

Module 7 Animation

“We lost everything.

“Typhoon Odette took our lives away –

our home, our livelihoods.

“Some lost their family members.

“Some have already left.

But we stayed.

“These were the saddest and scariest days of my life.”

This is Mariel, a 16 year old girl from the Philippines whose village was affected by Typhoon Odette that hit the country in December 2021.

It ravaged the islands and coastal communities in the east of the country and flooded towns and cities.

Mariel is one of the millions of Filipinos who were affected by the super typhoon devastating her village.

Her experience is also an example of the gendered impacts of disasters.

“The typhoon almost wiped out the entire village.

“There were just ruins of houses left.

“I cried seeing how everything was destroyed.

“Even our local shop where we get our necessities was ruined.”

When the storm had cleared, Mariel's family and other villagers set up temporary shelters.

“I got my period during this time and I didn't know what to do about it.

“To make things worse, it was almost impossible to come by sanitary pads, especially as the storm wiped out our local shop.”

However, in the shelters there was no water, light, or ways to communicate with the outside world.

Before the rescue team arrived, Mariel's family had to walk to the next village for the nearest water source.

“In my village, collecting water is a woman's responsibility and because I'm the eldest among five siblings, I had to help my mother.

“The journey was long and the path blocked by trees that had fallen to the ground during the storm.

“At the water filling station, I had to queue 3 to 4 hours.

“It was tiring and very stressful for me, and carrying the water back was heavy.”

From the experiences of Mariel, we can see how people are impacted differently by disasters.

In Mariel's case, the gendered division of labour, where women are meant to fetch water, and the obstacles to maintaining menstrual hygiene expose Mariel to new risks.

“When the rescue team arrived, they arranged consultation meetings with my village to hear about our needs.”

“I wanted to attend the meetings to tell them about my experience and create change, but only elderly men from the village seemed to participate.

“Even if I was to attend, I am not sure I would feel comfortable talking about my issues there.”

Apart from acute challenges, Mariel's experience demonstrates that power dynamics and inequalities create obstacles for fair and equitable participation in decision making spaces.

The risk is that gender related issues continue to be neglected.

Therefore, gender-responsive action in the context of extreme weather events is a crucial aspect for more effective disaster risk reduction.