ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN DURING DISASTERS:

THE CASE OF GUIMARAS, PHILIPPINES OIL SPILL

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Women are very vulnerable in disaster situations. Female mortality rate is not only higher, there is also increased incidence of violence against women and children after catasprophic events in areas where gender bias is tolerated (UNDP, 2010). Disasters therefore tend to worsen the manifestations of gender bias.

This study is an analysis of coastal women’s experiences of gender bias particularly economic marginalization following the oil spill in Guimaras Island, Philippines. The main objective of the research is to determine the economic impacts of the oil spill on women and find out if they were marginalized in terms of economic interventions in the aftermath of the disaster. Using multi-stage sampling technique, 112 female adolescents, mothers and elderly were chosen as study participants. Primary data were collected using key informant interviews, focus group discussions and household survey. Results show that one of the most immediate consequence of the oil spill was the disruption of fishing and related livelihoods. Women and children were marginalized most because it severely affected the domain of their fishing activity, the shorelines and shallow waters. Economic marginalization was exacerbated because women’s occupations and needs were considered less important, leading to minimal institutional interventions.

The results of the study affirm that disasters have distinct effects on women. It also highlights the importance of gender perspective in analyzing disaster impacts. The research recommends that disasters should be analyzed using the gender lens. Intervention programs from preparedness (e.g. early warning systems) to rehabilitation (e.g. relief operation) should be gender-sensitive and gender-fair.