

Abstract

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Research Topic: Addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) during disasters

Considering that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is the leading cause of death among women aged 18-44¹ (in some countries), that at least one-third of women experience some type of SGBV in their lifetime (WHO, 2016)² and that Asia Pacific is the most disaster-prone region in the world (UNNC, 2016)³, it is crucial to assist both female and male SGBV survivors with stronger support mechanisms during disasters and other emergencies.

SGBV is often life threatening and impacts a survivor's daily life, dignity, rights, livelihoods and health. SGBV during and after disaster situations and other emergencies is under-researched and largely ignored in policy circles⁴. Few studies focus on low-income, developing countries and go beyond researching the gendered effects on women and girls of SGBV. Consequently, the primary research question for this paper is:

Why and how are the risks to sexual and gender-based violence exacerbated during disasters?

Sub-research questions include:

How can risks to sexual and gender-based violence during disasters be effectively prevented? What short and long-term interventions are required by disaster responders at the national, provincial and local level?

The following hypotheses are considered in this research:

- H1: SGBV is more likely to increase when health, legal and security services are interrupted;
- H2: Women, men, boys and girls living in temporary shelters are at a higher risk of experiencing SGBV than women, men, boys and girls not living in temporary shelters;
- H3: A rise in economic hardship increases intimate partner violence in homes where intimate partner violence existed prior to the disaster.

This research project applied mixed methods, including data analysis and results from quantitative household surveys with disaster affected men and women; qualitative focus groups discussions with disaster affected men, women, adolescent girls and adolescent boys; and key informant interviews with frontline disaster responders in the health, psycho-social support, legal and security sectors. The research scope is limited to select data collection sites in three country contexts: Philippines, Indonesia and Lao PDR. The focus of this paper will be to broadly identify the triggering factors which exacerbate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) during disasters, how they can be effectively prevented or addressed during disaster preparedness, response and recovery and how short-term versus long-term interventions may differ at the national, provincial and village level.

¹ Women on the frontlines of Peace and Security, p.180:

https://books.google.com.my/books?id=iX4jalSyYpEC&pg=PA180&lpg=PA180&dq=SGBV+leading+cause+of+death+for+women&source=bl&ots=r1TgAFhml&sig=JjGVmjrSrTs9O7R2nje7I8-LHMs&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=SGBVper cent20leadingper cent20causeper cent20ofper cent20deathper cent20forper cent20women&f=false

² <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>

³ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53407#.WW1x28lLdZo>

⁴ Unseen, unheard. 2016.