Slow violence and layered disasters: Gender-based violence before, during and after cyclones

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Abstract

This paper investigates the mutual relationship of gender-based violence (GBV) and cyclone disasters. Evidence is sparse on this topic, especially in-depth research attending to the socio-economic and cultural aspects of locality. The research reported here is a case study of a coastal region in Bangladesh, carried out shortly after Cyclone Roanu (2016), that aimed to shed light on the mechanisms linking GBV to cyclones through the eyes of survivors. The paper maps out different forms, experiences and impacts of GBV before, during and after cyclones. It argues that cyclones lead directly and indirectly to GBV, and that GBV makes women and children more vulnerable to the effects of disasters. Climate change, poverty and economic loss compound this cyclical relationship. We develop a conceptual framing, that draws on Nixon's (2011) 'slow violence', to understand the layering of forms of violence that operate on what appear to be different temporal and spatial scales.

Introduction

It is well known that gender-based violence (GBV) increases during humanitarian crises (CARE International, 2013; Enarson, 2012; Goulds, 2013; Wiest et al., 1994; Baden et al., 1994; Neumayer and Plumper, 2007; MacDonald, 2005; Pittaway et al., 2007). The experience of several natural and humanitarian disasters over the last two decades shows that various forms of GBV increase in post-disaster periods, becoming a second disaster for the largely female victims; for example evidence in the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in the USA in 2005, the New Zealand snowstorm in 2006, earthquakes in China in 2008 and Haiti in 2010, and the BP oil spill in Florida in 2010 (MacDonald, 2005; Houghton et al., 2010; Chan and Zhang, 2011; MADRE et al., 2011; Patterson, 2011 in Enarson, 2012). However, accurate data on incidence are in short supply, as are in-depth studies that seek to understand the contextual, cultural and structural factors underlying the association between disasters and GBV. This is particularly the case for the lower income countries in the Global South which are the most affected by morbidity and mortality arising from disasters.

There is a pressing need for information on the spectrum and context of GBV during humanitarian crises, and for the development of methodological approaches that offer new information about experience and causality (Hossain and McAlpine, 2017). Though existing research is scarce (Enarson, 2012; Koenig et al., 2003), the evidence that exists strongly suggests that GBV increases during and after disasters worldwide, is likely to be a highly significant factor affecting a range of health and social outcomes, and poses a key issue for responders and service providers. However, there are a number of complicating factors in undertaking such analyses. First, rates of GBV during non-disaster periods are often unknown, with most incidents unlikely to be reported to the authorities, even where national data collection takes place. This is a global problem but especially severe in disaster prone countries where data and information on GBV may be limited and irregular (Rezwana, 2018a). Second, there are strong cultural forces that militate against survivors talking about GBV and thus reporting it to researchers. For example, these include female and male victims of rape and sexual assault not wanting to be identified for fear of social humiliation, and female victims of domestic abuse fearing further abuse if their husbands find out about the disclosure. Again, these challenges to research can be most pronounced in the most disaster-prone regions. Third, the most affected regions may be those that are least accessible, in geographical and cultural terms, to researchers. And fourth, the methodologies used in research seeking to quantify GBV rarely produce the kinds of rich or 'thick' empirical material that might help identify the complex mechanisms that connect disasters to GBV.

To address these lacunae, the research reported here took a qualitative approach to document and analyse the different forms of GBV associated with recent cyclone disasters in Bangladesh. By collating the experiences and reflections of local women, men and service providers a period of time after cyclones had occurred, it aimed to develop survivor-led understandings of the relationships between cyclones and GBV. This leads us to identify a number of contextual, cultural and structural factors in a particular region of Bangladesh that both pre-condition GBV and exacerbate it when disasters occur. As we go on to argue, disasters may lead to rises in GBV, but GBV can also be seen to aggravate disasters: as a structurally-rooted form of oppression, GBV significantly increases both vulnerability to disasters and their social and economic impacts.

In the latter part of the paper we theorise these relationships by drawing on Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence, which he developed to describe the very gradually unfolding but deadly environmental damage resulting from climate change, pollution and warfare. Nixon mentions both domestic violence and post-traumatic stress as potential applications of slow violence, though does

not develop them further (see George, 2014, and de Leuuw, 2016, who apply the idea of slow violence to the issue of gendered violence). Here, we consider what it means for the idea of slow violence when disasters are 'layered', in other words they are strengthened by, and generate, different sorts of violence that manifest on varying timescales. Slow violence 'occurs gradually and out of sight, [it is] a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all' (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). At first glance, this definition may appear incongruous when applied to either GBV or the violence of disaster itself, as both forms of harm are often imagined as sudden and short-lived. But just as the causation of disasters is now recognised as revealing itself over multiple time scales (Knowles, 2014), GBV and the harm and trauma it creates manifests as immediate and chronic crises simultaneously.

It is quite often stated that climate change is leading to increased violence around the world (Parenti, 2012), with the scientific studies most often cited analysing the effects of rising temperatures on civil conflicts (e.g. Hsiang et al., 2011). However, much of the evidence on this relationship is open to critique or offers only limited insight, because of methods and causal connections that are unlikely to capture the complex relationships involved (O'Lear, 2016). Women are disproportionately at risk from the effects of climate change (Nagel, 2015; Terry, 2009; WHO, 2014) and women also bear the brunt of climate change-induced violence, despite being radically under-represented in decision-making bodies on climate change (Oberhaus, 2016). As O'Lear (2016) details, slow violence is also enabled by the discursive or epistemic constructions of crises and disasters, in this case the mobilisation of particular technoscientific narratives of climate change. Instead, research seeking to explore the links between climate change and violence 'must be carefully operationalized at particular geographic, temporal, and social scales' (Saleyhan, 2014, p. 3; George, 2014).

To understand the relationship between GBV and disasters (natural or humanitarian), different approaches are needed that can begin to elucidate the complex mechanisms between these phenomena. In so doing, it is important to reduce our scale of analysis to examine specific effects (in this case, the damage caused by cyclones) and their detailed interconnections with specific forms of GBV, and to situate analysis in the spatial and cultural contexts of those localities and regions affected.

In the rest of the paper, we first outline the background to the two issues of GBV and disasters in Bangladesh. After outlining the methodology of the study, we draw on survivors' testimony to

describe experiences of GBV before, during and after cyclone disasters, and the impacts that they had. We then analyse the relationships between GBV, disasters and other forms of social and environmental injustice using and extending the framing of slow violence, before drawing some conclusions.

Background: GBV in Bangladesh

Definitions of GBV and its cultural variation

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015) defines GBV as 'an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females' (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015, p. 5). It includes any act that 'results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (WHO, 2016). However, gender identity and roles vary widely across societies and cultures, and so do designations of GBV and social and legal responses to it. Though acts of GBV violate a number of universal human rights, 'many - but not all - forms of GBV are criminal acts in national laws and policies; this differs from country to country, and the practical implementation of laws and policies can vary widely' (Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2015, p. 5). Indeed, not all forms of GBV are widely perceived as violence, but rather perceptions of them are located in local cultures that govern gender roles and responsibilities. For example, this is the case in Uttar Pradesh in India and Sierra Leone (Care International, 2013; Koenig et al., 2003,) and with regard to child forced marriage in Niger (75% of girls are married before 18 years), in Chad (68% of girls) and in Bangladesh (66% of girls) (UNICEF 2013 in ICRW 2016). Many forms of gender-based violence around the world are culturally endorsed to different extents, including child abuse, trafficking, sexual assault, honour killings, forced marriage and genital mutilation. Among the different forms of GBV, the most common form is domestic violence, which is shrouded in different societies' cultures and traditions. Domestic violence creates long-lasting fear and trauma, which reinforce the abuser's control over the abused person. Affecting vastly greater numbers of people than global terrorism, it has impacts on many aspects of society (Pain, 2014). It is important to point out that, amongst our respondents (except for a few of the male respondents), domestic violence was widely condemned and considered to be a crime. Despite its ubiquity and impacts, however, in a patriarchal society those with responsibility for responding to domestic violence (parents, local government, community elders, etc) tend to consider it a private rather than public matter and

some see it as a tradition to keep discipline at home. Likewise, child forced marriages are mostly arranged by families, shrouded in secrecy but with tacit support of communities (Rezwana, 2018a) and are not reported as violence (Onyejekwe, 2004). In this way, 'GBV is often hidden from view and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice' (CARE International, 2013, p. 9). Because of this hidden nature, the research reported here emphasises understanding GBV from survivors' own perspectives.

Disasters and GBV in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the fifth most disaster-prone country in the world (The World Bank, 2016; ICIMOD, 2012). The country is affected by tropical cyclones, tornadoes, thunderstorms, tropical depressions, floods, riverbank erosion, arsenic contamination and earthquakes (Banglapedia, 2015). These disasters have gendered impacts, and there are always more female victims than male (Rezwana, 2018a). Cultural and social attitudes create significant social and economic differences amongst the population (Nahar et al., 2014); in particular, gender identity and poor economic conditions create a complex situation for female victims, making them more vulnerable in disasters (Canon, 2002; Sultana, 2011). Sultana (2010, p. 48) suggests that women face more 'marginalization and oppression than their male counterparts' during disasters which might lead to increased GBV. However, GBV is a major social problem in Bangladesh during non-disaster periods, with common forms of violence including child marriage, wife beating, rape, acid throwing, physical torture, dowry violence, trafficking and others. This country had the fourth highest rate of child forced marriage in the world in 2013 (UNICEF, 2013 in ICRW, 2016). According to a recent Government report 'Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey 2015' in 2016, 80.2% of currently married women in Bangladesh are abused by their husbands at least once in a lifetime, and 41.7% of female victims of physical or sexual violence suffered physical injuries (*The Daily Star,* 2016). Moreover, it is considered that 'the rape violence situation is aggravating rather than improving' (BBS, 2013, p. 133), with 512 rape incidents reported and 26 deaths caused by rape between January to September 2016 (ASK, 2016).

Such statistics are likely to represent only the tip of the iceberg, given under-reporting. A recent Government report shows that 72.7% of women affected by GBV do not share their experiences with anyone, and only 2.6% sought legal support (*The Daily Star*, 2016). What this amounts to is a pervasive general condition of GBV during non-disaster periods, which raises questions about the extent, nature and effects of GBV during and after disasters in Bangladesh. This paper begins to address this research gap, based on empirical research located in a remote location of disaster-prone Bangladesh. We go on to suggest that it is no coincidence that 'most of the 25 countries with

the highest child marriages are considered fragile states, or at high risk of natural disasters' (Goulds, 2013, p. 142). Detailed data on the gendered impacts of disasters are not easily available in lower income countries (Bradshaw and Fordham, 2013; Rezwana, 2018a), and data on GBV in disasters are rarely available in Bangladesh, except for a few individual studies (Sultana, 2009, 2010; Rashid and Michaud, 2000).

Case Study Site

Our study was located in Barguna, a coastal district of Bangladesh. Barguna is one of the remotest districts, 247 km from the capital city Dhaka (RHD, 2007) with a population of 893,000 and population density of 488 per square kilometre. The male-female ratio is 100:96 in this district, and the average literacy rate of 57.6% is significantly lower among females. Barguna's economy is predominantly agriculture based (out of total holdings 71.93% are farmers) (BBS, 2013) and most of the inhabitants are in the poorest socio-economic group (Health Bulletin, 2013). Facilities such as electricity, water supply and road networks are insufficient to meet needs, even in the urban areas (municipalities). There is also an insufficient number of healthcare centres and medical staff (only 33 doctors work in the district, of 141 authorised posts), which increases health care insecurity for the inhabitants (Health Bulletin, 2013). The region is often hit by natural disasters like cyclones and coastal flooding (Miah et al., 2004). Cyclone disasters have a long history, with severe instances in 1935, 1965, 1970, 2007 and, most recently, Cyclone Mahasen in 2013 and Cyclone Roanu in 2016. Cyclone Sidr in 2007 was the most severe disaster the region has experienced, leading to the loss of 1,335 lives in Barguna (about 40% of casualties nationwide), destroying 60-70% of crops and 95,412 houses either fully or partially (NIRAPAD, 2007 cited in Tamima, 2009). During Cyclone Mahasen in 2013, only seven people died but around 60,000 were affected, with 6,856 houses completely destroyed (CDMP, 2014). Most recently, Cyclone Roanu hit Barguna, heralded by danger signal number seven on a scale of one to ten, and damaging 48 bridges in the region. Any cyclone poses a great threat for the health of Barguna residents, exacerbating the poor socio-economic conditions and insufficient healthcare facilities in the district.

Gendered health impacts and healthcare access, and increased rates of GBV, further intensify women's problems in Barguna during and after disasters (Rezwana, 2018a). Barguna is a conservative society and strongly patriarchal. Women are expected to be dependent on men for money, information and decisions; women's labour is mostly confined to the home, and they often

need a chaperone to visit other places. As we go on to discuss, these social expectations increase women's vulnerability to disasters as well as to GBV.

Methodology

The study took a grounded qualitative approach to identify and explore GBV in a single case study of the relationship between cyclones (primarily the very recent Cyclone Roanu) and GBV in the Barguna region. The research team initially spoke to key informants from among the local residents, municipal and local government and NGOs in Barguna, and through these contacts we applied snowballing methods to recruit respondents to the research. Through four group discussions, 45 individual interviews and periods of observation, the research aimed to address the research questions in a sensitive, ethical and culturally appropriate way, asking: (1) What are the problems of GBV as women define them? (2) What are the effects of disasters on GBV and vice versa? Following a grounded theory approach, the questions were subject to iterative development, as the researchers learnt from women and men the issues that they and others have faced during cyclone events.

Several field visits were conducted to collect data from remote areas of Barguna. The first was just after Cyclone Roanu in 2016. This visit helped to establish Barguna as the study area, and began to explore the key issues that fed into the study design. Short discussions with the affected residents and observing the impacts of the disaster helped to understand the severity of the cyclone. We observed damaged houses, roads and the poor condition of cyclone shelters, and increased insecurity in the affected areas due to lack of strong infrastructure. The second visit involved recruiting and interviewing eight key informants, training the research assistants and piloting the methods. In the main three-month fieldwork period, in-depth interviews and questionnaires were conducted with 29 female survivors of GBV, who were identified following snowballing methods as described above. We included men in the sample in order to offer additional perspectives on the factors underlying GBV in this particular context, and eight male respondents were also interviewed. The female respondents were 17 to 50 years in age. Most of the female respondents were of very poor socio-economic status (as compared with a poverty line equivalent to USD 1.9 PPP; World Bank, 2017), and nearly half were housewives dependent on the family income for economic support. The rest worked as day labourers, housemaids, students and NGO junior staff. Most of the male respondents were businessmen, NGO officials or teachers. Two of the male respondents

identified as GBV perpetrators – they were already known in the locality for beating their wives. In addition, one male survivor voluntarily shared his experiences of sexual abuse when a child. All of the respondents shared not only their own experiences but also examples of GBV they had witnessed among their relatives and neighbours.

It was challenging to find respondents who were survivors of a range of forms of GBV and were willing to speak about it. On many occasions, the team found survivors who had agreed earlier to talk, but changed their minds. Because of the sensitive nature of the research and the cultural context, a strict ethical protocol was developed and adhered to (see Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). The lead researcher and research assistants are all Bangladeshi and familiar with the local culture of the region. Several meetings were held with potential respondents in a location of their choosing, so that they felt they could speak in privacy and in confidence. In the introductory meeting, priority was given to introducing the research and interviewer to the potential respondents to answer their questions about the research and gain their trust. After getting their permission, interviews were conducted in the second meeting or later, however in some cases several visits to the respondent's house or work place were needed. Questions on GBV were never directly asked during the interviews; rather, we waited for respondents to volunteer their experiences.

We now go on to present and discuss the research findings, situating these within existing literatures. We have divided reports of GBV and its context into three stages: before, during and after cyclones, in order to help identify the connections to and impacts of the disasters this region has experienced. Because of the grounded qualitative nature of the research, our focus is on survivors' accounts which are rarely heard in this region. Our aim is not to provide a quantitative portrait of GBV, but rather focus on everyday lived experiences; but where such data exist from other research we draw it into our discussion.

GBV before, during and after cyclone disasters

Before: forms of GBV in Barguna

First, respondents were asked for their perceptions of the prevalence and nature of GBV in Barguna. According to their responses, GBV is a very common and chronic occurrence within the communities they live in during non-disaster periods. It includes early marriage, domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, eve teasing, dowry violence and psychological abuse . Of these, wife beating, early marriage and dowry violence are the most common.

According to the Bangladesh Government about 72.6% of ever-married Bangladeshi women are abused by their husbands (BBS, 2016). The most common reasons for wife beating (or accurately, triggers for it, given that it is a long-term repeated crime) offered by respondents are dowries, poverty, extra-marital relationships, adultery and extra marriages, and tradition. Of these, dowry is the most common, as nearly every marriage in Barguna involves some form of dowry violence. Often the amount of dowry money promised by the bride's parents is beyond their capacity and they are unable to pay it on time. As a result, husbands beat their wives. One survivor explained how her husband beat her for dowry money:

'He says, "I do not want to keep you. I want to marry into a rich family, so that I can have more things. Your father could not give anything". That day he hit me on my forehead. It still hurts.'

Several other strong relationships between GBV, poverty and social inequality arise from the data. For example, wife beating also increases when poverty strikes a family (see more in Slabbert, 2016). Many respondents described how when a husband loses his job or property, or simply does not want to work, he becomes violent towards his wife. Taking loans out also creates tension among poor families which exacerbates wife beating. Extra-marital relationships, adultery and extra marriages are also important triggers. According to the respondents, when men are in extra-marital relationships or visit prostitutes, they start avoiding their wives and becoming arrogant and violent at home. In many cases, they leave or abandon their wives and remarry. However, women are also beaten by their husband and his family members in the name of tradition. A male respondent explained in the interview how these traditions had been followed for generations:

'The father thinks that if he marries off his daughter she will be under the supervision of her husband. If she does anything wrong he has the right to punish her. Actually, as the father saw his forefathers commit this behaviour towards their wife, he also possesses the same social attitude and behaviour towards his wife and daughter.'

Not only husbands, but in many cases other members of the family such as mother-in-laws and sister-in-laws may join in, increasing the vulnerability of women. Research elsewhere has revealed that this tradition is far from unique to Bangladesh, for example in one study in Iraq, 63% women agreed that a husband is justified in beating his wife (Linos, Khawaja, and Kaplan, 2012).

Early marriage is another common form of violence committed in Barguna, as in the rest of Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2013 in ICRW, 2016). Girls are married off as young as 10 years old. Poverty is

the main reason for this, though poor housing, insecure neighbourhoods, and gender discrimination are also important reasons. However, the impacts of early marriages are lifelong for survivors, and often lead to other forms of GBV. As Black et.al (2011, p. 1) have noted, 'violence begins at an early age and commonly leads to negative health consequences across the lifespan', as victims of early marriage usually cannot complete their education and become economically dependent. They also face other physical and mental problems, as one survivor described:

'*I was too young to understand marriage (age 12-13 years). My husband proposed to my father and married me. From that time, I had to face different problems. There were women's problems [i.e. the physical relationship], I had to manage in-laws. My husband tortured me for dowry. I have been suffering since'*.

These young girls may also have their basic needs neglected by their husbands:

'My husband did not believe me, did not take care of me during my illness, I was not taken to the doctor'.

Child marriage and poverty are therefore mutually reinforcing.

While we heard many allusions to rape and sexual abuse in the research, detailed first-hand accounts were not forthcoming, reflecting the very private and taboo nature of this form of GBV which is frequently unspoken and kept hidden within the family (Hossian and Suman, 2013; *The Daily Star,* 2016). We did however receive many reports from women of sexual assault from men outside the family (see below). Another unspoken form of GBV in Barguna is where men are the targets. Sexual abuse against male children, and women's violence towards their husbands when having extra-marital relationships, are kept hidden and also rarely reported.

During: GBV when cyclone disasters strike

While there are high rates of GBV in Barguna during non-disaster periods, it is widely believed by respondents to worsen immediately before, during and after cyclones. Violence against women increases both in number and in form, from the time that severe weather warnings are first given. Many female respondents related personal experiences of abuse from family members, strangers and/or acquaintances, often in the most difficult circumstances when their survival was threatened by the unfolding disaster. All our respondents knew others who had been in this situation.

Many experiences of sexual assault during cyclones were reported to the research. During weather warning periods, inhabitants are advised to take shelter at their local safe place. Volunteers, mainly local men or those affiliated with Government and NGOs, take part in disseminating warnings and helping people to reach shelters. Women may already be feeling panicked, confused and frightened, sometimes losing contact with their family, or losing their way to the cyclone shelters. At these times, according to our respondents, men come into the area from outside pretending to be volunteers, using the opportunity to harass and abuse women. One survivor described her experience in Cyclone Roanu in 2016:

'One man pulled my sari...I was going to the cyclone shelter...I was alone...I was so afraid...then some passersby came closer to us. He could not do anything more'.

Perpetrators have also been known to check abandoned houses and attack women found to be staying there alone. This may include women in female-headed families, or in fishermen's families where husbands leave their wives at home for months while they catch fish from the deep sea.

However, reaching the cyclone shelter does not end women's vulnerability to GBV, rather they face new problems there. Shelters typically become overcrowded during cyclone attacks, as new refuge-seekers keep coming in until the shelters are beyond their capacity. The provision of shelters is insufficient, and there are few measures to protect women and girls while they wait there (Rezwana, 2018a). Many survivors told us that people push each other to get into the shelters, and some men touch women intentionally and improperly at these times. A mother of a young girl described her experience, which reflects other women's experience and their double-burden in the cyclone shelter:

'I went to the cyclone shelter with my elder daughter...there were many people, they were shouting, pushing each other, crying, screaming and suddenly someone pulled my blouse and tore it...I was worried about my daughter...how can I save her? Now where should I go? Violence is everywhere'.

Again, men, especially young males from nearby villages, are described by respondents as coming to the cyclone shelters with the intention of harassing girls and their mothers, physically and verbally. As one survivor described:

'The shelter is not safe for us. Young men come from 7 or 8 villages. They eve-tease [verbally harass] girls and young women. They try to touch or molest them. I feel frightened to stay in the shelters. I stay at my house rather taking my teenage daughter to the shelters'.

As they take place in public, these incidents can have significant impacts on women's characters and reputations, which are very important to their husbands, family and society. A male respondent explained the situation:

'*In the shelters if a woman gets harassed by a man, she might lose her honour and also her marriage. Her husband might accuse her and abandon her on these grounds'.*

These experiences have additional impacts. Traumatic experiences of molestation, rape attempts, rape threats and eve-teasing on the way to shelters and within them during cyclones created hyperarousal among some of the survivors. They become afraid of using cyclone shelters in future disasters, which increases their vulnerability to the death or injury from the disaster. Recent research shows a high rate of refusing shelter among Barguna inhabitants during Cyclone Roanu in 2016 (Rezwana, 2018b). This refusal (where women are either late to respond or do not respond to weather warnings) makes the inhabitants of disaster prone areas far more likely to become victims (Paul et al., 2011; Rezwana, 2018a). GBV has a significant role to play in generating and compounding this vulnerability.

After: relief, insecurity and GBV

The heightened risks of GBV continue after the cyclone has passed. Respondents described how men, again typically from other villages, roam around the affected areas. Women become vulnerable not only at their damaged homes where they may be staying, but when they move from one place to another to collect relief or receive healthcare or other services. At these times, they are less likely than usual to have male chaperones available to accompany them. One victim described an incident of sexual assault in these circumstances: *'I was going on a trawler, it was very stormy on the river. I was holding my son tightly. Suddenly I found that a man was touching me...very badly... I could not say anything. I was so afraid. I was afraid of the storm, and at the same time of that man'.*

Women may also be cheated or victimised during relief distributions. Insufficiency and mismanagement of relief is very common and has a huge impact on disaster victims (Rezwana,

2018a), however these problems are most intense for women. We heard a number of accounts of poor women being propositioned for illegal relationships, 'ransom marriages' (i.e. female disaster victims being offered relief only if they agree to marry the relief distributor/manager) and being subject to sexual assault while receiving relief. Several cases were reported during recent cyclones Roanu and Mahasen. Just one example is Rima, a disabled woman who lost her home in Cyclone Sidr. After the cyclone, a donor agency offered to give her training, a home, a solar panel and a small chicken farm. Initially, she was very happy about this. In her words:

'Every day I came back from the training centre at 5 o'clock and used to wait for the morning to go back there again. One day, the head of the office called me and told me to wait until he finished his work. I had to wait until everyone left the office. He then led me to the staff room and suddenly closed the door. I started crying...he did not do anything further and let me go. I was shivering in fear. After that incident I never went to that organization again'.

Leaving the organization created problems for her, as she was threatened and ended up being given far less than the other cyclone victims who received everything that had been promised.

Some women reported experiencing domestic violence because of relief collection. Sometimes their husbands and their husbands' families had forced them to leave the house and collect relief from unknown agencies. However, it is socially shameful for many women in Bangladesh to collect relief from distributors who are unknown, and when women refused to do this they were beaten. Domestic violence was also described as increasing at an alarming rate after disasters, when poverty often strikes affected families. The high cost of recovery and rebuilding efforts, the lack of jobs and loss of belongings all create huge tensions and financial problems for families. Both men and women were described as becoming involved in conflicts, quarrelling and in a few cases women throwing things at their husbands. In most cases these conflicts result in wife beating (Lips, 2014). Wife beating for dowry money also becomes more common after disasters; as a victim described:

'Torture for dowry money increases after disasters. [Only] If I could bring some money then I would get relief from beating, and could be in peace for some time'.

It is clear that economic dependency in particular increases women's vulnerability after disasters. Women may be slow to find work again, and many of them had lost their small amounts of savings. Sometimes they are unable to search for or take up new jobs, as their household work and responsibilities increase after disasters. This produces dependency which, again, increases their

vulnerability to GBV. In contrast, some men are described by respondents as being relaxed about their responsibilities, not wishing to be accountable for household or external work and decision-making. Family conflict is higher within these families. Other men had migrated for work after the disaster, sometimes leaving their family in difficult conditions; or had become involved in extra marriages for dowry money to help with post-disaster poverty. For some poor families, marrying off young girls becomes a coping strategy. Other families send their daughters to take up jobs such as housemaid or garment worker a long way away, despite being aware of their vulnerability to trafficking. All of these forms of post-disaster GBV have huge impacts on the women and children involved.

The impacts of disaster-related GBV

GBV has a range of serious direct and indirect impacts on survivors (Black et al., 2011 in Lips, 2014). Direct impacts include physical injuries and psychological impacts which can be seen and recognized more clearly, and indirect impacts such as changes in economic condition and social status which are as life-changing.

Physical impacts of GBV

Domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking often have direct health impacts on victims because of the physical violence involved. Survivors reported being beaten with hands and anything available at home, including brooms, wooden, cane and bamboo sticks, and glasses, and having their faces hit against walls. Some had been beaten until they became unconscious. Such survivors faced several health issues as a result, including vision and hearing impairments, broken fingers and so on. In most cases, survivors had not received any medical treatment for their injuries from GBV, as during disasters opportunities to visit the doctor become severely limited. Damaged healthcare centres and transport systems and a lack of emergency savings are the main reasons behind inability to access healthcare after disasters, and gender becomes a strong factor underlying women's especially poor access (Rezwana, 2018a). As a result, their injuries remain untreated, they experience longer pain and suffering and sometimes lifelong disabilities. It is likely that many internal injuries remain undiagnosed. The physical health impacts of rape and sexual assault could not be revealed by this research; while the presence of rape was found, the survivors did not want to talk in detail about it.

Psychological impacts of GBV

Most forms of GBV are marked by the use of emotional and psychological violence, as well as (or sometimes instead of) physical violence. The dynamics of trauma and its long-term impacts on survivors, are generally poorly understood (Pain et al., 2020). Our research uncovered a number of psychological impacts of GBV, although none of the survivors we spoke to had visited mental health professionals for formal diagnosis. Many women do not wish to report violence to the authorities as this can aggravate their trauma. Social stigma, economic dependency, the lack of victim support facilities and health care centres, and lack of knowledge about government helplines are also key reasons for not seeking formal support. Yet self-reported symptoms suggest strong similarities with psychological trauma: specific symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder including hyperarousal and intrusion (Herman, 1997) were described by survivors. The study reveals that survivors of domestic violence bear feelings of helplessness and live in deep sadness and constant fear (Lips, 2014); GBV creates mental pressure and trauma, decreases self-confidence and changes the survivor's self-perception. While mental health impacts can be lifelong, most women experiencing violence in the home cannot leave their marriages because they do not have anywhere to go (Arias and Pape, 1999). Where women had married early, they had not received enough education to get a good job, and relied on informal jobs such as housemaid or day labourer, which increase their insecurity to other forms of GBV such as rape, sexual harassment and trafficking and reduces their social status further. These women did not want to return to their parents' house, as in Barguna culture returning to her father's house is the most disgraceful option for a woman. They are seen to become a burden to their family, economically and socially. We explained earlier that young girls are married off to reduce the costs to their family, especially after disasters, and so going back again does not solve the problem. Most parents are not economically solvent enough to take on the extra costs of their daughters and grandchildren. Furthermore, sons get priority in this highly patriarchal society, and sisters are not welcomed back by their brothers, especially if they are divorced and economically dependent. Therefore many women try their best to stay with abusive husbands, despite the physical and mental consequences.

This illustrates the complexity of the situations created in disasters for woman in a conservative and patriarchal society, where women are always facing social tests they must pass in order to survive. Women in Barguna face the socially-created hazards of GBV alongside disasters, indeed these have more severe effects than cyclones.

Slow violence and layered disasters

In summary, our research received numerous reports of GBV before, during and after cyclones in Barguna. Cyclones lead directly and indirectly to GBV, and GBV makes women more vulnerable to these disasters. At all three stages, we have noted that the impacts of GBV increase poverty and gender inequalities, which further increase women's vulnerability to disasters.

Such impacts increase during disasters, due to the rise in domestic violence and other forms of GBV at these times. However, women experiencing family violence in Barguna face these double burdens for their whole lives, as 'acts of domestic violence tend not to be one-time events but rather become long-term patterns' (Lips, 2014, p. 123), and likewise, tropical cyclones are no strangers to the coastal district of Barguna, becoming more frequent as the climate changes.

As our discussion of findings has shown, survivors of GBV in Barguna are often trapped by overlapping layers of location (due to the remoteness of the region and poor level of service provision), socio-economic conditions, gender roles, social attitudes, culture and tradition. According to our respondents, domestic violence, forced marriage, sexual assault, harassment and trafficking increase immediately before, during and after each cyclone. Women are victimized in the name of enduring cultural traditions including early and forced marriage, family discipline, dowry and the priority given to sons, and their complaints and resistance are also judged through the lenses of these traditions. Women are often advised to tolerate violence, due to social stigma and fear of perpetrators, to avoid the further embarrassment of abandonment or divorce, and to maintain tradition and social status (Hossain and Suman, 2013; *The Daily Star*, 2016). Rather than cyclones disrupting cultural traditions, the evidence from respondents in our study is that cyclones and their after-effects serve to entrench them.

In the remainder of the paper, we return to Nixon's (2011) idea of slow violence, asking what it means for the idea of slow violence when disasters are layered; in other words, when disasters are strengthened by, and generative of, different sorts of violence that develop and manifest on varying timescales?

For Nixon, slow violence is 'a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous but instead incremental, whose calamitous repercussions are postponed for years or decades or centuries' (Nixon, 2011, p. 1). Reflecting earlier themes in Galtung's (1969) structural violence and Watt's

(1983) silent violence, Nixon identifies the structural causation of many forms of violence, adding the dimension of time – the delay of years or decades before slow violence creates casualties is pivotal to its effectiveness and persistence. His focus on environmental degradation and destruction fits well with cyclones compounded by climate change, and by the economic vulnerability of people living on coastal margins and delta regions such as Barguna. Indeed, Knowles (2014) has used Nixon's analysis to rethink disasters:

> '…not as specific terrifying events demanding immediate response, but rather as long processes of environmental degradation and deferred maintenance on technological systems. The slow disaster stretches both back in time and forward across generations to indeterminate points, punctuated by moments we have traditionally conceptualized as "disaster," but in fact claiming much more life and wealth across time than is generally calculated'.
>
> Knowles (2014, p. 777)

For Knowles, the idea of slow violence expands, geographically as well as temporally, what we consider to be relevant factors in disasters, so that (for example) a profitable but polluting factory, as a factor in climate change, makes an incremental contribution to disasters. O'Lear (2016) argues that slow violence is also enabled by discursive or epistemic constructions of problems, such as the mobilisation of dominant techno-scientific narratives of climate change. Indeed, a number of commentators expose climate change itself as violence, arguing that the long term nature of its harm to humans and non-humans masks its brutality. As Matts and Tynan (2012) suggest, environmentalists have tended to think about nature as the object of human violence, but the human and non-human are far more intertwined. This violence of 'nature' is discriminatory, harming poor populations first and worst, and stoking human conflict (O'Brien, 2017; Solnit, 2014).

These conceptualisations are helpful to understanding GBV as positioned within a wider complex or network of violences. For many years, feminist conceptualisations of violence have expanded consideration of 'violence' beyond the usual dichotomy of everyday/state, insisting on connections between masculinist and misogynistic aggression at multiple sites and scales (e.g. Cockburn, 2004; Moser, 2001; Pain, 2014). Along these lines, de Leuuw (2016) extends the idea of slow violence to understand the colonial violence that, she argues, is still taking place in British Columbia, but now perpetrated through the intimate sphere of home, family, women's and children's bodies. Her research charts the commonness of GBV against young indigenous women living there, and children

being taken into the care of the state in higher numbers than were ever sent to the residential schools of the colonial era. Our research also underlines the need to understand violence at different scales simultaneously, as the slow environmental violence of climate change and disasters has most impacts on women and children. The harm done by disasters and GBV is not only interconnected, but together produces a complex of violence that cycles between 'fast' or 'hot' and 'slow' or 'banal' (see George, 2014; de Leeuw, 2016; Christian et al., 2016; Dowler and Christian, 2019). Indeed, as these authors demonstrate, the example of GBV complicates the concept of 'slow violence'; our research suggests that *both* disasters and GBV manifest as immediate and dramatic spectacles *and* long term chronic processes.

The temporalities of violence are therefore crucial here. Just as disasters are slow in their causation and effect (Knowles, 2014), GBV is most often a long term experience; many of the survivors we spoke to had experienced multiple forms, which leads to a layering and compounding of trauma over time (Pain et al., 2020). In some cases this also enables the building of resilience, but in all cases it increases suffering. In an account of women's peacebuilding activities in the Pacific Islands in the face of gendered and military violence, George (2014) examines the relationship between 'hot conflict' (i.e. urgent violent situations taking place now) and slow violence (the less visible environmental risks of sea-level rise, masculinised politics and militarism that also contribute to women's insecurity). She argues that these various forms of slow violence are ignored in responses to women's security from violence. Likewise, in our case study and elsewhere, the failure to properly see and act upon the scale and effects of GBV in preparations for and responses to cyclone disasters is alarming. Various performances of 'stage-managed amnesia' are integral to Nixon's (2011, p. 184) account of slow violence; its delayed effects become an excuse for inaction.

The different spatialities of slow violence (Pain and Cahill, forthcoming) are relevant here too. Feminists have long argued that the lack of visibility of GBV is greatly aided by its occurrence in the private sphere. However, this is an over-simplification, as what private space actually constitutes varies widely across gendered cultures. In our research, much of the GBV reported often has quite public dimensions: for example harassment in shelters, or communities turning a blind eye to child marriage, or strangers coming into the homes of women left alone in cyclones in order to abuse them. In terms of disaster planning and management, the failure of effective provision of safe places for women and children means that they are far more vulnerable to the social and physical dangers of cyclones.

Conclusion

It is well known that disasters are associated with increases in GBV. Yet there is a scarcity of data, both quantitative, to establish varying rates over time, and qualitative, to help identify mechanisms in what we suggest is a complex relationship. The intensive small-scale case study reported here in a coastal region of Bangladesh contributes to understanding how the specific forms of GBV that are prevalent in the area are affected when disasters strike, both directly and indirectly. However, given the severity of issues of GBV during disasters and their diffuse impacts, as reported here, there is an urgent need for further research. We suggest that research may be most fruitful where it involves sensitive methods and grounded approaches that listen to survivors' accounts of their experiences, as well as their views on local gender cultures and other relevant contextual factors.

We have argued in this paper that disasters lead to rises in GBV, but GBV can also be seen to aggravate disasters in significant ways: as a structurally-rooted form of oppression, GBV increases both vulnerability to disasters and their social and economic impacts. Environmental degradation, poverty and patriarchal traditions worsen both GBV and disasters, as well as disaster management practices that does not sufficiently take account of these processes (Enarson, 2000; Fisher, 2010; Dominelli, 2014). Indeed, what we observe here, as elsewhere, informed by Nixon (2011) and feminist theories of violence, is a closely interlocking system of violences at different scales: of the Anthropocene via climate change; the human-made causes of disasters and their aftermath, and the intimate violence, largely against women and children, that is not adequately effectively or responded to in any society. Our case study shows how different forms of violence - climate change, poverty, natural hazards and GBV - are connected and cycle, fast and slow, at different times.

Nixon's interest in *Slow Violence* focuses as much on activist resistance as in the creep of violence itself. In Bangladesh as, we would argue, elsewhere, the main activists and responders to GBV are survivors themselves. This paper has not discussed women's resilience or action, either in the context of GBV or disasters, but it is clear from our study alone that women develop a myriad of coping strategies in order to protect themselves and their children, both in response to immediate threats of harm and in order to try and safeguard from future risks. However, here as elsewhere, gender oppression and the urgent risks that GBV poses require intervention and prioritisation, both in disaster planning and management and in non-disaster times. At present, interventions are

inadequate to protect women, and thereby worsen the impacts of disasters, continuing the cycle of disasters, poverty and GBV.

The study reported here suggests the need for both immediate response plans that improve women's security during cyclones, and the improvement of gender disparities and discrimination in society before disasters take place. Steps should be taken to reduce the slow and long-term impacts of cyclones on GBV, and the impacts of GBV on cyclones, by considering the inter-related contextual factors discussed in this paper. Economic assistance and education for women (Schreiber, 2018), awareness-raising programmes on gender equality and equity, increasing law and enforcement and legal support might improve GBV conditions in cyclone prone regions such as Barguna (see Rezwana and Pain, 2017). However, while gendered attitudes are embedded in society and have been practiced for so long time that they become naturalised for participants (Bourdieu, 1977; Bolin et al., 1998), long term plans and programmes are needed to effect noticeable change. These initiatives along with gender-sensitive disaster management plans (see Rezwana, 2018a) might have positive impacts on the relation between GBV and cyclones. More widely, The National Disaster Management Plan of Bangladesh should focus on gender mainstreaming and WCD (women, culture and development) approaches (Bhavnani et al., 2003 in Rezwana, 2018a). It should explicitly take account of traditions, social attitudes and norms, given that local gender cultures have a direct relation with the successful implementation of disaster management plans (Fisher, 2010). Prioritising GBV in gender-sensitive long-term plans and programmes in this way, before, during and after disasters, and explicitly recognizing both their slow and sudden impacts on women will help to improve prevailing conditions in disaster prone regions.

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