



Men advocates of MOVE-Aklan take a stand against VAWC



## Aklan Province

Local government units (LGUs) doing gender mainstreaming need strong leadership and commitment, organized women's groups, adequate resources — and lots of inspiration — to see things through. In fact, when gender mainstreaming is not explicitly defined in the LGUs' development plans, Gender and Development (GAD) efforts may not be realized at all. As a form of assistance and in keeping up

with the unique contexts and specific needs of LGUs, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) then “localized” its Technical Assistance Blueprint in accordance with gender-related mandates and as provided for by the Magna Carta of Women (RA 9710).

In 2014, PCW added the **GAD Local Learning Hubs (GAD LLHs)** to its LGU-centered technical assistance

portfolio, the aim of which is to showcase innovative GAD structures, processes, and programs that have been sustained if not improved by LGUs through the years. GAD LLHs are meant for sharing and replicating good practices, ultimately giving other LGUs the opportunity to think outside the box when implementing GAD initiatives. LGUs seeking to imbibe GAD innovations can learn from the GAD LLHs and get inspiration on how to infuse GAD in local governance and public service.

**One of the five PCW-certified GAD LLHs is Aklan Province.** The Provincial Government of Aklan has continuously fulfilled its GAD mandate by strengthening its social facility and by expanding its network to eliminate violence against women (VAW).

## Survivor's Safe Haven

There are crisis centers that provide temporary shelter and protective custody to survivors of VAWC [violence against women and children]. Then, there are those that go further by providing additional services by extending socio-economic assistance to women survivors and by sharing knowledge on VAWC documentation and monitoring to other crisis centers.

This is true in the case of the **Daeangpan it Kababayan-an sa Aklan** or the **Aklan Comprehensive**

**Center for Women (ACCW).** Since its establishment in 2001, the ACCW served as a 24-hour receiving and action center for walk-ins, referrals, and rescued women and children under crisis — even to those from nearby provinces. Having learned from a decade of operations, the Child Protection Unit (CPU) was later organized to bolster ACCW's counseling services, referral functions, and economic support for women survivors.

ACCW was constructed with support from former Senator Tessie Aquino-Oreta and PCW (previously the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women); the establishment of the CPU was financed by the European Union and Philippines Against Child Trafficking. While the construction of both facilities was sourced outside LGU budget, Aklan included the operations of ACCW in the Aklan GAD Code, thus providing for staff complementation and funding for its operations and programs. At present, the Provincial Social Welfare and Development Office oversee the activities of ACCW in close coordination with the Aklan GAD Commission.

The ACCW has an Operations Manual providing for the general policies that govern the processes and day-to-day affairs of the center. The manual lists down the procedures and guidelines for case management; it also defines the functions and accountabilities of the center's management, personnel, and staff.

Referral is an integral mechanism of ACCW's operations. Using the VAW Referral System Guidelines developed by PCW and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, the center provides referrals for legal and medical assistance, counseling services, and psychiatric and psychological evaluation to VAWC survivors. A distinct component of the Referral System is the offering of livelihood skills training by partner organizations, hence providing economic opportunities to Women in Especially Difficult Circumstances. Where appropriate, the ACCW also provides Php 5,000 capital to women survivors to enable them to start their own livelihood enterprise.

As an offshoot of ACCW's efficient VAW referral system, Aklan piloted the National VAW Documentation



*Aklan Comprehensive Center for Women (ACCW) based in Kalibo, Aklan*



*A staff from the Aklan Comprehensive Center for Women (ACCW) counsels women under crisis*

System (NVAWDocS) with technical assistance from the PCW-AECID project. All of Aklan's 327 Barangay VAW Desk Officers together with 17 Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officers and 17 Municipal Local Government Operations Officers were levelled off on the use of NVAWDocS. The piloting enabled the social workers of ACCW to monitor the services it provides and minimize double counting of reported VAWC cases.

## Men Step up to End VAW

**A** strategic way to escape the stigma of violence committed by men is to organize them as advocates in the elimination of Violence Against Women (VAW).

In 2007, barely a year after PCW organized the **Men Opposed to VAW Everywhere (MOVE)** as a

national organization of men working to end VAW, the Provincial Government organized the MOVE-Aklan Chapter led by 20 founding members, including the Provincial Governor as Honorary Chair. As of 2014, MOVE-Aklan has 270 members. Many of them are government employees, barangay officials, young men, and private individuals, including farmers.

Membership expansion is done mainly through advocacy, education, and training on VAWC and VAW-related legislations. Advocacy is further strengthened by actively participating in the Technical Working Group of the Aklan GAD Commission (AGADC) and Aklan's GAD Focal Point System (GFPS). Since its creation, MOVE-Aklan has been a major partner of the Provincial Government in the commemoration of the annual 18-Day Campaign to End VAW.

On August 2013, MOVE-Aklan officially registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission as a non-government organization (NGO). Despite the change in organizational status, MOVE-Aklan continues to partner with the Provincial Government as an active member of the AGADC and the Aklan GFPS.

Major activities like the Annual MOVE Aklan Congress are still co-funded by the Provincial Government and by some partner municipalities. MOVE-Aklan utilizes its Annual Congress to consult its General Assembly, especially on the issuance of resolutions to strengthen advocacy programs to eliminate VAW in Aklan.

Meanwhile, funds for VAW education sessions done at the municipal and barangay levels are sourced from the GAD budgets of the respective LGUs. At the same time, the anti-VAW campaign and mobilization activities of MOVE chapters in the Philippine National Police and the Department of Agrarian Reform Provincial Office are sourced from their agency's GAD budgets.

As part of its organizational transition, MOVE-Aklan crafted its Strategic Plan 2013–2016 to give direction to its mobilization and advocacy programs, ultimately



**MOVE-Aklan organizes various education, advocacy, and training for its members, including the Competency Training on GAD**

complementing the Provincial Government's call for a VAW-free Aklan.

MOVE-Aklan has helped the city, municipal, and barangay LGUs deliver appropriate services for women and children. Overall, the advocacies, education, and training organized by MOVE-Aklan with its local chapters have resulted to more pronounced awareness on VAW and their increased appreciation of pertinent laws. The number of men advocates from government offices also increased under the guidance of MOVE-Aklan.



**GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT LOCAL LEARNING HUBS**  
 (Published in series by the Philippine Commission on Women)  
 MANILA, PHILIPPINES | JUNE 2015

Text supplied by the PCW—Technical Services Division  
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Photos from the Provincial Government of Aklan and  
 MOVE-Aklan

**GAD** Local Learning Hubs are about sharing and replicating good practices, ultimately giving LGUs the opportunity to think outside the box when implementing GAD.

**W**hen an LGU examines its legal mandate with gender lens, when it unleashes gender equality as part of its development goals, when it unites women and men constituents to work toward GAD — that is gender mainstreaming.

Aklan Province offers two GAD innovations that may be replicated by other LGUs when incorporating GAD in local governance. The first is on how to enhance and expand the traditional services provided by a VAWC crisis center, while the second is on how to engage men from both public and private sectors to contribute to the elimination of VAW in Aklan.

The Provincial Government of Aklan has shown that setting up organizations and institutions with clear mandates, coupled with the support of the Local Chief Executive and the strong involvement of the public, can contribute to the LGU's mission to promote a VAW-free community.



The five PCW-certified GAD Local Learning Hubs are located in the Provinces of AKLAN, ILOILO, and QUEZON, and the Cities of DAVAO and NAGA

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