

GENDERED CONCERNS IN
COASTAL DISASTERS:
AN ANALYSIS
OF WOMEN'S POLITICAL
SUBORDINATION AND
PROSPECTS FOR
EMPOWERMENT

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Rationale

- A growing number of Philippine population live along the country's extensive coastline

- Coastal vulnerability to disasters has heightened due to global environmental change and rapid capitalistic globalization

- Disasters are gendered

“ Power relations of age, race or ethnicity, social class, and *gender* shape the societal experience of disasters, just as they frame that “normal life” which is so profoundly disrupted by events like floods, toxic spills, or earthquakes.” (Enarson, 1999)

Literature on Gender and Disasters

- ◆ Weist, Mocellin and Motsisi (1994)
- ◆ Elaine Enarson (1996, 1998, 1999, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2012)
- ◆ Betty Hearn Morrow (1997, 1998)
- ◆ Pincha (2008)

Gender Concerns in Disasters

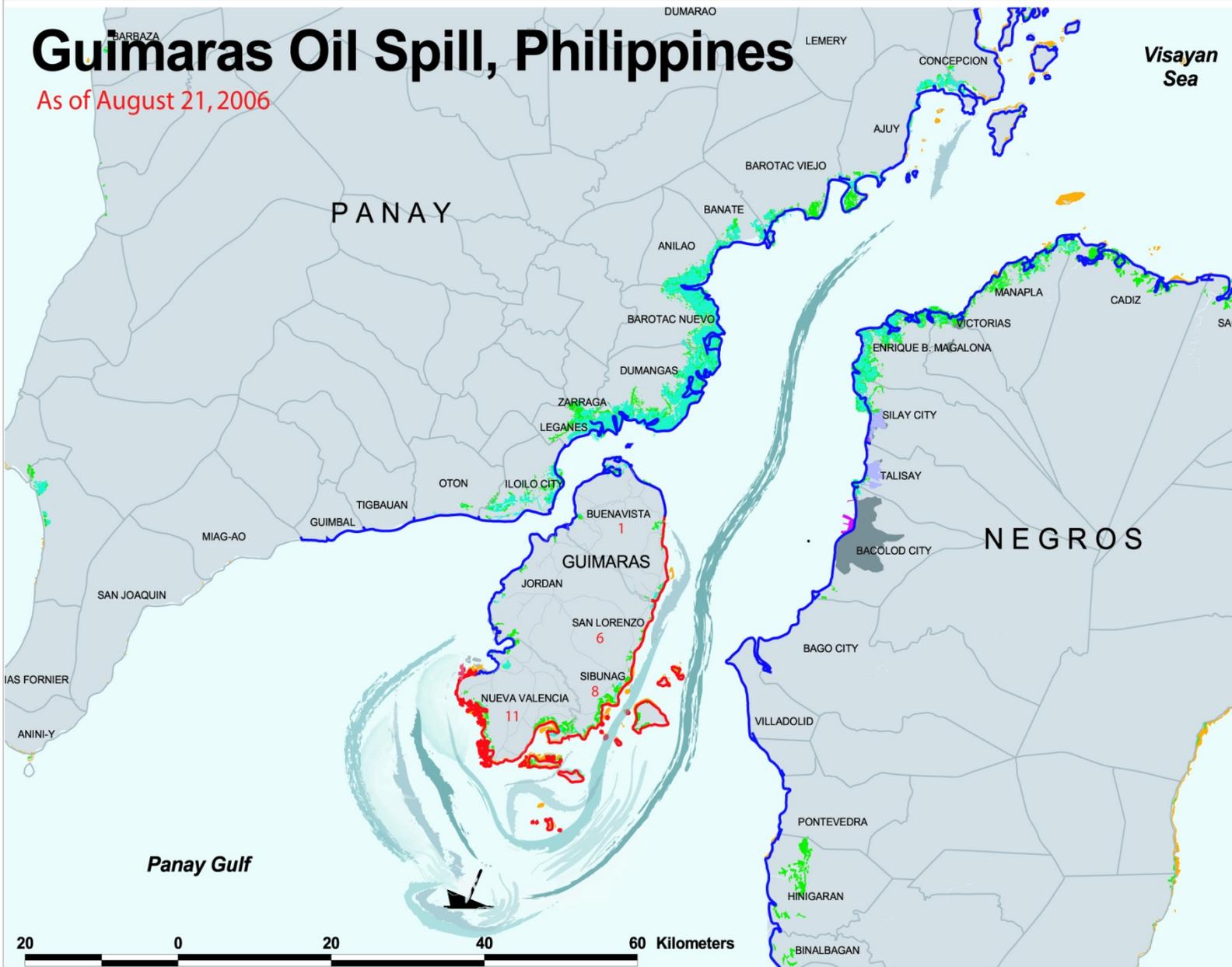
- ◆ Women and men are differentially affected by disasters, with women more likely to bear higher stress levels
- ◆ Contemporary disaster response mechanisms remain gender-blind
- ◆ Particular women's needs or concerns are usually unmet during disaster response and recovery

Some gender and coastal disaster lessons drawn from

An Interdisciplinary research on women's experiences of gender bias following the oil spill in the coasts of Guimaras, Island, Philippines

Guimaras Oil Spill, Philippines

As of August 21, 2006



- Spill Source
- Coastlines Under Threat
- Areas Contaminated
- Municipal Boundaries
- Coral reefs
- Mangrove areas
- Industries
- Residential areas
- City area
- Fishpond areas

No. of barangays affected:

Nueva Valencia	- 11
Sibunag	- 8
San Lorenzo	- 6
Buenavista	- 1

Data based on field reports and aerial survey.

Map prepared by:
Conservation Research, Mapping
and Systems Devt. (CRMSD) Unit
WWF - Philippines



Oil spill Affected Areas

Municipality/ Town	Population	Number of Households	Number of Households Affected
Nueva Valencia	35,475	7,757	2,185
Sibunag	19,132	3,679	1,088
San Lorenzo	23,293	4,395	371
TOTAL	77,900	15,831	3,644



Research methods used

- ❑ Focus group discussions (FGD) with women from 8 most affected villages
- ❑ Interview survey with mothers, adolescent girls and elderly women
- ❑ Key Informant Interviews (KII) with village leaders, political leaders and government agency personnel

Significant Findings

- ◆ Stereotyped gender roles abound in the affected communities
- ◆ Women felt discriminated against in terms of information dissemination
- ◆ Some daughters/young girls had to stop schooling or skipped classes to take over household chores or look after younger siblings
- ◆ Older/Senior women worked as domestics in other places to financially help out

- ◆ Women's needs/concerns (e.g. help with household chores and childcare) were subsumed under general community needs by relief workers, planners and community leaders
- ◆ Decision-making within households was male-dominated

Women's Political Subordination



Disaster mitigation followed a militaristic top-down tradition

Women often attended community meetings but were rarely represented in actual policy decision-making contexts

Women's needs or concerns were rarely addressed by institutional disaster response

- mothers were concerned over the nutritional intake of their families as relief goods almost always only comprise of rice, noodles and sardines
- women expressed distress over heightened alcohol consumption of men which led to domestic quarrels, verbal abuse and even instances of wife battering
- young women experienced sexual harassment in relocation sites

Conclusions Arising from the Oil Spill Study

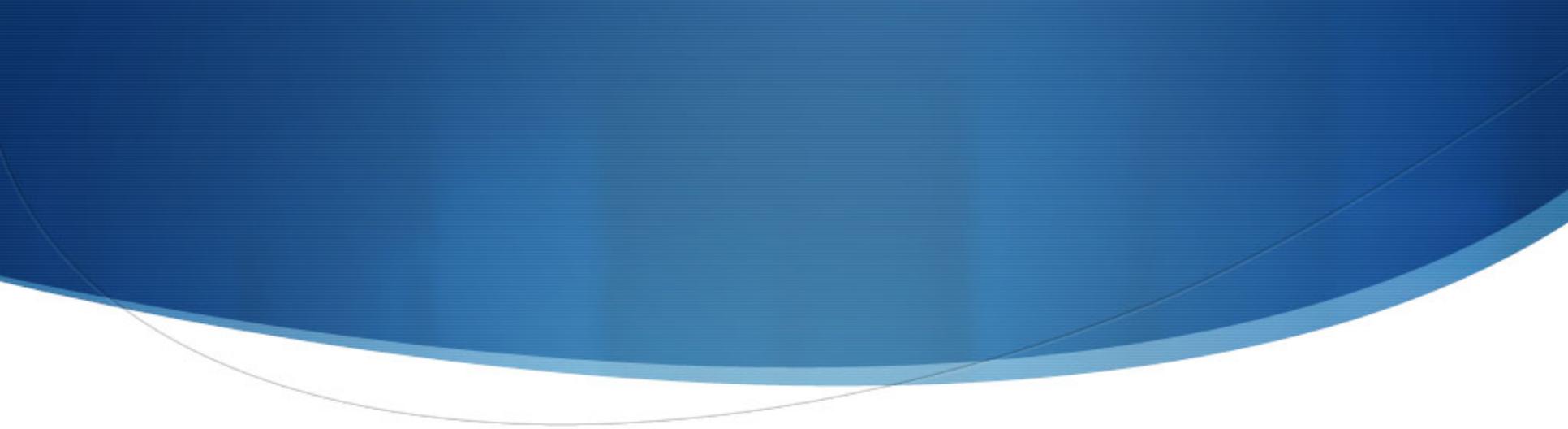
- ◆ Institutional responses / disaster mitigation addressed the household level, mostly ignoring gender needs
- ◆ Prevailing gender biases against women in the community were maintained
- ◆ Some biases like Violence Against Women (VAW) were heightened after the oil spill
- ◆ Lack of women's consultation at time of disaster response leads to mismatch in relief operations and women's needs/concerns

Recommendations for Gender-sensitive coastal disaster work

- Disaster response and recovery efforts have to consider the intersections of vulnerabilities, including those pertaining to gender biases
- Women need to be made part of decision-making
- Women need to be organized to minimize their experience of political subordination



- ◆ Disaster contexts highlight women's resilience and can provide opportunities for women's empowerment if harnessed by institutional responses
- ◆ There is still a need to mainstream gender sensitivity in coastal disaster response and mitigation in the Philippines
- Should take into consideration masculinist institutional policy structures



Thank you for your attention!