Why and how does the risk to gender-based violence increase during disasters? Evidence from the Philippines, Indonesia and Lao PDR

Dr Priyanka Bhalla
**What is Gender-based violence?**

“an umbrella term for any harmful act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a woman, man, girl or boy on the basis of their gender. GBV is a result of gender inequality and abuse of power.”

Includes but is not limited to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sexual violence</th>
<th>domestic violence</th>
<th>trafficking for sexual exploitation or domestic slavery</th>
<th>sexual harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>forced or early marriage</td>
<td>harmful traditional practices</td>
<td>gender-based discrimination (e.g. denial service access)</td>
<td>forced prostitution;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why is this research important?

1) Gender-based violence during disasters is an under researched and overlooked topic.
2) The literature that exists states that the risks to GBV increase during disasters – BUT most of this research has been in developed countries
3) There is little to no information for low to middle-income countries which are regularly disaster affected
4) A lot of information is anecdotal from “grey” literature or includes short, qualitative studies
5) Long-standing failure in humanitarian community to adequately prevent and respond to GBV during disasters and other crisis.
Main points in existing literature review
Primary research questions and sub-research questions

Primary research question:

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

Sub-research questions:

1) What characterizes GBV in disasters? How does SGBV, during and in the direct aftermath of disasters, affect boys, girls, women and men differently?

2) To what degree are GBV prevention and response incorporated in the national disaster risk management laws and policies? Can disaster law be an effective tool in preventing the risk to GBV during disasters?

3) How can public authorities (focus on national ASEAN governments) and humanitarian actors (focus on National Societies and IFRC) prevent and respond to SGBV during disasters? How can the coordinated community intervention approach serve as a model for improved coordination and response by disaster actors?
Theoretical Framework

1) **Coordinated Community Response based on Duluth Model**: Minnesota, criminal justice intervention in domestic violence cases (Pence and Shephard, 1999) – 8 principles in this model

2) **Disaster Law as a Tool**
Main argument

The coordinated community response, in combination with a strong, national disaster law framework can result in effective preventative measures for the risk to GBV during disasters.
Who Participated and Research Methods

• **1,779 disaster affected individuals** (846 men and 933 women) participated in the *household survey*

• **358 disaster affected individuals** (83 adult men, 93 adult women, 91 adolescent boys and 89 adolescent girls) participated in the *FGDs*

• **58 key informant interviews** (KII) across the health, legal, security, psycho-social and government department sectors were conducted.
Where and which disaster?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Data Collection Sites</th>
<th>Disaster and population description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Philippines</td>
<td>Aklan and Leyte</td>
<td>Large scale: Typhoon Haiyan (2013) – urban, rural, coastal / shelter and non-shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Aceh and Bima</td>
<td>Mid scale: Pidie Jaya earthquake and Bima floods (2016) – rural and urban, shelter and non-shelter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Oudomxay and Sekong</td>
<td>Small scale: Floods (2016) – rural and non-shelter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organisational Process

- Partnership between IFRC and the ASEAN Disaster Management Committee, Working Group on Prevention and Mitigation

- Raising awareness within the National Society on SGBV and response during disasters (PRC, PMI, LRC)

- Formation of intersectoral steering committee

- Recruitment of data collection team

- Fieldwork planning and data collection

- Lessons learned and psycho-social debrief workshop
Results – all three countries

(Household surveys, FGDs and KII)

- Adolescent girls, followed by adolescent boys and elderly women are most at risk of GBV during disasters
- Household survey respondents were distressed by the rise in early marriage and domestic violence 6 months following the disaster
- Overcrowding in evacuation centres and shelters, lack of separate toilets for men and women, too few safe spaces for women and children.
- FGDs brought attention to many existing GBV cases and the need for stronger referral pathways and survivor services
- Emphasis on strengthening child protection in schools.
Results – all three countries

Disaster Laws and Provisions for GBV survivors

• Philippines (most robust)
  2010 Philippines DRRM Act, the 2015 Children’s Emergency Relief and Protection Act, the Department of Social Welfare (DSWD) Guidelines on Women Friendly Spaces, the Council on Anti-Trafficking and the Violence against Women and Children (VAWC) Information desks

• Indonesia (only one regulation)
  BNPB Perka (Regulation) no.13 on Gender Mainstreaming in Disaster Management / Disaster Management Law no.27 (2007), article 3, 4, 8 and 48

• Lao PDR (no framework but the opportunity exists)
  Decree on social welfare no.169 (2013) – emphasis on child protection
Results – Philippines

Incidents causing distress after the disaster

- Respondent hearing someone had sustained injuries from domestic violence...
- Respondents hearing someone has been raped after the disaster
- Trafficking
- Sexual Harassment
- Domestic Violence
- Early Marriage

N=805
Results – Philippines (FGDs and KIIIs)

Emergent Themes:

• The lack of separate spaces for men and women, separate toilets and bad lighting in evacuation centres

• The need for child protection committee, SGBV prevention awareness in schools.

• The need to better understand and incorporate preparedness, response and recovery for the LGBTQ+ community.

• The need to train and build stronger referral pathways at the barangay level and to ensure that the VAWC desks are permanently there.
Results – Indonesia

**Incidents causing distress after the disaster**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of incident</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early marriage</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic violence</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who experienced injuries due to domestic violence and accessed health services</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Indonesia (FGDs and KII)

Emergent themes:

• The increase in sexual harassment in temporary shelters

• The importance of well-designed livelihoods interventions

• The dependence on village level dispute resolution mechanisms
## Results – Lao PDR

**Incidents causing distress after the disaster**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N = 265</th>
<th>Early marriage</th>
<th>Domestic Violence</th>
<th>Communal Violence</th>
<th>Respondents hearing someone had been raped after the disaster</th>
<th>Respondents hearing someone had sustained injuries from domestic violence after the disaster</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women and girls</td>
<td></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men and boys</td>
<td></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results – Lao PDR

FGDs

“The violence increased because of the lack of safety and surveillance [after the disaster]. It started to get worse after 2 weeks” said an adolescent, male participant in Oudomxay.

Adolescent girls emphasised that livelihoods trainings are needed to prevent and decrease GBV. They also spoke about having proper toilets with locks and early warning systems which reach all community members during the onset of floods.
Discussion

Coordinated Community Response as a Framework and Disaster Law as a Tool

Most likely to be effective in the Philippines because of institutional strength

Lessons that can be learned for other contexts
Future Research Recommendations

• Stronger coordination between in-country protection and shelter clusters before the onset of disaster and crisis.

• Integrate GBV prevention and response into national disaster law frameworks

• Use RCRC auxiliary role to help identify safe evacuation centres

• Stockpile dignity kits

• Budget and prepare for implementation of safe spaces

• Partner with other organisations for longer term GBV prevention programming (beyond emergency phase) – addressing root causes

• Future research on the linkages between livelihoods programmes and violence prevention / on coordination systems between disaster and non-disaster actors / best practice exchanges on national disaster law frameworks
And finally...

Even if you have reams of evidence on your side, remember: numbers numb, jargon jars, and nobody ever marched on Washington because of a pie chart. If you want to connect with your audience, tell them a story.

- Andy Goodman
THANK YOU AND QUESTIONS?