed against husbands and male partners. It was therefore

important to educate both men and women in the community on RA 9262. In an FGD with community women in December 2008, a participant expressed that MR GAD trainings on RA 9262 helped both women who may have need for protection from abuse and men who come to use the law to check the interpretation of their behaviors.

Since MR GAD started its campaign for RA 9262 literacy in the pilot communities, agencies of first contact had begun exerting effort to provide the climate for disclosure for both the female complainant and the male accused. Service providers feel more confident at measures to be taken to validate the nature of the complaint and inform as appropriate on the consequences of engaging the law or refer aspects of the case to the pertinent service agency. It is noted, for example, that the figures for counseling services delivered respectively by the PNP and the CSSDO have been decreasing (from 668 and fifty-four in 2006 to 591 and forty-two in 2007). On the other hand, figures for referrals to other agencies had increased from 296 in 2006 to 620 in 2007, indicating an improvement in community awareness of the nature and availability of these services. The trend indicates that MR GAD interventions had proven adequate to situate the officials in the context of collaborative efforts to preserve communal peace and protect men, women, and children from domestic violence.

*Customizing training inputs according to particular needs of participants.* The following modules have been developed by MR GAD with respect to the training needs of MR GAD Advocates, service providers, and Peer Counselors:

1. Training of MR GAD Advocates
  - a. Basic training on gender sensitivity and reproductive health
  - b. Interpersonal communication and counseling
  - c. Anger management
  - d. RA 9262
  - e. Advocacy and leadership training
2. Training of the network of service providers
  - a. Review of gender and RH
  - b. Orientation to MR GAD concepts
  - c. Basic counseling and cognitive restructuring

- d. Enhancing the referral form
  - e. Development of the counseling form for doers of violence
3. Training of the Peer Counselors
    - a. Basic gender and RH
    - b. Interpersonal communications and counseling
    - c. Anger management
    - d. Cognitive restructuring
    - e. Use of the form in counseling doers of violence

*Adopting inclusivity of gender work.* Given the established presence of women's groups in the pilot barangays, MR GAD marked its entry into these communities with the resolve not be combative and confrontational with prescribed feminist reading of the gender and RH issues which had been and still was being disseminated in some pilot communities. MR GAD does not dispute what had been established by police figures and gender research: Women and children are the usual victims and men are the usual doers of violence against them.

In proposing the need for a shared understanding of the root causes of male violence, as well as the likely repercussions on the family of engaging the women laws as they are, MR GAD sought to accommodate women and youth to view these matters through MR GAD lens. With the help of trained service providers and barangay functionaries who had been won over to the cause, concerted community efforts could actually work to create the climate for a more sober and rational resolution of marital dispute that is acceptable to both parties.

Trainings directed at women's and youth organizations made women and youth realize that gender and development issues need not remain to be the exclusive domain of women. This has made them more sensitive to men's needs and more receptive to commit to efforts to address these. Whereas other male participation programs focus on interventions that elicit the help of men only insofar as to improve their wives' maternal health and health-seeking behaviors or to increase the utilization of family planning methods, MR GAD differs in the way it recognizes men to have peculiar gender and RH concerns by and in themselves. And far from antagonizing women and women's groups, MR GAD had been cited by many women in the communities instead for its good intentions for the ends of bringing about marital harmony and communal peace.<sup>27</sup>

The early socialization agenda directed at the youth imbue the next generation with much needed information on gender relations, RH, risky lifestyle, and STI. This allows them to provide appropriate advice not only to their peers and siblings, but also to their parents. The IEC activities arm them to form values to guide their own personal behavior and to try and influence others to adopt a change in attitudes and perspective.

*Reckoning by data-driven assumptions.* Research has been at the heart of the implementation of the MR GAD project. Hard data rationalize every activity undertaken, which in turn generate data for analysis to determine the best course of action among available alternatives. In counseling male doers of violence, for example, MR GAD prescribes the use of a form that draws the individual's sociodemographic data, socialization experience, and gender and RH information. Taken together, the information provides an individual profile of the client that is used guide to customize the conduct of one-on-one counseling on him. Also, SGD participants are asked to fill out a screening form to allow the facilitators to profile the violent experiences of the men and determine the information requirements of the group.<sup>28</sup>

At each step of the way, research data had been generated to analyze the needs, resources, and alternatives and rationalize the evolution of programmatic elements to be adopted. Data gathering in various forms – through dialogue and group discussions, profiling interviews, and participatory action research methods – brought in the information necessary to develop training designs, select effective strategies, and generate forms to streamline documentation and monitoring of program delivery. While it can be argued that the MR GAD project does not hew to conventional prescriptions in gender work in the way it privileges men's needs, and especially of those who have done violence against women and children,<sup>29</sup> what it has going for it is that it had ably adjusted to the realtime concerns articulated at the grassroots, founded as its interventions are on hands-on research into the gender and RH needs in the pilot barangays.

*Capacitating community structures for rehabilitation of doers of violence.* A controversial aspect of MR GAD advocacy is its recognition of the VAWC victim's right to opt for the rehabilitation of her abuser.

While the human rights paradigm emphasizes justice and redress, many a victim had articulated the desire for community support in rehabilitating her partner instead of claiming her right to redress under the law. To this end, community structures such as faith-based groups had been capacitated to counsel men and to introduce them to peaceable conflict resolution and anger management techniques. Similarly, techniques for couples counseling had also been taught to enhance third party efforts at encouraging more gender equitable attitudes and interactions among couples in conflict.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Republic Act No. 6955. "An Act to Declare Unlawful the Practice of Matching Filipino Women for Marriage to Foreign Nationals on a Mail Order Basis and Other Similar Practices, Including the Advertisement, Publication, Printing or Distribution of Brochures, Fliers and Other Propaganda Materials in Furtherance Thereof and Providing Penalties Therefor." 13 June 1990.

Republic Act No. 7610. "An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination, Providing Penalties for Its Violation, and for Other Purposes." 22 July 1991.

Republic Act No. 7877. "An Act Declaring Sexual Harassment Unlawful in the Employment, Education or Training Environment, and for Other Purposes." 08 February 1995.

Republic Act No. 8353. "An Act Expanding the Definition of the Crime of Rape, Reclassifying the Same as a Crime Against Persons, Amending for the Purpose Act No. 3815, as Amended, Otherwise Known as the Revised Penal Code, and for Other Purposes." 1997.

Republic Act No. 8505. "An Act Providing Assistance and Protection for Rape Victims, Establishing for the Purpose a Rape Crisis Center in Every Province and City, Authorizing the Appropriation of Funds Therefore, and for Other Purposes." 13 February 1998.

Republic Act No. 8972. "An Act Providing for Benefits and Privileges to Solo Parents and Their Children, Appropriating Funds Therefore and for Other Purposes." 07 November 2000.

Republic Act No. 9208. "An Act to Institute Policies to Eliminate Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Establishing the Necessary Institutional Mechanisms for the Protection and Support of Trafficked Persons, Providing Penalties for Its Violations, and for Other Purposes." 26 May 2003.

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." 08 March 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The GAD budget legislation is considered by the NCRFW as a major milestone in its work to fully integrate women for economic, social, and cultural development at the local, national, and international levels. See <http://www.ncrfw.gov.ph/index.php/ncrfw-profile>.

<sup>3</sup> Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) underscores "...the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases" (Emphasis author's).

<sup>4</sup> Following the 2000 UNFPA directions on partnership with men in reproductive and sexual health and rights (PMSRH), male participation programs are prescribed to foster three basic expectations of men – relating to partnership in sexual and reproductive health, being gender-equitable, and taking ownership of problems and being part of the solution (Cohen and Burger 2000).

<sup>5</sup> The UNFPA also published guidelines to "increase men's involvement in reproductive health issues through research, advocacy, behaviour change communication and education, policy dialogues and well-tailored and innovative reproductive health services" (UNFPA 2003).

<sup>6</sup> <http://222.davaocity.gov.ph/welcome-to-davao.htm>, accessed 19 January 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Health Management and Research Group Foundation, Inc. information pamphlet. n.d.

<sup>8</sup> The TB DOTS is a government health program to combat tuberculosis.

<sup>9</sup> HMRG. "Men's responsibilities in gender and development (MR GAD): Breaking the culture of silence." Davao City, Philippines: December 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Specifically, the Lupon Tagapamayapa is a functional committee in the barangay system tasked to resolve disputes in the communities, including those involving marital conflicts.

<sup>11</sup> Smallest unit of community organization.

<sup>12</sup> In later years of implementation, it was allowed to accept women as MR GAD Advocates.

<sup>13</sup> The PNP Women's Desk was created to ensure unbridled disclosures of violence experiences of women when they report to the police.

<sup>14</sup> The case studies form part of the HMRG publication for dissemination at a partners conference on 28-29 August 2009.

<sup>15</sup> The Old Airport has since been converted into the Davao Air Base for the Tactical Operations Group-11 of the Philippine Air Force.

<sup>16</sup> In comparison, PhP150.00 is set as the figure to meet the daily Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) of a family of five.

<sup>17</sup> Barangay Protection Order (BPO), RA 9262, an irrevocable barangay protection order is issued to a male partner when a woman complains to the police or barangay official that he had subjected her to abuse. The BPO has a fifteen-day effectivity.

<sup>18</sup> When MR GAD trainings are held in St. Joseph the Worker parish, this often involves lay leaders from Barangay Sasa and the neighboring barangays of Hizon, Pampanga, and Anglionto that are under parish jurisdiction. Some of these non-Sasa parishioners are also local government functionaries in their respective barangays. Through their participation in the parish-conducted trainings, they come to network with MR GAD also for assistance and information.

<sup>19</sup> Pantalan is a Visayan term meaning port or wharf.

<sup>20</sup> During Lupon Tagapamayapa and Barangay Council meetings, this question came to be increasingly raised: *Ngano man nga babaye lang may Code?* (Why is it that only women have a Code?), in reference to the 1997 Women and Children's Code of Davao City that enshrines women's rights. There was an emerging recognition of the fact that men too had needs and that these were not being met. It was in this context that efforts were initiated to link the barangay to the MR GAD program.

<sup>21</sup> The Bathaluman runs a half-way house in the relocation area within the barangay and has strong presence in its advocacy for the rights of women victims.

<sup>22</sup> In separate FGDs facilitated by this researcher, a similar complaint was aired by local government officials in Barangay Calinan in December 2008 and by service providers in Barangay Daliao in May 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Government functionaries must enforce the fifteen-day cooling off period on pain of a hefty fine (PhP10,000.00) for initiating a willful violation thereof, such as when moves are made to reconcile the couple.

<sup>24</sup> PO3 Absarah Khansi of the PNP observes that some woman complainants use RA 9262 and the attendant threat of police action as *panghadlok - murag mumu* (threat – like a specter) on their husbands.

<sup>25</sup> Abing has since been replaced by Barangay Secretary Remy Caday.

<sup>26</sup> Barangay Committee for the Protection of Women.

<sup>27</sup> Women's organizations were represented at the MR GAD partners conference held on 28 to 29 August 2009. At the culmination of the program, DPF director Lyda Canson, a prominent women's rights advocate, thanked MR GAD for "proving her wrong." She cited her personal knowledge of former doers of violence who had reformed and committed to adopt non-violent means at resolving marital disagreements.

<sup>28</sup> In August 2009, MR GAD drew the consolidated data from 391 screening forms that were accomplished. The findings reveal the SGD participants had been between fifteen to sixty-four years old (mean age at 42) with an average income of PhP7,345 per month. They were mostly married (62%) and college graduates (57.6%). Only nine percent of them had yet to have sex. Of those who were sexually active, there were reports of STI symptoms such as painful urination (29%), urethral discharge (11%), and genital sores (12%). Problems of premature ejaculation (50%) and erectile dysfunction (40%) were also reported. Younger cohorts reported earlier sexual debut than older cohorts. The majority (82.5%) never used condom or any other contraceptive (58%). Almost a third had multiple sexual partners, but almost never had to pay for sex. Most of them (66%) experienced physical abuse as children; a third admits to having hit their partners at least once; and seventy-four percent directed hurting words. On the other hand, they also reported experiencing being insulted in public (24.6%) and hit (16%) by their wives.

<sup>29</sup> After the fact of the MR GAD pilot project implementation, The Rio Call to Action (2009) stipulates the need to "invest in men and boys to become engaged in changing their behavior and attitudes towards gender equality supported by communities, systems and national policies."

## References

- Barangay Panacan Profile, n.d.
- Barangay Sasa Profile, n.d.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), in <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>, accessed 10 February 2009.
- Cohen, S. and Burger, M. 2000. *Partnering: A new approach to sexual and reproductive health*. New York: UNFPA.
- Focus Group Discussion with Community Women, Barangay Panacan, Davao City. December 2008.
- Focus Group Discussion with Service Providers, Calinan Barangay Hall, December 2008.
- Focus Group Discussion with Barangay Calinan government officials, Calinan Barangay Hall, 14 January 2009.
- Focus Group Discussion with MR GAD staff, HMRG office, 05 January 2009.
- General Profile of Barangay Sasa, Buhangin District, n.d.
- General Profile of Barangay Panacan, Bunawan District, 2000.
- Haberland, Nicole and Measham, Diana, eds. 2002. *Responding to Cairo: Case studies of changing practice in reproductive health and family planning*. New York: The Population Council.
- Health Management and Research Group Foundation, Inc. n.d. Informational pamphlet.
- HMRG. 2007. "Men's responsibilities in gender and development (MR GAD): Breaking the culture of silence." Preliminary report to German Technical Cooperation and Davao Regional Population Office.  
<http://www.davaocity.gov.ph/welcome-to-davao.htm>, accessed 19 January 2009.
- International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), in <http://www.un.org/popin/icpd2.htm>, accessed 15 February 2009.
- Ilagan, Gail. 2004. "Some take the lonely road," in <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/category,COI,,QUERYRESPONSE,PHL,41501c4f7,0.html>, accessed 05 February 2009.
- Interview with Kagawad Lorna Pandapatan, Barangay Hall, Sasa, Davao City, 30 April 2009.
- Interview with Pastor Ray Palomar, Barangay Hall, Sasa, Davao City, 30 April 2009.
- Interview with Remy Caday, Barangay Panacan, Davao City. 06 May 2009.
- Interview with Doers of Violence, Barangay Hall, Sasa, Davao City, 25 May 2009.
- Power Point Slides on Barangay Sasa, n.d., from HMRG files.
- Power Point Slides on PNP Panacan, n.d., from HMRG files.
- Resolution No. 009A, Series of 2007. Office of the Sangguniang Barangay, Panacan, Bunawan District, Davao City.
- Rio Call to Action. 2009. In <http://www.engagingmen2009.org/24>, accessed 19 July 2009.
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). 2003. *It takes two: Partnering with men in reproductive and sexual health*. New York: UNFPA.
- ..... 2007. *Delivering on the promise of equality: UNFPA's strategic framework for gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment 2008-2011*. New York: UNFPA.