



## **Prevention of, and Response to Gender-Based Violence in Settings Affected by Natural Disasters**

**With a specific look at Asia and  
the Pacific**

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## Background to this Guidance Note

This guidance note is part of series of knowledge products produced by the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) Helpdesk. The Helpdesk is a technical research, analysis, and advice service for humanitarian practitioners working on GBV prevention and response in emergencies at the global, regional and country level. GBV AoR Helpdesk services are provided by a roster of GBViE experts, with oversight from Social Development Direct.

This note focusses on addressing GBV in natural disasters, with special attention to emerging good practices and lessons learned from efforts to prevent and respond to GBV in the aftermath of recent natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific. The topic of natural disasters was chosen based on recommendations by GBV AoR members: given the current extent of natural disasters, their anticipated increase in frequency and intensity as a result of climate change and other factors, and the impact natural disasters have on women and girls' safety and well-being, it is critical for GBV actors to be able to draw from emerging good practices and lessons learned when planning and implementing GBV programming in settings affected by climate-related emergencies. The Asia-Pacific region was identified as an area of particular focus for case studies, not only because it is the region most affected by natural disasters globally, but also because national governments' and regional capacity in disaster management has grown significantly in the last decade, generating some interesting insights into challenges and successes in addressing GBV before, during and after an emergency strikes.

The information presented in the guidance note is meant to serve as an introduction to the topic, rather than an exhaustive overview—there simply is not yet enough published information or evidence about GBV programming in natural disasters to produce a definitive guide. Several of the preliminary questions that this guidance note seeks to address are:

- What distinguishes efforts to address GBV in natural disasters, as compared to other humanitarian emergencies (e.g. conflict)?
- What is the evidence of good practices and lessons learned in prevention of, and response to GBV, particularly in recent disasters in the Asia-Pacific?
- What are critical areas of focus/consideration in order to support effective GBV programming in natural disasters?
- What are some of the considerations for GBV experts (and other humanitarian actors) to ensure improved action on GBV in natural disasters?

This note begins with a broad introduction to natural disasters—including their global scope; the effects of climate change on natural disasters; an overview of why the Asia-Pacific is one of the most affected regions by natural disasters; how natural disasters disproportionately affect women; and what the humanitarian community's commitments are to addressing natural disasters and their effects on women and girls.

The note then examines more specifically the links between GBV and natural disasters—first in terms of what we know about the scope of GBV in disasters, followed by discussion about addressing GBV in natural disasters and some of the ways programming in natural disasters

may be different from that of conflict-affected settings. The guidance note also presents several brief case studies—from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Fiji --that are based on desk review materials as well as semi-structured interviews with GBViE specialists who have worked in emergencies in these countries. The case studies attempt to represent several different types of disasters that have occurred recently in the region. Although the guidance note does reference learning from some of the bigger—and likely more well-known --natural disasters in the last 20 years, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami and Typhoon Haiyan, the focus of the case studies is towards more recent disasters, as this provides the reader a more up-to-date view of work being undertaken.

The note concludes with several “key take-aways” for the GBV community aimed at improving efforts to address GBV in the context of natural disasters.

# 1. Introduction to Natural Disasters

## Nature and Scope of Natural Disasters

The UN defines natural disasters as “the consequences of events triggered by natural hazards that overwhelm local response capacity and seriously affect the social and economic development of a region.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, to constitute a natural disaster, an incident or incidents must directly impact the safety, health and well-being of humans, and to such an extent that governments and communities cannot adequately meet the needs of those affected. Disasters that occur suddenly are often referred to as “sudden onset” and include, for example, earthquakes and associated tsunamis, as well as floods, cyclones, and volcanic eruptions. Disasters that evolve more gradually, such as in the case of droughts, are typically referred to as “slow onset.”

These events of nature constitute more than 90 percent of the world’s disasters.<sup>2</sup> The reach is significant: between 2014 and 2017, according to UN OCHA, disasters caused by natural hazards affected more than 870 million people *per year*, covering more than 160 countries and territories.<sup>3</sup> The World Bank estimates the damage from these disasters to the global economy ranged from 90 billion in 2015 to as much as 340 billion in 2017.<sup>4</sup> Natural disasters wreak havoc on communities and societies, causing loss of life, homes, and livelihoods—pushing an average of 26 million people into poverty every year.<sup>5</sup> Natural disasters also often trigger massive displacements. In 2018 alone, natural disasters resulted in over 17 million new displacements.<sup>6</sup>

Natural disasters cause significantly greater humanitarian crises worldwide than even armed conflict, triggering new displacement at substantially higher rates; for example, in 2016 the rate of displacement due to natural disasters was *three times* higher than displacement due to conflict.<sup>7</sup> Notably, however, many displacements from natural disasters happen in conflict-affected settings: of the 50 countries with the highest number of displacements from natural disasters in the last year, over half were also suffering from conflict-related violence and displacements.<sup>8</sup> This underscores the importance of linking humanitarian preparedness, response and learning in conflict-affected settings with efforts to address natural disasters—in particular to avoid what the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) has characterized as a problem in the humanitarian sector: “disasters and conflicts are usually treated as two separate types of humanitarian emergency.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> InterAgency Standing Committee, [Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters](#). Washington: Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement, June 2006.

<sup>2</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, p 15.

<sup>3</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, p 15.

<sup>4</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, p 15.

<sup>5</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, p 15.

<sup>6</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 13.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.internal-displacement.org/disasters-and-climate-change>

<sup>8</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 31.

<sup>9</sup> IFRC, 2015. *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, p 8.

## Natural Disasters on the Rise

Scientists predict that the frequency and devastation of natural disasters will continue to rise in line with the changing climate. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change produced a report in late 2019 indicating that it is not likely that global warming of the earth's average temperature can be held to (or below) 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial average temperature—this means that global warming is likely to exceed what is widely understood as the 'tipping point' for massive climate catastrophes.<sup>10</sup> Even without reaching this point, the changing climate is expected to continue to intensify the extent and severity of natural disasters.

As concerning as this prognosis may be, climate change is not the only contributor to the negative impacts of climate-induced emergencies on affected populations. In fact, a study released in 2015 examining the human cost of natural disasters over the period of 1994-2013 concluded that population growth and economic development are greater contributors to vulnerability than climate change.<sup>11</sup> So, while disasters have become more frequent over the last 20 years, the average number of those affected has fallen from an average of one in 23 during 1994-2003, to an average of one in 39 during 2004-2013—but this good news is decidedly skewed to higher income countries. Even though higher income countries experienced more disasters overall from 2004-2013, they experienced less mortality related to the disasters. In fact, researchers estimate that more than three times as many people died per disaster in low-income countries compared to high-income countries.<sup>12</sup>

When taking into account that poverty and lack of infrastructure are as much risk factors for natural disasters as they are outcomes, it is easy to see why there is a strong overlay of displacement due to natural disasters with displacement due to conflict: "natural disasters can exacerbate conflicts while conflicts and fragility intensify the effects of natural disasters."<sup>13</sup> Countries and settings with greater population density combined with less safe living environments are at most risk; put simply, "vulnerability to disasters is not solely a matter of where a person lives, but also depends on the way they live."<sup>14</sup>

## Asia and the Pacific: The Most Affected Region

Asia and the Pacific is the world's most disaster-prone region, vulnerable to both sudden and slow-onset disasters, including earthquakes, typhoons/cyclones, flooding, tsunamis, volcanoes, drought and food shortages. Some of the better-known recent disasters from this region are the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004; Typhoon Nargis in Myanmar in 2008; Japan earthquake in 2010; and Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013 (see Figure 1). From 2014 to 2017, the region experienced 55 earthquakes, 217 storms and cyclones, and 236 cases of

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<sup>10</sup> The 1.5°C threshold has long been put forward as a goal to stave off the most extreme consequences of climate change. In 2015, the countries who signed the Paris climate agreement agreed to hold warming to "well below 2°C," with a goal of 1.5°C. For more information, see <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>11</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2015. *The Human Cost of Natural Disasters*, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, p 10.

<sup>12</sup> Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, 2015. *The Human Cost of Natural Disasters*, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, p 28.

<sup>13</sup> IFRC, 2015. *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, p 33.

<sup>14</sup> Wood, J. Dec 2018. World Economic Forum, n.p.

severe flooding. These disasters affected 650 million people and resulted in a death toll of nearly 33,000.<sup>15</sup>

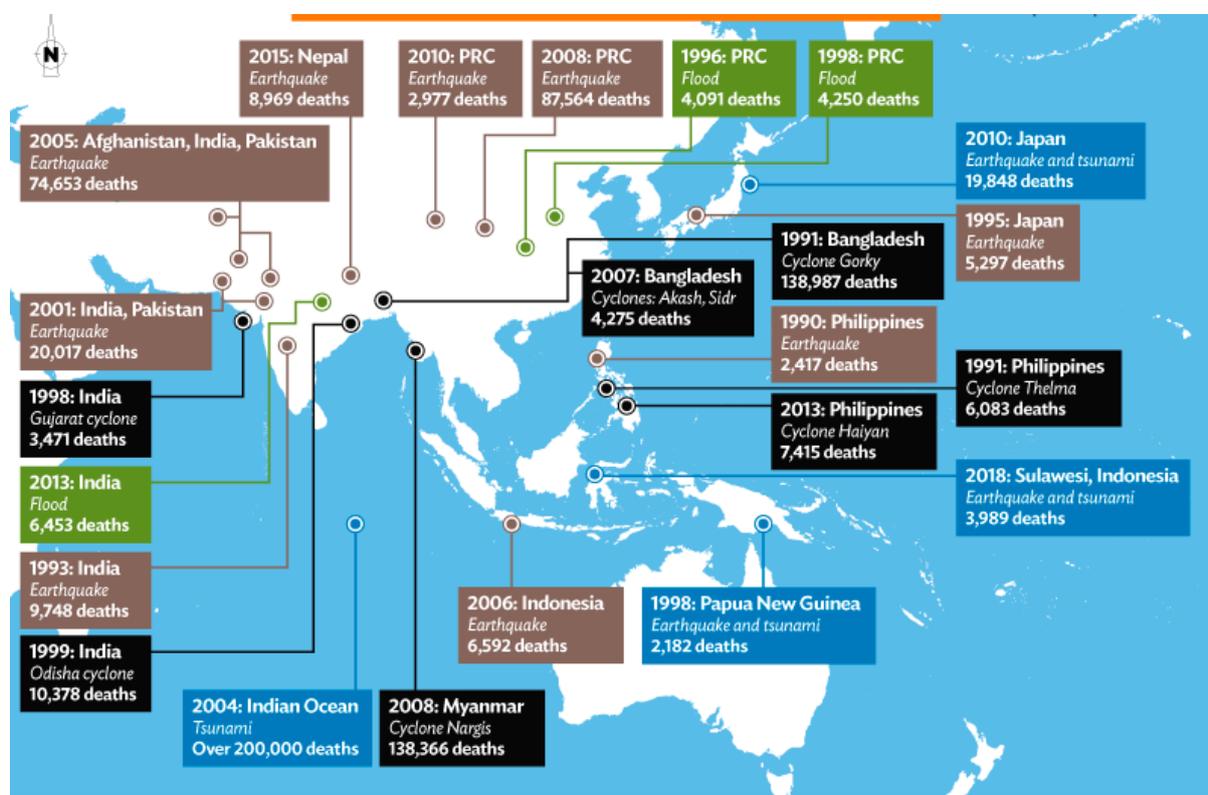


Figure 1: Recent Natural Disasters in Asia-Pacific, <https://www.adb.org/news/infographics/recent-significant-disasters-asia-and-pacific-region>

Many Asia-Pacific nations share common characteristics that make them vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters, such as growing populations with a high proportion of people living in poverty, as well as high rates of environmental degradation. The large expanse of coastal areas, coupled with a lack of infrastructure to protect against natural onslaughts, increases vulnerability for populations living in those areas. In addition, rapid industrialization means that many poor people are concentrated in poorly planned and poorly constructed urban centres. Whether rural or urban, lack of communications to and within impoverished communities means these communities may receive no warning about impending disasters, particular those with a rapid onset.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, more than one quarter of the world's conflicts are occurring in Asia and the Pacific, and in recent years violence has intensified, such that the region now hosts 3.3 million refugees.<sup>17</sup> As noted previously, situations of conflict and associated displacement are another contributor to vulnerability to the effects of climate events. Pakistan and Bangladesh are two examples where refugees (and host communities) are at risk of on-going climate

<sup>15</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, p 15.

<sup>16</sup> Wood, J. Dec 2018. World Economic Forum, n.p.

<sup>17</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 31.

emergencies, with many refugees in particular having “alarming limited options for evacuation” when natural disasters occur.<sup>18</sup>

The very fact of the region’s vulnerability has led national governments to prioritize investments in disaster management, making the region an important source of learning. In the last ten years, most countries in the region have established national disaster management authorities and built national systems that are increasingly capable of managing small- and medium-scale disasters.<sup>19</sup> Nationally-led disaster management is comprised not only of government, but also the military, civil society and the private sector.<sup>20</sup> Countries in Asia and the Pacific are increasingly less dependent on international assistance and funding appeals, and more likely to request targeted support to facilitate and improve national capacity and/or address specific gaps.<sup>21</sup> UN OCHA anticipates that national capacity in the region “will continue to grow, albeit at varying rates and degrees.”<sup>22</sup>

Alongside growing national capacities, regional organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as well as bilateral agreements from within the region, are contributing to a more diverse and coordinated regional response system. According to UN OCHA, countries in Asia also play an active role in international networks.<sup>23</sup>

## **Women and Girls: The Most Affected Group**

Across Asia and the Pacific, and in other emergencies worldwide, it is not unusual for women and girls to be more negatively affected by emergencies compared to men and boys. Social constructions of gender, rather than biological differences, determine this vulnerability. Findings suggest that particularly in countries with significant discrimination against women, women’s mortality rates during disasters can be markedly higher. For example, an older but nevertheless often-cited example is the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, where women were reportedly 14 times more likely to die than men.<sup>24</sup> More recently, a multi-country survey undertaken by women’s rights organisations after the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 indicated that in Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka, approximately 8 out of 10 deaths from the tsunami were female.<sup>25</sup> Seventy percent of the adults who died in the 2009 tsunami in both Samoa and Tonga were female.<sup>26</sup> By contrast, in settings where the economic and social

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<sup>18</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 31.

<sup>19</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 13.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/disaster-response-asia-and-pacific-guide-international-tools-and-services-2nd-edition>

<sup>21</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2019, p 15.

<sup>22</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 31.

<sup>23</sup> OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2020, p 31.

<sup>24</sup> Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank, UN Women, and European Union, 2018. *Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Disaster Recovery*, p 4.

<sup>25</sup> Asia Pacific Forum on Law and Development, cited in LM Silverstein, *Reproductive Health Matters* 2008;16(31):153–158, p 154.

<sup>26</sup> Government of Tonga, cited in *Time to Act on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction*, UN Women, 2016, p 23.

status of women is relatively high, the mortality rate for men and women during and after disasters has been determined to be roughly the same.<sup>27</sup>

Although the evidence base is limited, some of the gender-discriminatory social norms that seem to consistently heighten vulnerability for women and girls include<sup>28</sup>:

- Low economic and social status generally;
- Limited mobility, including prohibitions against being in public that discourage women and girls from evacuating, cumbersome clothes that undermine movement, limited access to transport;
- Less access to skills development that would mitigate risks, such as being taught how to swim and climb trees;
- Less physical strength, especially informed by nutritional deficiencies;
- Caretaking and other domestic responsibilities that place women in homes that are poorly constructed, and may affect women's opportunities to flee;
- Illiteracy that prevents women from accessing or understanding early warning messaging systems, and/or engaging in decision-making or planning for preparedness;
- Livelihood patterns that place women in places of high risk.

Thus, women's increased risk during disasters is a reflection of their pre-existing status. Lack of education, lack of resources, productive work that is rendered invisible, are just a few of the issues that define and reinforce their subordinate position in society and contribute to their risk of exposure to natural disasters. Specific groups of females suffer double and triple risk from additional sources of marginalization, such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation.

The same issues that make women more likely to be killed in disasters also make the aftermath for those who survive more challenging. Women and girls are often excluded from disaster response administrative systems, and disaster risk management policies and procedures are often gender blind. Women and girls may face unequal access to aid, loss of documentation, inequities in property restitution, among many other gender-based challenges. In one example, following the 2010 flooding in Pakistan, financial and familial restrictions reduced women's mobility, which in turn affected their ability to access even the most basic aid—including water and sanitation facilities.<sup>29</sup> In the case of the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, women were dramatically more affected by the emergency, but few were engaged in management of the response (see Box 1).

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<sup>27</sup> Neumayer and Plümper, 2007, cited in *Time to Act on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction*, UN Women, 2016, p 23.

<sup>28</sup> Summarized from ASEAN, *Women in Natural Disasters: Indicative Findings in Unraveling Gender in Institutional Responses*, Thematic Study, July 2018;; IFRC, *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, December 2015; Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank, UN Women, and European Union, 2018. *Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Disaster Recovery*; World Bank, 2012. *Making Women's Voices Count in Natural Disaster Programs in East Asia and the Pacific*.

<sup>29</sup> Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank, UN Women, and European Union, 2018. *Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Disaster Recovery*, p. 4.

### Box 1: Women-led Learning from the Mistakes of the Indian Ocean Tsunami

In response to perceived marginalisation, over 60 women, women's rights activists and survivors of the disaster from India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand, and from international and regional NGOs, convened the Consultation of Asian Women on Post-Tsunami Challenges in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, July 2005 (referred to as the Aceh Consultation). The Aceh Consultation was a springboard to multi-country research on women's rights violations and exclusion as a result of the tsunami as well as an earthquake in Pakistan. Among other issues, the research revealed that thousands of women and children in the affected countries continued to live in camps and other temporary facilities that lacked adequate sanitation, clean water, health services and security. Overall, government compensation was scarce or non-existent and insufficient to restore their livelihoods. In many of the hardest hit areas, with no special care provided for pregnant women, many suffered miscarriages or premature births. Nor were the particular needs of women with children, including breastfeeding mothers, considered. Instead, food, water, mattresses, sheets and blankets were distributed on the basis of the necessities of a single adult. Frequently, a mother received a single adult food portion to divide among her children, often leaving her hungry and weakened. Women were not involved in camp governance, particularly in the allocation of shelter and supplies, and were also excluded from negotiations with suppliers. As a consequence, provisions for their most basic hygienic necessities, such as sanitary napkins, were neglected. In addition, the frequent dearth of separate and secure toilets and facilities to bathe in privacy exacerbated and complicated their having to maintain sanitation and cleanliness for themselves and their children. ***Because few specific programmes targeted women and girls, they suffered in particular ways: women gave birth in unsafe conditions, rape and abuse increased, and food and shelter were distributed in a gender-biased manner, reflecting the prevailing culturally mandated patriarchal norms of society. Although they constituted the majority of the tsunami victims, women were excluded from participation in disaster relief and their voices were absent from the reconstruction process.*** As a result of their findings, women came together at the Asian Forum on Women in Disasters in India, in December 2006. The group finalized the *Guidelines for Gender-sensitive Disaster Management: Practical Steps to Ensure Women's Needs Are Met and Women's Human Rights Are Respected*. At the heart of the Guidelines is the importance of consulting with and supporting the engagement and leadership of women and girls in natural disaster response.

Adapted from: LM Silverstein / Reproductive Health Matters 2008;16(31):153–158, p 154. The Guidelines are available at <https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/2726>

Of course, as will be discussed in detail in Part 2, women and girls also face multiple forms of gender-based violence (GBV) in the aftermath of emergencies. And yet, according to a 2015 report by the IFRC, “during past disasters, GBV has been largely unseen and unheard.”<sup>30</sup> This lack of knowledge about the extent of women's and girls' experiences in disasters is not only a function of stigma around reporting, or lack of services; it is itself a reflection of gender discrimination. As the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, formerly UNISDR) and others have recognized, “patriarchy is [...] reflected in the lack of gender-disaggregated data on disasters that serve to keep female mortality, injuries and violence invisible.”<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> IFRC, 2015. *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, p 8.

<sup>31</sup> UNISDR Background Paper n.d., 2, cited in ASEAN, 2018. *Women in Natural Disasters: Indicative Findings in Unraveling Gender in Institutional Responses*, Thematic Study, p 27.

## The Humanitarian Commitment to Addressing GBV-Related Needs of Women and Girls in Natural Disasters

The Interagency Standing Committee's *Operational Guidelines on Human Rights and Natural Disasters* (first published in 2006 and revised in 2011) are a core guidance document to promote a rights-based approach to humanitarian response in the context of natural disasters. The guidance is organized in terms of major areas (or "groups") related to protection, with the first group –or Group A—focusing on "Protection of Life; Security and Physical Integrity of the Person; and Family Ties." Under this section, there is a subsection on "Protection of Violence, including Gender-based Violence" that emphasizes two main points related to addressing GBV:

- **A.4.2** Affected persons, in particular women and girls, should be protected against gender-based violence and survivors of such violence should be provided with appropriate support.
- **A.4.3** Affected persons should be protected against trafficking, child labour, contemporary forms of slavery such as sale into marriage, forced prostitution, sexual exploitation, and similar forms of exploitation.<sup>32</sup>

This resource underscores the importance of addressing GBV in natural disasters. This is reaffirmed in more recent guidance produced by the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) and World Bank, and in GFDRR's 2016-2021 Action Plan.<sup>33</sup> The IASC *Guidelines on Addressing Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Action* ("GBV Guidelines", 2015) the *GBV AoR Coordination Handbook* (2019), and the *Inter-agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming* (2019) also promote attention to GBV in natural disasters, although the guidance is largely the same for both conflict-affected and natural disaster responses, with some useful case examples on natural disasters in the *Coordination Handbook*.<sup>34</sup>

Outside of these resources, however, there is little targeted guidance available on GBV in natural disasters: most guidance related to women and girls affected by natural hazards focuses more generally on gender issues, tending to reference GBV briefly. (See Annex 1 for a bibliography of tools and guidance on gender and disasters.) For example, the UNDRR Gender Policy, adopted in 2011 for gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction (DRR), and its Twenty-Point Checklist on Gender-Sensitive DRR, make no mention of GBV.<sup>35</sup> At the regional level in Asia and the Pacific, the ASEAN Vision 2025 on Disaster Management makes one reference to women, one reference to gender, and no reference to GBV.<sup>36</sup> While addressing gender equality and women's empowerment through gender mainstreaming is critical, it cannot be achieved without also addressing and reducing GBV risks.

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<sup>32</sup> IASC, 2011. *Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disaster*, p XX

<sup>33</sup> Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank, UN Women, and European Union, 2018. *Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Disaster Recovery*; also see <https://www.gfdr.org/sites/default/files/publication/gender-action-plan-2016-2021.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> The GBV Coordination Handbook includes several lessons learned from Asia and the Pacific, which are integrated into Part 2 of this guidance note.

<sup>35</sup> See [https://www.unisdr.org/files/42359\\_unisdrpolicyongender.pdf](https://www.unisdr.org/files/42359_unisdrpolicyongender.pdf), and <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/42360>

<sup>36</sup> See [https://www.asean.org/storage/2012/05/fa-220416\\_DM2025\\_email.pdf](https://www.asean.org/storage/2012/05/fa-220416_DM2025_email.pdf)

Even extending to the larger climate change community, where there have been more than 60 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) decisions addressing gender,<sup>37</sup> evidence of attention to GBV is difficult to find. The 2016 UNFCCC Gender Action Plan, for example, does not specifically reference GBV.<sup>38</sup> A review of the IASC *Standard Operating Procedures for Early Action to El Niño/La Niña Episodes*, activated in late 2018, has only one specific reference to women; one reference to gender assessments, and one reference to clinical management of rape (CMR).<sup>39</sup>

Whether because of, or in spite of, this limited guidance and attention to GBV in global and regional climate change/DRR policy and other guidance, the humanitarian community appears to be ratcheting up its commitment to addressing both these issues. Promisingly, in a response to a Thomas Reuter survey administered to ten international humanitarian aid organizations in late 2019 about which two issues they would prioritize in the coming year, senior figures in the majority of these humanitarian agencies identified climate change and violence against women and girls (or both) as the top issues that their organizations intend to devote more attention to moving forward.<sup>40</sup>

Supporting these recent commitments will be an important undertaking for the GBV community: as the next part of this guidance note discusses, addressing GBV in the context of natural disasters is not only critical to the health and well-being of women and girls, but also to the successful recovery from extreme natural events, and to the reduction of the harmful impact of future natural hazards. The growing concerns related to climate change impacts offer a critical window of opportunity to stimulate humanitarian investments and build capacity.

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<sup>37</sup> OHCHR, May 2019. Submission to the UNFCCC on Gender and Climate Change.

<sup>38</sup> See <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan>

<sup>39</sup> [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/inter\\_agency\\_sops\\_for\\_early\\_action\\_to\\_el\\_nino\\_la\\_nina\\_episodes.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/inter_agency_sops_for_early_action_to_el_nino_la_nina_episodes.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> See <https://www.climatecentre.org/news/1231/climate-change-violence-against-women-and-girls-among-agencies-a-top-priorities-for-2020-survey-shows>

## 2. Addressing GBV in Natural Disasters

### Evidence on the Nature and Scope of GBV in Natural Disasters

*“...International and national actors have become more conscious of GBV (especially sexual violence) in conflicts, but despite some efforts to address GBV in disasters, humanitarian responders are generally less aware of the risks that GBV poses in post-disaster situations. [...] Disaster responders are simply not looking for it; and when GBV takes the form of domestic violence, they often do not know how to respond.”<sup>41</sup>*

As noted previously, the dearth of sex- and age- disaggregated data from post-disaster settings makes it impossible to get a full or reliable picture of women’s and girls’ experiences, including related to their exposure to violence. Even so, there is a small but growing body of evidence that indicates women and girls are exposed to multiple forms of GBV in the aftermath of natural disasters. Some of the more common forms are identified below (also see Box 2 for examples from Asia and the Pacific).

**Intimate partner violence:** Consistently across disasters where GBV has been studied, intimate partner violence (IPV) is raised as one of the biggest concerns. While gender inequality is at the root of IPV, contributing factors to IPV in the aftermath of disasters include, to give a few examples: financial stressors; lack of privacy in temporary shelters or other temporary living arrangements (and, in some cases, associated frustrations of men about sexual relations); increased alcohol consumption by men; shifting livelihoods for both men and women, including economic dependence on men, as well as tensions related to women working outside the household for the first time, and/or men being unemployed.

**Child marriage:** Child marriage is another form of GBV that seems to be a significant risk in some disaster affected settings. This may be because of a desire of families to protect their girls from the hazards of displacement and communal living; it may be in order to generate more income for the family; diminished employment and educational opportunities and in some cases, child marriages may be triggered by the humanitarian aid process itself, where men who have lost their wives seek out new ones in order to access family benefits, which are larger than benefits for single individuals. In Myanmar, widowers marrying girls was reportedly considered by both men and women to be an important social and economic strategy for recovery.<sup>42</sup>

**Sexual assault:** Overcrowded temporary accommodation centres leave women and girls vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault, particularly if facilities are poorly planned, lack sufficient lighting, or lack sex-separated water and sanitation facilities. In one camp in Sri Lanka following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, male residents reportedly triggered a power cut at night and molested women while they were sleeping.<sup>43</sup> Women and girls can also be attacked when required to collect water at isolated water points, or points that require

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<sup>41</sup> IFRC, 2015, *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, p 28.

<sup>42</sup> IFRC, 2015, *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, p 23.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Violence against Women and Natural Disasters: Findings from Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka’, *Violence Against Women* 2010 16: 902 Sarah Fisher, p 909.

walking great distances in unprotected areas. Female-headed households and girls left alone for extended periods when parents are away to rebuild homes or regain livelihoods have also been found to be at heightened risk of sexual harassment and violence in disasters.

**Sexual exploitation:** There have been several emergencies in which sexual exploitation has reportedly increased considerably. One major contributor to this is food insecurity and lack of shelter triggered by the disaster, forcing women and girls to engage in sex in exchange for basic goods and services. This not only includes sexual exploitation by community members, but also by humanitarian aid workers. In some settings where approaches to humanitarian assistance are not gender-sensitive, compensation will typically go to men—and tends to focus on men’s needs (including their particular means of livelihood), failing to account for women’s lost properties. In a qualitative review of sexual exploitation in a disaster, UNHCR conducted a total of 15 focus group discussion involving 124 women in five different IDP camps in Haiti after the earthquake; every single participant had witnessed or engaged in transactional sex. Their primary motivation was personal survival and the survival of their children. According to the study, women engaged in exploitative sex to feed their families when other sources of support were not available. Many of the women interviewed had not been forced into exploitative sex before the earthquake.<sup>44</sup>

**Trafficking:** The data on trafficking is particularly hard to gather, and as such the extent of this issue is not clear in natural disasters. In research undertaken by IFRC, interviewees in several countries said that trafficking was more likely after a disaster, but they could not identify many specific cases. One researcher reflected, “It’s really hard to get women to talk about GBV but at least you can find them: with those who have been trafficked, you just can’t find them.”<sup>45</sup> Even so, trafficking has been identified as a significant concern in a number of post-disaster settings, in particular related to the chaos ensuing from mass evacuations.

### Linking GBV Risk to Climate Change

In addition to some of the risk factors already described, reflections on the links between climate change and GBV risk have generated a number of “red flags” (see Figure 2).<sup>46</sup> For example, *increased frequency of disasters* as a result of climate change is a red flag for GBV risk, not least because of the destruction of infrastructure that can respond to and mitigate GBV. *Mass population movements* put women and girls at risk of multiple forms of GBV while in flight. *Food insecurity*, as noted above, is a red flag for IPV, sexual exploitation, child marriage, trafficking, and other forms of GBV. *Deforestation* means routes for women to collect firewood may be longer, and livelihoods from forest products may be diminished—each raising the spectre of IPV and/or sexual exploitation. *Challenges in accessing water* that come as a result of climate change and natural disasters similarly mean women and girls may

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<sup>44</sup> UNHCR, *Driven by Desperation: Transactional Sex as a Survival Strategy in Port-au-Prince IDP Camps* (2011), cited in IFRC, *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, December 2015, p 24.

<sup>45</sup> IFRC, *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, December 2015, p 24.

<sup>46</sup> GBV AoR training PowerPoint NEED DATE/CITATION

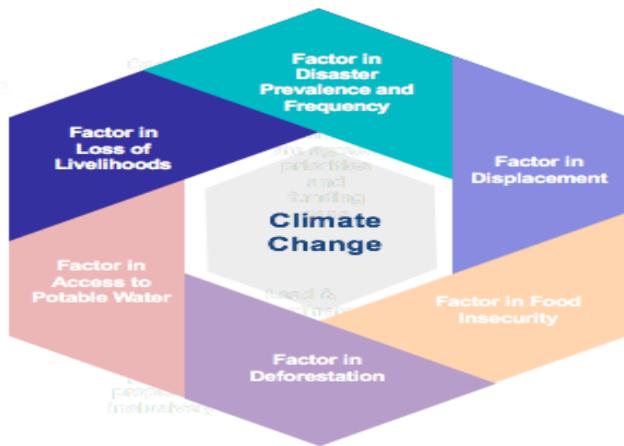


Figure 2: Climate Change and GBV “Red Flags”

have to travel further to collect water, and the lack of potable water may put them and other family members at risk of disease, in turn heightening their vulnerability to violence. *Loss of livelihoods for men and women*, as already noted, can contribute to IPV, sexual exploitation, child marriage, among other forms of GBV.

In all cases of GBV occurring in the wake of natural disasters and/or as a result of climate change, patterns of GBV are pre-existing: alongside other pre-existing forms of discrimination and inequality, disasters may serve to make GBV more visible. It cannot be overstated that the situation of women and girls pre-emergency will inform risks post-emergency. This makes it critically important to understand the extent of the problem of GBV in disaster-prone settings as part of preparedness.

The limited data that is available from Asia and the Pacific suggest that in many settings vulnerable to natural hazards and climate emergencies, violence against women is high (see Figure 3). As is the case pre-emergency, those women and girls who suffer double and triple marginalization as a result of intersecting oppressions related, for example, to age, disability, ethnicity, etc., are at greatest risk.

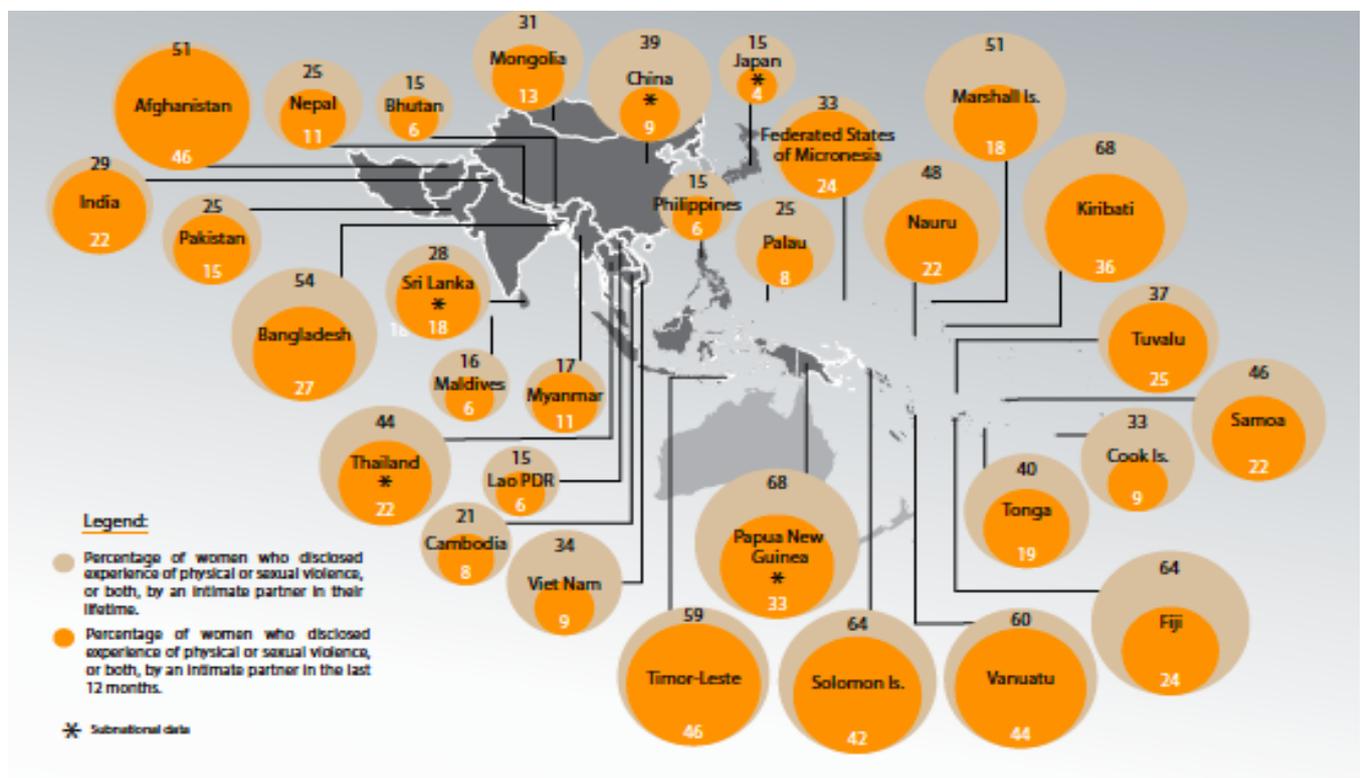


Figure 3: UNFPA Asia Regional Office, 2019. Asia-Pacific 2018 Highlights, p16.

### Box 2: Select Data on Incidents of GBV in Disasters in Asia and the Pacific

- In Bangladesh, child marriages spiked following cyclone Sidr in 2007<sup>47</sup>
- In India and Sri Lanka, girls were rushed into child marriages to “tsunami widowers” who sought government subsidies for marrying and starting a family<sup>48</sup>
- In the Solomon Islands, increased rates of GBV, including rape, were reported after the Gizo tsunami in 2007<sup>49</sup>
- In post-tsunami Sri Lanka, domestic violence was considered by more than 4 out of 5 respondents to be the most prevalent and sustained form of post-disaster violence against women<sup>50</sup>
- In Indonesia, following Pidie Jaya earthquake and Bima floods in 2016, 13 per cent of respondents reported that women and girls felt distressed by the rise in domestic violence after the disasters. Adolescent boys and girls reported that unsafe temporary housing arrangements during the disasters triggered an increase in sexual harassment<sup>51</sup>
- Tonga’s National Survey found that violence is exacerbated by living with extended family, alcohol consumption and economic hardship faced by men, which are factors common in the recovery phase in the aftermath of disasters<sup>52</sup>
- In Samoa after the tsunami of 2009 and Cyclone Evan of 2012, unequal distribution of relief supplies created disillusionment, agitation and community tensions, indirectly increasing the risk of physical violence amongst intimate partners.<sup>53</sup>

## Prevention, Risk Mitigation and Response to GBV in Natural Disasters

*In the short term, humanitarian actions need to respond to violence and protect the vulnerable, while in the long term, Disaster Risk Reduction and development must tackle the root causes.*<sup>54</sup>

As is captured in the core global GBV guidance—from the IASC GBV Guidelines, to the revised GBV Coordination Handbook, and in the GBV Minimum Standards --many of the responsibilities for addressing GBV in natural disasters are the same as in conflict-affected settings. In all natural disasters, it is critical to apply guiding principles for safe, ethical, survivor-centred and empowering programming. It is also important to assume GBV is

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<sup>47</sup> Verma et al. 2013, cited in Solotaroff J and Prahba Pande R, 2014. *Violence Against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, World Bank, p 93.

<sup>48</sup> UNFPA, 2012, cited in Solotaroff J and Prahba Pande R, 2014. *Violence Against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*, World Bank, p 93.

<sup>49</sup> UNOHCHR, 2011. *Protecting the Rights of Internally Displaced Persons: Challenges in the Pacific*.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Violence against Women and Natural Disasters: Findings from Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka’, *Violence Against Women* 2010 16: 902 Sarah Fisher, DOI: 10.1177/1077801210377649, p 907.

<sup>51</sup> IFRC, 2018. *The Responsibility to Prevent and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Disasters and Crises*, p 12.

<sup>52</sup> Government of Tonga, 2014, cited in *Time to Act on Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction*, UN Women, 2016, p 27.

<sup>53</sup> Le Masson V., Lim S., Budimir M., Podboi J., *Disaster and Violence against Women and Girls: Can disasters shake social norms and power relations?*, ODI, 2016, p32

<sup>54</sup> Bradshaw S., Fordham M., *Women, Girls and Disasters – A Review for DFID*, DFID August 2013, p 3.

happening, and not wait for data before funding or initiating programming. Humanitarian actors must come together to ensure a coordinated response that supports and maximizes the expertise of many different actors.

In all settings, specialized multi-sectoral response to survivors that includes health and psycho-social services as a minimum in early response, and later, safe law enforcement and judicial mechanisms, must be put in place. These specialized services must run alongside efforts by the broader humanitarian community to integrate GBV risk mitigation strategies into their areas of operation. All of this work must be undertaken, to the extent possible, with approaches that prioritize the voices and leadership of women and girls, support women's livelihoods and other strategies for empowerment and transformative change and build sustainable systems that can prevent and respond to GBV in the long-term.

And yet, however similar GBV responses in conflict-related emergencies and natural disasters may be, there are some important differences that will inform the planning and scale up of GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response in disasters. Lessons learned from Asia and the Pacific (as well as other disaster settings from around the world) illustrate some of these differences. Several examples are summarized below; the list is neither exhaustive nor universal, but rather an attempt to capture some of the collective learning about characteristics that tend to distinguish natural disasters, and that have implications for disaster-related GBV programming.

**1. Responses to natural disasters, particularly in non-conflict settings, are increasingly managed by national governments and regional mechanisms. The international community may be called upon for discrete areas of support.**

As noted previously, Asia and the Pacific exemplify a trend in disaster management towards nationalization of response, that is led by government, often in collaboration with the military, civil society and private sector. Support for government-led responses is a critical aspect of localization, in line with the objectives of humanitarian action laid out in the Grand Bargain. This means, however, that success in the response is predicated on the leadership and capacity of national and local actors. As such, international humanitarian actors have a responsibility to support capacity-building as part of preparedness planning. Rather than waiting until a disaster strikes, and particularly in settings vulnerable to cyclical disasters, the GBV community must support ongoing improvements in GBV-related systems for prevention, risk mitigation and survivor response. The GBV Coordination Handbook emphasizes that:

Capacity building as an emergency preparedness intervention involves building on the strengths of GBV partners and communities to respond when a disaster strikes, or when there is a new spike in an ongoing crisis. Building capacity is not a top-down effort, in which [GBV] coordination leaders determine needs and abilities of coordination members. Rather, it is a collaborative process in which the government, the affected population and local and international GBV responders develop coordination and GBV response skills for emergency preparedness.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> GBV AoR Coordination Handbook, p 118.

Importantly, this capacity building must focus not only on capacity-building for national-level partners, but also partners at the sub-national level—who are often overlooked. In one example from Indonesia, a 2016 research report on “Integrating Gender into Disaster Management in Indonesia” reportedly found low levels of awareness related to gender mainstreaming at the provincial levels.<sup>56</sup> Based on learning from disasters in the Philippines, targeted efforts have been undertaken in that country to address capacity at the sub-national level (see Box 2).

**Box 2: Localization in the Philippines**

In the Philippines in 2015, UNFPA and USAID collaborated on an emergency preparedness capacity-building initiative to further develop the skills of actors who responded to Typhoon Haiyan. At the request of the Government’s Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the project trained a Rapid Response Team (RRT) in every region, which could be deployed in disaster-stricken areas within 24 to 48 hours to address GBV in emergencies. At the same time the project trained members of inter-agency protection mechanisms and NGOs and the Women and Children Protection Unit (WCPU) at the Level 2 regional medical centre in a disaster-prone area. The result was a cohort of national actors who could be utilized in future disaster response. This 2015 project has recently been expanded into a more intensive programme for government and NGO actors that refreshes skills and trains a new cohort on GBV in emergencies. This training is conducted in collaboration with a university. As part of the curriculum each participant must make an Action Plan to prepare their organizations and other colleagues in their local areas for disaster response. The implementation of the Action Plan must be completed before the participants receive a certificate from the university, which verifies their emergency response credentials.

Excerpted from: GBV AoR Coordination Handbook, p 120, [https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-07/Handbook%20for%20Coordinating%20GBV%20in%20Emergencies\\_fin.pdf](https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-07/Handbook%20for%20Coordinating%20GBV%20in%20Emergencies_fin.pdf).

Another important shift for GBV actors related to localization in disaster response is that international partners may be called upon to respond to very specific support requests during emergencies, such as facilitating the distribution of supplies. Particularly in settings where the government has introduced tight restrictions on international response, undertaking these discrete responsibilities can provide an opportunity for GBV actors to work directly with the government to increase understanding of the importance of addressing GBV in emergencies, and to build alliances for more coordinated and comprehensive response. In one example, some countries in the Asia-Pacific region are building on a pilot of pre-positioning Reproductive Health Kits, as part of UNFPA’s effort to support implementation of the Minimum Essential Service Package (MISP). Pre-positioned kits were utilized in the acute phase of the 2015 Nepal earthquake and Fiji’s 2016 Cyclone Winston response. Multiple interviews conducted during an evaluation of UNFPA humanitarian response indicated the added value of dignity kits distribution as a strategy to initiate conversations about the importance of GBV programming.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Siahna, 2016, cited in IFRC, 2018. *The Responsibility to Prevent and Response to Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Disasters and Crises*, p 75.

<sup>57</sup> UNFPA, *Evaluation of UNFPA Support to the Prevention, Response to and Elimination of Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Practices*, 2012-2017, Asia and Pacific Regional Case Study, 2018, p 29.

## 2. Responses to natural disasters are informed by disaster risk reduction laws, policies and guidelines developed prior to the crisis.

Successes in localization of response are often dependent on ensuring that attention to GBV is included in laws, policies and associated guidelines for DRR. However, without entry points or regular opportunities to engage the government, influencing laws and policies can be a challenge for GBV actors. Using the cluster system—even in settings where international actors are not leading the response—can be a useful approach. In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, disaster risk reduction (DRR) agendas increasingly promote gender-inclusive approaches, with some recognition of the need for gender-sensitive DRR initiatives; however, attention to GBV is weak. To address this problem, and as a first-step, some countries with clusters have developed inter-sector contingency plans that include GBV and bring awareness about the standards for GBV response in case of an emergency.<sup>58</sup> In Vanuatu, the establishment of the Gender and Protection Cluster following Tropical Cyclone Pam in March 2015, “significantly strengthened the enabling environment,” and facilitated advocacy on attention to GBV in subsequent emergencies.<sup>59</sup>

An often-overlooked aspect when incorporating attention to GBV in disaster risk reduction measures, including preparedness measures such as contingency planning, is the development of early warning systems that ensure engagement of women and girls. This is one reason why women have been considerably more affected by natural disasters in Asia and the Pacific than men and boys. On the flip side, however, evidence suggests that when women are engaged in the design and implementation of early warning systems, they are more likely to receive and act upon early warnings. The same social networks that can be utilized (and strengthened) as part of early warning systems can also be mobilized to facilitate more efficient and effective response, including to GBV.<sup>60</sup>

The fact that GBV is often left off the agenda of DRR is both a reflection and reinforcement of structural inequalities, which must be tackled through prevention efforts aimed at addressing these inequalities.<sup>61</sup> However, GBV prevention is not typically included in DRR plans and policies. The case studies in Part 3 reflect that even if prevention efforts are undertaken in the GBV response, they often focus on short-term IEC campaigns, which have not been shown in research globally to have significant impact on the reduction of GBV. As such, it is important that DRR plans include—and illustrate the value of—evidence-based GBV prevention efforts as part of risk reduction and emergency response. This not only means including social norm change as part of DRR but improving laws and policies that support gender equality and the empowerment of women alongside response to survivors and impunity for perpetrators.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> GBV AoR Coordination Handbook, 2019, p 21, [https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-07/Handbook%20for%20Coordinating%20GBV%20in%20Emergencies\\_fin.pdf](https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-07/Handbook%20for%20Coordinating%20GBV%20in%20Emergencies_fin.pdf).

<sup>59</sup> Australian Aid and Care, 2018, *Promising Approaches for the Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, [p 13](#).

<sup>60</sup> Bradshaw S., Fordham M., *Women*, August 2013, *Girls and Disasters – A Review for DFID*, p 11.

<sup>61</sup> Bradshaw S., Fordham M., August 2013, *Women, Girls and Disasters – A Review for DFID*, p 17.

<sup>62</sup> IFRC, *Unseen, Unheard: Gender-Based Violence in Disasters, A Global Study*, December 2015, p 26.

### **3. In countries with cyclical natural disasters, data is increasingly recognized as critical to informing preparedness and improving emergency response.**

The growing focus on collecting population data for disaster preparedness provides an opportunity for GBV actors to promote understanding of and attention to GBV in preparedness and response. While the IASC GBV Guidelines underscore the point that GBV response in emergencies should not be contingent on data about the scope of the problem (and humanitarian responders should assume GBV is taking place), the development of GBV-related data systems for disaster preparedness and response can support advocacy efforts as well as improved targeting of at-risk women and girls. This means undertaking assessments, situational analyses and other research as part of preparedness, to establish baseline data on the nature and scope of different forms of GBV, as well services available to address GBV in at-risk communities. It also means—to the extent possible-- that a GBV information management system for service providers is in place prior to the emergency.

#### **Box 3: Improving Rapid Assessment Processes in Nepal**

In 2012 in Nepal, an inter-agency guidance note was updated to accompany the standard MIRA template, providing question-by-question guidance to assessment planners and enumerators, and integrating GBV considerations. It explains what questions to ask, when, where and how to explore GBV-related concerns without posing protection risks. This MIRA guidance note and roster training became part of a disaster preparedness plan, feeding into assessment processes following the 2015 earthquake.

Excerpted from the GBV AoR Coordination Handbook, p 97, [https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-07/Handbook%20for%20Coordinating%20GBV%20in%20Emergencies\\_fin.pdf](https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-07/Handbook%20for%20Coordinating%20GBV%20in%20Emergencies_fin.pdf).

Lessons from Typhoon Haiyan<sup>63</sup> and other emergencies have also emphasized the value of ensuring GBV is reflected in multi-sector rapid needs assessments (MIRA) during the preparedness and planning phase – not only during the onset of the emergency (see Box 3). The GBV Coordination Handbook recommends that especially in disaster-prone settings and complex emergencies, GBV sub-clusters (and lead agencies) should make sure that programming includes developing MIRA/IRNA templates and training on integrating GBV into initial rapid needs assessments. The sub-cluster may develop a roster of people who are trained in GBV and assessments and can participate in rapid assessments if there is any emergency.<sup>64</sup>

### **4. Natural disasters may result in widespread damage infrastructure, particularly in the hardest-hit areas. This has implications for formulating the response to GBV.**

The fact of widespread destruction often calls for approaches that engage actors outside the affected region who can be deployed for rapid response. Governments in Asia-Pacific may rely on the military as a key first responder. In relation to GBV programming, engaging actors outside the affected region may mean supporting women’s groups and organizations to

<sup>63</sup> Refugees International Field Report, 2014. *Philippines: New Approach to Emergency Response Fails Women and Girls*.

<sup>64</sup> GBV AoR Coordination Handbook, p 97.

undertake mobile response. In the Philippines, UNFPA has trained a local pool of national people who can be recruited for GBV roles in crises.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time, training actors living in settings vulnerable to cyclical disasters may be an important strategy for ensuring aid is on the ground even before external responders are able to access communities. Data can be collected on the availability and quality of services as part of developing GBV Standard Operating Procedures in the preparedness stage, which are then adjusted based on agencies that are able to continue service provision in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The case studies in Part 3 illustrate strategies that include support to local women’s GBV organizations, as well as the development of women-led community watch groups in settings affected by natural disasters.

Lessons from these and other emergencies illustrate, however, that investments in *ongoing* training, capacity building, and technical support for local women’s groups and women’s organizations is critical to ensuring safe and ethical programming, especially in settings where there is limited pre-existing GBV expertise. In addition, supporting self-care of local actors is an often-overlooked component of response, but especially important when service providers are drawn from the disaster-affected community or nearby areas.

#### **5. The response may be shorter, with the transition to recovery faster.**

In too many instances, recovery tends to focus on infrastructure, leaving out issues of women’s rights, GBV and gender equality in recovery frameworks. However, global evidence illustrates that recovery and resilience is linked advancements in gender equality. Where, for example, there are higher levels of gender inequality, there is typically greater state instability.<sup>66</sup> While this has been widely acknowledged in the Sustainable Development Goals, it does not always translate into priorities for reconstruction in disaster-affected regions.

This reality calls upon GBV actors to actively engage around the development of recovery frameworks—whether as part of the larger national recovery planning process, or as part of GBV coordination partners’ strategic planning. This includes ensuring GBV is attended to in policy and legal frameworks, sector-based recovery plans, and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks for recovery.<sup>67</sup>

Developing a GBV-specific recovery strategy offers another opportunity to engage local women’s groups and women’s organizations in prioritizing actions for recovery that promote long-term actions to reduce GBV, including support to women’s livelihoods and other strategies for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Promoting women’s participation and leadership in recovery planning and processes can help “shift the narrative

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<sup>65</sup> UNFPA eval, p 27

<sup>66</sup> See, for example, Crespo-Sancho, C. 2017. “The Role of Gender in the Prevention of Violent Conflict.” Background paper for the United Nations-World Bank Flagship Study, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*. World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>67</sup> Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank, UN Women, and European Union, 2018. *Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Disaster Recovery*, p 13.

from women merely being victims, to women being actual agents of change in society” and can support efforts to more successfully ‘engender’ disaster management.”<sup>68</sup>

#### **6. Funding mechanisms may be different for natural disasters than conflict settings.**

The Asia-Pacific is a good example of how funding for disaster response can be different from conflict settings. Not only does funding for disaster relief tend to run on shorter cycles, it is coming less and less from global humanitarian funding streams. With government exercising more control over management of resources, there may be increased reliance on direct, bi-lateral funding to the governments of affected nations. Foreign remittances can play a significant role, particularly in the recovery phase, and have an impact on who within communities is more likely to be able to recover their homes and other losses quickly. Person-to-person donations and micro-giving have also become more prominent in recent times.

This means, simply, that the humanitarian GBV community must be aware of and familiar with alternative funding streams. They must understand that the shifts in funding may mean less money is flowing to local NGOs (via international NGOs and the UN agencies), which can have an impact on the availability of services. As well, it is important, when designing GBV programmes, to anticipate the likelihood of transitioning relatively quickly back to development funds after the initial stages of the disaster, and plan programming accordingly. One example of a strategy that incorporates this reality is helping local women’s organizations who are new to GBV work sustain their programmes by providing training about how to access development funding when emergency monies dry up.

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<sup>68</sup> ASEAN, *Women in Natural Disasters: Indicative Findings in Unravelling Gender in Institutional Responses*, Thematic Study, July 2018, p 28

### 3. Case Studies from Asia and the Pacific

*Note: These case studies highlight a few selected examples of good practices and lessons learned from GBV interventions in Asia and the Pacific. They are not meant to provide a detailed summary of all aspects of GBV response in these disasters.*

#### 2018 Central Sulawesi, Indonesia Earthquake and Tsunami

Indonesia, located between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanic eruptions. On 28 September 2018, a significant earthquake struck Central Sulawesi, precipitating a tsunami and land liquefaction, which impacted 1.5 million people.<sup>69</sup> The triple disaster caused catastrophic damage, loss of life and injury. More than 4,000 people died, and many more were injured.<sup>70</sup> Some 100,000 homes were destroyed, triggering widespread displacement.<sup>71</sup> The areas worst affected were the cities of Palu and Donggala, as well as the districts of Sigi and Parigi Moutong.

In response to the crisis, the Government of Indonesia (GoI) requested that the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management serve as the conduit for financial and in-kind assistance for the Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response. The national disaster management agency, Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Bencana (BNPB) coordinated the response in-country under the overall leadership of the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs. The Indonesian Government set restrictions on the nature of international support and insisted that assistance be channelled through national and local humanitarian actors. In the first few weeks of the response, 95 percent of reported activities were implemented by the government and national NGOs.<sup>72</sup> While this was clearly a government-run response, several international agencies were invited to support the GoI, including UNFPA, particularly for GBV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

A Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response Plan was published October 5, 2018 by the UN-led Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). The HCT appealed for \$50.5 million to provide humanitarian assistance, of which \$2.2 million (4 percent) was for GBV prevention and response.<sup>73</sup> Notably, in the Response Plan there is one reference to the gendered impacts of natural disasters and the particular vulnerability of women and girls to gender-based violence (GBV): *“Such disasters tend to perpetuate and exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities, exposing women and girls to further multiple vulnerabilities, risks and exploitation,”*<sup>74</sup> but otherwise there is little reference to the distinct humanitarian needs of women and girls throughout the document.

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<sup>69</sup>Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response Plan (2018) p 1.

<sup>70</sup><https://reliefweb.int/report/indonesia/indonesia-57000-people-homeless-one-year-after-sulawesi-earthquakes-tsunami-and>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

<sup>72</sup> Action Aid (2019), *Leading The Way: Women-Led Localisation in Central Sulawesi: Towards Gender Transformative Action*, p 14.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid p3 and 20.

<sup>74</sup>Central Sulawesi Earthquake Response Plan (2018), p 3.

## GBV Response

According to the 2016 Indonesian *National Women's Life Experience Survey*, one in three women aged 15-64 years reported experiencing physical and or sexual violence in their lifetime and 9.4 percent of women had experienced violence in the previous 12 months.<sup>75</sup> Child and forced marriage are also typical in Central Sulawesi, with an estimated 18 percent of women marrying before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>76</sup>

Key findings from a rapid gender analysis undertaken by CARE International in October 2018 highlighted that prior to the crisis, prevailing gender norms in Central Sulawesi meant that women and girls had limited access to education, land, livelihood opportunities and inheritance rights, little control over household resources, and were by and large excluded from public life.<sup>77</sup> Men were traditionally understood to be heads of the household and more likely to attend public events and community meetings, thus making them the gatekeepers to any information their wives and daughters receive.<sup>78</sup>

After the crisis, damage to food gardens meant women were no longer able to sell the surpluses, which diminished their access to income. The poorest members of the community (particularly single mothers and widows) struggled to purchase essential goods such as food and water and required help constructing shelters. Economic hardship heightened the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual exploitation and abuse. Increased difficulty in accessing drinking water and the lack of sanitation facilities also augmented risks for women and girls of exposure to violence. Women with disabilities were identified as being at particular risk.

In the early stages of the emergency response, UNFPA worked with the government to establish the Women's Rights Protection Sub-Cluster at the provincial level. One of its first activities was to map community-based organisations, programmes and services, and establish a referral pathway for GBV survivors.<sup>79</sup> The Sub-Cluster also led on the formation of 4W maps of the work of Sub-Cluster members in order to minimise duplication of work and address gaps in the response.<sup>80</sup>

With support from UNFPA, women-friendly spaces were set up by governmental actors and local women's rights organisations, to enable women and girls to access psychosocial support and GBV case management services, as well as dignity kits.<sup>81</sup> Two local women-led organisations supported by UNFPA, Libu Perempuan and KPKPST, also linked survivors with livelihoods opportunities.<sup>82</sup> UNFPA worked with the Ministry of Health on organising and

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid p 2.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid p 2.

<sup>77</sup> See Heather Cole (2018), *CARE Rapid Gender Analysis Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami Indonesia Version 2*.

<sup>78</sup> See UN Women (2018) Gender and Inclusion Alert: Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami. P.1.

<sup>79</sup> *Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami Humanitarian Country Team Situation Report # 1 (as of 9 October 2018)* p 6.

<sup>80</sup> *Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami Humanitarian Country Team Situation Report # 3 (as of 16 October 2018)* p 6.

<sup>81</sup> *Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami Humanitarian Country Team Situation Report # 3 (as of 16 October 2018)* p 6.

<sup>82</sup> Interviews with Elisabeth Adelina Sidabutar and Risya Ariyani Kori, UNFPA

delivering training to staff in health facilities on GBV standard operating procedures and the clinical management of rape, including provision of post-exposure prophylaxis and contraception.<sup>83</sup>

Information on availability of GBV services was shared through a radio talk show in cooperation with MS Radio, one of the popular local radio stations in Palu, with a potential audience of about 40,000 listeners.<sup>84</sup> Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials were distributed by UNFPA through the women-friendly spaces and health centres and posts.<sup>85</sup>

Notably, UN Women undertook research to review risk mitigation measures in the government response, publishing their findings in November 2018. They found that 63 percent of sites reported no camp management structure being in place.<sup>86</sup> Overcrowded shelters, limited electricity and lighting, and a lack of security measures, such as locks increased women and girls' fear of and vulnerability to GBV. Water collection points were also identified as unsafe, and 87 percent of sites did not have sex-disaggregated toilets.<sup>87</sup> To improve risk mitigation with government partners, the Sub-Cluster prioritized hiring a consultant to develop a set of recommendations and checklists for other sectors on how they might mitigate the risk of GBV in their response, paying particular attention to health sector, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter, and camp coordination management.<sup>88</sup>

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

**Multi-sectoral collaboration and risk mitigation.** GBV colleagues were somewhat constrained in their ability to promote risk mitigation measures due to the government-led response that did not fully understand GBV risk mitigation, nor prioritize it. In an effort to facilitate government engagement around the importance of GBV risk mitigation, UNFPA and other partners created easy-to-read checklists for sector actors.

**Support for localisation and sustainability of GBV response.** In line with government mandate, the response was locally led. UNFPA supported the identification and capacity-building of local partners to provide psychosocial support (PSS) and clinical management of rape (CMR) services, with all women-friendly spaces offering PSS, and all reproductive health tents prepared to provide CMR through a cadre of trained nurses from the local communities. UNFPA also back-stopped local government to improve their capacity in GBV coordination. Even in the context of an emergency that relied largely on temporary shelters, the support to local partners means the coordination and referral systems will remain in place after recovery.

**Building on progress in the disaster to improve national GBV response.** Increased recognition by the provincial and national government of the importance of GBV

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<sup>83</sup> Interviews with Elisabeth Adelina Sidabutar and Risya Ariyani Kori, UNFPA

<sup>84</sup> *Central Sulawesi Earthquake and Tsunami – Humanitarian Country Team Situation Report # 9 (as of 23 November 2018)* p 6.

<sup>85</sup> Interviews with Elisabeth Adelina Sidabutar and Risya Ariyani Kori, UNFPA

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid* p 7.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid* p 5.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Risya Ariyani, UNFPA.

interventions as a result of the Central Sulawesi response has positioned UNFPA and other partners to better influence the national government in integrating attention to GBV in disaster preparedness moving forward. While the GoI has in place a policy and legislative framework for advancing women's rights and protection from GBV, there is scope to increase the visibility of these commitments within the wider disaster management architecture, including BNPB and its associated policies and systems.<sup>89</sup> UNFPA is continuing to work with the GoI to build a more effective GBV strategy based on learning from Central Sulawesi. These efforts will hopefully be undertaken in support of and collaboration with women's civil society organizations and networks.

## 2018 Bangladesh Rohingya Refugee Monsoons

Widespread discrimination, torture, imprisonment, rape and other forms of violence against the Rohingya people in Rakhine State, Myanmar has resulted over many years in waves of displacement.<sup>90</sup> In August 2017, following an upsurge in hostilities, an estimated 745,000 Rohingya (including 400,000 children) fled to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.<sup>91</sup> By January 2019, over 900,000 Rohingya refugees had been displaced to Bangladesh, the vast majority of which reside in highly congested camps in Cox's Bazar.<sup>92</sup>

More than half (52 percent) of the Rohingya refugees are women and girls, many of whom were exposed to sexual violence in their villages and during their flight to Bangladesh. In the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar, women and girls continue to be at risk of GBV, including intimate partner violence, early child and forced marriage, trafficking, and exploitation. Older adolescent girls are said to be at particular risk, given the fact that they are out-of-school and livelihood opportunities are limited.<sup>93</sup>

The humanitarian response is led by the Government of Bangladesh. Following the 2017 influx, the Ministry of Disaster Management mandated the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) to provide operational coordination for the Rohingya refugee response, while the Deputy Commissioner (DC) oversees coordination of the response for Bangladeshi host communities, including Disaster Risk Reduction efforts. For humanitarian organisations, strategic guidance and national coordination is provided by the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Dhaka, which is led jointly by the United Nations Resident Coordinator, IOM and UNHCR, and a Senior Coordinator coordinates the response at the level of Cox's Bazar, chairing the Heads of Sub Office Group (HoSOG), which includes all UN agencies and representatives of international and national non-governmental organisations.

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<sup>89</sup> Action Aid (2019), *Leading The Way: Women-Led Localisation in Central Sulawesi: Towards Gender Transformative Action*, p 27.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, p 10.

<sup>91</sup> 2019 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis January-December. Available at: [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019\\_jr\\_p\\_for\\_rohingya\\_humanitarian\\_crisis\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_jr_p_for_rohingya_humanitarian_crisis_compressed.pdf) (Accessed 6.11.2019) P10.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid p 10.

<sup>93</sup> 2019 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis January-December. Available at: [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019\\_jr\\_p\\_for\\_rohingya\\_humanitarian\\_crisis\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_jr_p_for_rohingya_humanitarian_crisis_compressed.pdf) (Accessed 6.11.2019) p 16.

The Rohingya refugee crisis is exacerbated by the fact that the area in which the refugee population is residing is very vulnerable to natural disasters, such as cyclones, floods, and landslides. Cox's Bazar has two cyclone seasons per year, with high likelihood of cyclones, floods or other severe weather events.<sup>94</sup> Since 1960, the Bangladesh Meteorological Department has registered 33 cyclones in Bangladesh, 11 of which have directly impacted Cox's Bazar, the most recent of which occurred in 2004, 2015 and 2017.<sup>95</sup>

The need to coordinate response to the conflict-related crisis alongside disaster risk reduction and response is an important feature of the response in Cox's Bazaar. Most recently, between May and July 2018, the monsoon rains resulted in severe flooding and landslides, affecting 29,000 people.<sup>96</sup> Lives were lost, people injured, shelters and facilities destroyed, and many displaced. According to an inter-agency research report produced by Action Against Hunger, Save the Children and Oxfam – *Rohingya Refugee Response Gender Analysis: Recognising and Responding to Gender Inequalities*<sup>97</sup> – published in August 2018, there were significant gaps in the humanitarian response before the 2018 monsoon season in terms of disaster preparedness, with women in particular lacking knowledge of disaster management, e.g. the need to move to safer locations, relocate pregnant women, children and elderly people to shelters, or take water, dry food and medicines with them.<sup>98</sup>

The 2019 Joint Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Mid-Term Review noted that cyclone and monsoon preparedness had since “improved enormously,”<sup>99</sup> with a common emergency response plan in place and agreed by all sector leads in the camps. Targeted training has been delivered to Disaster Management Units, in coordination with the Government of Bangladesh's Cycle Preparedness programme, to ensure the maintenance of humanitarian access throughout the monsoon season, develop risk models, demarcate the most-at-risk areas, inform communities, track the moderate weather-related incidents and coordinate the camp-based response.

Still, integration of gender and GBV considerations into disaster preparedness work is an ongoing challenge. In the 2019 Joint Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Mid-Term Review, the risk of cyclones and natural disasters are listed as a major concern by the GBV Sub-Sector Working Group, yet less than 1% of the 23.5 million funding required for GBV prevention and response is allocated to disaster preparedness.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid p 24.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid p 24.

<sup>96</sup> UNFPA (2018) *Health facilities, safe spaces reinforced as monsoon rain threaten Rohingya refugees*. Available at: <https://www.unfpa.org/news/health-facilities-safe-spaces-reinforced-monsoon-rains-threaten-rohingya-refugees> ( Accessed 07.11.2019)

<sup>97</sup> Action Against Hunger, Save the Children and Oxfam (2018), *Rohingya Refugee Response Gender Analysis: Recognising and Responding to Gender Inequalities*, Available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/rohingya-refugee-response-gender-analysis-010818-en.pdf>.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid P50.

<sup>99</sup> 2019 Joint Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Mid-Term Review. Available at: [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019\\_jr\\_p\\_mid\\_term\\_review\\_final\\_for\\_circulation1\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_jr_p_mid_term_review_final_for_circulation1_compressed.pdf).

<sup>100</sup> 2019 Joint Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis Mid-Term Review. Available at: [https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019\\_jr\\_p\\_mid\\_term\\_review\\_final\\_for\\_circulation1\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/2019_jr_p_mid_term_review_final_for_circulation1_compressed.pdf). p 28.

## GBV Response

The GBV Sub-Sector Working Group, led by UNFPA, was established in March 2017 in response to the influx of Rohingya refugees. As part of the 2018 monsoon response, the GBV Sub-Sector Working Group contributed to Inter-Sector Coordination Group briefing notes on the impact of the floods, highlighting the destruction of protection spaces as a major challenge, and the potential disruption this might cause to delivery of and access to essential GBV services and information.<sup>101</sup> Due to concerns that the existing Joint Needs Assessment (JNA) tool insufficiently addressed GBV, the GBV Sub-Sector Working Group also developed a context-specific sudden-onset disaster assessment tool for use by trained GBV enumerators.<sup>102</sup>

Partners in the GBV Sub-Sector Working Group provide support to women and girls primarily through women-friendly spaces, where women and girls receive case management, psychosocial support, and life-saving information and referrals. Notably, the numbers of women and girls reporting GBV incidents decreased during the 2018 monsoon season; one hypothesis was that this was due to difficulty in accessing health centres and women-friendly spaces as a result of water-clogged roads.<sup>103</sup> No alternative mechanisms were in place—such as mobile services—to address this issue.

More positively however, the destruction caused by the monsoon rains provided an opportunity for humanitarian response to “build back better.” A number of schools were destroyed as a result of the monsoon rains. The GBV Sub-Sector Working Group worked with education actors to ensure that schools were rebuilt with separate toilets and washing facilities for boys and girls, so that in the event of another natural disaster, they might function as safe evacuation centres with rooms designated as women-friendly spaces.<sup>104</sup>

## Good Practices and Lessons Learned

**Specifically targeting women in disaster preparedness.** Following from lessons learned about women’s exclusion from disaster-preparedness activities, GBV partners are now targeting women and girls with disaster preparedness and GBV-specific information at the household level, so that women no longer need to depend on male heads of households relaying information. This includes organising disaster simulation exercises, so women and girls have practical experience of what to do in the event of a sudden-onset natural disaster-- including what do if they do experience GBV.

**Ensuring GBV-specific needs assessment.** The GBV Sub-Sector now has in place a context-specific sudden-onset disaster protection assessment tool and a pool of trained GBV enumerators to supplement information which might be gained through the multi-sectoral Joint Needs Assessment.

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<sup>101</sup> See for example, See for example, *ISCG Monsoon Emergency Preparedness and Response - Cox’s Bazar Rohingya Refugee Crisis (22 - 27 June 2018)*. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/iscg-monsoon-emergency-preparedness-and-response-cox-s-bazar-rohingya-refugee-1>.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Interview with Girum Teshime, UNFPA GBV Information Management Officer, 22/11/2019.

<sup>104</sup> Interview with Sonia Rastogi, Unicef.

**Ensuring mobile protection units and community-based support mechanisms.** In order to address access issues for the next climate emergency, the GBV Sub-Sector Working Group is exploring alternative service delivery modalities, including Mobile Protection Units, comprising GBV Specialists on standby to identify/address/refer individual cases, and women-led Community Watch Groups, who can act as first responders when humanitarian access is impeded.<sup>105</sup>

## 2016 Fiji Tropical Cyclone Winston

Tropical Cyclone Winston hit Fiji on 20 February 2016. One of the strongest cyclones ever to make landfall in the Southern Hemisphere, it impacted approximately 540,400 people--60 per cent of the Fijian population<sup>106</sup>. The damage was extensive, with more than 167 islands of the 300+ Archipelago impacted.

Fiji has a strong national structure for disaster preparedness and emergency operations. This is composed of the National Disaster Management Council (NDMC) and the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) at capital level, and of disaster management committees at the provincial and district level. The country has developed a National Disaster Plan, Disaster Management Act and Standard Operating Procedures for disaster response. The National Cluster System brings together Government ministries and a network of humanitarian actors, with United Nations agencies and international and national NGOs. The GBV Sub-cluster (part of the 'Safety and Protection Cluster'), is led by the Ministry of Women, Children and Poverty Alleviation with support from UNWomen and UNICEF<sup>107</sup>.

Following the impact of the cyclone, the Fijian Government implemented a number of disaster responsive social protection programs that resulted in an injection of approximately F\$344.7 million into the economy<sup>108</sup>. In doing so, Fiji became the first Pacific country to channel both government and external partners' post-disaster assistance through an existing national social protection system. This system was utilised for rapid response including cash assistance, and for channelling other humanitarian relief efforts.

### GBV Response

Prior to the crisis Fiji had substantially high rates of GBV: a national survey conducted by Fiji Women's Crisis Centre in 2011 showed 71 percent of women in Fiji reported having been subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by either partners and/or non-partners in their

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Government of Fiji, *Disaster Recovery Framework: Tropical Cyclone Winston, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016*, September 2016, available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DRF\\_Draft\\_6.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DRF_Draft_6.pdf)

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Mainsur, A., Doyle, J., Ivaschenko, O., 2017 ' *Social Protection and Humanitarian Assistance Nexus for Disaster Response: Lessons Learnt from Fiji's Tropical Cyclone Winston* ', Social Protection and labour, Discussion paper no. 1701, February 2017, available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/143591490296944528/pdf/113710-NWP-PUBLIC-P159592-1701.pdf>

life<sup>109</sup>. As a result of this high level of pre-crisis GBV, as well as learning from previous emergencies--including the 2012 floods in Western Fiji that showed incidents of sexual violence against women and girls in evacuation centres and an increase in domestic violence a number of preparedness activities focused on GBV were implemented prior to Cyclone Winston<sup>110</sup>. These included development of GBV guidelines for evacuation centres, as well as trainings on GBV for first responders, and pre-positioned dignity kits<sup>111</sup>.

Prior to and during the response to Cyclone Winston, national NGO FemLINK Pacific utilised regular radio programs and SMS weather and emergency updates to enable their network of women in villages across Fiji to engage in village and community preparedness efforts through their Women's Weather Watch initiative.<sup>112</sup> Women's Weather Watch piloted women-led, community-based protection mechanisms in six locations throughout Fiji in the aftermath of Cyclone Winston. The intervention was aimed at empowering women to have greater decision-making and influence in preparedness and response activities, and to further support and strengthen existing mechanisms for protection at the village level in order to more effectively mitigate GBV risks in the initial stages of a crisis and facilitate safe and effective referrals to available services.

In the aftermath of Cyclone Winston, eight women-friendly spaces were established with support from UNFPA. Alongside social activities, these spaces provided access to psychosocial support and multi-sectoral referrals. The Fiji Women's Crisis Center facilitated workshops for women managers of the women-friendly spaces on topics related to GBV, gender equity, and referral mechanisms.<sup>113</sup> The spaces were also used to conduct community profiling to assess ongoing community protection concerns and support mechanisms.

The GBV Sub-Cluster developed a GBV response and referral protocol drawing from existing national guidance that encouraged the use of existing national- and regional-level services. Where services were lacking in affected regions, support was provided to national organisations to expand to those areas, or provide temporary relief, rather than deploying international organisations to set up programs. GBV Sub-Cluster partners, including government, UN, national and international NGOs, along with civil society partners of the GBV Sub-Cluster, provided multi-sectoral (health, psychosocial, security) services reaching more than 20,000 women and girls. GBV actors also provided approximately 4,000 dignity kits and

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<sup>109</sup> Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, 2013, 'Somebody's Life, Everybody's Business' available at: <http://www.fijiwomen.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/National-Survey-Summary.pdf>

<sup>110</sup> UNWomen, 2012 *The 2012 Fiji Floods - Gender Sensitivity In Disaster Management*, available at: <https://www.preventionweb.net/organizations/7646>

<sup>111</sup> UNWomen, 2014 *In Fiji First Responders Train to Address Sexual Violence in Disasters*, 20 November, 2014, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/11/in-fiji-first-responders-train-to-address-sexual-violence-in-disasters>

<sup>112</sup> Femlink Pacific, *Women's Weather Watch: Protection and Human Security Report*, 2016, Available at: [http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/images/PDF/Policy/WWW\\_ProtectionAndHS\\_Update.pdf](http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/images/PDF/Policy/WWW_ProtectionAndHS_Update.pdf)

<sup>113</sup> Government of Fiji, *Disaster Recovery Framework: Tropical Cyclone Winston, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2016*, September 2016, available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DRF\\_Draft\\_6.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/DRF_Draft_6.pdf)

700 solar radios to women who attended awareness and one-on-one sessions, as well as women who came to women-friendly spaces<sup>114</sup>.

In addition, UN Women worked with partners to provide female market vendors with tools, supplies, seeds and training so they could replant their gardens and work towards economic security. UN Women also worked with local governments to rebuild market buildings that were severely damaged or completely destroyed.

### **Good Practices and Lessons Learned**

**GBV-related preparedness planning with women at the community level.** Participants of Women’s Weather Watch were trained in disaster risk reduction as well as how to identify protection concerns, particularly relating to GBV, and to engage with decision-making structures in order to advocate for measures to mitigate GBV risks throughout the response. However, in assessments of subsequent emergency responses, including to Cyclone Josie and Cyclone Keni, it was found that while the response and recovery to Cyclone Winston improved preparedness and the capacity of the existing national machinery on GBV to respond to a crisis, key gaps remain in accessibility of services in remote and otherwise isolated locations<sup>115</sup>. In addition, these locations lacked awareness of the gendered impacts of a crisis and the risks for GBV.

**Support for national capacity.** The GBV response to Cyclone Winston was able to build upon and support the strength of the existing national capacity, in particular through embedding the national women’s shelter (Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre) in to referral pathways, working collaboratively with the Fijian Police Force and the main referral hospital in the capital Suva, alongside directing resources to these and other national organisations. While collaboration with national-level organisations and systems was strong, greater emphasis and effort was required to effectively coordinate with and, where appropriate, support informal networks, including women’s organisations and other local support mechanisms already existing at the regional and village level. The evaluation of the CERF allocation for Cyclone Winston highlighted that “there are significant untapped local resources including NGOs, CSOs and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) that could be tapped to further strengthen future emergency responses and enhance service delivery coverage.”<sup>116</sup>

**Support for livelihoods, linking that support to GBV information-sharing.** As part of UN Women’s support to livelihoods for female market vendors, information about GBV-related

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<sup>114</sup> CERF, *Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator Report On The Use Of Cerf Funds Fiji Rapid Response Tropical Cyclone Winston 2016*, Available at: [https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/16-RR-FJI-18935-NR01\\_Fiji\\_RCHC.Report.pdf](https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/16-RR-FJI-18935-NR01_Fiji_RCHC.Report.pdf)

<sup>115</sup> Care, 2018 *Republic of Fiji Tropical Cyclone Josie and Tropical Cyclone Keni Rapid Gender, Protection and Inclusion Analysis*, April 2018, Available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RGA%20%28TC%20Josie\\_Keni%29%202018%20FINAL%20with%20Logo.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/RGA%20%28TC%20Josie_Keni%29%202018%20FINAL%20with%20Logo.pdf)

<sup>116</sup> CERF, *Resident / Humanitarian Coordinator Report On The Use Of Cerf Funds Fiji Rapid Response Tropical Cyclone Winston 2016*, Available at: [https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/16-RR-FJI-18935-NR01\\_Fiji\\_RCHC.Report.pdf](https://cerf.un.org/sites/default/files/resources/16-RR-FJI-18935-NR01_Fiji_RCHC.Report.pdf)

protection services was integrated into the training program, and temporary stalls were set up in markets with information on where to access GBV services.<sup>117</sup>

**Self-care for responders.** Following the immediate response to TC Winston, UNICEF supported a self-care workshop for social workers from around the country. The three-day debrief and orientation focused on psychosocial first aid and stress management and provided a space for social workers to tell stories of their experiences in responding to TC Winston.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> UNWomen, 2016, *Women Of Fiji Look For Support To Rebuild Their Livelihoods*, 26 February, 2016, Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/2/women-of-fiji-look-for-support-to-rebuild-their-livelihoods>

<sup>118</sup> UNICEF 2016, *Partner Update Cyclone Winston in Fiji & New from the Pacific*, 30 June 2016, available at: <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Pacific%20Partner%20Update%20%20as%20of%2030%20June%202016.pdf>

## 4. Ten Take-aways for Improved GBV Response in Natural Disasters

1. Natural disasters are the greatest cause of displacement across the world. Natural disasters, and the humanitarian emergencies they generate, are expected to continue to rise alongside global warming. Population growth and economic development will continue to be key determinants of human vulnerability to climate-related events and other natural hazards.
2. Many displacements from natural disasters happen in conflict-affected settings: of the 50 countries with the highest number of displacements from natural disasters in 2019, over half were also suffering from conflict-related violence and displacements. This underscores the importance of improving humanitarian capacity to meet the demands of both types of emergencies.
3. Women and girls are often significantly more affected than men and boys by emergencies, including being more likely to die as a result of an event—sometimes by huge margins. In the aftermath of an emergency, women and girls are at risk of multiple forms of gender-based violence. Although the nature and levels of exposure vary across the world, growing evidence suggests that intimate partner violence, child marriage, and sexual exploitation are among the most common issues.
4. While there are many contributing factors to females' comparative vulnerability in natural disasters, at the heart of this risk is the problem of gender discrimination. In settings with significant discrimination against women, the negative impact (including mortality) on females is high; by contrast, in settings where the economic and social status of women is relatively high, the mortality rate for men and women during and after disasters has been determined to be roughly the same. This means any successful efforts to promote women's and girls' safety during and following natural events must include—in both the short-term and long-term—attention to gender equality and women's empowerment.
5. At the same time, the humanitarian response must accelerate its efforts to prevent, mitigate and respond to incidents of GBV, using strategies that support sustainability of programming. Core global guidance on addressing GBV in humanitarian contexts is relevant to both conflict-related and natural disasters—this includes applying guiding principles, ensuring multi-sectoral response to survivors, integrating risk mitigation across all areas of humanitarian response, and undertaking prevention efforts that target social norms change. However, there are some important differences in response that will inform planning and scale-up of programming. There are good practices and lessons learned from settings around the world about some of the unique characteristics of disasters, and how to promote attention to GBV.
6. Among these are the fact that natural disasters are increasingly managed by governments, rather than international humanitarian architecture. As such, GBV actors must actively seek opportunities to work with national and local governments

to build their capacity to address GBV. One way in which GBV actors can build relationships with government actors is through targeted support to fill gaps in national response efforts, such as through facilitating delivery of GBV-related supplies, and/or supporting improved knowledge of responders about the value GBV risk mitigation in ensuring more effective response. Another way to improve government engagement is through establishing GBV coordination mechanisms as part of preparedness. Where working with the government directly is a challenge, but where the government has permitted the activation of the cluster system, working through the cluster system can be a strategy for enhancing national commitments to GBV, including activating a GBV Sub-Cluster in settings where one does not already exist.

7. Enhancing government commitment and capacity has been shown to be most successful when attention to GBV is integrated into disaster risk reduction management laws and policies, including preparedness and contingency planning. Regional and national climate change frameworks are another way to enhance attention to GBV related to natural disasters. It is important that governments have an understanding not only of the importance of specialized GBV response in disasters, but also risk mitigation measures. For long term change that reduces the impact of disasters, laws and policies must support transformative change towards gender equality.
8. A variety of data is increasingly being used to improve disaster response, representing important entry points for improving GBV-related data. Natural disasters exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and GBV. As such, understanding more about the nature and scope of GBV, as well as availability of services in disaster-prone areas is an important part of preparedness. Another important strategy to ensure that data informs better response in natural disasters is developing specific tools for and undertaking GBV rapid assessments in the aftermath of an emergency, as well as ensuring Standard Operating Procedures based on pre-and post-disaster service delivery assessment. However, as is the case in conflict-affected settings, the absence of data on the nature, scope and available services related to GBV is not an excuse to limit investments in GBV.
9. Just as disaster preparedness laws, policies and plans offer opportunities for improving attention to GBV in natural disasters, so do recovery frameworks. Ensuring GBV-specific elements in recovery frameworks provides an opportunity to reflect on learning from the emergency and ‘build back better’ the human, technical and other resources required for safe, ethical and effective GBV response in future disasters. Developing a GBV-specific recovery framework provides an important occasion when women and girls from affected areas can be mobilized to inform and lead planning. In addition, recovery frameworks are important entry points for ensuring longer-term support to addressing gender inequality that drives GBV.
10. In all aspects—preparedness, response and recovery--it is critical to ensure the engagement of women’s groups and organizations. In many regions of the world, women and girls are the most affected by natural disasters, yet they are often excluded from planning for and managing disaster response and recovery. Women’s

and girls' involvement in the development and management of early warning systems has specifically been shown to reduce the impact on them of natural disasters. Reducing the risk of and better responding to GBV before, during and after disasters requires the full engagement and leadership of women and girls from local to national levels.

# Annex 1: Selected Resources

## Annotated Tools and Guidelines

Asia Specific Forum on Women, Law and Development, 2006. Guidelines for Gender-sensitive Disaster Management: Practical Steps to Ensure Women's Needs Are Met and Women's Human Rights Are Respected, available at:

<https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/2726>

These Guidelines draw on the experiences of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development's staff (APFWLD) to formulate a list of practical, easy to follow steps that should be taken into account in responding to women's concerns in post-disaster situations. The steps are categorized into immediate, midterm and long-term responses and draw from reports of countries that were affected by the December 2004 Tsunami: Thailand, Aceh, India, Sri Lanka and the earthquake in northern Pakistan in October 2005.

Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, World Bank, UN Women, and European Union, 2018. *Disaster Recovery Guidance Series: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Disaster Recovery*, available at:

<https://www.gfdr.org/sites/default/files/publication/gender-equality-disaster-recovery.PDF>

These Guidelines analyse differences in female and male vulnerability to risks from natural hazards and their intersection with various markers of vulnerability such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation, as well as socioeconomic status, geographic context, cultural and religious beliefs, and migration status. The Guidelines make recommendations for the prioritization of gender-specific recovery needs and protecting the psychological and physical integrity of women, men and children, culminating with a five-pronged recovery framework for policy makers aiming for a gender responsive recovery process.

IFRC and Asia Pacific Zone, 2010. A Practical Guide to Gender-Sensitive Approaches to Disaster Management, available at:

<https://www.ifrc.org/PageFiles/96532/A%20Guide%20for%20Gender-sensitive%20approach%20to%20DM.pdf>

These Guidelines aim to help Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) incorporate effective gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches into their disaster management strategies when assisting communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. They are primarily drawn from the practical experiences of twelve National Societies and supplemented with six accompanying National Society case studies within the Asia Pacific region, highlighting key challenges and good practices for integrating gender into various stages of disaster management programming.

IUCN, UNDP and UNISDR, 2009. Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender Sensitive, available at: <https://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/9922>

This report summarizes policy and practical guidelines for national and local governments to further implement the Hyogo Framework for Action. The report includes a policy guideline on gender mainstreaming, and practical guidelines on how to institutionalize gender-sensitive risk assessments, implement gender-sensitive early warning systems, and use gender-sensitive indicators to monitor gender mainstreaming progress. Also included is a summary of the limited global progress in this task so far, and a list of further readings.

Pincha, C, 2008. Gender-Sensitive Disaster Management: A Toolkit for Practitioners, Oxfam and Nanban Trust, available at:

[https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/pincha\\_gender\\_sensitive\\_disaster\\_management\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/pincha_gender_sensitive_disaster_management_toolkit.pdf)

This Toolkit builds on comprehensive research on gender differential impacts of the Tsunami and gender mainstreaming strategies of NGOs in Tamil Nadu in Tsunami relief and rehabilitation efforts. It presents an array of tools for facilitating gender mainstreaming in disaster management, which were developed in consultation with NGO staff and grassroots women's federation members.

WHO, 2014. Gender, Climate Change and Disaster, available at

<https://www.who.int/globalchange/GenderClimateChangeHealthfinal.pdf>

This Report provides a review of the interactions between climate change, gender and health. It documents evidence for gender differences in health risks that are likely to be exacerbated by climate change, as well as adaptation and mitigation measures that can help to protect and promote health. The aim is to provide a framework to strengthen World Health Organization (WHO) support to Member States in developing health risk assessments and climate policy interventions that are beneficial to both women and men.

World Bank, Global Women's Institute and IDB, April 2015. Disaster Risk Management Brief, VAWG Briefing Series, available at:

[http://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sites/vawg/files/briefs/vawg\\_resource\\_guide\\_disaster\\_risk\\_management\\_brief\\_april\\_2015\\_0.pdf](http://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sites/vawg/files/briefs/vawg_resource_guide_disaster_risk_management_brief_april_2015_0.pdf)

This report reviews the intersection of Disaster Risk Management and VAWG and provides guidelines for addressing VAWG at the policy, institutional and community level in disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery efforts. It also provides a list of recommended resources for integrating attention to VAWG in disaster risk management and response.

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