A CALL TO ACTION: PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV) IN DISASTERS

What is GBV?
An umbrella term for any harmful act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to a man, woman, girl or boy on the basis of their gender. Gender-based violence is a result of gender inequality and abuse of power. It usually increases during disasters and conflicts. The fact that disasters often occur in areas of conflict suggests that the intersections between GBV, conflict and disasters requires more attention.

What are the types of GBV?
- Sexual, psychological and physical exploitation and abuse
- Rape
- Early marriage
- Domestic violence
- Forced trafficking and prostitution
- Denial of resources, opportunities or services

Why is it crucial to address gender in disasters?
- Women and children are 14 times more likely to die in disasters
- Out of 4,841 respondents interviewed three months after Cyclone Nargis, 31.4% were afraid they were going to be raped and 20.4% were worried about increased violence at home
- 245 children were intercepted from being trafficked after the 2015 Nepal earthquake

Silence and lack of data does not mean GBV is not happening
In the 2015 IFRC study on GBV prevention and response in disaster settings, respondents in Bangladesh and Samoa mentioned relocation after displacement, inequitable relief distribution and economic hardship after a disaster as triggers for GBV increasing. Safety for women and girls in evacuation centres and shelters is of primary concern.

Women and girls are not the only ones who are affected
- Sexual violence against men and boys has been reported in 25 conflict-affected countries between 1998 and 2009
- Over 1,700 transgender persons have been murdered in 63 countries in the past decade.


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International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
What the IFRC and National Societies in Asia Pacific are doing about it:
The primary aim is to reduce the risk of physical, psychological, and sexual and gender-based violence against girls, boys, women and men.

- Bangladesh Red Crescent Society is integrating violence prevention and response activities within the Community-Based Health and First Aid (cGBHFA) package.
- Myanmar Red Cross Society is planning for more gender sensitive relief distribution and safe shelter design.
- Samoa Red Cross Society is working together with the National Disaster Council to identify evacuation centres and shelters, safe for women and girls.

The IFRC is implementing the Minimum Standard Commitments to gender and diversity in Emergency Programming in all National Societies, offering training or use of these guidelines through our gender and diversity.

What other actors can do about it:

ALL ACTORS
- Assume GBV is taking place, even if no reliable data is available
- Increase awareness within organisations and communities that disasters can heighten the risk of GBV

GOVERNMENTS
- Apply the IASC and IFRC guidelines in specific organisational context
- Establish effective law enforcement mechanisms and procedures, including relevant criminal laws
- Implement, monitor and follow-up on Resolution 3 on Sexual and gender-based violence. Joint action on prevention and response
- Pay attention to GBV risks in disaster management laws, policies and plans.

HUMANITARIAN ACTORS
- Develop locally-appropriate processes to ensure that women, children and men can report GBV confidentially and in a timely manner.
- Improve reporting mechanisms and systems for data collection in emergencies
- In camp settings, establish committee that can report informally on GBV and provide support mechanisms
- Develop and ensure implementation of internal codes of conduct on child protection and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

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