



# Impact of COVID 19 and Disasters on Women in Bangladesh

The National Resilience Programme (NRP), through UN Women, undertook a gender analysis in Bangladesh to gather quantitative and qualitative evidence on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the series of disasters in 2020-2021 on women and vulnerable groups. The target population includes adolescent girls, married women, marginalized women, married women from low-income households, sex workers and the transgender communities. Data was also collected from men and boys in the communities to allow for a comparative analysis. The findings from this study provide thorough insight on the impact of COVID-19 and natural disasters in Bangladesh on (i) unpaid care work (ii) women's livelihood, income and food security (iii) women's leadership and decision-making authority (iv) mobility (v) gender-based violence (vi) access to health services (vii) WASH and (viii) access to education. The survey was undertaken in seven districts – Khulna, Jamalpur, Satkhira, Cox's Bazaar, Kurigram, Dhaka and Narayanganj - on 368 samples.

## Snapshot

### Reduced average monthly income

- **Average monthly income decreased** for married by **70%** and for marginalized women by **54%** during pandemic induced lockdowns through 2020 and 2021.
- At least **two out of every three female** respondents saw their family **income decrease** due to disaster related impacts through 2020 and 2021.

### Inability to access health services and sexual and reproductive health care

**1 out of every 2** women experienced a **negative effect on physical health** due to lack of access to proper health services and poor WASH conditions during disasters.

### Increased vulnerability to Gender Based Violence

**19%** married women, **17%** adolescent girls, **8%** marginalized women **faced harassment by different types of workers/ service providers** involved in relief distribution in the shelter centers during disasters.

### Increased burden of unpaid care work

- Women spent **28% more time on domestic duties** than they did before the pandemic.
- **40%** women and girls **experienced increased burden of unpaid care work during disasters.**

### Reduced access to WASH

During disasters, **39%** of the women respondents **resorted to open defecation.**

### Reduced access to education

**Almost a third of the respondents reported that they stopped their children's education** due to financial vulnerability during COVID-19

### Reduced mobility, voice, leadership and decision-making authority

- **1 out of 5 women** were **forced by their husbands and family members to take loan**
- **1 out of every 3** women were **mentally upset due to mobility restrictions** during emergency situations that affected their access to different services (health, social services etc.)



## Unpaid Care Work

Lockdowns increased the burden of unpaid care work by

**41%**  
for married women

**40%**  
for adolescent girls

**27%**  
for marginalized women



**women had to bear the challenging responsibility** of fetching water during disasters

**More women (62%) than men (21%)** had the primary responsibility of maintaining sanitation during disaster



## Women's livelihood, income and food security

**Average monthly income decreased** for sex workers by **74%** (BDT 15464 to BDT 4055) during lockdown.

**In transgender communities,** their average **monthly income reduced by 70%** (BDT 10796 to BDT 3272) during lockdown.

**64%**  
marginalized women

**49%**  
transgender persons

**31%**  
sex workers

**experienced acute food scarcity** during floods.



## Women's voice, leadership, decision making and mobility



women expressed that **increased conflict** during lockdown **affected joint decision making** among family members.



married women had to take shelter in a relative's house against their will during disaster, proving that their **role in the family is complimentary not independent.**

**61%**  
adolescent girls

**60%**  
married women

**39%**  
marginalized women

**couldn't visit local health service centres or go to doctors** due to their mobility restrictions during lockdown.



# Gender-Based Violence



women and girls were **physically mistreated** (physically abused, beaten by husbands) during lockdown.



were **subjected to sexual coercion by their husband and close relatives** during lockdown.



**women respondents** reported that **young girls** are more vulnerable to **physical/sexual abuse** compared to others in shelter homes during disasters.



sex workers



transgender Persons

involved in sex work experienced **negative behaviour from clients** during disasters.

**Cases of physical violence almost doubled** for the sex workers,

**54%** private sex workers experienced **sexual and physical violence from their clients.**

**Child Helpline 1098**, run in collaboration with UNICEF, said the reported cases of child marriages received **450 phone calls** related to child marriage in April 2020



## Access to health services and sexual and reproductive health care

**45%**

married women

**41%**

marginalized women

**38%**

adolescent girls

**couldn't afford sanitary products and hygiene materials** during lockdown.



transgender persons



sex workers

**didn't have access to healthcare services**

during disasters.



sex workers



transgender persons

**couldn't find doctors for medical treatment** during lockdown.



## Access to WASH facilities and services

**48%**

adolescent girls

**52%**

married women

**38%**

marginalized women

**faced difficulty in using sanitation facilities** at night during disasters.

During disasters, **52% females** faced problems in getting access to water for sanitation compared to **38% males**.



## Access to education



adolescent girls and



adolescent boys

**missed school during disasters** as the schools are used as shelters

### Study conducted by



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