WOMEN IN DISASTER: CASE STUDY OF KOSI FLOOD IN BIHAR

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ABSTRACT

In the present study “Women in Disaster: Case Study of Kosi Flood in Bihar” I have tried to locate women in the wake of devastating kosi flood, having focus on women’s health and the issue of domestic violence. Additionally, data pertaining to disaster experiences and losses, general and reproductive health, psychiatric symptoms and quality of life assessment of respondent was also collected.

In order to understand how adversely women’s health is affected in the wake of disaster, the aspect of general and reproductive health, mental health problems and overall quality of life were assessed. Additionally domestic violence was studied with the focus on intimate partner violence. In researching women in disaster situation, the theoretical and methodological orientation is guided by the vulnerability theory to disaster. In this study, mixed method approach has been used which combines both the qualitative as well as quantitative methods. For the purpose of the study two high floods affected areas i.e. Hridyanagar and Bhawanipur including some part of Mansi Piprahi and two least/unaffected areas from village Fatehpur and Bhimnagar was selected. During the period, cross-sectional survey was conducted with the total sample size of 250. 125 from high flood affected areas where populations were displaced for longer period of time (at least more than a month) from their original homeland and the same from the unaffected/low-affected areas without displacement with the help of purposive sampling. Ever-married women aged 17-49 were eligible for the study that were recruited after informed consent.

Self-assessment of respondents on their health, in general indicates a striking difference between the two areas. In both flood affected and unaffected areas, ill health, miscarriage, abortion, death of child after birth was attributed to inadequate nutrition and health services by the respondents. Other factors identified were cultural barrier and women autonomy in decision making. While examining the mental health problems among women in form of anxiety, depression and PTSD it was found that there was an increase in mental distress among affected population. When comparing quality of life, among affected and unaffected group, a highly significant difference was found between the groups, on both the subscales, physical health summary score
and mental health summary score. In need assessment, need for alternate employment opportunity within their own community, health and educational facilities were emphasized by the respondents. Further, by comparing the data from the affected and unaffected areas, occurrence of violence in past one year and causes and context of violence it may be concluded that the increase in the certain cases of emotional violence may be triggered due to flood disaster. Alcohol abuse and DV was related in some or the other way, however the relation is of cause and effect is a debatable issue. Underreporting is more likely in the aftermath of disaster, as women were having the double dose of disaster, the flood as well as DV. Under such traumatic conditions, intruding into one’s private matter is highly sensitive endeavor.