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Mortality and the Gender Bias in Aceh

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The Silencing of Women

- Women are often 'silenced'
- Discrimination and abuses of rights lead to a female deficit in many Asian countries
- Gender bias of disasters may contribute to the deficit and to the ultimate silencing of women



The Biases of the Tsunami

- Earthquakes cause more injuries, floods (including those associated with tsunami) more deaths
- The effects are worst for those living in the poorest countries
- The poor are disproportionately affected by severe impacts, including loss of life





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And Gender?

- In Aceh 126,602 people were killed and 93,638 are missing
- Lack of systematic sex disaggregated data raises questions about connectedness of responses
- What about appropriateness, adequacy, and efficiency?



Some Examples

- In four villages in Aceh Besar, of 676 survivors only 189 were women, in 4 villages in north Aceh of 366 people dead, 77% were women.
- For Tamil Nadu: in Nagapattinam 2,406 women, compared to 1,883 men died; In Cuddalore 391 women versus 146 men.



The Consequences of the Gender Bias in Mortality in Aceh

Immediate consequences

- Women's reduced numbers contribute to their poor participation in relief, at all levels
- Reported physical and sexual violence against women
- Men have lost wives, daughters and sisters





The Consequences of the Gender Bias in Mortality in Aceh

Disaster preparedness

- Only accurate information allow for disaster preparedness of adequate scale and sophistication (beyond ‘teaching women to swim’).



The Consequences of the Gender Bias in Mortality in Aceh

Long term consequences

- Early marriage and frequent pregnancies **endanger** reproductive health and have a deleterious effect on girls' education
- Land rights of survivors and of descendants of deceased women may be neglected
- Where women are a minority they will be more vulnerable to gender based violence





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Recommendations

- Always disaggregate disaster statistics by gender.
- Long-term comparative research on demographic trends, gender aspects of livelihood, property rights, violence etc.
- Women's participation must mean: addressing the dominance of men in leadership, a mind shift from perceiving women as 'vulnerable victims' to one recognising their skills and rights.

