

IMPACT OF OIL SPILL ON WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN IN COASTAL AREAS OF A PHILIPPINE ISLAND AND ASSESSMENT OF DIFFERENTIAL GENDER INTERVENTIONS FOR RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION

Rosario H. Asong*, Ida Siason, Ebonia Seraspe, Diana Aure

University of the Philippines in the Visayas, Miagao, Iloilo 5023A PHILIPPINES

roseasong@yahoo.com

This is a study on the differential impact of the worst oil spill in Philippine history on women, men and children in the coastal areas of a Philippine island, an assessment of interventions using a gender lens and participatory research methodologies to determine the equitable distribution of benefits and services, and the level of participation of men, women and children in the rehabilitation and recovery activities. A review of secondary data reveal that the quality of life of men, women and children have been affected directly or indirectly by the intensive damage of the ecosystem and the decline of fisheries production. More than half of the island province's population live in coastal villages and having no other means of livelihood except fishing; a majority of the households lost their main source of income and food on the table. While the men have lost their sea as fishers, the women especially those in shell gleaning, fish vending and seaweed production have lost their major source of income.

Analysis of the initial rapid assessment done on the afflicted coastal areas of Guimaras, Iloilo and Negros islands showed some degree of gender awareness by including a number of women in the creation of various mechanisms such as task forces, assessment teams, quick response and rehabilitation strategy teams. However, more focus was given to rapid biological, physical-chemical and fisheries assessment which were dominated by men scientists as well as in legal and communication interventions. The socio-economic and health assessments were dominated by women welfare workers and medical service providers. Short term interventions such as clean up work were given to men except for some women who substituted for their sick or absentee husbands just to earn for a day. Evacuation activities like food distribution and health care services were also dominated by women. Data on other immediate and long term interventions such as projects, services, activities provided by various agencies – local, national, international, government and private organisations and individuals - were not sex-disaggregated, thus the differential impact of the oil spill on men and women could not be analysed; women's crucial role in the recovery and rehabilitation programmes was not made visible nor highlighted; and the appropriateness, effectiveness and sustainability of these interventions and mechanisms were not analysed either.

The gender-specific impacts of natural disasters and other emergencies must be well-documented; specific needs and priorities of women as well as men and children must not be overlooked in the planning process and allocation of resources; and gender perspective must be given attention in policies and strategies for disaster relief and reconstruction.