

Abstract

Bangladesh experiences a higher frequency of disasters compared to many other nations because of its unique geographical location. Here, coastal regions are at heightened risk of natural disasters. Disasters disproportionately impact women as one of the most vulnerable demographics and expose their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in jeopardy. SRHR is an integral component of the right to health under Article 12 of the International Convention of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the other international human rights instruments and thus deserves paramount importance. Bangladesh, as a signatory to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework), is obligated to uphold gender-inclusive disaster governance. The Disaster Management Act of 2012 (DMA) and the National Plan for Disaster Management for 2021-25 (NPDM) highlight priority healthcare access by women and children during disasters. This research investigates the adequacy of the national legal framework of Bangladesh in safeguarding the SRHR of women amidst disasters, particularly in coastal areas. The study adopts a qualitative legal research methodology, where primary data is gathered from stakeholder interviews, relevant national and international instruments and case decisions. Contextual analysis extends to secondary sources such as reputed journal articles, books, and newspaper reports. Although the national disaster legislation guarantees priority healthcare access for women, the study anticipates a notable lack of specific attention to SRHR. Furthermore, societal taboos often lead to the neglect of SRHR during disasters, resulting in inadequate accessibility. The study identifies this non-accessibility as contributing to gender-based discrimination. Therefore, there is a pressing need to enact specific legislation focusing on SRHR and for the government to take proactive measures to ensure the SRHR of women during disasters.

Keywords: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR,) Disaster, Women, Coastal Zone, Bangladesh