Understanding Gender-based violence during disasters in the coastal region of Bangladesh

Final Report

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Acknowledgements

I was a PhD research student at Durham University, UK when I came across an unexpected incident. I had a neighbour from my country. The husband was doing a PhD at the same university and the wife was taking care of their only daughter. Though officially the man was my colleague, I had a good relationship with his wife rather with him. She was a faculty member in a private university back home and had to leave her job to accompany her husband. She used to visit our home often. From our talk I knew that the husband was not very helpful and she had to compromise in every family matter. One day I was invited to her house to have afternoon tea. The husband was taking a nap, and was not in a good mood as he had a supervisory meeting at the morning. He always demanded extra care and service from his wife on those meeting days. Here, I should mention that as a PhD student I always had supervisory meetings and my husband barely knew that. This is our culture. Though living in the UK, we were following our culture to support men at home. However, I went to my neighbour’s home with my daughter and we were having a good time. Suddenly her child fell from her baby chair. It was not buckled up properly. We were stunned and helped the child from the floor. She was bleeding from her lips, though the injury was not that severe. Hearing the sounds, the husband came out of his room and suddenly started shouting and kicking things, which were on the floor. He was shouting at his wife, hitting her back, and accusing her of causing the incident, totally ignoring our presence in his house. Seeing him in that mood, my 9-year-old daughter started crying. She was shivering with fear. She had never seen anyone behaving like that. She was shocked and traumatized. I waited for a few minutes to check if the girl's injury was severe or not and then got out of the house immediately. I had to take extra care of my daughter for the next few days to comfort her, and make her understand that not all men are like that. However, I am worried about the trauma she felt. This incident was a shock for me too. I never imagined that an educated and earning woman would tolerate an abusive relationship. I was surprised and embarrassed to witness this secret of their lives. The wife never told me anything about it, though we spent many evenings talking about different problems of family life. This incident reminded me how much domestic violence is kept hidden within the family. It made me think about the women who are living in remote locations of Bangladesh. I knew that GBV is very high in the coastal district Barguna, which was the study area of my PhD research. Most of the women there are uneducated, non-earning and stay at home. I became very curious to know about their lives, and how they are coping with GBV. I also wanted to know if disasters in Bangladesh have any impacts on GBV and women's lives.

So I looked for an opportunity to work on this topic. I shared the wish with my PhD supervisor Professor Rachel Pain. She liked the plan and kindly agreed to work on this topic with me. I am so grateful to her for helping me to write the research proposal. However, we needed a grant to start the research. We waited for few months, then planned to start the research with our own savings. However, we had good news to receive. Listening to our plan Mrs. Moyes advised me to apply to the Christopher Moyes Memorial Foundation (CMMF). We made a research proposal and a budget plan where we (Professor Rachel Pain and me) planned to work voluntarily, and submitted to the CMMF. We received the research grant. It was a great help for us. I am really grateful to all the members of CMMF and especially to Mrs. Moyes for all her inspiration and help.
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Nahid, 2017
1. Introduction

Disasters are sudden calamitous events when people, communities and societies may feel helpless due to the huge loss of lives, materials and serious disruption of daily functions. The impacts of these events are so great that these exceed the ability of the community or society to cope within its own resources (IFRC 2016). One of the greatest challenges individuals, families and communities face during humanitarian emergencies is gender-based violence (GBV) (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2015). The rise in GBV during disasters and its significant impacts on individuals, families and society has become a great concern for disaster managers in recent years. However, the actual rates of GBV often remain hidden, unrecognized and unreported especially in developing disaster prone countries (Rezwana 2018) where data and information on GBV is very limited and irregular. This research aims to document and understand the different forms of GBV during the recent cyclones in Bangladesh. It also focuses on the experiences and opinions of the victims, to understand and make recommendations to improve the conditions they experience.

1.1 Context

Declared an urgent public health priority in 2011 by the World Health Organisation, GBV may include domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, forced marriage, trafficking and ‘honour’ crimes. The 2013 ELHRA-commissioned review states a pressing need for information on the spectrum and context of GBV during humanitarian crises, and for new methodological approaches. Existing research is scarce, but strongly suggests that GBV increases during and after disasters worldwide, and is likely to be a highly significant factor affecting a range of health and social outcomes, and poses a key issue for responders and service providers. A rise in GBV was recorded during the post-Katrina period in New Orleans (Neumayer and Plümper 2007), and during the rescue time and in the refugee camps after the 2004 tsunami (MacDonald 2005, Pittaway et al. 2007). However, GBV in disasters does not always get proper attention. Many cases are not reported or recorded by the respective authorities.

For instance, a disaster prone country like Bangladesh, which is highly vulnerable to several disasters, does not have records of GBV after recent cyclones like Cyclone Sidr in 2007 and Cyclone Mahasen in 2013. No surveys have been conducted in the affected areas. However, recently completed PhD research reveals several cases of GBV after Cyclone Sidr which did not get recorded (Rezwana, 2018). Further, the research suggests that the presence of different forms of violence created highly vulnerable conditions for the women and girls living in the remote coastal region of
Bangladesh. These cases were mentioned by the NGO officials working in the coastal regions, whereas local inhabitants avoided questions related to violence. This is a mark of the hidden nature of GBV within this society, which itself increases the vulnerability of women and girls to disasters and reduces community resilience and the efficacy of state and NGO responses.

It should be mentioned here that GBV is a major concern in Bangladesh even during usual conditions. According to Government records, there were 19,898 cases of reported violence against women in 2011 (reported to the Police Department). Such violence includes rape, acid throwing, physical torture, dowry, serious injury, and others. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), violence against women increased in 2010 and 2011, and ‘the rape violence situation is aggravating rather than improving’ (BBS 2013, p 133). Such statistics are likely to be only the tip of the iceberg, given under-reporting. They raise questions about the extent, nature and effects of GBV after disasters in Bangladesh, and how agencies might best respond to reduce female vulnerability at these key times. Following the innovative and sensitive methodology developed previously (Rezwana 2018), qualitative research is required to capture the problems of women and girls in this region, and to understand the complex interrelations of socio-cultural factors, GBV, and disasters.

1.2 Aim, research questions and methodology

Using Participatory Action Research in urban and rural areas of Barguna region, Bangladesh, the research aims to document and understand the different forms of GBV that have occurred during cyclone events in recent years. The research asks:

(a) What are the problems of GBV as women define them?

(b) What are the effects of disasters on GBV and vice versa?

(c) What strategies do women use to cope and develop resilience?

(d) What resources and help would women like to see developed by communities and service providers?
2. Conceptual Framework

Before the data collection, a critical analysis of existing conceptual and empirical research was been conducted.

2.1 Definition of GBV and its cultural variation

The increasing number of GBV and its pervasive nature (Heise et al. 2002, Kim and Motsei, 2002) have created an urgent need to know more about GBV and its health and social impacts on victims. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015) defines GBV as 'an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females' (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2015, p5). It includes acts that 'results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life' (WHO 2016). Here, gender identity and roles are a very important factor, which Benjamin and Khadija (1998) emphasize in their definition: 'Gender-based violence refers to violence targeted to a person because of their gender, or that affects them because of their special roles or responsibilities in the society' (Benjamin and Khadija, 1998 in Carpenter 2006 p 86). However, gender identity and roles vary widely across societies and cultures. As a result, the inter-relation of violence and gender creates variations in concepts and definitions of GBV in different societies. Though acts of GBV violate a number of universal human rights, 'many-but not all-forms of GBV are criminal acts in national laws and policies; this differs from country to country, and the practical implementation of laws and policies can vary widely' (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2015, p5). Again, some forms of GBV might be recognized as violence under national laws; however, not all forms of GBV are socially perceived as violence, but rather treated and followed on the basis of local cultures and gender responsibilities and roles (for example child marriage in Bangladesh; BBS 2013).

Again, in South Africa, Kim and Motsei's (2002) research revealed that local nurses defined GBV differently; while female nurses focused on physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, male nurses mentioned only physical abuse (see more in Kim and Motsei's 2002). These personal and social attitudes and norms work as one of the main factors to reinforce several types of visible or hidden GBV in a society; such as domestic violence, rape, marital rape, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, sex trafficking, and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriages, 'honour' killings and female genital mutilation/cutting (USAID 2014, WHO 2016). Among these different forms
of GBV, the most common and complicated form of GBV is domestic violence, which is shrouded in society’s cultures and traditions. According to Pain (2012), ‘domestic abuse can be considered a form of everyday terrorism. It creates long-lasting fear and trauma, which reinforce the abuser’s control over the abused person. It affects vastly greater numbers of people than global terrorism, and it has impacts on many aspects of society as well as on the individual’ (Pain 2012, p 28). However, most often domestic abuse is considered as ‘private’ matter rather a ‘public’ matter and is not reported as violence (Onyejekwe 2004). Especially, beating a spouse is often believed to be the right of the husband, and is not discussed outside the family (sometimes even within the family). Many regions such as Uttar Pradesh in India, Sierra Leone and Bangladesh face this problem (Care International 2013, Koenig et al. 2003). Child forced marriage often takes place in parts of Africa and Asia, especially Niger (75% of girls are married before 18 years), in Chad (68% of girls) and in Bangladesh (66% of girls) (UNICEF 2013 in ICRW 2016). However, forced child marriages are mostly arranged by their families, supported by the communities, and remain shrouded (Rezwana 2018). In this way, ‘GBV is often hidden from view and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice’ (CARE International 2013, p 9).

Therefore, any research on GBV in a specific geographical region needs special attention to clarify the definition of GBV, and to understand its nature and forms by analyzing the inter-relation of GBV with local cultural values and norms, personal attitudes and perceptions (see more in Kim and Motsei 2002). Emphasizing this point, the present research aims to focus on understanding GBV from disaster victims’ own perspectives as they define the problems of GBV.

2.2 Disasters and GBV (GBV): global perspective

GBV is a great concern for every society. Both males and females may become victims (USAID 2014); however, women and girls are overwhelmingly the targets of GBV all over the world (CARE International 2013). According to the World Health Organization (2013) ‘violence against women is not a small problem that only occurs in some pockets of society, but rather is a global public health problem of epidemic proportions, requiring urgent action’ (WHO 2013, p 3 and p 20). Statistically, a higher number of women and girls living today have experienced any form of GBV in their lifetime, in their homes, workplaces, schools and communities (see more in www.unwomen.org, accessed on 17/09/2016). Globally 35.6% of women have ever experienced either non-partner sexual violence or physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner, or both. The number is higher in low-and middle-income regions, e.g. in Africa 45.6% and in South-East Asia 40.2% and in high income region is 32.7 % (WHO 2013). In addition, about 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18
years of age) (UNICEF 2016) and adult women account for half of the human trafficking victims detected globally (UNODC 2014).

However, these conditions worsen during humanitarian crises, due to increased rates of violence (CARE International 2013, Enarson 2012, Goulds 2013, Wiest et al. 1994, Baden et al. 1994, Neumayer and Plumper 2007, MacDonald 2005, Pittaway et al. 2007). The experience of several disasters in last fifteen years show that different types of GBV increase in post disaster periods, becoming a second disaster for the female victims; e.g. Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, New Zealand snowstorm in 2006, China earthquake in 2008, the 2010 Haiti earthquake and the BP oil spill in Florida in 2010 (MacDonald 2005, Houghton et al. 2010, Chan & Zhang 2011, MADRE et al. 2011, and Patterson 2011 in Enarson 2012). According to the Department of Children and Families, New Jersey (2016), domestic violence increases up to 50% following a disaster. Goulds (2013) also states that 'when disaster strikes and poverty and insecurity increases, child marriage is used by some families as a coping strategy' and 'most of the 25 countries with the highest child marriages are considered fragile states, or at high risk of natural disasters' (Goulds 2013, p 142). Not only the disaster victims, but female aid workers may also face harassment (Dominelli 2013). However, it should be mentioned here that despite these literatures indicating the importance of the relation between disasters and GBV, the availability of data is very limited (Enason 2012, Koenig et al. 2003). Especially, detailed data on the gendered health impacts of disasters are not easily available in developing countries (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013) and data on GBV in disasters are rarely available. This lack of data is due to constraints created during disasters, i.e. widespread damage (Enarson 2012); however recently completed research on disaster prone Bangladesh revealed another important reason. It shows that along with insufficient initiatives taken by authorities (i.e. Government or NGOs) to record these incidents, there is a strong tendency to keep GBV hidden within the family and within society, which stops many of these incidents being reported and recorded (Rezwana 2018).

2.3 Disasters and GBV: Bangladesh perspective

GBV is a major social problem in Bangladesh. According to Government records, there were 19,898 cases of violence against women in 2011 reported to the Police Department. Such violence includes rape, acid throwing, physical torture, dowry, serious injury, and others. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, violence against women increased in 2010 and 2011 compared to the previous six years, and ‘the rape violence situation is aggravating rather than improving’ (BBS 2013, p 133). According to Ain o Salish Kendra, there were 512 rape incidents during January to September 2016,
and 26 deaths caused by rape in Bangladesh (ASK, 2016). Early marriage is another major problem in this country. This country was in fourth position in child forced marriage in 2013 (UNICEF 2013 in ICRW 2016) and the 66 percent of girls are married before the age of 18 (UNICEF 2016). One third of these girls are married before the age of 15. In addition, a high number of Bangladeshi women become subjects of violence in their husband’s house after marriage. According to a recent Government report on ‘Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey-2015’ in 2016, about 80.2 percent of married women are abused by their husbands at least once in a lifetime. The forms of violence include physical, sexual, economic, emotional and controlling behaviour. Around 41.7 percent of female victims of physical or sexual violence suffered injuries (The Daily Star, 2016).

Here it should be mentioned that such statistics are likely to be only the tip of the iceberg, given under-reporting. As Hossain and Suman (2013) note, ‘in a traditional value dependent society like Bangladesh, many incidents of violence against women are not reported to the police or in the media’ (Hossain and Suman 2013, p 81). A recent Government report also emphasizes that about 72.7 percent of female victims do not share their experiences and only 2.6 percent sought legal support (The Daily Star, 2016). Social stigma, fear of the perpetrator and further embarrassment are some of the reasons behind not reporting violence (Hossain and Suman 2013 and The Daily Star, 2016). These conditions of GBV during normal times of the year raise questions about the extent, nature and effects of GBV after disasters in Bangladesh. This requires special attention and investigation.

2.4 Disaster prone Bangladesh and GBV

Bangladesh is a disaster prone country. Indeed, this small country with a large population of over 164 million is the fifth most disaster prone country in the world (The World Bank 2016 and ICIMOD 2012). The country suffers from tropical cyclones, tornadoes, thunderstorms, tropical depressions, floods, riverbank erosion, arsenic contamination and earthquakes (Banglapedia 2015). Due to dense population and poor economic conditions, disasters always affect a large number of people (Matin and Taher 2001; Loayza et al. 2009). However, disasters have gendered impacts, and numbers of female victims are always higher. For example, during the 1991 cyclone, 90% of victims were women and children, and in Cyclone Sidr 2007, the female to male death ratio was 1:5 (Ahmed 2011, Rahman 2013). Considering health impacts, female victims are more vulnerable than male victims in regards of both health problems and health care access after disasters (Rezwana 2018). Research reveals that culture and social attitudes create differences among the members of society (Nahar et al. 2014); gender identity and poor economic conditions create a complex situation for female
victims, making them more vulnerable in disasters (Canon 2002; Sultana 2011). Sultana (2010, p 48) suggests that women face more 'marginalization and oppression than their male counterparts' during disasters which might lead to increased GBV. Similarly, Hossain and Suman argue that 'due to patriarchy and in the absence of adequate empowerment situation of women, domestic violence by men against women is a common phenomenon in Bangladesh' (Hossain and Suman 2013, p 81). However, due to absence of detailed data on GBV, especially during disaster periods, it is difficult to know the real conditions. Considering the previous discussions on increasing rates of GBV after disasters in the other countries, and GBV records in Bangladesh collected during normal times, the question arises of the real conditions of GBV after disasters in Bangladesh.

2.5 Understanding GBV in disasters: the research gap

From the previous sections, it can be summarized that different types of GBV 'may be triggered by or exacerbated by a disaster but generally reside(s) in the everyday lived reality of women and girls' (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013, p 4). While GBV occurs across the world, it is geographically uneven due to differences in culture, social attitudes and economic conditions. In addition, political influence (Pain 2014 a& b) and power relation among members of society may reinforce GBV, prohibiting disclosure and keeping it hidden (Rezwana 2018, Sultana 2011). Bangladesh has a gap in GBV records, for example early marriage is not recorded as gender based violence in government reports, whereas early marriage is a criminal act according the law (Gender Statistics 2013). Besides, there is no detailed information about GBV during disasters in Bangladesh, except a few individual studies (Sultana 2009 & 2010, Rashid and Michaud 2000). Bradshaw and Fordham 2013 also mention that 'there is a lack of quantitative data available to measure the gendered impact of disasters, and the lack of large-scale qualitative studies by which to better understand how disasters are experienced as gendered events' (Bradshaw and Fordham 2013, p 7).

The current study aims to address this research gap by investigating the nature and effects of GBV after disasters in Bangladesh, and how agencies might best respond to reduce female vulnerability at these key times. Following the innovative and sensitive methodology developed previously (Rezwana 2018), this qualitative research study aims to capture the problems of women and girls in this region, and to understand the complex interrelations of socio-cultural factors, GBV, and disasters.
3. **Methodology, methods and fieldwork**

3.1 **Methodology and methods**

The research took a Participatory Action Research approach to identify and explore GBV with women and the agencies, which work with them. In PAR, researchers work with communities to produce rich contextually-sensitive knowledge. It rests on the development of trust and relationship-building, and uses largely qualitative methods to identify new issues for study, generate shared analysis, and highlight action. The experience of the research team in this region of Bangladesh also informs the methodology. In the main phase of the research, the Researcher, Co-Investigator and Research Assistants have worked with key informants in Barguna, and through these contacts recruited a larger number of respondents to the research. Through group discussions, individual interviews and observations the research aimed to address the research questions in a sensitive, ethical and culturally appropriate way. The questions were open and subject to iterative development as we learnt from women the issues they and others have faced during cyclone events. This main phase of fieldwork at the different sites of Barguna have been supported with interviews with key personnel from national, municipal and local government, NGOs, educational institutes and other service providers working in the region. These have generated another dataset on GBV during disasters, that help to explore existing responses and engage professionals with findings and recommendations from the community stage of the research. Towards the end of this phase, key findings were been presented for verification. Because of the sensitive nature of the research and the cultural context, a strict ethical protocol was been developed and adhered to.

3.2 **The study area, fieldwork and data collection**

Several field visits were conducted to collect data from remote areas of Barguna. The first field visit was conducted just after Cyclone Roanu in 2016. This visit helped to establish Barguna as the study area of this research, and to begin to explore the key issues that fed into the study design. The second visit involved meeting with the key informants, training the research assistants and undertaking the pilot surveys. Several visits were then made to collect data using in-depth interview methods with semi-structured questionnaires. The details of the fieldwork are described in the following paragraphs.

*Field visit 17 days after Cyclone Roanu*

To examine the impacts of Cyclone Roanu in Barguna, a field visit to the coastal region was made, to see the impacts of the cyclone and suffering of the victims during the post-disaster periods,
especially women. The Research Assistant set off for Barguna on 8 June 2016, taking a steamer to reach Barisal. He reached Barisal on 9 June and took a bus to reach Barguna. A local Research Assistant from Barguna joined him to visit vulnerable areas of Barguna municipality. They visited Khagdon river bank and Crock areas and 'Asrayan' (the Government residential area for landless people) in Barguna Municipality and Naltona Union of Barguna Sadar Upazila (one of the most vulnerable area of this upazila) (Map 1).

Map 1 Barguna Sadar Upazila

Source: Bangladesh Statistical Bureau
**Cyclone Roanu at a glance**

Cyclone Roanu made landfall on the coastal region of Bangladesh on 21 May 2016. About 24 people died during this cyclone. Beside strong winds, landslides, floods and heavy rain were the main hazards created. About half a million people had to move from their home to take shelter (BBC, 21 May 2016). Many houses and land were submerged (Map 2) and 'at least 351.48 kilometres of roadway, 59 bridges and seven buildings belonging to the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) were badly damaged in Barisal division, especially Barguna was particularly badly affected, with 48 bridges damaged' (Hossain, 2016). However, no casualties were reported in Barguna, and so compared to other coastal districts Barguna was only moderately affected by Cyclone Roanu.

Map 2 Flooded areas of Barguna after Cyclone Roanu

Source: Copernicus, 2016.

Map 1 shows the flooded areas of Barguna after two days (23/05/2016) of Cyclone Roanu.
Experiences at the field level; Barguna Municipality

Areas beside the Khagdun river were moderately affected during Cyclone Roanu. Most of the inhabitants did not go to the cyclone shelters, though many live just beside the river at the water level. Water entered into these houses and they had to wait on the high roads or in neighbours’ houses until the water subsided and returned to the river.

Some of the families who took refuge at the cyclone shelter reported that female members and children had been left at the cyclone shelter by male members of the household, who stayed at home to protect the house during the warning period. This raised questions about insecurity of the female victims in the cyclone shelters, warranting further investigation.

Photograph 1: Damaged house, Cyclone Roanu. The woman in the photograph did not leave her house, though part of the house was damaged during Cyclone Roanu.

Photograph 2: Houses near Khagdun River. These houses are located below high tide level and tide water enters easily. During Cyclone Roanu water entered and these weak houses were also highly vulnerable to the strong wind of cyclones, however most dwellers did not take refuge in a shelter.
**Naltona Union (Padda Village)**

This is one of the most remote areas of Barguna. The economic condition of this village is poor. Most of the houses are made of tin and bamboo. Like the other villages of Barguna, this village has insufficient transport system and healthcare facilities, and it becomes disconnected from the Barguna municipality for some days after any disaster. It is therefore difficult for relief to reach this village.

While visiting the village, the research assistants talked with inhabitants. According to them, Cyclone Roanu had less impacts here compared to the other parts of the coastal region. However, the embankment (Photograph 4) which protects the villages was partly washed away. Due to heavy rainfall it became extremely muddy (Photograph 3). During the rainy season, this embankment road always becomes difficult to use and the condition became worse during Cyclone Roanu. Very thick clay and mud was also found after 17 days of Cyclone Roanu during the field visit. People who went to the safe shelter had to suffer these slippery roads full of mud during the warning period and again, it was one of the reasons people did not go to the safe shelter. Most of the inhabitants did not leave their home in spite of getting a cyclone warning of signal 7 from the Government and NGO forecast. Most inhabitants did not listen to them and relied on their instincts. They gave several other reasons (mentioned in the following section) for not taking refuge during the warning period. According to one local NGO, only 2000 among 89000 people went to the safe shelters. Many people, women, children and older people stand on the nearest road/ embankment for a long time in the rain during Cyclone Roanu. Some of them got injured while going to the shelter at the last moment.

The problems observed during the immediate post-disaster period included many houses being partially damaged, and many kitchens were destroyed. Poor inhabitants, especially women, try to cope with these conditions as they are not able to make immediate repairs. In addition, in Naltona village, the embankment is the only road and people have to use it for travelling from their villages. Women here carry drinking water using this road. However, this embankment becomes very difficult to use after rain. Photograph 4 shows a woman carrying a water pot, barefoot on the embankment. Traditionally men do not do this job in this area, whatever the condition of the road is.
Again, 17 days after the cyclone, people were found to be in a panicked and confused state of mind with regard to the decisions they had taken during Cyclone Roanu. They expressed these feelings to the research assistants. Men tended to dominate the discussions. They informed us that they had taken most decisions about cyclone preparations and recovery, however their wives and female family members showed confusion and dilemmas in relation to these decisions, with which they sometimes disagreed. According to the research assistants, the emotional distress witnessed raised questions with regard to GBV at home during the disaster periods. An in-depth investigation was required to know more about this.

**The second visit and pilot surveys**

The objectives of the second field visit were; to meet with the potential key informants (local inhabitants and NGOs officials), to introduce the research and researchers to the key informants for
the main field work, to discuss with the key informants the research questions, methods and methodology to finalize decisions as part of the participatory research, to observe and learn more about GBV conditions at the field level, and to arrange accommodation and recruit a field investigator from the study area.

It was a successful field trip in regards of meeting potential key informants. Five NGO officials and three local inhabitants were interviewed. Most of the interviewed officials are working with GBV victims and two of the key informants (a male and a female) are the victims of GBV including child abuse, forced marriage and domestic violence.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the potential key informants (the interview schedule is included at the end of this report). This interview collected data on GBV in Barguna at the local level from the potential key informants, and asked their input into the research questions and methods and methodology. This participation resulted in the planned focus group discussions being moved from the research plan. According to the key informants, FGD would not be successful due to the sensitive nature of the research topic.

Interviews with the key informants also helped to finalize the decision to have Barguna as the study area,. The draft interview schedule was sent to the key informants before the main field work. They checked and gave opinions on the interview schedule, and also referred potential respondents for the main field work.

**In-depth interviews and data collection**

In-depth interviews were conducted with 29 female GBV victims and 8 male respondents. The female respondents were all over 10 years in age (as cases of early marriage starts from age 10) and from different occupations and economic conditions. Among the male respondents, two were GBV perpetrators and one was a victim. All these respondents shared not only their own experiences, but also examples of GBV they had witnessed among their relatives and neighbours.

The main fieldwork stage took more than three months to complete. It was a challenge to find respondents who are victims of different forms of GBV and were willing to speak about it. On many occasions, the team reached victims who had agreed earlier to talk, but changed their minds. These visits had to be rearranged with other victims. The remote location and difficult transport systems required complex arrangements to reach them. Some field visits had to be postponed when weather was especially bad. Female research assistants were always accompanied by other assistants when visiting remote locations, which also needed more time to plan and fix the dates.
4. Understanding GBV: the Bangladeshi context

This section will focus on the prevailing conditions of GBV in Bangladesh. The rise in GBV in Bangladesh during the last few years, and its severity, was noted above. Before going on to examine GBV during disasters, a description of GBV conditions in Barguna during the rest of the year is helpful to understand the context to experience of disasters. These findings are based on the experiences of GBV victims, both male and female inhabitants of Barguna.

4.1 Present conditions of GBV in Barguna

The present research revealed the presence of higher numbers of different types of GBV in Barguna. Most of the respondents spoke of different forms of GBV and gave details which are alarming. The data analysis shows that GBV in Barguna includes early marriage, wife battering, domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse, eve teasing, dowry violence and mental torture. Among these GBV, wife battering, early marriage and dowry were mentioned by all respondents.

According to one of the key informants, ‘Violence in Barguna includes rape, early marriage, wife battering, torture for dowry, mental torture. However, discrimination between girls and boys created by and within the family should be included in the definition of violence because it is the root of everything’ (Rj1, male). Discrimination between girls and boys was mentioned in several interviews however one key respondent described that ‘most of the people believe that girls do not need higher education. There would be no profit for them if they educate daughters. Son will earn for them and take care of them. So, they should spend more money for sons’ (G1, female). This point is very important and we will return to it.

Other respondents described GBV as follows:

‘Early marriage is one of the most frequently committed forms of violence in Barguna. Secondly, wife battering, sexual harassment, rapes are also common in this area’ (I1, male).

‘GBV in coastal regions includes many things. Women face disasters, they have problems with their husbands, they have children to take care of’ (P3, Female).

We go on to describe these forms of violence in more detail.
4.1.1 Wife battering

Wife battering is the most common violence committed in Barguna in many households. According to the Bangladesh Government about 87 percent of married Bangladeshi women are abused by their husband (BBS 2011) This research also reveals a higher presence of wife battering in Barguna. The experiences of respondents were unbearable to hear, and I could see their bruises. Many times, hearing these interviews and analyzing the data, even sitting in my favourite cosy corner of my room at home, made me cry. I felt lost, sorry and even angry. The interviews show how helpless and vulnerable many young girls and women in Barguna are at their own house.

Domestic abuse is a very sensitive and private issue to talk about, however the victims of wife battering were eager to describe their experiences and even showed their bruises during the interviews:

'I was beaten with a shirt, hands, several times for silly or simple reasons, one day he pushed me towards the wall which made me senseless' (M5, female & M6, female).

'He has beaten me until I became senseless. My mother was present at that time. She could not do anything. She took me home' (P6, female). This shows the helplessness of mother and daughter, at the same time represents many Bangladeshi rural women who can not do anything but cry on their own.

'He hit me on my eye three times. Blood got clotted in my eyes. I can not see well with this eye' (P4, female).

The reasons for wife battering vary. However, analysis shows that women's empowerment, power relations, culture and tradition are the main influencing factors, and create an environment that enables this violence. However, the reasons most often directly mentioned by the respondents are dowries, poverty, extra-marital relationships, adultery and extra marriages, and traditions. Sometimes there were no specific reasons mentioned, and women are simply beaten by their husbands. According to these victims, men just beat them whenever they want:

'He beats me every day. Whenever he wants to beat, he starts. He uses bad words, he swears' (P12, female).

'He hit me with glass... I got a cut on my hand... I was pregnant that time. The reason was I spoke loudly' (M10, female).
Other interviews reveal simple reasons such as the wife not finishing cooking on time, or not completing the husband’s orders; or maybe he is just upset and becomes violent.

However, the major reasons mentioned in the interviews are described in the following paragraphs.

**Dowry and wife beating**

Dowry is the main reason mentioned by respondents for wife battering. Nearly every marriage in Barguna involves some form of dowry violence. Dowry is the money the parents of the bride have to spend, or the gifts they must give the groom and his family. The amount of money depends on many things. For example, the status of groom - if he is educated the dowry will be higher - or if the family of the groom is high status the money will also be higher. On the other hand, if the bride has a dark complexion, has any disability or any negative social record the dowry will also be higher. One respondent said:

‘I have dark complexion and I do a job outside my home, these are the main problems of the family to get a good marriage proposal for me ...everyone (neighbours) talks about me negatively...I became a burden to the family’ (M5, female).

A negative social record may include many complex criteria. One of my respondents was a trafficking victim when she was only 6 or 7 years old. Her father had to find a larger amount of money to arrange her marriage. He is very poor and struggles to earn enough for his family's daily meal, however he had to promise one lac (GBP 1000) as dowry money. He could not find this amount in time, and as a result the girl is beaten by her husband and his whole family. She said, 'they blamed me and say 'your father did not tell us that you were trafficked'. They also want full dowry money from my father...though my father informed them about trafficking before the marriage and spent a huge amount of money already...but could not fulfil their demands ...so they torture me. My father is very poor’ (T1, female). A negative social record could be also be due to the girl's family living near a bazaar, or the father being a shop owner in the local baazar and the girl working at her father’s shop; or if the girl has been eve teased or abused by local miscreants, or the girl has been in a relationship with a boy or her neighbours simply suspect this. These criteria are very seriously considered during the marriage proposal and in deciding the amount of dowry money.

Even without these criteria, often the amount of dowry money promised by the bride’s parents is beyond their capacity and they cannot give it on time. So, the torture starts. Alternatively, the groom and his family may start asking for more money even if the dowry money has been paid. Any economic loss suffered by the family, for example after disasters, any improvement made to their
house, or if the husband needs money for his business or bribe money to help him get a new job, the groom and his family start torturing the wife to raise money from her parents. This is a very common phenomenon of wife battering in Barguna, as these examples show: while beating his wife, the husband of a respondent screamed 'I do not want to keep you. I want to marry into a rich family, so that I can have more things. Your father could not give anything'. Saying this he starts torturing me. That day he hit me on my forehead. It still hurts'(P3, female).

'The more educated the groom is the higher the dowry money is. She is tortured, beaten, forced to abort her child only for dowry money. She still does not want to leave her husband's house to conserve the honour of her family.' (R2, female). This respondent discussed her daughter's case who is a dowry victim.

'He beats me with whatever is near to his hand. Look at my bruises. These marks will never go away. He wants me to bring cigarettes for him, he wants me to bring money... where can I get money?' (P11, female).

'He orders me to bring money from my parents but where will they get money? They are poor and do not have anything left to give him. He beats me for this...' (P6, female).

Poverty

Poverty is the another important reason for wife beating in Barguna. Many of the respondents mentioned that when poverty strikes the family, wife battering increases. Often, when a husband loses his job or property, or simply does not want to earn anything, they start wife beating. Taking loans from different organizations also creates tension in the poor family and leads to wife beating. According to the respondents, loans are mostly issued in the wife's name, and many examples came up in this research that husbands stole the money from their wives, or sold the item bought with that loan money (such as a rickshaw or cow), and spent it.

'My husband cheated me, he took loans from everyone he knew, used me to get rid of his creditors and humiliated me in crowds, accused me of negligence of my responsibilities in relation to loans ' (P5, female).

Whenever these women try to claim the money back from their husbands they get abused. As this respondent explains: 'Wife battering, conflicts in families are mostly created because of loans taken from different organizations. When the instalments cannot be managed then both men and women
in the family become tensed and they start quarrelling. However, women are mostly beaten by their husbands.’ (M1, female).

**Extra-marital relationships, adultery and extra marriages**

Extra-marital relationships, adultery and extra marriages are also important reasons for wife battering. According to the respondents, whenever men are in extra-marital relationships or visit brothels or prostitutes, they start avoiding their wives and become arrogant and violent. A female respondent said, 'if a man starts liking women who live outside home, would he be happy with the woman at home? He has beaten me from the very beginning and bruises are all over me. Those are very painful and I became sick' (M10, female).

However, the explanation was different from a male respondent's view. He explained, 'when he (a perpetrator) married her, she was good looking. However, after few years due to poor diet and child bearing at the early age she lost her beauty which also became a reason for torture. Her husband started avoiding her and adultery started' (K, male). This is a very important and alarming quotation from a male respondents who opened up to us and told his opinion, as he is defending the men who are in extra-marital relationship. This point will also be discussed later.

**In the name of tradition**

'The father thinks that if I marry off my daughter she will be under the supervision of her husband. If she does anything wrong he has the right to punish her. Actually, as the father behaved with his wife, he also possesses the same social attitude and behaviour towards his daughter’ (H1, male).

This is one of the reasons that many men and some women justify wife beating. Most of the wife beatings are committed by husbands, mother-in-laws and even other family members in the husband's family. Women may also take part in this violence. Many respondents mentioned this in their interviews.

'Both he and his mother, brother, father all beat me’ (M7, M6, P12, P8, T1, M1, female).

'He and his ex-wife has beaten me and evicted me from my own house' (P12, female). Again, wife beatings are considered as families' own matter that should be kept private within family. Most of the time neighbours remain as passive bystanders and only help to stop violence when it becomes too serious or the woman seeks help from them. In July 2017, in a case of wife battering Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, a women was beaten to her knees, and pulled and dragged by her husband along a populated street where all the other people were passive bystanders, except one.
This man stepped forward. As he got close to the couple, the woman asked for his help to save her. He took photos of the abusing husband and called the police. (Protho Alo, 02/07/2017). The video of this violence is on the National Newspaper's website.

Male respondents spoke of the perspectives of men on wife beating. One of them said 'we saw our previous generations do the same with our mother, aunties and grandmothers and we just follow them. We were raised like this.' (N2, male)

‘Our tradition was to think women were like subordinates. So men beat them. Still some men are not aware and they do the same. They have different problems. Actually, some women do not have problems to be beaten like this. Men want to control and dominate women’ (K, male). This male respondent finds it okay to beat wife and he feels that women do not mind for this.

4.1.2 Early marriage

Early marriage is another common form of violence committed in Barguna. Girls are married off as young as 10 years old. According to the respondents, poverty is the main reason for this, however insecure and poor housing and neighbourhoods, and gender discrimination are also major reasons.

‘Parents feel the lack of security for their girls, and they do not believe in higher education for the girls, so they arrange early marriages for their daughters. These girls become the victims of other violence after early marriages. However all these forms of violence have psychological effects on the victims. (Rj 1, male).

The key informants (Government and NGO officials) who work on early marriage described the difficulty they face in prohibiting early marriage:

‘From my experiences I find that 80 to 90 % of early marriage are ending in divorce or abandoning the wife. These girls are also becoming the victims of dowry violence. We tried our best to stop early marriages whenever we receive information that one is being planned. However, these parents are desperate, they proceed with their plan when they have made up their mind’ (I1, male and G1, female). This research also found some respondents who made fake birth certificates to marry off their daughters at very early age. They also mentioned the same reasons described above.

Early marriages are often followed by other forms of violence:

‘Violence is physical and mental torture by the husbands. Sometime they do not just beat but swear and threaten too. The dowry might be the reason. Early marriage might be another reason. Many
times parents married off their daughters to save them from the local miscreants, however these girls do not know what marriage is. They are often scolded, beaten by their husbands and in-laws’ (M2, female).

'Early marriage in Barguna is more common in fishermen’s society. They move from one place to another in different seasons. They get married to young girls and when they leave the area, they leave the new wives too' (I1, Male).

Victims of early marriage describe their situations:

'I was too young to understand marriage. My husband saw and married me. From that time, I had to face different problems. There were women's problems (physical relationship), I had to manage in-laws. My husband tortured me for dowry. I have been suffering since' (P3, female & P9, female).

'I was too young to understand marriage, I was only 14-15 years old, too shy and soft. After some days of my marriage he started asking for money from my parents. They gave him whatever they could, even keeping pawn to valuable things. But he was not stopping. Even his mother joined in with him. She tortured me at every step. For this my parents lost everything valuable' (P5, P7, M6, female).

Most of the time these victims of early marriage could not continue their education, which can be seen from the educations statistics of Bangladesh. The number of girls attending primary school is satisfactory, but suddenly drops after class five when they are 11-12 years old. Most of them are then married off.

Many times during the marriage proposal the groom's family promise to allow the girl to continue her schooling, but like the other promises they never keep it. 'They did not let me continue my study though they promised' (P5, female).

These young girls may also have their basic needs neglected by their husbands: 'my husband did not believe me, did not take care of me during my illness, I was not taken to the doctors'(P5, female).

4.1.3 Extra-marital relationship, another marriage and abandoning wife

Extra-marital relationships were one of the problems in many respondents' lives. It is reported that many women have been cheated by their husbands, and they abandon their wives to remarry. This is an additional very common form of violence. The behaviour could be noticed from the very beginning of the marriage:
‘He has extra-marital relationship. He liked his sister-in-law before my marriage. His family knew that but they forced him to marry me’ (P2, female).

‘He eloped with a married women when I was six months pregnant with my child. He remarried her without my consent’ (M7, female).

‘We did not know that he was in a relationship with other woman before my marriage. Still he married me, and I then found that he was cheating. He started avoiding me after some time. He gave my phone number to some bad men and they now call me and disturb me’ (M2, female).

‘My husband left me when I was at my father’s house to give birth to our first child. He cheated and went to Dhaka and married another woman’ (M6, M4, P3, female).

When husband marries again, he sometime wants the first wife to stay in the same house with his new wife. This is the most embarrassing and sometime vulnerable situation for both wives; often conflicts start, which may end with violence and crime. However, if the wife does not want to continue her marriage she might be accused by the husband and by wider society too.

**4.1.4 Rape, abuse and eve teasing**

Rape is mostly kept secret and hidden in Bangladeshi society. Most cases are not reported to any authority (Government or NGOs). However, it should be mentioned here that the number of reported rape case is also very high in this country – and yet it is only the tip of the iceberg.

A male key informant explained the situation, ‘Rapes are sometimes conducted by the cousins or other members of the family’. (Rj1, male).

The research also revealed several cases of rape and abuse in Barguna where the victims are below 12 years old. The stories are not elaborated upon here as they are very sensitive and disturbing.

Rape cases also occur in poor neighbourhoods, sometimes committed by rich members of the society. In particular, in the fishermen’s village, cases of rapes are higher.

Eve teasing (street harassment) is a great concern for young girls, women and even married women in Barguna. There are several cases of eve teasing reported; even as a female researcher I was one of the victims during my field work in Barguna. Respondents mentioned eve teasing and abuse several times in their interviews:
My husband left me... it is a violence to me. However, when people swear at me, say bad words to me, it also becomes violence to me. When I walk by the road they tease, only because I am a woman and my husband left me. I have no faults except these’ (M9, female).

4.1.5 Trafficking

‘Trafficking is present in Barguna, however it is not easy to recognize. Trafficking is conducted with the permission of parents or victims themselves. These men or women leave Barguna for jobs offers by the traffickers and many of the victims do not return. We know presence of this violence but do not know more.’ (I1, male).

‘Even parents sell their daughters or provoke them to get involved in prostitution. They agree to give their daughters to do jobs as housemaids. However, many of them know that their daughter might not be safe. Parents try to reduce responsibilities for their daughters and the burden of poverty. (G1, female).

During our fieldwork we interviewed a trafficking victim. The interview reveals that she might have been saved from trafficking, but that she is now the victim of dowry violence, wife battering, and mental torture in her husband's house. She is often beaten. She is pregnant at the age of 17, and has not received any vaccinations during her pregnancy due to her husband’s negligence.

4.2 GBV and male victims

There are some incidents of GBV mentioned in the interviews where men were the victims. According to the male respondents, the present law is seen to work for women now. Women use these laws for their own use. For example, in one case a woman filed a false case against her husband because she does not want to be with him. Besides, women may become oppressive when they bring household things from her father's house during marriage. A respondent explained, 'If woman brings things (dowry or gifts) from her father's house, she might start teasing her husband and his family' (P1, male). The respondent called it mental torture for the men.

Again, some women become involved in extra-marital relationships and cheat on their husbands. Especially during husband's absence, ‘they have extra marital affairs and they cheat on husbands, especially married women have relationships with young men and many of these women’s husbands live abroad’ (Rj1, male & P1, male). A few cases were reported where women start fighting with their husbands, throw things and beat them. These incidents led to separation or divorce. However,
our male respondent who was a victim said that he still wants to continue his bad marriage for his son and the honour of his family.

A key informant who works in the Mahila Parishad mentioned that 'Male victims also come to us to get help and retrieve the marital relationships' (G1, Female).

We also interviewed a male who was a victim of sexual abuse (unwanted touching) when he was 10-11 years. He mentioned that a middle-aged man who lived near their house liked to touch young boys like him. He and his friends were the targets of his violence. He did not mention it to anyone except me in his entire life. The man could not go further as he was transferred to another section of his office. I know this is absolutely a secret behaviour in this society. However, the male respondent's courageous effort helps us to know the presence of this violence and vulnerability of young boys.

Nonetheless, compared with men it is clear that women are the main victims of all types of GBV. The experience of GBV is very common, and the severity of many cases GBV is alarming.

4.3 Are there any exceptions? GBV and women

Our analysis questioned whether there is any factor which might influence the presence of GBV in Barguna. Considering the employment status, education, socio-economic condition, religion and physical conditions of the respondents, we found that these factors do not prevent female GBV victims from being abused. Our methodology included GBV victims from highly educated groups (even those with MSc), job holders, earning women, lower middle class women and women of different religions. Their experiences of violence are similar; however, their coping strategies might be different which is discussed in Section 5. Even women with physical disabilities and mental illness faced severe GBV.

One respondent who had had a mental illness said, 'when I was mentally ill, all of them (in-laws) beat me in such a way that neighbours came forward and requested them to stop. They beat me with everything, put me into the water. Neighbours said that the sick person should be returned to her parents rather being beaten. But they did not listen first' (M1, female).

Another respondent mentioned the problems of being an earning woman (jobholder), 'Earning women face double burdens. The burden of torture and the burden of helplessness for not sharing the problems and pains with others. They mostly keep these problems hidden. They spend every single penny for the family and cannot even see their own earnings. She might sometimes want to
spend money at her father’s house but it creates conflicts with her husband. He does not allow that. Whereas it is a common concept of the society that women do not listen to their husband when they earn’ (G1, female).

‘I earn, I take care of the family and I get beaten at every step’ (M1, Female).

Here I should mention that women from upper middle and rich socio-economic classes were not included in interviews as they did not agree to take part. We got interest from lower middle class and poor women. However, as our research aims to reveal GBV in disasters and poor women are the major victims of disasters, these respondents meet our target groups.

5. GBV in disasters: during and post disaster periods

It is already known that the number of GBV increases after disasters. The present research reveals that GBV occurs to an alarming extent in Barguna even during normal times of the year, however conditions become worse before, during and after cyclones. Violence against women increases in its numbers and in its different forms.

According to the respondents, common violence like wife beating increases a lot, and early and forced marriage, abuse and rape, cheating and wife abandonment also increase, thus decreasing the security of women after disasters.

5.1 Wife battering

Wife battering is very common in Barguna society (as detailed in Section 3). However, after any disaster, this violence increases in number and severity. According to most of the respondents, this is the most common violence, which is committed in almost every house, and new victims are added after every cyclone.

One of the GBV victims described in her interview how her husband became abusive after Cyclone Sidr. Her husband was a fisherman and he was getting ready for his successful work. He arranged fishing nets and other necessary tools. However, Cyclone Sidr attacked and destroyed everything. After this loss, he became violent and started torturing his wife. Still the torture continues. The victim describes the situation as follows;

- ’My husband and my father are both very poor. Every cyclone intensifies poverty for them. My husband lost his fishing nets and other tools during Cyclone Sidr... he became violent. He started
beating me. He beats me listening to his sisters. They complain about me and he beats me. One day I had to leave the house and took shelter to my aunt’s house to save myself from his tortures. He brought me back. But, still he is abusive and beats me. I touched his feet and requested him to forgive and love me for sake of our children. He never listens. He always says, ‘get out of my house’. However, where should I go now? ‘(P12, female).

Intense poverty after disasters, lack of jobs and money, and losing belongings all create huge tensions and crises in relations among the family members. One of the respondents described in his interview; ‘during disasters, the family might lose everything. Cattle, trees, crops, house... they become penniless. They might not be able to earn these resources again in their whole life. People become restless and feel lost. In these families, conflicts begin and wife battering increases. People even fought over receiving relief’ (P1, male).

Poor inhabitants do not have any savings for emergencies, and they need help after cyclones. However, there are huge issues of mismanagement reported in relief distribution (Rezwana 2018). Not all victims get help, and most of the time reliefs are insufficient in amount.

These conditions, lack of relief, money and help from the Government or any organization during the recovery phase after the disaster, provoke some men to torture their wives to bring money from her parents. However, disaster strikes everyone and most of the time the wives’ parents do not have any money to give. As a result, wife battering increases. Respondents explained: ‘I could have brought a few things from my parents before the cyclone, but after the cyclone my parents also became helpless...They faced severe loss in the cyclone and still they can’t recover from those loss’ (P6, female).

‘Torture for dowry money increases after disasters. If I could bring some money then I would get relief from beating, and could stay in peace for some time ’ (M12,female and  P11, female).

When conflicts among the family members increases after disaster, both men and women participate in those incidents. One respondent explains, ‘People become restless and lose their patience in disasters, that’s why more quarrels occur in families’ (p5, female). Therefore women might get involved in quarrels and in a few cases, as respondents mentioned, women throw things at their husbands, however in most cases conflicts turn to wife beating. Men become violent and they misuse their physical strength. It has been explained in Section 4 that men complain about the high tone of women’s voices. Women need men to work hard after disasters, to help to collect relief,
repair houses and act as chaperone to allow them to access healthcare. Women do not always get that support from male members of the family, and they lose patience and get involved in quarrels.

Economic dependency particularly increases women’s vulnerability after disasters. Women are slow in regaining their previous jobs after disasters, and many of them lose their small amounts of savings. Sometimes women cannot search for or take up new jobs as their household works and responsibilities increase after disasters (Rezwana 2018). These dependencies increase women’s vulnerability to GBV. Again, as we have seen (Section 4), some men are relaxed about their responsibilities and do not earn enough to maintain their family’s expenses. They do not even want to be accountable for their work and decisions. Family conflicts are higher among these families. This respondent explained the situation as follows;

‘My observation is that whenever men face a lack of money, conflicts between men and women increase...especially after disasters. Fishermen in this area become jobless after cyclones. They do not know or are interested in any other work. All day they roam around, play cards or gossip and spend leisure time. On these days whenever they return home women start questioning them. Women are helpless at home, waiting for men to bring food or other necessary groceries...so they start accusing. Then conflicts begin and wife battering increases’ (I1,male).

This is a very common phenomenon of GBV reported in Barguna after disasters.

5.2 Early and forced marriages

Intense poverty and lack of security after disasters increase the number of early and forced marriage. Young girls are the main victims of this violence. The present research revealed increased number of early marriages in Barguna after recent cyclones. Victims talked about their experiences during the interviews, highlighting the reasons for and consequences of these situations.

‘I was married just within two months after Cyclone Sidr. My father was very poor and the cyclone intensified his poverty. The cyclone took everything we had. Again, my father became afraid of insecurity and being humiliated by the society. He thought people would say bad things about me. So, he arranged a marriage for me as early as possible. However, coming to my husband’s house I found that poverty and other problems are more intense here. At my father's house whatever he earned I could have eaten, but now I get my meal after everyone. Besides, my husband beats me every day. I tolerate all these for my honour and my children, and I have no place to go. ’p12
According to the victims of early marriage, poverty and insecurity after the disaster were the main reason for their marriages. They said that their parents would have said no to a proposal for a young girl before the cyclone, but agreed and married off their girls after disasters without thinking about the consequences. The research reveals that respondents who are the victims of early marriage were very young; one of them was only 13 when she was married off after Cyclone Sidr. She was studying in class 5 at school. Later, she became a victim of dowry violence and her husband divorced her.

An opportunity arose to talk with a parent who married off her young girl at a very early age. She explained the reasons behind her decision. 'I had to say yes to the marriage proposal for my daughter after Cyclone Sidr because we were in intense poverty, no food, no proper shelter. They (groom's family) said they would provide all the marriage expenditure. I had to say yes' (P10, female).

However, as these marriages are arranged quickly, in many cases cheating happens. Grooms hide their age, economic condition and even first marriages. Parents may not have the time or interest to check the groom's information. As a result, young girls become victims. A respondent explains the situation; 'I was married just after the cyclone Sidr. Poverty increased after the cyclone and my parents did not make checks on the man. The man was aged, married and had a wife and two children already. He lied and cheated me'(M3, female). This victim had to face her husband's first wife and was tortured. She had to suffer a lot to have her own rights in that house.

Another important reason for early marriage after disasters is that rich men take disastrous events as an opportunity to prey on girls from poor families. The family does not want to take a risk keeping their young girl at their damaged house, and would rather arrange a marriage for her.

However, the research reveals that the underlying common reason for early marriage that whenever a family falls into crisis, girls are thought of as a burden to the family. The girl's living cost is offloaded by the family marrying them off. One respondent describes that after Cyclone Sidr: 'My father wanted to arrange marriage for me and my sister but we were saved. After disasters the number of early marriage increases' (M7, female & M2, female).

### 5.3 Ransom marriage

In a related case revealed in the present study, a marriage had taken place in the study area after paying a 'ransom' after Cyclone Sidr. The respondent described, 'in our village, a women took loan from a man after Cyclone Sidr and could not pay it back within the time. So, he forcefully married her.
This man has another wife and two daughters already' (M6, female). Again, this shows the very disempowered condition of women after disasters. It highlights the prevailing social attitude that is accepting of early and forced marriage in Barguna. Although this is a common form of violence, the victim’s descriptions reveal that members of society do not protest it. Many women also take it as their fate. However, early marriage often ends in other GBV, as we discuss in Section 6.

5.4 Rape, sexual abuse and threats

The present research reveals experiences of sexual abuse during disasters. It shows, firstly, that disasters such as cyclones create a context that enables more sexual harassment for Barguna women. From the previous section we have come to know that verbal abuse is common in Barguna, however, secondly, sexual abuse and rape are also common. The number appears to increase again before, during and after cyclones, from the time of the weather warning time to beyond the disaster period. Many respondents were the victims of sexual harassment, and described their experiences during the fieldwork in Barguna. However, here it should be mentioned that no rape victims agreed to be interviewed (or, no interviewees wished to divulge rape). The key informants informed the research team about rape incidents after disasters, but the victims did not want to talk about it. Therefore, the following sections reveal cases of sexual harassment which help to build up the picture of GBV in disasters.

During the warning periods before cyclone hits the land

During the weather warning periods, inhabitants were advised to take shelter at a safe place. Mostly people take refuge in cyclone shelters, a neighbour’s stronger house, or at any nearby offices. Weather warnings are disseminated by hand mike, radio, TV and mobile phone network. Many volunteers affiliated with Government and local NGOs work to ensure the weather warning reaches every house. Local people, mainly male, take part in this dissemination before the cyclone. These activities therefore create the context for gatherings of unknown males in the neighbourhoods. Under the guise of volunteers, some miscreants enter the locality and use the opportunity to harass women.

Women may already become panicked, feel confused and frightened while taking shelter (Rezwana 2018), sometimes losing contact with their family, or losing the way to the cyclone shelters. At these times, volunteers, neighbours and others help each other. People who are also going to the shelters help other evacuees who are left behind. However, women do not always get help - sometime they are misled and abused, as these respondents describe;
‘Sometimes people come to help the people to reach the safe shelters. However, some of them take the chance to rape, abuse the girls or women found alone at home’ (M3, female; M1, female and P1, male).

Instead of helping refuge-seeking women, some men become perpetrators. They even check abandoned houses and attack women found to be staying alone at home. This includes female-headed families, or fishermen’s families where husbands leave their wives at home for months to catch fish from the deep sea. These men also try to harass women who have been separated from their families or groups on the way to shelters. We have found in this research that a female respondent moving alone to take shelter during the warning period of Cyclone Roanu in 2016, was attacked by a man. He pulled her dress but this time the victim was lucky and the incident did not get any worse: ‘One man pulled my sari ...I was going to the cyclone shelter...I was so afraid...then some passersby came closer to us. He could not do anything more’ (P3, female) (mother of a young child, Cyclone Roanu). This type of experience was mentioned by other respondents too.

However, reaching the cyclone shelter does not end of women’s vulnerability to GBV, rather they face other types of problems there. The next section elaborates on gendered insecurity at the cyclone shelter during disasters. However, here it should be mentioned that many respondents reported no violence at the cyclone shelter. Differences in perception on GBV might have influenced these opinions. While unwanted touching and verbal abuses were common in a crowded shelter, mentioned by many victims even by male respondents who saw and protested the incidents, some female respondents did not say anything about it. Some have taken this behaviour of male as normal; ‘men are always like that, this is normal for men, they are not good’. However, many women did express their fear and shared their feelings. The following section focuses on the experiences of the respondents at the cyclone shelters. Some of the memories are very fresh, and while they were being described, it was difficult to remain composed; rather, fear captured both of us, victim and researcher.

**During the disaster: GBV at the cyclone shelters**

All cyclone shelters become highly over-crowded during the cyclone attack. New refuge-seekers keep entering the shelters during the cyclone attack, beyond shelter’s capacity. (Details on conditions in cyclone shelters are given in Rezwana’s 2018 book). Respondents mentioned that people push each other to get into the shelters, and some men touch women intentionally and improperly. One of the respondents, the mother of a young girl, described her experience, which represents other women’s experience and their double-burden in the cyclone shelter:
'I went to cyclone shelter with my elder daughter... there were many people, they were shouting, pushing each other, crying, screaming and suddenly someone pulled my blouse and tore it...I was worried about my daughter...how can I save her? Now where should I go? Violence is everywhere' (P2, female).

This mother not only faced abuse herself, but was also in greatly concerned to save her daughter. She was worried where she and her daughter would be safe to take shelter during the next cyclone attack. Many other women also mentioned their fear for the safety of their daughters. According to the respondents, men, especially young males, come to the cyclone shelters and their intentions are not good. They harass young girls and their mothers, physically and verbally. One respondent described, 'shelter is not safe for us. Young men come from 7/8 villages. They eve tease girls and young women. They try to touch or molest them. I feel frightened to stay in the shelters. I stay at my house rather taking my teenaged daughter to the shelters' (P3, female).

Here, a case of harassment and threatening behaviour, which occurred during Cyclone Sidr, is presented to highlight this situation. The respondent described it as follows;

'There was a young girl who took shelter during Cyclone Sidr. Her mother was sick. Her mother left her at the cyclone shelter asking me to look after her. After some time, some men came and asked her to go with them to talk in private. The girl was afraid and did not want to go with them first. However, they forced her. I told them that if you want to talk with her let her mother come first and then you might talk with her. But they forced again and she had to go with them to talk. I was standing a little far from them. They proposed an illegal relationship and threatened her. She came back to me shivering. I also became scared. We had to leave the shelter when her mother returned to the shelter' (M3, female).

This incident shows how vulnerable young girls are at the cyclone shelters. However, these experiences have other impacts on their parents. They do not want to go to the shelter during the warning periods, which increases their vulnerability to cyclones. Recently completed research shows a high rate of refusing shelter among Barguna inhabitants during Cyclone Roanu in 2016 (Rezwana 2017). As Paul et al. 2011 and Rezwana (2018) describe in their research, inhabitants of disaster prone areas become disaster victims due to the late response to weather warnings. GBV has a significant role to play in generating this vulnerability.
After returning home, survival in the post disaster period becomes a great challenge. Most of the houses have been damaged, and food and water insecurity hit the affected area. It has been noticed that some men from outside the village come and roam around the affected areas. As one respondent describes it, 'After the disaster, some young men roam around the area. They tease young girls, women. They sit here and there and pass time. This is a problem after disasters' (M9, female). These problems were also mentioned by other respondents (I1, male; M1, female and M2, female).

However, women are not only vulnerable in their home, but become vulnerable while they move from one place to another. After a disaster, affected inhabitants need to collect relief or move around to receive healthcare or other services. Because men are very busy during these times, they may not be available to chaperone women. This also becomes a chance for miscreants. One victim described an incident in her interview: 'I was going on a trawler during the post disaster period, it was very stormy on the river. I was holding my son tightly. Suddenly I found that a man was touching me...very badly... I could not say anything. I was so afraid. I was afraid of the storm, and at the same time of that man. These types of men create problems for the women in the society' (P1, female).

Relief is very important for surviving during post disaster periods, especially for the poor inhabitants. However, there are many problems mentioned in previous research in relation to relief distribution. Insufficiency and mismanagement are very common and have a huge impacts on disaster victims (see more in Rezwana 2018 and other research). This present research reveals problems that are more intense for women, as they also have to face the risk of GBV in receiving relief and recovery support.

One of the respondents, “Muna” had a very bad experience. She is the main earning member of her family. Her husband left her and remarried. He does not take any responsibility for her and his children. The reason for leaving her is, as she described it, 'I am old for him now at this age...’. Muna is 42 years old and has two young children of 7 years and 4 years. However, Muna's age and marital status also became reasons for her to be targeted by a perpetrator. After a recent cyclone, Muna was trying every source to get some relief for her family. She asked everyone to help her to survive the post disaster period. According to her, she got some relief from different sources but it was not enough. One day a man (barely known to her) told her to come to a place near the baazar to get some relief. She became confused and did not fully believe him, however, she could not say no to him and she had to take the chance. So, she took a chaperone, a known male, and went to the
baazar at the evening. She asked her chaperone to stay a little distance away from the building. She did not dare to let the first man know she did not believe him and had brought someone else. She entered the house alone, and immediately felt that something was totally wrong, and she left the house instantly. There was no one in the house except the man, and there was no arrangement of relief distribution. She saved herself that day and returned home. However, she got phone calls from that man later but did not pick up the phone. She said, 'I was too afraid to receive the calls and still I feel panicked about what could have happened to me.'

According to the interviews, this is not a rare case of GBV in regards of relief distribution; respondents mentioned other cases too. One very recent case in 2016 helps further understand the context of GBV in Barguna.

It was a crowded government office where rice was being distributed among the poor. However, not everyone was getting the help. Therefore, there was tension among the people waiting. Luna was present in that office with her younger brother. While they were waiting for the service, they noticed that a woman was sitting in the office from the early morning. No one was attending her and she was not in the queue. In the late afternoon, the woman was called by an official and he had taken her to an empty room upstairs. Everyone knew what was going to happen and some were laughing and mocking. This incident shows the helplessness of this poor woman who needed the support very badly. She had to become a victim of GBV to survive the poverty that followed the disaster.

Women also got harassed while they were attending disaster recovery programmes. Rima, a woman with a disability, described her helpless condition while getting training after Cyclone Sidr. Case Study 1 elaborates.

**Case Study 1**

Rima, a woman of 45 years lives in a one-room accommodation provided by the Government for poor inhabitants. She has physical disability that affects her walking since childhood, because of having severe typhoid fever. These problems meant she had not completed a primary level of education. She was married early and has a daughter. However, like many of the poor women in Barguna, her husband cheated on her and remarried another woman. He does not take responsibility for her, and spends any money he gets from her, sometimes visiting and torturing her for money. He beats her and takes any help she receives from the Government or an NGO as a
disabled person. Rima does not file a divorce case or leave her husband, being afraid of losing her honour and the least security she has, being married.

Rima experienced other types of GBV after Cyclone Sidr. She was offered the chance to receive training, a home, a solar panel and a small chicken farm by a donor agency because she was a victim of Cyclone Sidr and a disabled person. She was told that she should receive the training first and one by one she would get all the other help promised. She was very happy at the beginning of the training. In her words, 'I did not get attention and love from my parents, my husband or anyone in my whole life whereas... this organization was very friendly to us. Every day I came back from there at 5 o'clock and used to wait for the morning to go back there again. One day ( ), the head of the office called me and told me to wait until he finishes his work. I had to wait until everyone left the office. He then led me to the staff room and suddenly closed the door. I started crying and said that he was like my father and I believed in him. He did not do anything further and let me go. I was shivering in fear. After that incident I never went to that organization again.' However, leaving the organization created additional problems for her. They contacted her and called her. In a gathering, they threatened her and slapped her for not contacting them. Eventually, she was given only a room by the donor, because everyone in the village knew about the donor's promise. However, she did not get other items as they promised, whereas other cyclone victims received everything. Her only fault was that she did not agree to the illegal proposition.

Rima is now living in the room but that incident has left a deep scar. Additionally, she still gets beaten by her husband regularly for money. This torture increased after Rima got the new room. Rima works as housemaid and sews katha (local blanket made with used sarees). She has very low earnings. However, her husband often comes, takes all she has and one day forcibly took her only goat to sell. He has threatened to murder her to buy a rickshaw van for him. Unfortunately, after all these tortures, her husband talks ill about her in the society and spreads rumours in regards of her character. He wants her to be unhappy and helpless in every aspect.

Rima represents the helplessness and vulnerability of those poor women who have been abandoned by their husbands. Her experience also throws light upon the way that gender identity increases women's vulnerability to GBV in disasters. She constantly struggles with her disability and intense poverty, however her problems and vulnerability increase in disasters mainly because she is a woman.
5.5 Social crisis and crime: post disaster periods

In post disaster periods, the severity of crimes and violence increases, influenced by existing trends of GBV. The previous sections have described and highlighted these conditions. An alarming finding is that other family members (first/other wives, mother-in-laws, sister-in-laws) also participate in these crimes beside their husbands, and make the situation worse for women. Sometimes the husband and his family force women to leave the house and collect relief from unknown responders. As relief distribution policies mostly emphasize female disaster victims, so women get priority. However, the rural culture of Bangladesh does not support women from different socio-economic groups joining public relief queues. It is socially shameful for many women in Bangladesh to collect relief from the unknown distributors. Additionally, we have seen in the previous sections the added dangers for women in regards of relief collections. However, families sometimes become forceful and women may even be beaten if they do not go out to collect it.

The present study also reveals that their family members sometimes deprive women of their rights. After women collect money as relief, their husbands may take it. One of the respondents was thrown out of her own house by her husband and another wife, after she received relief,. The case is described as follows;

Aklima’s (p4) father arranged marriage for her with an aged divorced man. Like other young girls, Aklima could not say no and got married. However, after few years of marriage, her husband left her and remarried his ex-wife. Aklima was trying to survive alone by doing different informal jobs. However, Cyclone Sidr attacked Barguna, and like other poor women she lost everything and became helpless. Fortunately she received a small house as relief. She made a pond, and made the house liveable with other people's help. After some days, her husband returned to her. He brought his other wife and both of them started torturing her. One day they beat her severely and evicted her from the house. Aklima was crying during her interview and saying that if she knew this would happen to her she would not put her every penny and effort into that house. She is now living with her poor parents. She is very weak (physically, socially and economically) and can not take any action to get back what is rightfully hers.

Other cases are reported of looting and taking relief from poor women. Mostly this violence is committed by husbands and their families, and even neighbours. Sometimes, husbands use their wives’ name to get loans easily. Then they leave and never return. One of the respondents described her situation; ‘He cheated me. He took a loan and left the house. I had to pay the loan selling my
Another type of GBV is found in the study areas after cyclones. During the post disaster period, a scarcity of informal jobs become a great problem for poor families. In this situation, male members often leave the area to get a job in the big cities. In many cases, these men send money for the first few months, and then stop contacting their families. Women are abandoned with their children in the disaster affected area with immense poverty and insecurity.

5.6 Powerlessness and GBV in disasters: Men's perception

The research asked the male respondents about their GBV experiences in disasters. Most of them agreed the conditions of GBV that have been described so far, and the incidents they reported have been incorporated into the previous sections. When they were asked why it is mostly men who participate in violence after disasters, the male respondents gave the following reasons.

One male respondent thinks that if there were no disaster, there would be a low incidence of GBV in Barguna. He thinks that disastrous situations make men more violent. Poor men lose their jobs, wealth and money. They too become helpless. He also mentioned that instead of men, women are given priority by the responders, which creates an imbalance in the prevailing power relations amongst local society. *'This policy makes men feel left out and sad. Actually men always want to be on the strong side'* (N1, male). This quotation reveals that men expect women to be weak and dependent. Some men feel that getting relief from outsiders make women 'more clever' and 'self-confident'.

Besides, some men do not want to face the hardship of post disaster periods for their family. So, they try to escape. They roam around and wait for easy money as relief. This creates a crisis within relationships and increases wife battering.

However, all men do not feel the same, or become perpetrators. One of the male respondents mentioned that during a recent cyclone three men in the shelter attacked a young girl. They were trying to molest her. Then some other men protested and beat the three men away. Again, another male respondent (S2, male) was found to be very sensitive and sympathetic. He saw a man at the cyclone shelter was molesting a woman. He stopped and threatened the man. He did not tell anyone. He thinks if he tells anyone about it, the women will lose her honour and maybe the shelter of her husband's house.
Conclusion
The research reveals that cyclones intensify GBV conditions in Barguna. Because of their gender identity and roles, women face double impacts from any disaster. However, these include not only the direct impacts of disasters and GBV, but also other severe consequences which will be described and analyzed in the next section.

Here it should also be highlighted that respondents of this present research were remembering their experiences from Cyclone Sidr in 2007 to Cyclone Roanu in 2016. These findings reveal that GBV conditions did not change within this 10-year period; rather problems became intensified.

6. Impacts of GBV and coping strategies

6.1 Impacts of GBV
The present research reveals immense direct and indirect impacts of GBV on victims. Direct impacts include physical injuries and psychological impacts, which could be seen and recognized as symptoms, and indirect impacts such as changes in economic condition and social status which are life-changing for the victims.

As a developing country, healthcare facilities are insufficient in Bangladesh generally, and worse in Barguna, and victims receive very little or no help and support from the Government and NGOs. As a result physical injuries and psychological impacts do not always receive proper treatment, leaving victims with long-term pain and health problems (this is detailed in Rezwana 2018). Again, female victims’ economic conditions often worsen after disasters as well: living standards drop and food, health and education insecurity worsens due to GBV (such as wife abandoning, divorce or separation). They sometimes become victims of several types of violence, being unprotected and unsheltered in a conservative patriarchal society. However, these conditions become severe in any disaster.

6.1.1 Impacts of physical violence: injuries and life-long disabilities

Domestic violence, rape and trafficking often have direct health impacts on victims because of the physical violence involved. Data analysis shows that physical injuries mostly occurred due to wife beating. This type of domestic violence increases in disasters and has severe impacts on victims.
Wife beating

Victims face minor to severe injuries due to wife beating by the husband and their family members. According to the respondents they are beaten with hands and anything available at home like brooms, wooden, cane and bamboo sticks, glasses, etc, causing injuries. Sometimes, these injuries end in lifelong disabilities, as wife-beating victims describe:

'My body...my blood might have become black...I was beaten so many times after I have been married to him. Everyone beats me, my husband, my mother-in-law, father-in-law and even sister-in-laws. I cannot show all the bruises, there are many more...I was working with the sticks, she (mother-in-law) took them and poked me with that... I could not get any treatment. It was so painful...I wanted to die...I cannot go back to my parents' (M10, female).

'He threw a glass towards me...it hit. I was pregnant at that time' (M5, female).

It is common for abusive husbands to hit their wives against the walls of a room. Victims may be hit on their faces, which brings more pain and sometimes causes lifelong disability. Some victims are beaten until they become unconscious. Victims of this kind of beating may face several health issues such as vision problems, hearing problems and broken fingers. Usually, they do not get access to doctors following the attack. As a result, their injuries remain untreated, they experience longer pain and suffering, and many internal injuries remain undiagnosed.

'I can not hear well after those incidents' (M5, female).

'He hit me on my eyes three times. Blood got clotted in my eyes. I can not see well with this eye. I can not even refill a needle' (P4, female).

'O one of my fingers was broken as he hit me so hard one day. He always hit me' (M8, female).

'He hit me on the face so hard that I cannot hear properly now. He started punching my face ...again and again...I became senseless. I have got a bone injury. He did not take me to the doctors, my father did' (M7, female).

Unfortunately victims mostly have to rely on their husbands to visit the doctors, as female patients need a chaperone, permission from their husband and above all money for the treatments. Husbands who have been violent rarely take their wives to the doctors, so they remain untreated. In a very few cases a parent takes their daughter to the healthcare centre.
‘He beats me whenever he wants. I became sick due to these tortures. One day he hit me on my ear, it started bleeding...I cannot hear well now.

Researcher: Did you get any treatment?

Respondent: How can I go to the doctor? Who abuses you, is he going to pay for it? He says ‘die...if you die I would be happy’. How can I die? I have two little daughters’ (P2, female).

In disasters, there is no opportunity to visit the doctor for such health problems. Damaged healthcare centres and transport systems, and a lack of emergency savings become the main reasons for inaccessibility of healthcare after disasters, and gender becomes a strong factor for women’s lack of access (Rezwana 2016). So, it is easily understandable that injuries for GBV do not get attention after disasters and remain untreated. However, it is alarming that wife beating also increases during the post disaster period. These physical injuries of GBV, along with increased household work in damaged environments and fresh experiences of disaster, create a very difficult period of survival for the female victims.

The physical health impacts of rape and sexual harassment could not be revealed by this present study; while the presence of rape was found, rape victims did not want to talk about it. In her interview with a trafficking victim, she mentioned the physical health problems she faced due to injections by the traffickers during the periods of captivity. Those medicines damaged her ability to remember events, and she could not even complete her primary education afterwards. Trafficking also had a very strong psychological impact on her. She said she could never feel like a normal girl and had lost her childhood. Being the daughter of a poor man and living in a conservative society, she never received proper treatment for these physical and psychological problems.

6.1.2 Psychological impacts of GBV

The study suggests that GBV violence has several types of psychological impact on victims. However, it should be mentioned here that none of the victims had visited any psychologist for formal diagnosis of these mental health problems. Yet analysis of victim's feelings shows strong similarities with psychological trauma, a feeling of 'intense fear, helplessness, loss of control and threat of annihilation' (Andreasen 1985 cited in Hermen 1997, p 33), deep sadness, helplessness and loss of self-confidence. Specific symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder like 'hyperarousal' and 'intrusion' (Hermen 1997, p 35) were also described by the victims.
Listening to victim's feelings after GBV was difficult, very touching and overwhelming. Respondents were crying and feeling very sad while describing their GBV experiences. Some were asked if they wanted to take a break during the interviews, but they were eager to express their feelings to someone who really wants to listen. Most of the time, if they shared their stories of torture and helplessness with others, they would be further humiliated, and so victims mostly try to keep these violence stories private.

GBV victims in Barguna are in a trap created by gender identity, responsibilities, social attitudes, culture and tradition. They are being tortured in the name of tradition, their complaints are considered through the lens of tradition, and they often tolerate these forms of violence to maintain tradition and social status because of lack of alternatives. However, most harmful of all is this inability to express their feelings because it is not socially acceptable, and this increases their vulnerability to mental health problems. The following sections highlight the psychological impacts of GBV which have been revealed from the field work.

**Psychological impacts of domestic violence and its complexity**

In Barguna, domestic violence includes wife beating, dowry violence, adultery, abandoning wife and remarrying without the permission of the first wife. According to the present research, all these forms increase in number and severity during disasters. In most cases women become the victim of domestic violence, and only in a very few cases do men become the victims. All these forms of violence have an immense psychological impact on victims.

One respondent is a young girl, studying at university level, who was married off at the age of 19. Her family arranged the marriage and she was happy with the proposal. However, after marriage it became clear that the man was involved in adultery and he did not want to change his character after marriage. He started avoiding her and then beating her. This young victim tried her best to tolerate the torture and made several attempts to continue the relationship. She tried to stay with her husband, but her husband continued to beat her for very trivial reasons, and one day it got worse. She had to return to her father's house. Later, her husband abandoned her. She was very young when she married, and started her new life hoping for a happy life with her husband. However, her dream turned into nightmares as she described; 'I was so shocked, sad and upset ...there was not a single day that I could take my meal without tears' (M5, female). Within two years she became a divorced women, dealing with the physical injuries of domestic violence. Her social status has changed a lot within these two years as she returned to her father.
Not all victims of wife beating can return to their parents. The study reveals that most victims of wife beating are powerless, with no option but to live in that environment and continue the bad marriage. These victims are in deep sadness, bear feelings of helplessness and live with constant fear.

Being beaten in her own home does not only create mental pressure, immense fear and trauma but also these incidents decrease self-confidence and change the victim’s self-perception. These can be life-long mental health impacts. A victim of GBV mentioned in her interview that she could not work out why she had become victimized. She expressed her lost faith in life and herself:

'I do not know why my life has become like this. My husband left me just after 4-5 years of my marriage. I have to work at other’s house. People talk about me good and bad' (M3, female).

The study shows that victims of domestic violence are mostly young women. They became victim at a very young age. They are beaten, tortured by their husbands and in-laws. They passed many days of their married life in tears. They have become traumatized. The victims who stay at their husband's house remain in constant fear that he will become violent again. So, they abide by all the rules and orders of their husbands to keep them calm. 'I do whatever he says, never disobey him now...' (P13, female), 'I never want anything from him to buy, I do it myself, I want him to be calm'.

In one case, a mother of two young girls has been beaten regularly by her husband from the very beginning of her marriage. When her husband becomes violent, she hides in her neighbour’s house for a day or night until her husband calms down. If he does not, then her daughters provide food for her and call her home whenever he leaves the house. When husband comes back from work she leaves the house again.

'He beats me, evicts me out of my house at night, I have to stay at another house. He even forced me to stay in water for hours. I have to hide at other’s house to keep me safe. My daughters provide me meals secretly. I cannot go to my parents house...I have to stay here like this' (P11, female).

Listening to this story, it is clear that her only fault she is a woman. These three females are in a home-prison for their whole life without any reason.

Domestic violence victims are mostly beaten and tortured for dowry money, for protesting the adultery of their husbands, or claiming their rights for food and shelter. Among these victims, many do not leave their abusive husbands. Instead, their husbands may leave them and remarry. The question arises why women, regularly beaten by their husbands, do not leave their marriage. The
answer is complex. These women do not have any place to go. They are not educated enough to get a proper job and maintain their life. They mostly did not complete their primary education because of early marriage and poverty. So, they cannot be economically self-dependent and receive social respect. Rather, they are only able to get informal jobs like housemaid or day labourer, which increases their insecurity to other forms of GBV such as rape, sexual harassment and trafficking; and mostly, they will lose their social status. According to the respondents, women do not want this alternative life; it is like jumping from the frying pan into the fire. So, they do not want to leave their husband’s house. Why don’t they return to their parent’s house to avoid this torture? In Barguna culture, returning to her father’s house is the most disgraceful option for a woman. They become a burden for their family, economically and socially. In the previous section we explained that young girls are married off to reduce the costs of their family, especially after disasters, so going back again does not solve the problem. Besides, sons get priority in this patriarchal society, and sons live with their parents and take care of the family wealth. It is quite common that sisters are not welcomed by their brothers especially if they are divorced and economically dependent. After marriage, whether it is a good or bad marriage, a girl loses the shelter of her parents. Besides, most parents are not economically solvent enough to take on the extra costs of their daughters and grandchildren. So, married women try their best to stay with even abusive husbands. Husbands may take this an opportunity to threaten their wives. They often mention that the wife will be sent back to their parent’s house if they protest against domestic violence. Sometimes, for example if they are severely beaten by the husband, victims may want to take shelter in their parents’ house temporarily, but their husbands threaten them:

‘If you go to your father’s house now, then go for forever, don’t dare to come back’.

‘I will send you to your father’s house and never bring you back in this life’ (M5’s husband)

Women also think of their parent’s honour which would be affected by their daughter’s broken marriage. It is noticeable that daughters’ tolerance and sacrifice in this regard are praised by society, and even by the parents. One mother of a GBV victim, who was describing her daughter’s tolerance and capacity to keep their family’s honour said with pride that her daughter says, ‘let me see what happens, I do not want to be like her (one of her cousins who is divorced and living with parents), leaving my husband’s home and become a problem for the family’. However, it has been revealed in the present study that, nonetheless, these nightmares come true for many women, who are forced to return to their parents - many of them were abandoned by their husbands and very few took their own decision to leave the marriage.
Such abandonment results in great mental distress. Kairun mentioned in her interview, ‘When husband leaves a woman, she feels abandoned to herself and feels abandoned everywhere, even at her fathers’ house.

Most victims who had to return to their parents do not feel good. They may be earning their own meals but still feeling unwanted at their parent’s house.

‘They knew everything, that I am a victim of trafficking, however they deny that now and make an issue of it and torture me. I mostly stay at my parent’s house. However, is it possible to stay at father’s house after marriage?’ (T1 is a very young girl of age 13-14 years).

'I do not know what should I do, I cannot go back to that house (in laws house), I cannot stay here (father’s house)...he (husband) is enjoying his life, I saw him on Facebook...he went on a vacation.’ (M2, an educated young women who has to do home tuition to earn money).

However, women’s miseries after being abandoned by or separated from their husband have other aspects too. They become vulnerable to sexual harassment such as eve teasing, verbal abuse, forced illegal relationships, rape and sexual abuse. Women leaving in poor housing and poverty are especially likely to become targets of the local miscreants.

A GBV victim explained how she became traumatized after her husband left. She had to live alone. She does not have any children or relatives to stay with. Local men started disturbing her. They roam around her house at night silently. They had bad intentions. She was afraid and locked herself at home. ‘When they came I could hear them, they roamed around outside my room, I could hear them whispering, they wanted to come to the door...I called loudly...they went away... I could not sleep for whole night...They were coming every night... I could not sleep for nights. It became a trauma for me. I left that house near the bazaar. Now, I stay in my rural home. However, I cannot visit bazaar now. I feel frightened’ (M13, female).

However, she could not tell anybody about this incident, as she would be blamed. People would spread rumours about her character, and her life would be more miserable and vulnerable still.

In some cases, women whose husbands do not take responsibility for them still live at the husband’s house with their in-laws. However, these women are not welcome there, and face ill treatments and misbehaviours from in-laws. Their husbands left the house and remarried, or left the house after cyclones and stopped contacting the family. In this situation, women experience great sadness, worry and tension. They use every opportunity and spend every penny to get news of their husband.
It has been revealed that women are cheated in this regard too. One respondent sold her last gold ornament to get news of her husband, and the man who promised to find out where he was cheated her with false news. Another respondent described that she went outside home for days and stood near the main roads and asked everyone she knew, 'I asked everyone about my husband. Where he could go? No one could answer. I cried and cried for long' (P3, female).

These women live their lives with the pain of betrayal. 'I am not well, mentally. It looks like I am fine...actually I am suffering...my husband does not take responsibility, I struggle every day. I do not tell anyone...only a few close relatives know my situation' (P10, female).

Another alarming mental condition among some victims is their feeling that are responsible for these GBV. They feel abandoned and they take the blame for the violence from their in-laws. Just as in-laws are happy when they receive gifts (dowry) from the bride, victims understand it to be normal that parent in-laws are unhappy when they become a burdens on the family.

'My in-laws keep me with them after my husband left me. They sometime behave badly with me. They can do that as my husband does not take any responsibility, they have to feed an extra person' (P3, female & M4, female).

Such perceptions keep GBV and victims hidden. Many women are facing GBV, but their statistics and stories remain unrecorded, unnoticed and unrecognized.

6.1.3 GBV during disasters and psychological impacts

Section 4 revealed that GBV increases after cyclones and its impacts become more severe. The last section described the impact of domestic violence on the mental health of the victims. This section will focus on the psychological impacts of other violence especially occurring before, during and post-disasters.

During the warning periods of cyclones, people are advised to leave their vulnerable houses and take shelter. However, as we have discussed earlier, it is not easy to follow this advice for all women in Barguna. Many respondents mentioned that they faced GBV including molestation, rape attempts, threats to rape and eve teasing on the way to the shelter during previous cyclones. These traumatic experiences create 'hyperarousal' among some of the victims. They are afraid of cyclone shelters. They are in constant fear that the environment of the cyclone shelter will be the same as before. Many of them do not take refuge to the cyclone shelter now. One of the quotation is as follows;
‘I am afraid of cyclone shelter. Last time I went there, some one pushed me hard that I fell...I was pregnant that time...some one pulled my blouse and tore it’ (P2, Female).

However, this situation was more severe for the woman who was taking shelter without any male family member. One of the respondent mentioned her fear in the interview; ‘In the shelters...in the crowds...on the way to shelters some young men touch women, girls... they pull their clothes. If they see any beautiful girl or women sometime they pull them. I am alone, my husband left me...I am vulnerable too’ (M9, female & M1, female).

Here, a concern should be noted that the Government has planned to help evacuate women and children from their vulnerable houses and take them to the cyclone shelters first. However the question arises that this plan may save women from the cyclone impacts but who is going to save them from GBV at the shelters? Additionally, impacts of GBV occurred at the shelters do not stop there, rather these continue and become magnified after disasters. Examples from the interviews help to explain these complex situations.

‘I was in an embarrassing situation. I saved myself from the huge waves of storm surges but I lost my Sari. I was saved by a man and he took me to the shelter. I was so ashamed without my sari, wearing just a petticoat and blouse’ (P9, female).

This quotation explains the worries of the woman who could save herself from the huge waves but could not save her honour. She is ashamed that she lost her saree, and worried that an unknown man pulled her from the water, because she is frightened for the future of her marriage. As respondents mentioned, these incidents have significant impacts on their characters and reputations, which are very important to their husbands, family and society. A male respondent explained the situation;

‘In the shelters if a woman gets harassed by a man, she might lose her honour and also her marriage. Her husband might accuse her and abandon her on these grounds’ (P1, male).

This impact was also mentioned by other respondents;

‘During the warning time people run for their lives. There were many people... Muslims, Hindus run together to reach the safe shelters. My husband became suspicious, ‘why were you running with that man?’ I ran to save myself, I did not notice that... but he was not happy’ (P11, female).

‘If bad men tried to touch a woman and her husband saw this, then she would be blamed for this. The man thinks his wife might be involved with that man’ (P1, male).
This shows the complexity of the situations created in disasters for women in a conservative gender-biased society, where women are always facing social tests they must pass to survive. It is not only cyclone impacts that we can observe; women in Barguna are often facing socially created hazards along with natural disasters.

**GBV, change in socio-economic status and psychological impacts**

Another huge impact of GBV on victim’s lives is change in economic and social status. These impacts are life-changing and also have a strong effect on mental health. Women in Barguna mostly do not work outside the home to earn money, but are fully engaged in household work. However, extreme poverty may lead them to earn from the informal sector, except for the few educated women who choose to take jobs. Respondents in the present research belong to lower middle to extremely poor economic classes, and mostly do not earn money except those who are divorced, separated or abandoned by their husbands. These women frequently become the poorest of the poor after losing economic support from their husbands, as we have described in a previous section. Before the violence, their world was within their home, but afterwards they often become day labourer or maids in other houses. Even then, many of them cannot earn enough for every meal, and may starve for days.

Divorce, abandonment and separation also takes away women and their children's security of food, shelter, education and healthcare. Almost all victims mentioned these socio-economic changes. Rahima was one of them. She explained how she became vulnerable after being evicted from her husband’s house. She expressed her regrets and sorrow:

‘He started torturing me when he was planning to bring his ex-wife back. If I knew that I would not have decorated that house so much, would not have collected and stored all those food grains. They (husband and wife) beat me and evicted me from the house... They did not give even one kilo of rice to my children, whereas I have left one big drum of rice in that house. I am struggling now with my poor parents. I have to work at other’s house. It is so tough to earn a meal for my children. He even does not take responsibility for the children’ (P4, female).

Like Rahima, many victims stopped children’s education, and could not complete treatments or access to proper healthcare to cope with the economic change. However, these GBV victims become more vulnerable still if they have taken out a loan. The research revealed that fleeing husbands sometime take loans in their wife's name and leave the area. Sometime they steal their wife’s
property and sell it. A man filed a false case against his wife and left the area. All these loans increase the burdens of women and make them poorer.

'I bought a rickshaw by taking a loan. He took the rickshaw, sold it, eloped with a married women and left me in debt' (M7, female).

'They (husband and his family) filed a false case against us (me, my father and mother). He left me in debt and with this case hanging over us. My father became penniless and I am also helpless. I have to be dependent on donations' (P7, female).

Such victims of GBV face severe problems during disasters. These women do not get enough relief due to the absence of their husbands. Halima's case illustrates the conditions of these victims. Halima was left by her husband just before Cyclone Sidr and she was left to suffer it with her one month old son. She lost everything in the cyclone. Halima explained; 'I stayed at another house without a pillow, bed or mosquito net with my one month old son. It was a horrible time. I suffered a lot' (P4, female). We have also come to know the insecurity a single woman faces in regards of relief collection (Section 4).

6.1.4 Men: Psychological Impacts of disasters and GBV perpetrators

The research set out to investigate experiences of GBV from both men and women in disasters. However, the study finds that women are the main victims of GBV and in very few cases are men the victims. During the interviews, respondents described their experiences and opinions with regard to becoming victim or perpetrator (Section 3). However, a relationship has been revealed between the impacts of disasters and men becoming perpetrators in this study, as we discuss in the following sections.

According to the most respondents, mental stress increases in disasters as well as rates of GBV. One of the male respondents said that if there were no cyclones in Barguna, GBV would be much less. However, some respondents claimed that their husband's behaviour started to change after disasters. Losing everything in disasters creates great mental pressure on men and some of them engaged in negative activities to cope with this. One respondent's husband became drug addicted due to those losses, and started committing GBV; 'My husband became drug addicted after Cyclone Sidr. He lost everything in his shop and he started neglecting his responsibilities for his family. He became violent and beats me...Now I have to take the main responsibility for managing money for the children’s education and other things' (M14, female).
Another respondent (M13, Female) described the context of her abandonment after the disaster, and this trend is found to be common in the study area. According to her description, her husband’s mental problems started after Cyclone Sidr. He was fine before the cyclone. He worked on a fishing boat and earned money that was enough for them to live on. However, after Sidr he stopped working, and started doubting his wife. He controlled her movements. He beat her if she wanted to go outside their home to earn their daily meal. Then after few months he left her. She does not know where he lives now.

These cases help to explain some of the reasons and contexts for men becoming perpetrators due to the immense impacts of disaster. However, a question arises here that no female respondent was found to express their depression, sorrow and stress after disasters in violence. Rather, they appear to become more submissive, and tolerate an increased amount of violence. They may even be involved in forced physical relationships to get relief and survive the difficulties of the post disaster period. This shows that there is a complex inter-relationship between culture, and gender roles and people's behaviour. It is socially expected and accepted that men can show their feelings publicly after disasters, whereas women should keep them private and hidden. Husbands may become drug addicted or flee from their family, but it is impossible to think of a Barguna woman becoming drug addicted due to the frustration caused by disaster impacts; or that she would leave her children, due to her heavy housework burden and responsibilities. A drug addict husband will still get shelter from his family and society may turn a blind eye, but a woman would be evicted from her house and thrown into the street. Therefore, sharp gender discrimination can be found in social attitudes, which also provide indirect support for men who become perpetrators. A man does not have to think for a second before hitting his own wife. If we are raising our male children to become perpetrator with a confined social systems, GBV will remain high, indeed may increase.

Another aspect of men's feelings about GBV relates to their wife's behaviour. It has been mentioned by several respondents that women want to help their parents, especially after disasters. If women receive any relief or grants, they think of their parents as well as their own family. But this is not well accepted in this patriarchal society. It is commonly practiced that women cannot take any more responsibility for their parents after marriage, even they are earning. This culture is strongly practiced in poor families where resources are limited. However, as a daughter, a woman desperately wants to help her parents, and sometimes takes the money from her husband without his permission. A male respondent mentioned in his interview that he knows that his wife does that all the time, but her habit became a burden and mental torture for him during the post disaster crisis periods;
'Some women take money from her husband's earnings and send to their parents secretly. After disasters this becomes a torture for the men' (M3, male).

6.2 Coping strategy to GBV: growing resilience or living as victims

The research enquired what coping strategies women have to deal with GBV. Do they protest the many forms of violence described in this report, and develop resilience, or do they tolerate it and live as victims for their whole lives? These questions were asked of the respondents. Analysis shows that most of the victims do not want to let anyone know (outside the family) about the violence until it becomes severe. There are even victims who do not want to let their parents know about their pain. They suffer alone. However, this becomes impossible for most of the victims, because the domestic violence occurs in such a range of places that it cannot be hidden, especially wife beating. Some women complain to the local Government officials; local Members (elected) or Chairmen when the violence becomes intolerable. Here, it should be mentioned that in Bangladeshi villages houses are very closely located and inhabitants maintain a close inter-dependent relationship. So, families know each other. As the Members or Chairmen are elected among the villagers they are very much known to them. So, complaining to them is like complaining to a guardian of the village. Very few victims reported GBV to the police, government office or court to get justice. Many more victims simply keep GBV within the family.

6.2.1 “I tolerate everything”

When victims were asked why they do not talk about or report domestic violence, they mentioned several reasons behind this decision. The main reason is being frightened to lose their only shelter (their husband’s house). We have come to know that women and children become highly vulnerable when they are evicted from their husband’s shelter (details are in the previous section of this section). Women know that they have to live in this house until their husband evicts or divorces them. If they complain, the violence might be increased and the divorced process might get accelerated:

‘I do not complain to anyone because I know that I have to live in this house again. I have nowhere to go. If I tell anyone the torture might increase. So, I do not tell anyone...I tolerate everything’ (P10, female).

‘I tolerate everything... if I complain and file a case, he will be more arrogant. The Chairman might say something or beat him, but then he will beat me again. Beside, where I will get money for the case?’ (M9, female).
Besides this, thinking of children, their education and their future is an important reason for victims to tolerate domestic violence. They know complaining against their husband will end up into divorce which will bring more suffering for their children. Mothers might be remarried, but in that case they have to leave their children. Their new marriage will not allow children from a previous relationship. This is common practice in the study area. Women do not want to leave their children. Again, if they do not get married and try to survive on their own, they know that it would be impossible for them to provide a safe shelter, education and arrange good marriage for their daughters without their husband's support.

Social humiliation is also a very important factor. One respondent described the situation as; 'I did not complain to anyone as people will say, you have got only a divorce by filing the case. It will bring dishonour to me. I will be more humiliated. Many women do not tell anyone only for this reason' (P7, female; P3, female & P10, female).

Parents often also advise them to tolerate the torture for their family's honour and children’s future. So, victims mostly try to avoid sharing their experiences with anyone also because they may not be interested to listen. According to a respondent; 'People sometime say, it is your family matter (wife battering, abandoning wife)... what we can do? So I do not tell anyone' P3. However, sometimes women share their experiences with a friend who might also be a victim. They cry together and try their best to keep their bad marriages going. 'Her husband also beats her. She comes to my house. We share our experiences. We cry together' (P6, female).

Some of the victims are also hopeful that their husband might become good again, and love them and take care of them. It would be very good if their wishes ever come true, but no such cases are reported.

6.2.2 What happens when they report violence to the authorities

When victims complain about the domestic violence to the local Member or Chairman, they talk with both husband and wife and their priority is to try to keep the relationship going. They advise and sometimes threaten the man that he should manage his anger or else law-enforcement authorities would be informed. Mostly husbands do not listen to them, but instead these complaints become the reason for further violence as discussed in the previous sections. However, it should be mentioned that the advice women receive are gendered. Women are advised to be more tolerant and patient. One of the respondents complained about the dowry violence from her mother-in-law to the Member, and she received the advice 'Mother-in-law has the right to talk badly of you, she
can teach you, scold you but you cannot reply. You have to be patient’ (M10, female). This victim did not report the violence to a higher authority. These types of advice are common for female victims from the local authority.

Many respondents mentioned that they were advised to stay at their parent’s house or cope with the incidents as ‘the man would not change to a good person’, or women should become more mature, compromising and responsible. Again, society views female victims as having more faults than her husband’s family. This point was mentioned by a victim; ‘Daughter-in-laws always have more faults then parents-in-laws. So, if you tell anyone they may accuse you. So what should I say?’ (M4, female).

So, complaining to the local authority might have a small result but mostly not effective and good outcomes for the women. Sometimes, a very few victims report violence to the local NGO, the police or the Mahila Parisad (the Government Office which deals with problems related to GBV, especially wife beating and torture, problems of marital relationships etc). According to one of the Mahila Parisad officials (a key informant of this study) they receive GBV victims but the number is much lower than the actual number they know are out there: ‘Victims of wife battering are very common for us to see. We help them to receive treatment. There are huge number of wife battering cases in Barguna. All of these women cannot reach us, very few of them leave their husbands’ (G1, female).

Two of the respondents also received help from the local NGO and the Mahila Parisad to get a divorce from her abusive husband, and continue her studies and occupation.

Likewise, very few respondents reported to the police department. Those who did, did not get a good response, but faced corruption. 'Corruption lies within the police department. They want money for any case' (M3, female).

Poor victims do not have any money to give as bribe to the police. They also do not have money to continue the case. ‘I needed 1000 taka (10 GBP) to continue my case but I did not have that amount of money. So I could not do anything to get justice’ (P4, female). Respondents mentioned that they would have liked to file a case against their husband and his family; however, due to lack of money they cannot think of taking any legal action perpetrator.

However, here it should be mentioned that some women do not know whom they should inform to get justice in cases of GBV. They might know the name of the institutions but the information is not enough. They feel helpless.
This feeling of helplessness is revealed among most respondents. When they do not get any help and support from the family, local authority and other institutions, and they know their problems like lack of education or skills that would help find a job, lack of money and property, they become frustrated. Feelings of helplessness are common among the victims but some of them seem to be deeply frustrated. Shahida who lives with an abusive husband described her feelings as follows;

'I rely on Allah now. If He wills everything would be fine again. I complained to the Chairman and Members. They said I have to be patient. I know I have to be here with my husband tolerating every torture. I do that. What can I do. I can not go back to my parents, they are also very poor' (M10, female & M8, female).

Moriyam explains her feelings after her husband left, experiencing deep frustration. She has stopped socializing and lives a conservative life:

'I do not feel well...anytime. I cannot remember everything. After my husband left, there is no one close to me alive. My mother, father are dead. I do not feel any interest to visit the neighbours’ house...I do my work, earn a small amount of money and just lie down on my bed silently... I tell my Creator please take me as early as possible...do not let me fall sick' (M13, female).

**Positive thinking and efforts**

There are a few exceptions in respondents who took positive efforts to fight back against violence, increasing their self-confidence. One of the victims mentioned in the interview;

'If my husband loved me and all other members of his family did not like me and abused me, still I would have stayed with him...but if he does not like me, he beats me often, then how can I stay there? I left that house and took my children with me. I became the poorest and I have to struggle to earn money. I am still living on my own' (P6, female).

This woman wanted to continue her relationship but had to leave to keep self-respect. She chose a life of struggle to live with some dignity.

Another respondent filed for divorce against her husband and resumed her studies. Some of the victims went to a local NGO for counselling and received help from them to start a new life. However, the number of women living as a domestic violence victim is very high in Barguna society and this number increases after each disasters.
Women also employ strategies to keep them safe from other forms of GBV such as rape and social humiliation. One story should be mentioned here to highlight their efforts.

A young girl was living with her father in a house located at the baazar. Her father has a restaurant and he needs help from his daughter to run the restaurant smoothly. However, she was insecure at night due to the poor housing. Local men targeted her and tried to harass her. So, she was advised by her mother to keep a knife under her bed so that she can defend herself.

'I kept a big knife under my bed...all the time when I lived in Bazaar with my father. We had a shop in the bazaar. I helped my father. My mother said that a woman should always be prepared for any attack when she lives in bazaar' (M14, female).

This is preparation for the worst case of physical abuse. However, educated working women also have to take preventive measures against verbal abuse and harassment. One of our key informants works at the field level. She is unmarried and middle aged (very uncommon in Barguna society) and she decided to be single. Her choice always falls under social judgement and create lots of curiosity. So, she tries to hide it when visits unknown people in other rural areas. She wears a big bindi (a small red spot) on her forehead which is mostly worn by married Hindu women. She believes in the Hindu religion. This way, people do not talk about her marital status, and she can avoid the social gender-based harassment that single woman receive:

'My job is at the field level and I have to work with local inhabitants. I am unmarried. It's a common query from my respondents which I have to face every day - am I married or not? In our society a married women can avoid extra curiosity and other gender-based harassment. So, I wear a big tip (Bindi) to avoid all queries. It shows I am married' (G1, female).

Women have to be always prepared to keep themselves safe from GBV in remote Barguna. It is seen as their responsibility to be modest in the face of domestic violence, to cope with abusive husbands, to be prepared to fight back during a physical attack, to take shelter, to bow to cultural attitudes, and above all facing the mighty cyclones remembering her gender identity, roles and responsibilities.

7. **Conclusion: Women, the ultimate victim of GBV and disasters**

The previous sections 3, 4, 5 & 6 discuss context of GBV in Barguna and its impacts on victims. These sections also elaborately describe the influence of disasters on GBV and vice versa. The data analysis shows that women are the main victims of every type of GBV whereas very few men also become
victims. This concluding section summarizes the findings of the research, and discusses how and why women become the main victims of GBV, while at the same time some women participate in violence with men. Analysing power dynamics among members of families, and the influence of gender, demographic, socio-economic and cultural factors, helps to understand why women are the main victims and why and how men and women become perpetrators. The influence of gendered culture and traditions on GBV is also discussed.

7.1 Women, the main victims and men, the main perpetrators (with some exceptions)

According to the present study, there are a number of types of GBV in Barguna, which all increase during disasters. The victims of this violence are mainly females of different ages and socio-economic status. Girls are the main victims of early forced marriage whereas female members of different ages are the victims of wife beating and dowry violence. Eve teasing, abuse and social humiliation are common for all women in Barguna. Employment does not help to improve these conditions, rather easier access to loans and relief sometimes becomes another reason for domestic violence for women in Barguna (see more in Section 4, 5 &6).

A very few GBV incidents have been revealed in this present research where men became victims such as sexual harassment, social humiliation and mental torture. Rates are very low compared to GBV committed against women. However, men are the main perpetrators of GBV. Most of the time women are victimized by their husbands, their father or other males.

This raises questions about the reasons, factors and contexts giving rise to these alarming conditions. Why do men so often become perpetrators and choose a violent way of expressing their stress and powerlessness in disasters, getting involved in wife beating, forced marriage, dowry violence and rape? In contrast, many women tolerate most of the violence against them. They keep violence secret, mostly do not report it, and most of them do not get involved in violence (see more in Section 6). The following sections attempt to explain the context and reasons behind these differences.

7.2 Gendered society and support for men

Men, in the conservative patriarchal society of Barguna, are raised as a powerful creation of God and are given a sense of their own power beyond their capacity which sometimes helps to forget their limitations and their sense of humanity. This gender identity encourages them to be selfish. They easily become violent, and may beat their wives for dowry money, forget their promises, leave their children in disasters and get involved in extra-marital relationships. At the same time, girls are raised
in such a way that they have a diminished sense of their capacity and confidence. They feel themselves less than a full human rather partial or half. They feel dependent and too weak to protest. All these self-perceptions create a huge power imbalance among the members of a society or family. They behave unintentionally or intentionally according to the perceptions and confined gender roles society has fixed for them. These roles may be comfortable for men as they are on the privileged side. However, problems arise when women protest these gender roles or the violence becomes too severe. Mental torture is absorbed within life seemingly so naturally that it becomes daily practice for the powerful groups.

Besides these self-perceptions, gendered support from society also helps men to become oppressive and continue their behaviour. Men feel supported by their family and society from childhood. They have little accountability to their family and even to society. These freedoms are often misused by men in Barguna, increasing gender based violence in disasters.

However, it should be mentioned here that these gender identities and power relations sometime work negatively for men. Due to the gendered expectations of society, men cannot share violence committed against them, especially child abuse, extra marital affairs of wives or verbal abuse by wives. They feel too ashamed and afraid of humiliation to show their weakness. This gender based violence against men goes unnoticed, unrecognized and kept mostly in secret.

7.3 Power dynamics and GBV

The context, reasons and influencing factors of GBV are very complex. Power dynamics are one of the main factors behind gender based violence. Whenever any person, regardless whether they are a male or female, has power (economic, social or political) they might get involved in violence. To support this statement it is noted that women sometimes take part in domestic violence along with men. We described earlier how mother in-laws (who hold a powerful role in the family) are found directly involved in dowry violence and mental torture. Here, age and role in families work as the factors for women to become perpetrators. Being oppressed in one stage of their life, these elder women become perpetrators towards the younger women when they are given a more powerful role.

However, men are the main perpetrator in most GBV. Male members in this patriarchal conservative society are raised with especial attention and given extra power to be seen as superior in the family. As this report has shown, society often supports men in every aspect, even if they become violent
and commit crimes such as wife beating, dowry, rape and eve teasing. This gendered social behaviour creates a sharp imbalance among the members of the society.

Such a relation between power dynamics and GBV is common all over the world. Recently news of GBV in the workplace in developed countries has come to attention all over the world. Along with women, men also came forward with their experiences of sexual harassment being powerless comparing to their bosses (Milne 2017). They described that they were too weak to protest; in fear of losing their jobs. Their strong bodies and male identities did not help them in those incidents. In parallel, even Barguna women who are employed and educated may be beaten and abused by their husbands in their own houses. Their experiences support the findings of this research, and alert us to the fact that so long as children (male or female) are raised with privileges and gendered societal support, it will be very difficult to reduce the rate of GBV. Disasters and GBV will remain as double burden for the women in the vulnerable region as well as a key issue for disaster managers.

7.4 Recommendations and conclusion

GBV is very common in Barguna. Some cases of GVB, especially rape and child forced marriage, are reported to the police, but according to the informants many more remain hidden. Different types of GBV take place, shaped by traditions, culture and social attitudes. GBV increases in disasters, because of poor and damaged housing, the absence of parents for long hours of the day, power relations among the family members, lack of empowerment, powerful neighbours, dependency on relief or help.

Improving this situation in this conservative society is very difficult. Gender discrimination is embedded in the society and has been practiced for a long time. Indeed, the gendered attitudes of society have become so naturalised for the participants (Bourdieu 1977; Bolin et al. 1998) that even GBV victims in this research could not come up with any recommendation to improve conditions. The research asked their opinions about how to GBV victims might be helped, but almost no one answered the question. Based on the research findings, the recommendations of the researchers are as follows;

i. Introducing and enhancing awareness programmes on gender

Introducing and enhancing awareness programmes on gender, gender discrimination and women’s empowerment would be helpful to improve GVB conditions. These programmes could be on the effects of gender discrimination, early marriage and the problems of divorced women. Young girls and boys, parents and senior citizens could all be participants of such programmes. Especially,
parents should be aware that discrimination between sons and daughters has a long-term effect on power relations and dynamics within the future family. Men should have been trained in the problems created by GBV, and how they can become women’s allies. The research revealed eagerness to help among some male respondents, however they need some support through initiatives to break the stigma and change social attitudes and behaviour towards GBV. It is very important to increase awareness among parents to help their divorced or oppressed daughters. It is expected that if parents provide this support, then divorced/abandoned daughters’ vulnerability to further humiliation and insecurity would be lessened. Even oppressive husbands might think twice before becoming abusive to their wives, were there less imbalance in power relations among family members.

ii. Increasing law and enforcement and legal support

Increasing law enforcement, and its proper use in controlling GBV would also be effective. According to the present study, the lack of legal support facilities and the high costs of seeking this support creates a barrier for poor women GBV victims (such as those who are divorced, victims of wife abandonment or sexual abuse) and their families. Low cost or free legal supports would be very helpful for these women to seek justice. Local NGOs could take these facilities and counselling support to the doorsteps of victims, in light of women’s difficulties in accessing support centres. However, it would not be easy to use laws for every type of GBV, as many of them are kept hidden within family and society. In particular, ending early marriage needs intervention from the local government and law enforcement agencies. There are many examples of positive steps that have been taken in Bangladesh. However, there are many more cases which are not reported, and parents are even found making fake birth certificates to marry off their daughters (see Reliefweb 2017 for more stories). Therefore, arranging grants for survivors of early marriage, awareness programmes and advertising the legal support available on national TV, in local newspapers and social media should be provided.

iii. Financial support and healthcare facilities for victims

The research has shown that economic dependency and restricted access to property make women more vulnerable to GBV. There are numerous cases where victims have to stay at the abusers’ house simply because of economic dependency. Arranging financial support (for example, grants for education and healthcare, and easy loans from the local banks to start small businesses)
and introducing more vocational training for women locally would improve their economic conditions and self-confidence. This would help to reduce the struggle of GBV victims as well as perhaps having an impact on GBV incidence.

Again, increasing healthcare facilities both for physical and psychological health would be helpful for victims to continue living a healthy life. The study has revealed many victims living with physical injuries and mental health impacts of GBV due to the lack of healthcare facilities. Again, social attitudes towards GBV victims show the need for separate sections in any healthcare centres, or separate healthcare centres. For example, OCCs (One-stop Crisis Centre) have been established in Bangladesh since 2000: there are now six OCCs (CHMI 2017) which are very helpful to female GBV victims, however many more centres like this are needed at the local level in Bangladesh.

iv. Gender-sensitive disaster management plans to improve GBV prevention and response

The research has revealed an increase in GBV in disasters. GBV takes place as women and girls go on their way to take shelter, at the cyclone shelters and at damaged houses during the post-disaster periods. Security should be increased during these periods by training local volunteers. Local volunteers are a great help during cyclones (Rezwana 2018) in disseminating warnings and taking and rescuing vulnerable people to the safe shelters. These volunteers could receive training to protect female inhabitants of the locality. They can also protect female victims who take shelter in the cyclone shelters. For this, awareness training could be arranged for the volunteers and cyclone shelter management committees. Besides, arranging separate entry and exits, rooms and toilets for males and females in the cyclone shelters would decrease the incidence of GBV.

GBV during relief distribution could be reduced by a stronger management system. Relief for all, with a proper amount and distribution would decrease the vulnerability of female victims being cheated and abused. Again, jobs for female cyclone victims will assure their economic security which will save them from being trafficked for jobs or ransom marriages.

Above all, introducing gender-sensitive disaster management plans for pre, during and post disaster periods would be helpful to reduce vulnerability of female victims to disasters and GBV (Rezwana 2018).
8. References


54. Wiest, R. E., Mocellin, J. S.P and Motsisi, D. T. (1994). The needs of women in disasters and emergencies USA, Disaster Research Institute, University of Manitoba.
Interview schedule for the key informants

Research Title: Understanding GBV during disasters in the coastal region of Bangladesh

Village/Town................................. Upazila, District.................................

Date........................................ Time................................................

Respondent characteristics:

1. Age:
   18-28 years □
   29-38 years □
   39-48 years □
   49-58 years □
   59+ years □

2. Gender: Male □ Female □

3. Education........................................

4. Religion........................................

5. Occupation: ..................................

6. How do you define GBV? What do you think about GBV?

7. Is there any GBV in your area?

8. Do you know anyone or any group of women who are facing different types of GBV?

9. Do you think disasters have an impact on GBV in Barguna?

10. Do you think number of GBV increases in disasters?

11. If yes, would you please let me know what types of GBV and how do they are increased?
12. Do you know anyone or any group of women who were victims of disasters and GBV in recent cyclones?

13. What strategies do women use to cope with these incidents?

14. How do they develop resilience against GBV?

15. Do you suggest me to visit any area/areas in Barguna which face more number of GBV in disasters or other time of the year?

16. Do you suggest me to visit any person/organization (Governmental or NGOs) in Barguna who works on GBV?

17. What resources and help would you like to see developed by communities and service providers?

18. Research Plan:

   a) I am planning to do the research on GBV in disasters. The research questions are as follows:

      (i) What are the problems of GBV as women define them?

      (ii) What are the effects of disasters on GBV and vice versa?

      (iii) What strategies do women use to cope and develop resilience?

      (iv) What resources and help would they like to see developed by communities and service providers?

   Would you please kindly let me know your opinions/suggestions in this regard?

   b) The research approach is Participatory Action Research (PAR). The methods are in-depth interviews and observations. Interviews would be in two stages – Key Informants and other respondents.

   Key informants will help to shape the research questions and conduct/analyze some of the research. The findings of the research would be consulted with the Key informants.

   Would you please kindly let me know your opinions/suggestions in this regard?

   Thank you
Interview schedule for inhabitants

Research Title:

Understanding GBV during disasters in the coastal region of Bangladesh

Village/Town.................................. Upazila, District.................................

Date........................................ Time..................................................

Respondent characteristics:

1. Age:
   - 16 -25 years [ ]
   - 26-35 years [ ]
   - 36-45 years [ ]
   - 46-55 years [ ]
   - 55 + years [ ]

2. Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

3. Education..........................................

4. Religion................................................

5. Occupation: ........................................

Socio-economic condition:

6. Household Head..............................................................

7. Number of the family member...........................................

8. Total income of the family.............................................
9. Social characteristics of the family members

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<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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10. Properties of the family

Land..........................................................  
Cattle......................................................  
Money.......................................................  
Gold........................................................  
Tree....................................................................  
Mobile phone/television/radio.........................  
Others.........................................................

11. Housing condition

Ownership of the lived house..........................................

Building materials..................................................

Healthcare facilities and accessibility:

12. What are the healthcare facilities available in your area/nearest to your area?

13. Where do you visit during your/family member’s illness? Why/why not?

14. How do you visit your health care centres (walking/transport type)? How much does it cost?

GBV:

15. How do you define GBV (Violence against women and girls and violence against men)? What do you think about GBV?

16. Is there any GBV in your area?
17. Do you know anyone or any group of women who are facing different types of GBV?

18. Do you face any type of GBV in your daily life? (By whom, where, when, why?)

19. Did you face any type of GBV in your life? (By whom, where, when, why?)

20. Would you please share your experiences with me? (in detail)

21. Do you inform anyone about your GBV experience? (whom, where, when)

22. Did you report to the authority/any organization/any official person?

23. Do you know where you can report these incidents?

24. Did you get any help from them?

Disasters:

25. What are the disasters you have faced within last one year?

26. What are the disasters you have faced last 10 years?

27. Among them which one was the most severe disaster you have faced? Why?

28. Do you think disasters have an impact on GBV in Barguna?

29. Do you think number of GBV increases (i) during disasters and (ii) after disasters?

30. If yes, would you please let me know what types of GBV and how do they are increased?

31. Which period is more vulnerable, during disaster or post disaster to occur GBV? Why?

32. Do you know anyone or any group of women who were victims of disasters and GBV in recent cyclones? (if she know anyone/others then Question 33-41 would be asked)

33. Did you face any GBV (at home or any other place) in recent cyclones, (i) during cyclone and (ii) after cyclone?

34. Would you please tell me about your experiences during those disaster/disasters? (in details)

35. Did you inform about GBV to anyone?

36. Did you report to the authority/any organization/any official person?

37. Did you get any help from them?

38. Did you need any treatment (physical/mental)

39. What, where and when did you get the treatment?
40. Why did you receive this treatment? How much did it cost?

41. If treatment was not received, why did not you get the treatment? What happened next?

42. What health care facilities are available during disasters? Where?

43. Are they sufficient? If no, why not?

44. What strategies do women use to cope with these incidents?

45. How do they develop resilience against GBV?

**Disasters, shelters and health care**

46. Do you think that shelters are safe for women and girls?

47. Was there any violence in the cyclone shelter?

48. Was there any GBV on the way to safe shelter?

**Plans and policies:**

49. What resources and help would you like to see developed by communities and service providers?

50. Would you please tell, how effective are current laws, implementing agencies (police, RAB), policies and practices regarding pre- and post-disaster security against GBV?

51. Do you suggest me to visit any area/areas in Barguna which face more number of GBV in disasters or other time of the year?

52. Do you suggest me to visit any person/organization (Governmental or NGOs) in Barguna who works on GBV?

Thank you