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From Transition to Transformation – a Gendered Approach to Humanitarian Response



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There are biological, social and economic conditions and processes that make women more vulnerable to natural disasters such as floods, droughts and tropical storms. All of which affect the Southeast Asian region frequently and intensively. From having limited options to begin with to prolonged suffering post-disaster, women in disaster-prone areas in the region are impacted significantly longer and hence have longer physical, psychological and emotional recovery times. There is much research and knowledge-pooling between international aid organisations, governments, research institutes and local non-governmental organisations when it comes to outlining best practices, training and capacity-building and carrying out joint exercises in natural disaster relief and recovery and rebuilding. But what has not happened is the move from mere *transition* – from post-disaster to ‘peace time’ – to *transformation* in the way assessments, operations and policies are realigned, informed by different gendered experiences. So, to put it bluntly, natural disasters become a wasted opportunity for change. If we

persist in going back to how things were, we have lost the opportunity to change what does not work. Unfortunately, much of reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, *vis-à-vis* women, involve returning to how things were done before. Women are included but procedurally sidelined. And this despite the fact that women tend to be over-represented in fatalities and among displaced groups.

Humanitarian crises are sites of displacement, marginalisation, control, and, unfortunately, the sad truth of capitalising on human suffering; essentially the trafficking of women and children in the aftermath of disasters. It goes without saying then that it also becomes a site that magnifies inequalities. However, to say that there is no recognition or appreciation of the gendered (read women’s) dimension of humanitarian crises would be untrue. A more apt description would be not enough work is being done in this area. By definition *suffering* or the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship are equally (but not identically) experienced by men and women in any form of disaster or crises situation. But these

enormous life tragedies are made known to the world through the faces of women and children. Except how much have we examined the altered lives of women in the aftermath of these events? Impacts upon the lives of women affect lives and experiences of men. A gendered approach is not just about women's experiences but about how these experiences affect the lives of men, children and elderly; essentially all members of society. It is this *relational analysis* that is limited in disaster research in the region.

The lack of curiosity in women's experiences is a peculiarity in itself. On 13 September 2016, at the 28th ASEAN Summit, ASEAN leaders signed the "ASEAN Declaration on *One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region*." The declaration reiterates ASEAN's readiness to work together to build a community that responds effectively to natural disasters. The institution's vision is to build safer communities and create a disaster-resilient region. This becomes a challenge when women are not

explicitly integrated into this resilience plan. The vision is noble, but how we go about making it a reality can be troublesome when more than half the population is not intimately involved in the planning and implementation of goals and targets. The question then is: what would happen if we acknowledged both *men's and women's* points of view as a starting point for understanding people's experiences in crises such as natural disasters? Might we come up with better – and here we should read this as effective and sustainable – policies in recovery and rehabilitation efforts if we thought along these lines? What different approaches might we take that make our disaster response policies efficacious? When we have a more inclusive analysis of experiences in humanitarian crises, we paint a more accurate portrait of men's and women's struggles during these events. It becomes necessary to pursue this line of enquiry to have targeted response strategies, effective recovery plans and sustainable rebuilding policies. If these are the aims then this is the direction disaster policy research in the region should take.

International Women's Day falls on March 8 every year. The day celebrates the social, cultural, economic and political achievements of women. Some countries in this region – Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam – have even designated the day an official holiday. One key area where the strength and resilience of Southeast Asia's women can be harnessed is in the area of disaster response.

Suggested Readings

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CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND NATURAL DISASTERS

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Scientists just issued a grim new warning on climate change: 'We are not prepared'

Justin Worland,
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Seas to rise about a meter even if climate goals are met – study

Alister Doyle,
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We can't engineer our way out of climate change

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Cities, scientists unite in battle against climate change at UN summit

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4 March 2018

How architecture is tackling increasing floods from climate change

Neil Yeoh,
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Bangladeshi women to receive funding for protection from climate change

Reuters,
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Unprecedented climate events: Historical changes, aspirational targets, and national commitments

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EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

2018 Asia-Pacific Rain-forest Summit

16–18 April 2018
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Climate Adaptation Conference 2018

8–10 May 2018
Melbourne, Australia



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ENERGY SECURITY

NEWS AND COMMENTARIES

Japan task force echoes foreign minister calls to back renewables over coal, nuclear

Reuters,
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China should pay more attention to energy security in future: Chinese expert

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Japan marks seventh anniversary of 3/11 with moment of silence

Daisuke Kikuchi,
The Japan Times
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Taiwanese turn on power

Agence France-Presse,
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India's rising stature as a solar power

Chithra Purushothaman,
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14 March 2018

World's energy systems struggle to go from brown to green, new study finds

David Fogarthy,
The Straits Times
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International Congress on Energy Security and the Environment

2-4 May 2018
Djerba, Tunisia

Energy Security for the Future 2018

1 June 2018
Monte Carlo, Monaco

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Asia's climate change and energy security in figures

Regional Project Energy Security and Climate Change Asia-Pacific Centre, Hong Kong: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
2018

Developing renewable energy mini-grids in Myanmar: A guidebook

Asian Development Bank, Manila: Asian Development Bank
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Ensuring a successful Singapore urban food cluster

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Hunger rates remain high amid conflict, climate shocks, warns UN food security report

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China plans new competition, food watchdog in government revamp

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Over 4,700 UN agency trained veterinarians new vanguard against deadly disease outbreaks

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Buhari to inaugurate, chair National Food Security Council

Isiaka Wakili, Daily Trust
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China's top food company goes global to feed 1.4 billion at home

Shuping Niu, Emma O'Brien and Haze Fan, Bloomberg News
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Global Food Security Symposium 2018

21-22 March 2018
Washington D.C.

3rd International Conference On Agricultural Engineering and Food Security

12-13 November 2018
Frankfurt, Germany



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HEALTH SECURITY



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Call for help: UNICEF study places Malaysia's dire nutrition status under spotlight

Brenda Lau,
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Tobacco companies making a fortune in Southeast Asia

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Are global health organisations gender responsive or gender blind?

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Report: Big tobacco is targeting the world's most vulnerable to increase profits

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NHS slashes funds for top homeless mental health team

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Children without: A study of urban child poverty and deprivation in low-cost flats in Kuala Lumpur

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The tobacco atlas: Sixth edition

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2018

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International Conference on Women's Health 2018

18-19 July 2018
Sydney, Australia

8th International Health Tourism Congress

3-5 May 2018
Kusadasi -Aydin, Turkey



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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF

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China's naval presence deterred Indian intervention in Maldives crisis: sources

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The latest threat to the Rohingya: A menacing Monsoon

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Bangladeshi ex-PM gets bail; party consider poll boycott

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John Kerry says Trump's behavior toward Iran complicates his North Korean gambit

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Nigeria, Cameroon and unwanted headaches

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In Guinea, wave of protests leaves at least 11 Dead

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Charities and terrorism: Lessons from the Syria crisis

Rodger Shanahan,
Lowy Institute
2018

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Humanitarian Congress: ICHAS: 20th International Conference on Humanitarian Aid and Service

4-5 October 2018
Berlin, Germany

27-8 August 2018
Paris, France

TRANSNATIONAL CRIME



Courtesy of Flickr account of Jerome Starkey and used under a creative commons license.

Weak prosecution let human smugglers off the hook

Qadeer Tanoli,
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Duterte has declared that he was beyond the jurisdiction of the ICC

Genalyn Kabiling,
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UK is world's largest producer of legal cannabis

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Fighting the illegal wildlife trade means fighting global corruption and organised crime on a global scale

Dr Rupa Huq MP,
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Corruption fueling deforestation in Cambodia

Kris Janssens,
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Eastward bound: Analysis of CITES-listed flora and fauna exports from Africa to East and Southeast Asia

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Human Trafficking Hackathon

14 – 15 April 2018
Virginia, US

Illegal Fishing and Wildlife Trafficking: Ecological Crises and Security

19 April 2018
Massachusetts, US

WATER SECURITY



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Megacity precipitation-sheds reveal tele-connected water security challenges

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Mapping public water management by harmonizing and sharing corporate water risk information

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World's largest cities depend on evaporated water from surrounding lands

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How Delhi can move towards a water-secure future

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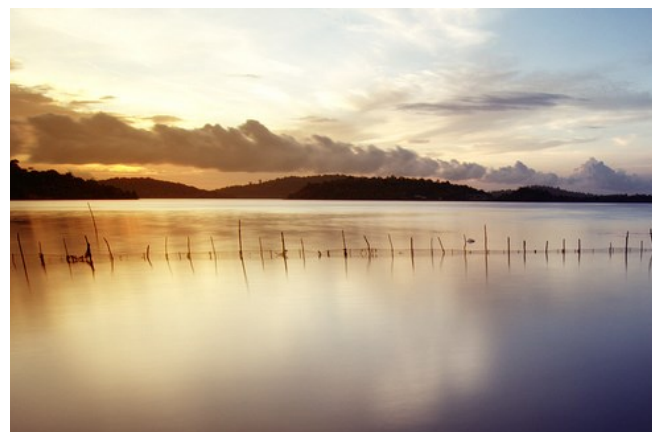
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Singapore World Water Day

1-31 March 2018
Singapore

1st International Conference on Water Security

17-20 June 2018
Toronto, Canada



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