



Viet Nam: Typhoon Yagi and Floods

Situation Thematic Update No.1: Gender and Protection

As of 23 September 2024

This is a thematic report led by the Protection and Gender Working Group (PGWG) for the Viet Nam United Nations Country Team (UNCT). The PGWG is a coordination forum through which protection actors provide technical guidance and oversight to ensure effective, coherent, and predictable interventions to support the Government of Viet Nam in its efforts to respond to protection needs of persons of concern. The PGWG is co- led by UN Women and Viet Nam Women's Union and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/ Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority. This thematic report covers the period from 9 to 23 September 2024.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

On 7 September, Typhoon Yagi, the most powerful storm to strike the Viet Nam in three decades, made landfall in northern part of the country causing widespread destruction. The hardest-hit areas were Lao Cai, Yen Bai provinces, as well as Quang Ninh and Hai Phong provinces, which saw winds of up to 213 km/h. As of 18 September, the storm claimed 291 lives, left 38 missing, and injured 1,922 people due to landslides and flash floods. Over 100,000 households were evacuated from coastal and high-risk regions, with extensive damage to homes, crops, and infrastructure, heavily affecting livelihoods. 251,000 hectares of crops were also flooded, posing food insecurity risks over the coming months. The Government of Viet Nam from national to local level, supported by local authorities, mobilised a large-scale response force involving over 438,000 personnel, while coordinating relief efforts with national and international partners.

Women, particularly in rural areas, are heavily involved in agriculture and natural resource management, making them more vulnerable to the effects of floods and other climate events, and more at risk of falling into poverty. Due to traditional gender roles, women often bear the brunt of unpaid care work, which intensifies during crises as they care for children, the elderly, and the sick. This limits their ability to engage in recovery efforts and decision-making processes. Moreover, the stress of livelihood loss can exacerbate risks of gender-based violence (GBV), further marginalising women during disaster response and recovery.



GENDER-SPECIFIC NEEDS AND VULNERABILITIES POST-DISASTER

The most affected areas were the mountainous districts of Bat Xat, Bac Ha, Bao Yen, Si Ma Cai and Sa Pa, where rugged terrain with a slope of over 20 per cent contributed to landslides and flash floods. Three days after the typhoon, basic services were still affected including access to electricity and access to water. Infrastructure suffered heavy damages, with initial assessments showing cracked walls, roofs swept away, and broken glass. So far, reliance on bottled waters seems to have led to no reported cases of diarrhoea or food poisoning.

Women in rural areas have pre-existing vulnerabilities which can include low-literacy and access to communications, limited economic opportunities, and limited access to water and sanitation. Reduced capacity of health facilities, damaged and suffering from electricity cuts (e.g. reported in Hai Phong, Do Son district) will impact women's access to health, including reproductive health, with respondents highlighting the specific impact in the nutrition and health of pregnant and lactating women (PLW). Health concerns due to lack of clean water and reduced health facility capacity might provoke the rise of diseases and have long-term impact on women and children. Initial assessments found no cases of dengue or other vector-borne diseases, although the quick timespan between the typhoon and the assessments, coupled with a limited health infrastructure, might make it more challenging to report such cases.

An initial review of the 4W support matrix shows limited gender-sensitive support: 264 hygiene kits¹ (Yen Bai, Tuyen Quang, Cao Bang and Ha Giang), gender sensitive households kits (Lao Cai and Yen Bai), with initial needs assessments showing requests for dignity and hygiene packages for example in Bao Yen, Lao Cai: sanitary pads, napkins, baby diapers, wipes and hygiene products.

PROTECTION CONCERNS ARISING FROM THE IMPACT OF THE TYPHOON

Initial needs assessments did not report any negative coping mechanisms used by affected people. However, these needs assessments were limited in time and scope, and negative coping mechanisms might arise in the medium-term, especially as a result of loss of livelihoods. Adequate monitoring and reporting should be sustained.

The suspension of GBV services is concerning and the resumption of such services should be a priority. For instance, Anh Dương House/One-Stop Service Center, which provides free services supporting women and children subjected to violence (including shelters, psychology counselling, healthcare, legal aid, police services and referral pathways) was interrupted completely. The windows are shattered, the roof is heavily damaged, and the elevator system has ceased functioning². Hotlines are also impacted by damages to the power and phone signals infrastructure. Initial assessments found no cases of child abuse, neglect, or injury, with risks of under-reporting due to constraints in reporting (limited protection services, hotline suspension, limited risks assessments, etc.).

“Schools across the district have given students a week off for the past week, and the plan is to continue giving them another week off to fix the roads to school and clean the school grounds and inside the classrooms” (Bao Yen, Lao Cai).

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicates partners will provide cash transfers to minimise the disruption of education for affected children, with OCHA indicating that ‘UN agencies and NGOs are supporting by raising awareness of parents and community members of the need for children to return to school when conditions permit and ensure information flow to parents/communities related to the need for mental health and wellbeing support to children who have experienced the trauma’. Strong communication on education and support in the form of cash assistance would minimise risks of children, especially girls, dropping out-of-school.

Local authorities in Quang Ninh flagged in their observations the consequences the huge stress the loss of livelihoods is having on the households and thus on men’s mental health (reports of absent-minded behaviours, panic). Local authorities fear risks of domestic violence, stress, neglect, trauma, and other consequences on the mental health of children in affected areas and indicate these should be considered in future assessments to identify issues and gaps in services offered.

RECOVERY REQUIRES WOMEN: ENGAGING WOMEN IN LIVELIHOODS RECONSTRUCTION

“Rice in full bloom and corn in flower were severely damaged, completely lost in mud. Almost all rice fields were lost in mud. In the coming season people will have no productive arable land.” (Bao Yen, Lao Cai)

“In the next six months, people will need food when the new season has not yet been harvested and production has been damaged and cannot be harvested.” (Rapid Assessment Report, inter-agency assessment team in Bao Yen, Lao Cai from September 12-14, 2024)

OCHA estimates in its 18 September Situation Report No.4 that more than 251,000 hectares of crops were flooded, and 2.96 million livestock animals perished, heavily affecting livelihoods in the medium- and long-term. The Country Gender Assessment of Agriculture and the Rural Sector in Viet Nam by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicates that women make up 63 per cent of the rural labour force, compared to 57.5 per cent of working men, and are predominantly engaged in subsistence farming, fisheries, and small-scale agricultural activities.³ Traditionally, women are heavily involved in agriculture as they are burdened with unpaid care work, with 22 per cent of women engaged in unpaid family work, compared to 10.4 per cent of men⁴. Their access to new technologies is often limited, which restricts their agricultural

¹ Govt. of Viet Nam, 4W Matrix of Response Activities, as of 19 September 2024

² Rapid Needs Assessment-RNA Quang Ninh

³ <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/53865cd6-65a4-450e-a9fc-cf20c553815b>

⁴ https://vietnam.un.org/sites/default/files/2019-08/Unpaid_Care_and_Domestic_Work_-_Tieng_Viet.pdf

productivity. Despite their involvement, women tend to work on smaller plots of land and focus on subsistence farming, which provides fewer economic opportunities compared to larger, commercial farming operations. This combination of limited resources and responsibilities reduces their resilience and economic empowerment potential, making them more vulnerable to climate crisis events such as the typhoon, floods, drought.⁵

KEY OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate Recommendations

1. Almost none of the data collected initially was SADDD (sex age and disability disaggregated data). There is a need to disaggregate data in needs assessments and other data collections to avoid ‘one size fits all’ and ensure specific needs are included in the response design and delivery. More data is also required on the psychosocial impact on vulnerable populations, including vulnerable women, women headed households (WHHs), people living with disability, and children. As much as possible, all needs assessment should be gender-sensitive, instead of conducting separate gender assessment or analyses.
2. Engage local networks creatively by partnering with civil society organisations and local women’s groups, the Viet Nam Women’s Union, local leaders, and authorities. Additionally, identify community volunteers or informal groups that may not be officially recognized but play key roles within the community. These groups can be trained and included in gender-responsive assessments to ensure a more inclusive approach.
3. The loss of livelihoods can significantly increase stress for breadwinners, impacting the entire family and heightening risks of GBV, domestic violence and child abuse. In response, responders should integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) support and GBV prevention into recovery programs, establishing safe spaces and referral systems for affected individuals, while training humanitarian workers to recognize and address protection risks early on. Existing support systems (women’s centres and safe spaces, hotlines) that have been affected by the typhoon should be reinstated as soon as feasible.
4. The rate of women using phones is 87 per cent compared to 93 per cent of men in Viet Nam⁶, the difference is — likely higher in the impacted areas— and with major telecommunications still down, there is a pressing need to ensure key information on aid and recovery reaches women through community-based mechanisms and alternative communication channels.
5. Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) interventions should be directly linked to protection needs, prioritising vulnerable groups including PLW, people living with disabilities, the elderly, WHHs, child-headed households, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, and should ensure that the CVA addresses both immediate financial relief and longer-term protection outcomes.
6. Ensure women’s consultation, engagement, and active participation in recovery planning and decision-making, especially in the reconstruction of livelihoods within agriculture and informal sectors. Prioritising their involvement ensures that recovery efforts are inclusive, responsive to gender-specific needs, and better equipped to address the unique challenges women face.
7. All responders must be trained on safeguarding and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Strong messaging and communications on PSEA should be integrated into all humanitarian response efforts. A robust reporting mechanism needs to be established, with PSEA cases linked to GBV and Child Protection case management services to provide comprehensive support for survivors.
8. Temporary and transitional shelters need to ensure safety and security for women, girls, boys, and LGBTIQ+ people, as well as ensure access for people living with disabilities. Additionally, WASH facilities should be designed to ensure safe access to these individuals, including by providing separate facilities for men and women to reduce risks of sexual harassment and assault, and by providing privacy measures such as locks on doors.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Điều tra mức sống dân cư 2021

Recovery recommendations

9. A coordinated and comprehensive medium- and long-term recovery strategy must be developed to support the restoration of livelihoods, which has been heavily affected, especially in the aquaculture and agriculture fields, impacting nutrition in addition to livelihoods. This recovery strategy needs to prioritise Women's Economic Empowerment by:
 - a. Ensuring that women's participation in the design and implementation of recovery efforts is central, recognizing their role in both agriculture and aquaculture sectors. Women-led initiatives should be promoted, such as cooperative farming and fishing groups, to help restore livelihoods and increase their decision-making power.
 - b. Introducing vocational training and capacity-building programs targeting women to help diversify their skills, particularly in climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable aquaculture practices. This can enhance their income security and adaptability to future climate-related challenges.
 - c. Providing flexible and accessible financial services such as microgrants, loan restructuring, and low-interest loans tailored for women to help rebuild their businesses or start new ventures.
 - d. Ensuring that unpaid care work is taken into account when developing recovery strategies by providing childcare services or integrating care economy initiatives, such as through community-based childcare centres.
 - e. Integrating CVA to provide immediate financial relief, prioritising women-headed households and other vulnerable women.
 - f. The recovery strategy must also focus on building resilience to future shocks by integrating gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction measures. This includes training women on climate-adaptive agricultural techniques and establishing early warning systems that are accessible to all, ensuring women's active participation in decision-making and preparedness.
10. It is essential to implement gender-sensitive training for disaster relief workers and gender-focused disaster risk reduction (DRR) training. These programs should equip responders with the skills to identify and address the distinct needs of women, men, and vulnerable groups during emergencies. Additionally, long-term DRR training should integrate gender analysis to ensure that planning and recovery efforts promote equality, resilience, and the active participation of women in disaster preparedness and response efforts.

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