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AI Index: ASA 35/001/2004

Stop violence against women Philippines – time to end abuse in the home

[photo caption]

Cover photo: Bellaflor Angara-Castillo (foreground), a member of the House of Representatives in the Philippines and author of a bill against violence against women, with the director of AI Philippines (far left) at a lobbying rally. © AI

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Finding the courage to leave

Marita's husband hit her when she tried to refuse sex. He once demanded sex while holding a knife to her throat. After 15 years of marriage and nine children, 34-year-old Marita feared further pregnancies.

Her husband was jealous when she came home late, after long hours of selling food to earn a meagre living as the family's sole provider. When he could not find regular work, he beat her even more. He burned her arms with cigarettes. She has lost almost all her teeth from constant assaults.

When he started to beat the children too, Marita left her husband, taking them with her. She was fearful that her eldest son might begin to fight back. So far, she has resisted all her husband's efforts, through threats and promises, to persuade her to return.

Strict moral standards are applied to women in the Philippines. They are expected to be docile and subservient within the family and intimate relationships. The widely held beliefs in the sanctity of marriage make it very difficult for women to leave abusive relationships. Studies show that women in abusive situations endure repeated and escalating violence for an average of 10 years before seeking assistance.

Support from a women's organization helped Marita find the courage to leave her husband. Hers is just one example of how a dynamic and committed network of human rights and women's rights organizations is making a difference in the Philippines, by helping survivors of violence in the family, lobbying

for reform of legislation and government support agencies, and organizing awareness-raising, education and training aimed at women's empowerment.

[photo caption]

Women from several women's groups in Manila, the Philippines, join forces in November 2002 to demand justice for victims of domestic violence ahead of a rally to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Maria Teresa Carlson. A former actress who had sought help after suffering years of domestic violence, she apparently committed suicide by jumping from the 23rd floor of her apartment block. © AI

[end caption]

Lobbying by women's groups helped to bring about new legislation on sexual violence in 1997. Previously, rape was described as a "crime against chastity" rather than a violent crime against the person. A woman who was raped had to prove that she did not willingly surrender her virginity. In a landmark Supreme Court decision in 2000, a woman sentenced to death for killing her husband had the sentence commuted and her case reopened. However, despite the recent passage of a law against domestic violence, funds for gender-based projects are inadequate, and existing laws designed to protect women are not properly implemented.

Despite the hard work of women's organizations and a Constitution that asserts the equality of men and women, domestic violence is endemic in the Philippines and women like Marita continue to suffer.

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Support our campaign: together we can make a difference

- **Take an interest:**
Find out and monitor how your community, government, police, security forces and courts respond to violence against women and girls.
- **Take a stand:**
Speak out about violence against women. Challenge prejudiced or dismissive attitudes.
- **Take action:**
Join our global campaign for women's right to freedom from violence and discrimination.

[end box]

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In the home and in the community, in times of war and peace, millions of women and girls are beaten, raped, mutilated and killed with impunity. Join Amnesty International's campaign to demand action by

governments, communities and individuals to stop violence against women throughout the world.

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Take action against domestic violence in the Philippines

Call on the government of the Philippines to:

- support vigorously the speedy enactment of the Anti-abuse of Women in Intimate Relationships Bill and other bills awaiting enactment that would strengthen women's rights;
- ensure that the five per cent of the national budget earmarked for gender issues is fully utilized and that legislative reforms already enacted, such as the Rape Victim Assistance Act, are effectively implemented through government monitoring, programs and training.

Send your appeals to:

The President of the Republic of the Philippines, Malacañang Palace
J.P. Laurel St, San Miguel 1005, Manila, Philippines.

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What you can do

I would like to join the Stop Violence against Women campaign.

Please send me more information.

I would like to join Amnesty International. Please send me details.

I would like to make a donation to support Amnesty International's work.

Credit card number:

Expiry date

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Amount

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NAME

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Signature

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ADDRESS

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Please send your form to the Amnesty International address in the box below, if there is one:

or to Amnesty International, International Secretariat, Peter Benenson House,
1 Easton Street, London WC1X 0DW, United Kingdom
or visit Amnesty International's website at
www.amnesty.org/actforwomen

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