

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO PREVENTION OF CHILD MALTREATMENT IN THE PHILIPPINES: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AMONG AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND THE COMMUNITY

*By Celia Capadocia Yangco**



I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines has a young population, with 36 million or 43% of its population of around 76 million as of 2000 consisting of children below 18 years of age. As such, it has a vast reservoir of future and potential human resources that can contribute to its progress as a nation, culture and people.

Children in the Philippines are guaranteed their rights, and their best interests are enshrined in the Constitution, the basic law of the country, as well as in other laws. All institutions of the land – from family, school, church, community and others – are called upon to protect and promote the welfare of the Filipino child. In fact, the Philippines is among the first countries in the world that has adopted a Child and Youth Welfare Code. Passed in 1974, the Child and Youth Welfare Code, also known as Presidential Decree 603 (PD 603), contains provisions that articulate not only the rights and privileges of children but also the responsibilities of the State and its institutions towards children and youth.

Like any other country, however, the Philippines is constantly affected by global changes and adjustments that somehow also affect its families and their children. Some of these changes, while intended to bring progress and developments, have negatively impacted on families specially children. The fast pace of living, rapid technological development, urban migration and congestion, and increased participation of women in the labour force are some developments that put stresses and pressures on the family.

The stresses and pressures on families are eventually communicated, transmitted and manifested in children, who are among the most vulnerable members of a family, because of their young age and malleability. At worst, these changes lead to maltreatment or abuse of children and, therefore, the violation of their rights.

Thus, the Philippine government, through the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), among other agencies, have embarked on a comprehensive and integrated approach to children's development along the areas of survival, protection, development and participation. Part of this holistic approach is the prevention and early detection of child maltreatment as well as the recovery, rehabilitation and after-care for maltreated or abused children.

This approach is part of the Philippine National Strategic Framework for Plan Development for Children for years 2001 to 2025 otherwise known as Child 21. Child 21 is a comprehensive guide for various stakeholders in designing their plans and programmes for Filipino children. Using the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as its framework, Child 21 follows a rights-based approach to achieving its vision of a child-sensitive and child friendly society.

II. CHILD MALTREATMENT IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT

Child abuse or maltreatment, whether habitual or not, as defined in the Philippines, includes any of the following:

- Psychological or physical abuse, neglect, cruelty, sexual abuse and emotional maltreatment
- Any act by deeds or words which debases, degrades, or demeans the intrinsic worth and dignity of a child as a human being.
- Unreasonable deprivation of his/her basic needs for survival such as food and shelter.

* Undersecretary, Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development, Philippines.

- Failure to give medical treatment to an injured child resulting in serious impairment of his/her growth and development or in his/her permanent incapacity or death.

Child abuse may be categorized in specific cases as follows:

1. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse refers to inflicting physical harm by beating, hitting, punching, kicking, biting, burning or any other act, which causes physical pain. This type of abuse can be caused by over-discipline or punishment that is inappropriate for the child's age and size.

2. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes activities by a parent or caretaker such as fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure and exploitation through prostitution or the production of pornographic materials.

3. Emotional/Mental Abuse

Emotional/mental abuse refers to a pattern of behaviour that impairs a child's emotional development or sense of self-worth. This may include constant criticism, threats, or rejection, as well as withholding love, support, or guidance. Emotional abuse is often difficult to prove and is almost always present when other forms are identified.

4. Child Neglect

Child neglect is the failure to provide for a child's basic needs, whether physical, educational or emotional. This can include refusal of or delay in seeking health care, poor nutrition, abandonment, expulsion from home or not providing shelter and inadequate supervision.

5. Child Labour

Child labour is the participation of children in a wide variety of work situations, on a more or less regular basis, to earn a livelihood for themselves or others. Poverty of the child worker's family is a reason for the emergence of child labour and the fact that it is relatively cheap and accessible. Child labour is tapped as a coping strategy of families who view children as potential income providers and as part of the family support system.

The worst forms of child labour include:

- (i) All forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- (ii) The use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production of pornography or of pornographic performances;
- (iii) The use, procuring or offering for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties;
- (iv) Work, which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or the morals of the children.

6. Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

Commercial sexual exploitation of children consists of practices that are demeaning, degrading and many times life threatening to children. It is a fundamental violation of the human rights of a child. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons. The child is treated as a sexual and commercial object.

There are four primary and interrelated forms of CSEC. These are:

- (i) *Child Prostitution* which is the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration. Children whether male or female, who for money, profit or any other consideration or due to coercion or influence of any adult, syndicate or group, engage in sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct, are deemed children exploited in prostitution and other sexual abuse.

Those who engage in or promote, facilitate or induce child prostitution, those who commit the act of sexual intercourse or lascivious conduct with the child and those who derive profit or advantage as owner or manager of the business establishment can be prosecuted for child prostitution.

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- (ii) *Child Pornography* which is any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated, explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes. These include photographs, negatives, slides, magazines, books, drawings, movies, videotapes and computer disks or files.
- (iii) *Child Trafficking for Sexual Purposes* which is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person below 18 years of age for the purpose of prostitution, pornography or other forms of sexual exploitation, the geographical transfer of the child's body from one place to another, both within the country (internal) and outside of the Philippines (external).
- (iv) *Child Sex Tourism* which is the commercial sexual exploitation of children by persons who travel from their own country to another, usually less developed country, to engage in sexual acts with the children. Child sexual tourism also includes local Filipino tourists who travel to other parts of the country to engage in sex with children.

Different studies and research on child abuse/domestic violence show the following common findings on the victims and the abusers or perpetrators.

Factors	Profile of Victims	Profile of Abusers/Perpetrators
1. Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The average age is 12 years, with age ranging between 7-16 years old at the time of reporting • Initial occurrence is between 7-12 years old • Abuse had been happening from 2-4 years if perpetrators are family members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of perpetrators are in their middle and late adulthood (30-59 years old) • Average age is 35 years old
2. Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Females are usually the victims rather than males (90%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrators are usually males rather than females
3. Educational Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of the victims reached elementary level while others stopped schooling due to poverty or due to the case filed in court 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More educated than his victim • Majority are skilled workers
4. Socio-Economic Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims generally come from lower class (90%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrators usually come from lower class
5. Relationship Between Perpetrator and Victim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim of kin offender is much younger than victim of other relation types. The closer the relationship between the victim and offender, the more likely the abuse is committed more than once. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The offenders know most victims; 33% would include incest (father-daughter relationship is most frequent)

With the increasing numbers of victims of domestic/family violence and child abuse, the DSWD, in coordination with other government agencies, developed programmes and services that address the needs of the victims. These programmes and services are focused on the three major aspects of prevention, recovery/rehabilitation and after care.

III. THE PHILIPPINE DSWD

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) is the premier national social welfare agency of the country involved in poverty reduction and the social protection of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sector, namely children, youth, women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), older persons (OP) and disadvantaged or needy families, including victims of disasters.

A. DSWD Vision and Missions

It has for its vision, “a society where the poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged families and communities are empowered for an improved quality of life”.

It’s mission is “to provide social protection and promote the rights and welfare of the poor, vulnerable and the disadvantaged individual, family and community to contribute to poverty alleviation and empowerment through Social Welfare and Development (SWD) policies, programmes, projects and services implemented with or through Local Government Units (LGUs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), People Organizations (POs), other Government Organizations (GOs) and other members of civil society”.

B. DSWD Goals

The DSWD’s goals are:

1. Formulation and advocacy of a just and responsive SWD legislative agenda, policies and plans, as well as ensuring their effective implementation;
2. Identification, development and marketing of technologies for building up social capital;
3. Setting up and enforcement of SWD standards to protect the rights of the poor and the disadvantaged to quality services;
4. Provision of technical assistance and resource augmentation to intermediaries in the implementation of SWD programmes and services; and
5. Provision of preventive, protective, rehabilitative and developmental programmes and services.

C. DSWD Functions

Since Philippine governance is devolved to the local government units (LGUs), the main responsibility of delivering basic social welfare services is latched in the provincial, city or municipal governments. There are 79 provinces, 115 cities and 1499 municipalities in the Philippines. Thus, there is a great diversity in the actual implementation of programmes and services, including those for children.

In the meantime, the DSWD continues to be in-charge of the following:

1. Policy Formulation and Programme Development, which involves coordination and networking with various stakeholders in coming up with policies and plans designed for social protection and poverty alleviation and eventually the development of programmes.
2. Social Technology Development - the development of a new programme which involves technologies addressing emerging needs.
3. Standards Setting and Compliance Monitoring which include registration, licensing and accreditation of social welfare agencies, programmes and services of intermediaries such as local government units, non-government organizations and people’s organizations.
4. Provision of Technical Assistance and Resource Augmentation to intermediaries needing such.
5. Capability Building of Intermediaries involving training and other forms of capacity building.
6. Implementation of national centre-based and community-based programmes and projects which include those for families, children, youth, women, older persons and persons with disabilities.
7. Management of Special Projects that are in keeping with national or flagship projects of government.

D. DSWD Structure and Network

The Department has a central office, five bureaus, seven services and sixteen field offices all over the country. It has three major organizational groups, namely the Policy and Programmes Group; General Administration and Support Services Group and the Operations and Capacity Building Group where all the field offices belong. Under the field offices are residential facilities and non-residential programmes.

It has three attached agencies: the Council for Welfare of Children (CWC), Inter-Country Adoption Board (ICAB) and National Council for the Welfare of Disabled Persons (NCWDP). Recently, the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW) and the National Youth Commission (NYC) were attached to the DSWD for oversight purposes.

The DSWD has a working relationship with 79 provincial social welfare offices, 115 city social welfare offices and 1499 municipal social welfare offices. It has partnerships with 536 NGOs which it has registered, licensed and accredited.

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

One of the major thrusts of P.D. 603 is the creation of the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC)

composed of several agencies, namely: the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Health (DOH), Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Department of Education (DepEd), Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Agriculture (DA), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the National Nutrition Council (NNC) three private individuals concerned with the welfare of children and youth and a youth representative. The CWC is the overall body for the formulation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of plans, programmes, projects and services for children. The CWC is an attached agency of the DSWD, with the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development as Chair of the Council, alternating with the Secretaries of Health, Education and Interior and Local Government.

It has for its powers and responsibilities the following:

1. Coordinate the implementation and enforcement of all laws relative to the promotion of child and youth welfare;
2. Formulate an integrated national policy and long range programmes, monitor and evaluate the implementation of this policy, and all programmes and services relative to the development of the general welfare and protection of the best interests of children and youth;
3. Advocate and recommend to the President and other appropriate agencies for implementation on a nationwide scale when appropriate, new, innovative, pilot programmes and services for the general welfare of children and youth;
4. Mobilize resource assistance and call upon and utilize any department, bureau, office, agency, or instrumentalities, public, private, or voluntary, for such assistance as it may require in the performance of its functions;
5. Submit annually to the President, through the Secretary of Social Welfare and Development, a comprehensive report on its activities and accomplishments.

IV. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DSWD IN RELATION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN

The roles and responsibilities in coping with child maltreatment and family violence are classified into four major aspects: prevention, early detection and intervention, recovery and after-care.

The DSWD plays a vital and pivotal role in the management of both domestic violence and child abuse or maltreatment cases. Aside from the Child and Youth Welfare Code, several republic acts have mandated DSWD to lead in the policy formulation, planning, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and services geared towards addressing these phenomenon.

Republic Act 7610 "An Act Providing for Stronger Deterrence and Special Protection Against Child Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination, mandates the DSWD and the Department of Justice (DOJ) in coordination with other government agencies and the private sector concerned, to come up with a comprehensive programme to protect children against child prostitution and other sexual abuse, child trafficking, obscene publications and indecent shows or other acts of abuse and circumstances which endanger survival and normal development. RA 7610 was further amended by RA 9231 to provide for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour and afford stronger protection for working children.

In the meantime, Republic Act 9262, known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004, seeks to prevent all forms of violence against women and children to secure their physical, sexual and psychological well-being, and has specific mandates for the DSWD. Under this law, violence against women and their children is considered a public crime. Temporary protection orders are issued to restrain the offender from causing further violence. The same is true for RA 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act which institutes policies to eliminate trafficking in persons, specially women and children.

A. Prevention

Prevention entails the setting up of wholesome and developmental programmes and services that will enable children to grow wholly and develop fully. It includes programmes and services that enhance family life, and promotes effective and responsible parenthood. Under this phase, the DSWD leads in the development, implementation and monitoring of the following programmes:

1. Early Childhood Development Project (ECDP)

ECDP refers to child and family focused services designed to build on and improve existing health,

nutrition, and early education services for disadvantaged children 0-6 years old. This project aims to reduce, by half, the infant mortality rate, child mortality rate, protein-energy malnutrition and dropout rates in elementary schools. It also aims to improve psychosocial development, school-preparedness of children and achievement levels of Grade 1 pupils.

2. Day Care Service for Children

This is the provision of supplementary parental care to 0 to 5-year old children of parents who find it difficult to fully take care of their children during part of the day because of work or some other reason.

Day care services are provided in day care centres or child minding centres. If these centres are not physically available, a community may avail of a supervised neighbourhood playground under an accredited service provider, child development worker or a day care mom.

A child who undergoes day care can expect to:

- become physically fit through proper care and nutrition;
- develop self-confidence, self-expression and self discipline;
- relate well to peers, parents and other adults;
- develop mental, intellectual, verbal and language skills;
- develop strong spiritual, socio-cultural and nationalistic values as well as positive attitudes towards one's family and community; and
- be provided comfort, safety and protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation.

3. Night Care for Children of Working Mothers

Night care involves the provision of temporary substitute custodial care for young children while their mother is working on the night shift.

4. Pre-Marriage and Marriage Counselling

Such counselling prepares about to be married couples (for pre-marriage) and spouses to understand their roles and obligations as couples and parents, among others.

5. Parent Effectiveness Service (PES)

This is a community-based service providing and expanding the knowledge and skills of parents and caregivers on parenting to be able to respond to parental duties and responsibilities on the areas of early childhood development, behaviour management of younger and older children, husband-wife relationships, prevention of child abuse, healthcare and other challenges of parenting. It assists parents and parent substitutes to develop and strengthen their knowledge and skills so that they can assume a major educational role in their child's growth and development.

6. Empowerment and Reaffirmation of Paternal Abilities (ERPAT)

This is a service that gives importance and emphasises the development and enrichment of knowledge, attitude and skills of fathers in performing their paternal roles and responsibilities. It involves conducting community-based sessions for fathers and training of and organization of father leaders and volunteers in the community to facilitate collective action and participation in promoting the important role of fathers to the family. It sees the significant role of fathers in performing multiple roles in all aspects of child rearing and development, including the care and behaviour management of adolescent children.

It gives emphasis to eliminating traditional gender role differentiation as manifested through the proliferation of the "macho" image of men as seen and observed in the norms, role expectations and behaviour patterns of Filipino males. It helps them achieve a broader and fairer definition of gender roles and understanding of oneself as nurturing and caring individuals both for their children and spouses.

B. Early Detection and Intervention

Programmes and services under this category consist of interventions meant to detect abuse/maltreatment and protect the child and his/her parents, usually the mother, from harm and further trauma. It tries to reduce the frequency, intensity and severity of early signs of abuse or maltreatment through early case finding and immediate responses.

Programmes and services included in this category are as follows:

1. Child Protective Behaviour Programme

This is a safety programme addressing issues relating to safety including abuse of children, adolescents and adults. It has the following objectives:

- Provide simple practical skills and strategies to keep children safe;
- Assist children in identifying and coping with situations where they may be unsafe;
- Encourage children to recognize early warning signs, i.e. bodily responses/signals;
- Encourage children to further develop communication, problem solving and relationship skills;
- Assist children to increase their self protective skills against forms of abuse and assault;
- Encourage children to recognize their early warning signs to network with a trusted adult and to report their concern.

2. Counselling

This intervention focuses on assisting the clients overcome their problems and enables them to move on and pursue activities that will restore their socio-economic functioning. Counselling is carried out either individually or in groups.

3. Clearance for Travelling Unaccompanied Minors

A travel clearance is a document issued by the DSWD through its Field Offices or its attached agency, the Inter-Country Adoption Board (ICAB), whichever is applicable, to a Filipino minor who is below 18 years of age travelling outside of the Philippines, unaccompanied by his/her parents or those exercising parental authority and legal custody of the child. It certifies that a minor is authorized to travel abroad for valid reasons based on the assessment of the social worker.

A travel clearance is issued to:

- Protect the child from abuse and exploitation while abroad;
- Prevent child trafficking;
- Ensure that the travelling companion is duly authorized and able to look after the welfare of the minor;
- Ensure that the sponsor has the capability to protect and support the minor's needs while abroad.

4. National Family Violence Prevention Programme (NFVPP)

This is a community-based strategy of preparing family members to protect themselves against violence and manage resolution of conflict within the context of family relations.

The main goal of the project is the reduction of violence against women, children and other vulnerable members of the family. The programme uses the following strategies:

- Training and continuing technical assistance
- Organization and strengthening of support groups/community based structures
- Research and documentation
- Public information and advocacy
- Installation of a data based system on family violence

5. Comprehensive Package of Social Development and Social Welfare Services for Single Parents and their Children

This is a response to address the needs of single parents and their children. The package of services initially includes livelihood, self-employment and skills development, employment-related benefits, psychosocial, educational, health and housing services.

The programme emanated from the enactment of Republic Act 8972, otherwise known as the Solo Parents Welfare Act of 2002. The law mandates various government agencies and other sectors to consolidate their efforts to help address the needs of single parents.

C. Recovery and Rehabilitation

Recovery and rehabilitation involves the process of transformation of a child from a dysfunctional to a state of renewed functional condition where he/she shows competence in the performance of his/her roles.

The DSWD utilizes two approaches in the provision of recovery services to victims of domestic/family violence and child abuse. These are the community-based and centre-based approach.

1. The Community-based Approach of Recovery/Rehabilitation

The community-based approach refers to the provision of community-based programmes and services. This includes the *System of Referral*, which is a support service that the social worker may use to link and network the needs of women and children for services and interventions available within the community such as health, education, livelihood, etc.

Aside from referral, the 16 Field Offices of the DSWD maintain *Crisis Intervention Units (CIU)*, where the victims of domestic violence and child abuse may be provided with counselling services. Other services provided by the CIU are: stress debriefing, financial assistance to defray medical expenses in case the victim needs immediate treatment and medical attention, transportation assistance, and temporary shelter. Through the CIU, working arrangements with appropriate government, non-government, professional and civic organizations are established for the benefit of the clients.

Other types of community-based services that seek to address the recovery or rehabilitation of a child abuse victim are the following:

- (i) *Child Care and Placement (CCP)* which is the provision of alternative care to children in especially difficult circumstances whose parents are unable to provide for their basic needs, temporarily or permanently, brought about by problems in family relationships, illness, extreme poverty, abuse and neglect. This may be provided through kinship care, local adoption, foster family care or legal guardianship.
- (ii) *Child and Family Counselling* which provides information, options and opportunities and emotional support to strengthen child-family relationships and coping capabilities to enable the child and family to reach a decision about family and child care.
- (iii) *Casework/Group-work Services* which focuses on treatment and rehabilitation of children who have undergone traumatic experiences that may affect their growth and development as human beings.
- (iv) *Psychological and Psychiatric Interventions* through tests and other modes of assessment as well as therapeutic sessions extended to the child to determine aptitudes, capacities, interest and behavioural problems to facilitate treatment in accordance with individual needs and characteristics.
- (v) *Medical Services* in the form of referral for medico-legal examinations, hospitalization and medical treatment, if indicated.
- (vi) *Legal Services* through referral to volunteer lawyers in pursuance of the victim's case, litigation of the perpetrator or termination of parental authority.
- (vii) *Livelihood Services* which provide skills training and capital grants to enable the child, when able, and his/her family to engage in income producing activities to alleviate their financial difficulties and improve their economic conditions.

2. The Centre-Based Approach of Recovery/Rehabilitation

The centre-based approach is done through the provision of activities geared towards the victim's recovery in a residential setting, managed either by the DSWD, LGUs or licensed/accredited agencies, and is commonly known in the Philippines as *residential care service*.

Residential care service is 24-hour group care that provides alternative family care arrangements to poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and families in crisis whose needs cannot be adequately met by their families and relatives or by any other forms of alternative family care arrangements over a period of time.

Under the guidance of trained staff, residents in centres and institutions are cared for under a structured therapeutic environment with the end in view of reintegrating them with their families and communities as socially functioning individuals.

To date, there are sixty-six DSWD-managed centres and institutions. Of this number, twelve are for women victims of domestic/family violence and twenty-five are for children/youth victims of abuse. The rest are for children in conflict with the law, persons with disabilities and older persons.

In addition, three *Therapy Centres* are being pilot tested for the conduct of therapy sessions for victims of sexual abuse. These are located in the cities of Manila, Cebu and Davao.

The following are the major services provided to victims of domestic violence and child abuse while they

are temporarily sheltered at the different centres and institutions:

- *Treatment and Rehabilitation services* - which refers to the process of providing appropriate intervention to a woman/child whose behaviour is inappropriate and unacceptable and has a negative impact on her and others. The social worker's focus is to facilitate the determination of the functional level of the woman/child. It also refers to the series of activities that would facilitate restoration, healing and recovery of the women/children from the trauma of neglect and other forms of abuse/maltreatment and exploitation and make them return to normal functioning for eventual social reintegration.

Among the activities provided to women/children are: casework, counselling, group work, group counselling, therapy and referral.

- *Group Life and Home Care Services* which refers to the daily living experience of the women/children that provides opportunities for self-discovery, social control and discipline that would promote a sense of responsibility and strengthen capability for decision-making and relationships with others. This includes: in-house training and daily living; self-enhancement skills and development; and maternal and child care skills development (for women).
- *Health and Nutrition Services* which includes preventive, curative and rehabilitative services to ensure physical, mental and psychological conditions of the women/children that would promote a healthy and productive environment through information dissemination, waste/ecological management, nutrition education and a health campaign against epidemics and contaminations. The health and nutrition services include: medical and dental care, STD clearance, psychiatric, psychological, and dietary.
- *Productivity Skills Training* to the women/children based on their needs and capability in preparation for future economic independence and gainful employment.
- *Legal Services* that would help women/children needing legal intervention while their cases are in litigation through coordination with other government agencies, private individuals, and groups providing legal services.

D. After-Care Services

After-care and follow-up services are necessary to ensure the smooth return and reintegration of the survivor to their families and communities. It is the provision of interventions, approaches and strategies with the end goal of ensuring effective reintegration and relapse prevention of the children and women victims of violence discharged from residential facilities.

The centre and community workers formulate a discharge plan as a basis in the provision of appropriate services to both the client and her/his family/guardian. The discharge plan indicates the interventions that will prepare the client, family/guardian and the community for their eventual return to the community.

The City/Municipal Social Welfare Development Office (C/MSWDO) under the city/municipal LGU provides after-care and follow-up services within a period of one year from discharge, in coordination with other government and non-government organizations. A contract/agreement is signed by both the community social workers and the client to carry out the reintegration plan.

The following are the components of the after-care service for women/children:

- *Educational Assistance*: the provision or access for scholarship and/or financial assistance to school age children to support the educational needs of those who decide to pursue their education/studies.
- *Family Counselling*: the provision/conduct of counselling sessions to the client and her/his family to enable them to be aware of the factors which caused the problem; their roles and responsibilities in order to improve their coping capabilities and strengthen their family relationships.
- *Self-Enhancement Service*: continuous provision of opportunities for the improvement of the self to enable her/him to fully participate and be fully mainstreamed into society. These include: personality development through values education, formation and inculcation: values clarification, gender sensitivity and the process of sustaining positive attitudes, habits and values acquired in the centre.
- *Social and Vocational/Practical Skills Development*: to further develop positive work habits, attitudes and skills in crafts and trades for the economic productivity of the client. The training is provided to either individuals or groups. It is conducted in existing community centres, facilities in the neighbourhood where clients reside through self-sheltered workshops and/or referral for appropriate employment to the client.
- *Spiritual Services*: provision of activities to maintain the moral and spiritual development of the client.

- *Referral Services*: provides the client the opportunity to avail of other services from other agencies like medical, laboratory examinations, psychological treatment and medication in the hospitals/clinics of the client who are sick/suffering from any disease or illness.

In all the major aspects of prevention, recovery or rehabilitation and after-care or follow-up service, the necessity of building partnerships among local government units, government agencies, non-government organizations and the community is of utmost importance. Convergence of existing programmes and services to eliminate domestic/family violence and child abuse/maltreatment is indispensable.

V. IMPORTANCE OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES AND NECESSITY OF BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AMONG AGENCIES, ORGANIZATIONS AND THE COMMUNITY

The quotation an “ounce of prevention is better than a pound of cure” is still very much relevant today, especially in the management of domestic violence and child abuse and maltreatment. Preventive measures ensure that domestic problems and situations in the family that spawn violence and abuse are nipped in the bud, so to speak. It brings about peace and development at the micro (family) as well as the macro levels of society.

At the family level, couples’ or parents’ capabilities are enhanced and their potential as role models are honed. Parents are able to demonstrate to their children the responsibilities that go with parenting, as well as of responsible, productive and contributing citizens of a community and society. They are able to live out their God-given roles as inter-generational purveyors of priceless values such as love, peace, joy, unity, kindness, generosity, etc.

In the meantime, preventive measures at the community and societal level ensure that citizens abide by the laws of the land, contribute to the progress of the nation and ultimately produce better and brighter citizens of the world.

Thus, it is important that the State lead in building partnerships among agencies, organizations and the community to prevent and address domestic violence and child maltreatment. Towards this end, the following have been established and institutionalized in the Philippines to prevent child abuse/maltreatment and promote children’s development.

1. Local Councils for the Welfare of Children

The CWC at the national level have been replicated at the regional and sub-regional levels. At the regional level, a regional sub-committee for the welfare of children (RSCWC) is created under the Social Development Committee (SDC) of the 16 Regional Development Councils (RDC) in the country. The RDCs are the regional coordinating bodies for all concerns and issues confronting a region. There are presently sixteen geographical regions throughout the Philippines consisting of several provinces, cities and municipalities. The RDCs have four major committees: economic development, social development, infrastructure and development management.

At the provincial level, there is a Provincial Development Council, under which is a committee in charge of the welfare of children and women. This is true for city and municipal councils.

2. Barangay Council for the Protection of Children

As provided for under the Child and Youth Welfare Code, every village is encouraged to organize a barangay council for the protection of children (BCPC) which draws up and implement plans for the promotion of child and youth welfare in the barangay. The functions of this Council are as follows:

- Foster the education of every child in the barangay
- Encourage the proper performance of the duties of parents, and provide learning opportunities on the adequate rearing of children and on a positive parent-child relationship
- Protect and assist abandoned or maltreated children and dependents
- Take steps to prevent juvenile delinquency and assist parents of children with behavioural problems so that they can get expert advice
- Adopt measures for the health of children
- Promote the opening and maintenance of playgrounds and day-care centres and other services that

are necessary for child and youth welfare

- Coordinate the activities of organizations devoted to the welfare of children and secure their cooperation
- Promote wholesome entertainment in the community, especially in movie houses
- Assist parents whenever necessary in securing expert guidance counselling from the proper governmental or private welfare agencies.

In addition, the BCPC shall hold classes and seminars on the proper rearing of children. It shall distribute to parents available literature and other information on child guidance. The BCPC shall assist parents, with behavioural problems whenever necessary, in securing expert guidance counselling from the proper governmental or private welfare agencies.

3. Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)

Parent Teacher Associations are required to be organized in all elementary and secondary schools to provide a forum for the discussion of problems and their solutions, relating to the total school programmes, and for insuring the full cooperation of parents in the efficient implementation of such programmes. It is also mandated to aid municipal and other local authorities and school officials in the enforcement of juvenile delinquency control measures, and in the implementation of programmes and activities to promote child welfare.

4. Associations of Private or Non-Government Agencies involved in Child Development and Welfare

Among the private sector and non-government agencies, there are a number of associations that have been organized to address child development and welfare and specifically to prevent child abuse and maltreatment. Foremost among these are Plan International, World Vision, ERDA Foundation and Christian Children's Fund. The Association of Child Caring Agencies of the Philippines (ACCAP) is a main supporter for community and centre based interventions.

5. Business Initiatives for Children

There are also a number of business establishments that have as a group or on their own support and/or established, programmes and services for children and/or their families. Such establishments include banking institutions, manufacturing firms and trading and service companies. Their support comes in terms of programmes, advocacy, resources and funding.

6. Professional Organizations

Professional organizations for children's causes such as those of lawyers, medical practitioners, social workers, etc. also have programmes for child development and welfare. They focus on specific areas where their particular expertise is needed. Medical practitioners for instance assist in the medical recovery of clients while lawyer groups assist in the legal aspects of cases.

7. Youth Organizations

Youth organizations at the local level are likewise actively involved in helping their peers or younger children, through participation in children's programmes and services such as in day-care centres and residential facilities. The older youth act as facilitators and guides for the younger children and serve as a resource group.

VI. PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE PREVENTION OF CHILD ABUSE/MALTREATMENT

A. Preventive and Developmental

Programmes, services and activities that are in place in the Philippines for children in addition to those enumerated in Section IV of this paper, and which highlight partnerships among the sectors of the community are as follows.

1. Mainstreaming Child 21

Mainstreaming Child 21 is an advocacy and planning programme at the national and local level, aimed at integrating children's concerns and services in all development plans at these levels. The three concrete manifestations of the outputs of this programme are having local child welfare codes or ordinances, local

children's plans and investment plans and functional local councils for the welfare or protection of children.

2. Bright Child Programme

This is basically a campaign strategy to accord children up to six years of age a full range of health, nutrition, psycho-social stimulation and early education services to ensure their holistic development. Led by the Departments of Health, Social Welfare and Development and Education, the programme counts as its supporter other government agencies, LGUs, non-government organizations, the private sector, the media the church and inter faith groups and the community.

3. Search for Child Friendly LGUs

Search for Child Friendly LGUs encourages LGUs to provide a child-friendly environment for the children in their localities, through the granting of a Presidential Award from the President of the Philippines. The LGUs are adjudged child-friendly based on certain criteria. This initiative has increased awareness of LGUs and improved their governance by making them responsible to the needs of children.

4. Bantay Bata Programme

Initiated and led by the TV-radio network ABS-CBN, the programme has an emergency response component through a 24 hour trunk line which the people can call for child-related concerns. Much like the USA's American 911, Bantay-bata specializes in the rescue of maltreated, abused or neglected children in collaboration with the DSWD and other agencies.

5. Children's Hours

Children's Hours is a fund raising campaign that taps individuals and companies to donate one hour's worth of earnings once a year to programmes committed to the welfare and development of marginalized Filipino children including education, shelter, rehabilitation, health, nutrition, and medical services.

6. Adoption of a Comprehensive Programme on Child Protection

In keeping with RA 7610 (Special Protection of Children Against Child Abuse), a comprehensive programme for the special protection of Filipino children was prepared by the Special Committee for the Protection of Children led by the Department of Justice and the DSWD. The programme addresses areas of prevention, reporting, rescue and investigation of child victims, the judicial trial involving children's cases and their eventual reintegration into society.

7. Proclamation No. 731

Proclamation No. 731 declared the second week of February of every year as "National Awareness Week for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse Exploitation" to highlight awareness of the issue.

8. Training Programmes for Personnel Handling and Managing Children's Cases

Initiated by the Philippine National Police Academy for policemen, the Philippine Judicial Academy for judges and the DSWD's Social Welfare Institute for social workers, these training programmes are meant to enhance the knowledge, skills and attitudes of the different groups of practitioners who handle or manage children's cases. Special training is given to police officers in charge of women and children's desks in police stations, for Family court judges and for social workers in charge of children who are abused/maltreated.

9. Conduct of Juvenile Justice Dialogues

Dialogues among the leaders of the community including representative of parents, the police, prosecutors, judges and correction officials are done at least once a year at the regional and sub-regional levels to take up issues and concerns such as child and youth development, including concerns about children in conflict with the law, substance and drug abuse, including victims of abuse and maltreatment. Recommendations at both policy and operational levels are made during these dialogues which are thereafter elevated to the concerned organization or entity.

10. Child Participation in Governance

In addition to the above practices and activities, children's participation in all aspects of life involving them, including in planning and decision making in the Philippine society, has been continuously encouraged and supported.

A concrete manifestation of this is the appointment of a child commissioner at the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), which is headed by the President, and which coordinates poverty alleviation efforts. The Child Commissioner spearheads and articulates the concerns of the Filipino children, including the victims of child abuse/maltreatment. A child/youth is now also a member of the Council for the Welfare of Children.

11. International Linkages for Children's Welfare

Aside from local initiatives, the Philippines has also embarked on regional and international linkages to protect and nurture children. Among these are:

- tie up with the International Social Services in Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore through the secondment of social workers in these countries;
- the posting of social workers in certain areas (Taiwan, Dubai, Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh) to focus attention on the threat to Filipino women and children;
- establishing a bilateral Working agreement with Malaysia to protect migrant's children particularly in Sabah;
- training on specialized services on children's protection with New Zealand, the Netherlands and the United States of America; and
- cooperating closely with international organizations and groups such as the ASEA, ILO, UNICEF, UNDP, etc. for children programmes.

VII. LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES MET

Child maltreatment or abuse is a threat to the safety, security, and development of young people everywhere. It is also a risk to the development of the country's human resources. The Philippines has its own share of the problem and has also its way of addressing and managing this challenge as described earlier. Thus, many lessons are learnt in addressing this phenomenon. However, problems and challenges also emerge in the process of managing child maltreatment.

Among the lessons learned are:

- Children are capable of much more than what adults believe them to be capable of, given the necessary nurture and support. A child's own qualities, characteristics and emerging competencies are themselves important protective factors that will prevent their abuse and maltreatment. By teaching them developmentally – appropriate ways to stay healthy and safe, children can be empowered to protect themselves. While young, children can participate actively in the process of self protection.
- Child abuse and maltreatment should always be understood in the context of the child's family and community, and therefore his/her environment. The family should thus be strengthened and supported to provide quality care and education for children. The family should thus be the focus and locus of all development efforts.
- The incidence of child abuse and maltreatment is exacerbated by the presence of drug abuse, alcoholism, vices, diseases, the separation of parents, poverty, and other social problems. Thus, there is a need to educate families and the communities on the menace and ills of these phenomenon and how to address them.
- The foremost objectives for prevention of child maltreatment are to reduce risks and vulnerabilities and enhance factors and capacities advantageous to the child, hence the need to have a wholesome, learning environment supportive of growth with quality.
- Governments must invest in education as it is the most potent element in the development of citizens and the nation and in child abuse prevention. Education must not just be for children, but for the parents and community as well.
- Clear laws, policies and procedures to protect children and policies advocating "children first" heighten people's awareness on the need to promote child welfare and development. The presence of a legal framework to protect children is thus a must. The adoption of Child 21 and the comprehensive programme for child protection are thus welcome developments.
- An efficient and effective system of identification, detection, reporting and processing/managing among the key members of society (government, non-government, business, church, media, the community) on the incidence of child abuse/maltreatment is crucial to reducing or eliminating this problem. A systematic, standard, integrated and comprehensive approach is therefore required to respond effectively to child maltreatment. Thus, a multi-disciplinary approach is called for in order to prevent and manage child maltreatment well.

A. Challenges Met and Encountered

Protecting the rights of children and promoting their best interests is a challenging task. While the Philippines has initiated many laws, programmes, services and initiatives for children, a lot remains to be done, especially in regard to child abuse and maltreatment. Presently, these challenges include the following:

1. Unavailability, inappropriate or lack of alternative parental care and custody of some children, including street children. While foster care and adoption are alternatives, there are children who are hard-to-place. This situation puts the children at risk and makes them vulnerable further to abuse and exploitation.
2. Existing penalties and fines against child abuse are not sufficient thus fail to be deterrents against child maltreatment.
3. Incidents of child abuse inflicted by parents to children under the guise of discipline are at times tolerated and remain unchecked. While some cases are filed in courts, these do not prosper as the child victims often execute an affidavit of desistance for pity by other members of the family, or after being brain-washed by parents themselves.
4. In some areas, there is lack of professionally trained staff (psychiatrists, child psychologists, paediatricians) to attend to the victims of child abuse and maltreatment.
5. Confidentiality of records of children are sometimes breached especially by the media and the police.
6. Responses to reports of child abuse cases in the country are still viewed as segmented, as functions of each agency of government are compartmentalized, thus the possibility of “re-victimization”.
7. In view of the devolution, programmes and services for children at the local level are not as holistic and comprehensive as they were conceptualized especially in low income municipalities because of limited resources.
8. A continuing burgeoning young population and a very high dependency ratio present risks and hazards of child abuse/maltreatment.
9. The insufficient budget allocated for basic social services that directly impinge on children’s growth and development continues to be a problem and a challenge.
10. Globalization, especially in regard to economic aspects, and information technology, has also brought about challenges in children’s growth and development.

B. Future Prospects in Handling Child Maltreatment

Child maltreatment or abuse is a traumatic experience that occurs throughout the world in many forms, with the victims belonging to a variety of socio-economic strata, culture and population. While almost all countries are state signatories to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the international law that protects and promotes children’s rights, child maltreatment continues to be a challenge for these countries, the Philippines included.

From a review of what the Philippines has adopted and implemented for the prevention and management of child abuse/maltreatment, a great deal has been achieved, but more needs to be done. Having codes and laws that are specific to child protection, welfare and development has established the legal framework from which the Child 21 and Comprehensive Programme on Child Protection were built on. These laws and framework plan have likewise laid the network for an integrated and multi-disciplinary approach to tackle the phenomenon. It likewise somehow articulated the political will to prioritize the issues relating to children.

There remains a bright future for children, particularly those who are abused and maltreated. Among these prospects are the following:

1. The passage of the Comprehensive Juvenile Justice System (CJJS) Bill before 2007 when the present 13th congress will end. The CJSS Bill provides for a comprehensive and integrated programme on the prevention of juvenile delinquency and treatment of juveniles in conflict with the law. With its

passage, certain issues related to non-standardization of procedures and processes in handling children's cases will be addressed.

2. The strengthening of the Special Committee for the Protection of Children at the national level and the Regional sub-Committees for the Welfare of Children at the national level.
3. The launching of a convergence programme for poverty alleviation in the poorest provinces and municipalities of the country with a focus on disadvantaged and marginalized families.
4. The passage and implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Development programme to ensure the best interests of children. One of the significant features of this programme is the adoption of a child development checklist against which the development of each child is matched to ensure that they develop well in seven critical domains, namely: cognitive; gross motor; fine motor; receptive language; expressive language; social-emotional; and self-help.

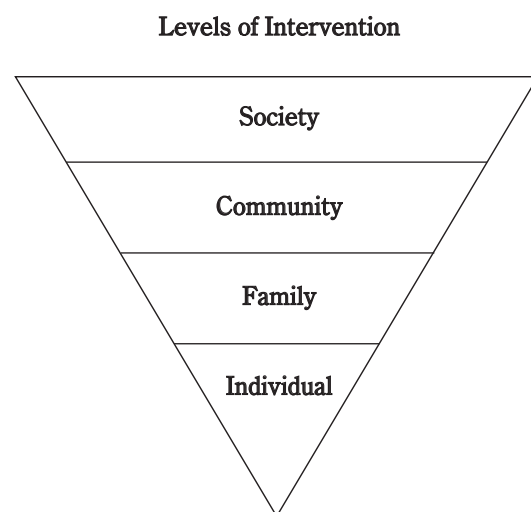
Preventing child abuse/maltreatment as a concern and intervention needs adjustment according to the size of the targeted population, whether these are individuals, families and communities or even an entire nation. At the individual level, interventions are primarily designed for children's healing recovery and rehabilitation which may be expensive and require individualized services from highly trained staff. At the level of the family, preventive interventions focus on the child within the context of his/her family both nuclear and extended, and on strategies to promote the well-being of the family as a unit, with special attention given to the parents or couples.

The next level of intervention addressed to the community include among others education of the public, training of service providers, support for community leaders, empowerment of local authorities and the community and preservation of local social infrastructures. At the national level, the interventions needed are designed for the entire population or general public such as laws, public policy, public institutions and services supporting child welfare, social protection and poverty alleviation. The aim at the societal level is to remedy the situations that are inherent in the social structure creating violence, inequality, injustice, exclusion or marginalization.

Thus, if we translate these preventive measures into an inverted pyramid with targets in descending order i.e., from society or nation to the individual, the resulting model will be as follows:

Examples of Preventive Measures

- Public policy (codes, laws)
- Pre-marriage counselling
- Early childhood care projects
- Public education and awareness raising
- Parent education
- Family enterprises
- Self-enhancement services
- Counselling
- Behaviour modification techniques



Clearly, the prevention of child abuse/maltreatment is everyone's duty. It involves the active participation and cooperation of the government, non-government organizations, the private and business sectors as well as the community and families. It entails the creation of an environment that is conducive to healthy, bright and productive children who will be the global citizens of tomorrow.