

WOMEN, DISPLACEMENT AND VIOLENCE IN MYANMAR

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this study was to find out about the impact of internal displacement caused by environmental factors, on the occurrence of violence against women in Myanmar, and support the policy and practitioner communities in responding to the welfare and empowerment needs of different groups of marginalised women, living in fragile contexts.

The study made use of an innovative mixed methods approach, combining qualitative narrative methods with a quantitative survey in order to understand if, how, and why women's experiences of violence have changed post-displacement, and how they might best be addressed.

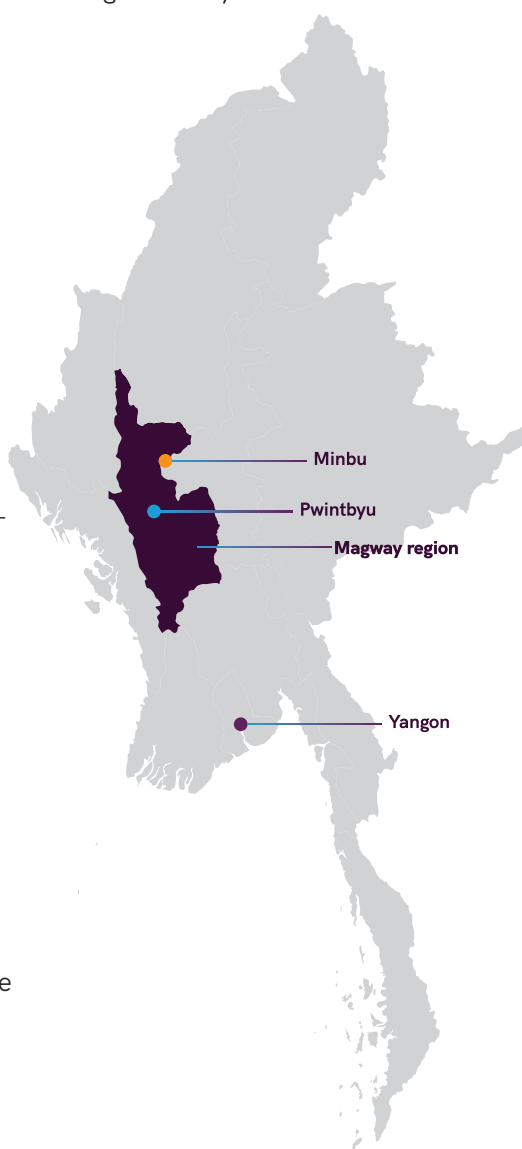
THE FIELD SITES

MAGWAY, MINBU AND PWINTBYU

These three sites in central Myanmar are affected by serious yearly flooding, resulting in communities being displaced as their homes are affected both by flooding and destruction as homes alongside the Irrawaddy River collapse due to erosion.

OUTER NORTH AND WEST YANGON IMPACTED BY HURRICANE NARGIS

These communities are made up of migrants who work mainly in the informal sector, and who suffer from ongoing displacement that originated with the hurricane Nargis disaster in 2008 that resulted in an estimated loss of over 100,000 lives, and the displacement of thousands of people from the Irrawaddy region of Myanmar.



KEY SURVEY RESPONSE DATA

805 respondents were surveyed from five different districts

97% of the respondents were married

The larger volume of the participants were from the Bamar ethnic community (97%) followed by Kayin (29%)

85% were female and 15% were male

81% of the total participants were found living together with their spouse

61% of respondents were living in a temporary cottage due to displacement

53% of the respondents were in the 43+ age group followed by 13% in the age group 33 to 38

One tenth of the respondents were widows or widowers

4% of respondents were divorced

3% of respondents (the smallest proportion) were in the age group 18-23

2% of respondents were living separately from their spouse



KEY FINDINGS

LEVELS OF VIOLENCE IN THE COMMUNITY

83%

Female respondents reported severe violence against women

67%

Male respondents support this

29%

Respondents reported violence against women occurred in 50 to 100% of households

46%

Respondents reported that violence against women happened most of the time

TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Intimate partner violence is the main form of violence with the husband being the most common perpetrator of physical violence. A significant number of female respondents reported forced sexual intercourse, though male respondents refused to acknowledge this was a problem.

More than 90% of male and female respondents reported that the husband was the most common perpetrator of physical violence, and 27% of female respondents reported that they had been facing physical violence by their husbands. By contrast, only a small proportion (26%) of male respondents accepted

that they were involved in the violence against their spouse.

During the last 11 months, 20% of respondents reported that they had experienced physical violence and 15% of the female respondents stated that they had experienced **forced sexual intercourse** by their husband, with over a third of these saying this had happened in the last 11 months. However male respondents reported that they were not involved. 1% of women reported experiencing forced sexual intercourse by non-family members in their community and the same percentage of men also supported this claim. **Forced sexual intercourse** by a non-family member was also identified as a problem when living with others in temporary accommodation.

After the husband the **mother in-law is the second perpetrator** of violence against women, and a small proportion (2%) of respondents reported that other relatives perpetrated physical violence.

AWARENESS OF THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF VIOLENCE

Most respondents were found to be aware of both physical and sexual violence, and also to a lesser extent psychological violence. They were least aware of violence related to deprivation and neglect.

10-20%

Male respondents were found to be knowledgeable on what constitutes violence against women

35-58%

Female respondents were found to be knowledgeable on what constitutes violence against women

TRIGGERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Perceived triggers or causative factors resulting in violence

38%

Alcohol as trigger a for weekly violence

52%

Low income as a trigger for daily or weekly violence

29%

Perception of poor performance in household tasks

29%

Gambling and/or misuse of money

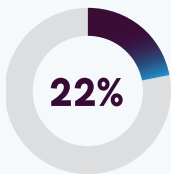
43%

Jealousy

Out of the female respondents who were affected by physical violence, 73% had been displaced and were from temporary cottages, and 70% were illiterate.

By comparison low income was not regarded as a trigger but is seen as a causative factor for violence occurring daily and weekly.

// Alcohol is a major trigger of violence against women by husbands.



Respondents claimed that the alcoholic behaviour of husbands was the trigger for violence

Many respondents also highlighted that violence is also triggered by husbands when there are perceived to be performing poorly in their household tasks. Gambling and/or misuse of household money were also seen as triggers by a significant number of respondents, and jealousy was reported as even more significant.

IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT

There was a positive relationship between physical violence by the husband and the nature of residence.



INTERSECTIONAL FACTORS

ETHNICITY

The female respondents of the Bamar community were found to be more affected by intimate partner violence than any other ethnic group.

LITERACY

There was not a positive relationship between physical violence by the husband and the literacy level of wives.

"I was 40 years old when my husband laid his hands on me. He was always intoxicated at that moment; he arrived back home and hit me with his hands. He only hit me to an extent so, there was no appearance of blood. At the time, my children were only students; our family was experiencing financial struggles that involves their academic fees. It was not a pleasant time for us. I was abused when stress was a part of our daily lives. Thankfully, my sons acted as barriers and protected me. I believe his anguish plaguing him was due to our financial difficulties and excessive alcohol consumption.

There are myriad number of women in this village who are in an abusive relationship- whether physically, mentally or verbally. There are plenty of women who are victims of domestic abuse; women who are just like me concealing our sufferings and chose not to talk about."

47, married at 19, two sons and a daughter, live also with daughter's husband, Pwint Phyu

OPTIONS FOR SUPPORT

The quantitative survey responses highlighted the importance of support from peer networks and local women's organisations. 94% stated that female peer networks and local women's organisations were important in order to minimise violence, and yet only 29% of respondents noted that organisations exist which support survivors of violence, so awareness raising of such organisations is very important.

The qualitative interviews reveal a lack of support specifically focused on violence against women. Whilst some welfare provision exists it is generally not tailored to responding to violence. While the vast majority (95%) of all respondents expressed that additional support is essential for women at the time of displacement, only 15% of female respondents expressed that they actually attempted to seek help at the time of violence.

The majority of female respondents (83%) reported that telling a local community leader is the best way of countering violence. This is followed by telling another

family member about the violent incident. By contrast the majority of male respondents (72%) expressed that telling a local community leader is the best way of countering violence followed by reporting to the police.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Responses to violence against women need to be mainstreamed in disaster response mechanisms
- Local government needs to offer advocacy, legal and counselling support to women and work actively to challenge the normalisation of violence both in communities and amongst professionals (e.g. the judiciary)
- The work of local social mobilisers and organisations needs to be better resourced both at times of crisis but also into the long term
- Measures are needed to curb male alcohol consumption
- Work with men specifically to challenge the normalisation of sexual violence in marriage

First option for support



"My husband and I's problems arose after our evacuation to my mother-in-law's place. It was not necessarily the reason behind our conflicts but it plays a role in where the behaviour of my mother-in-law interrupts my peace of mind, and that in turn creates a domino effect on other aspects of my personal life. I do not feel safe. Other than sleeping, cooking and eating. I travel to my parent's home and stay there."

Women, 28, married, 2 sons, Their Gone Village