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Save the Children Philippines: LGBTQI children should not live in fear and discrimination

Save the Children Philippines called for protection of rights of LGBTQI children who face higher risks of violence such as bullying and humiliation at home, schools, communities and online.

The group joins the LGBTQI community in the Pride March Saturday in Marikina to press for recognition of rights of all children to self-expression and to live in freedom from fear and discrimination.

Lawyer Albert Muyot, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Save the Children Philippines said the rights of every child to gender identity and freedom of expression are protected under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which has been in effect in the last 30 years.

He said the treaty, ratified by the Philippines calls for the passage of laws to protect all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTQI) children aged 18 and below from all forms of violence, discrimination or bullying.

“LGBTQI children have the right to fully enjoy their childhood without fear of discrimination and suffering violence,” said Muyot in a statement.

He said parents, teachers and carers should be at the forefront of protection of the rights and welfare of LGBTQI children.

“Parents need to be aware that mental health problems and risks of suicide are much higher among LGBTQI because they lead a life of fear,” said Muyot.

In the Philippines, LGBTQI children face more risk of suffering physical violence (75 per cent); psychological violence (78.5 per cent); and sexual violence (33.8 per cent) based on the 2016 Philippine National Baseline Study on Violence against Children (NBS-VAC).

In a consultation with children from Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 2016, they admitted suffering psychological abuse and discrimination from their own families as well as schools and communities.

Children in the Philippines often face exclusion from education, from families and communities, suffer homelessness and bullying which, in some instances, can include violence and murder, said the results of the consultation on ASEAN-Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression (SOGIE) which was supported by Save the Children.

The testimonies of Filipino teenagers include being told by their families that they should be “crucified” and they are not normal and the cause of their parents’ conflicts.

“Low self-esteem, suicide and self-harm are the response of some children to this discrimination,” said the ASEAN SOGIE paper.

It cited that non-heterosexual orientations should not be treated as psychological disorders, or are caused by illness, trauma, or abuse.

Save the Children Philippines promotes Positive Discipline by training parents and teachers various ways to strengthen bond with children at home and in schools. The training covers promoting respect and tolerance of every child's gender identity and freedom of expression.

The group calls on the Department of Education to effectively implement DepEd Order 40, series of 2012 or the Child Protection Policy that prevents bullying and discrimination of LGBTQI children in the school system.

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References:

Council for the Welfare of Children Philippines (2016). National baseline study on violence against children: Philippines: Executive Summary. Manila, Philippines: Author.

ASEAN SOGIE Caucus and the Civil Society Coalition on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Proceedings of "Bata at ang Bahaghari: Children's Workshop on the Rights of LGBT Children," conducted on April 20-21, 2016 at the University Hotel, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

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