

Plan International, UNFPA, PDRF conduct vital gender training for first responders



31 MARCH 2021, EASTERN SAMAR—The Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation (PDRF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported Plan International’s training of first responders from nine barangays in Eastern Samar, focusing on dealing with gender-based violence during emergencies.

The 1-day training adopted a blended learning approach, combining self-paced e-learning modules with live webinar workshops. Participants were required to take six online courses on Gender and Development (GAD) topics uploaded to PDRF’s digital learning platform, iADAPT, prior to attending the webinars. The training, titled “Bakit Mahalaga ang Usaping Gender sa Usapin ng Sakuna/Krisis?” [“Why Are Gender Issues Important during an Emergency/Crisis?”], tackled response to gender-based violence in emergencies (GBViE), building referral desks, and developing a re-entry action plan.

All participants were in one physical location, observing minimum health and safety protocols, while the resource speakers conducted the training online via Zoom. The participants actively engaged in the discussions and activities in spite of the limitations of remote learning.

Experts from UNFPA, Plan International, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia Pacific (CATW-AP), and the Eastern Samar Provincial Council served as resource speakers on the different topics during the workshop.

In her opening remarks, UNFPA National Program Officer Aimee Santos emphasized the urgency for equipping more GBVIE first responders during the pandemic.

“Disturbingly, as much as 90% of GBV incidents are not being reported anymore, but we know GBV is still present, and is even getting worse. Many women are currently trapped at home with their abusers. It is vital that we reach them and bring them to safety,” said Santos.

Meanwhile, Plan International Country Program Manager for Gender and Inclusion Jing Pura synthesized the key messages of the workshop:

“We want to protect all lives. The role of first responders, particularly male first responders, is vital. We are happy that many men are willing to report and to engage in dialogue on gender issues. Active listening and crafting a safety plan are important and there must always be a budget allocated for programs to stop gender-based violence.”

When there is an urgent need for education, both trainers and learners find innovative ways to continue capacity building. While the blended learning approach is an experiment, it will hopefully serve as an effective model for continuing vital training on gender issues even within the limitations of the pandemic.