

# UPSCALING DISASTER RESILIENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA – ENGAGING WOMEN THROUGH THE WPS AGENDA

Policy Report  
March 2018

Tamara Nair

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## Abstract

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The Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN)'s move towards an integrated and people-centred community presents an opportune moment for relooking issues surrounding women and their role in this envisioned integration. One key area where this integration can take place is in ASEAN's humanitarian assistance and disaster relief policies. A deeper acknowledgment of the gendered nature of disaster response in existing arrangements will help in planning strategic and more effective measures to create a disaster resilient region. A key conceptual tool that can be used in this is the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325). Its transformative appeal can be harnessed to address perceived gaps, *vis-à-vis* women's participation, in decision-making and planning strategies. It is hoped that through this initiative, overall community resilience will be enhanced. In addition, the incorporation of the fundamental pillars of UNSCR 1325 can produce more sustainable rehabilitation and recovery strategies for communities.

## Introduction

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The Asia Pacific region is one of the most disaster-prone areas in the world. Struck by tropical storms, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, landslides and volcanic eruptions, millions of people are affected each year in one or more of these catastrophes.<sup>1</sup> Disasters are apolitical. They are not discerning and they impact all people and all aspects of life. In addition, they accentuate existing deficiencies in state apparatus and magnify inequalities in class and gender. As International Relations Scholar, Katrina Lee-Koo puts it, “...(Disaster) affect(s) the economy, development, international relations, and of course, the already complex relationships between state and civil society.”<sup>2</sup> To go further, they can also affect both intra- and inter-state affairs as well.

The ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) was signed by ASEAN leaders in Vientiane on 26 July 2005. The agreement was ratified by all 10 member states and entered into force on 24 December 2009. It was this agreement that set the foundation for regional cooperation, coordination, technical assistance, and resource mobilisation in all aspects of disaster management and emergency response. AADMER has managed to increase both regional and national capacities for responding to disasters in Southeast Asia through various initiatives.

On 13 September 2016, at the 28<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit, ASEAN leaders signed the “ASEAN Declaration on *One ASEAN One Response: ASEAN Responding to Disasters as One in the Region and Outside the Region.*” The declaration reiterates ASEAN’s readiness to work together to build a community that responds effectively to disasters in the region. The institution’s vision is to build safer communities and create a disaster-resilient region. This becomes a challenge when women are not explicitly integrated into this resilience plan. The vision is noble, but how we go about making it a reality can be troublesome when more than half the population is not intimately involved in the planning and implementation of goals and targets. Women are classified as part of vulnerable groups affected by disasters. When a group is “invisibilised”, even unintentionally, within a larger group, the issues that specifically affect it become “non-existent” as well.

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<sup>1</sup> UN OCHA. “Major Natural Hazards in Asia and the Pacific”. Accessed January 24, 2018. <https://reliefweb.int/map/world/major-natural-hazards-asia-and-pacific>.

<sup>2</sup> Lee-Koo, Katrina. “Gender at the crossroad of conflict: Tsunami and peace in post-2005 Aceh.” *Feminist Review* 101 (2012): 59–77.

This policy brief looks at how United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: The Women, Peace and Security agenda (SCR1325), can be adapted and used as a tool in reconciling differences in how disaster response and recovery may be tailored, and how they are implemented now *vis-à-vis* women and girls. This is an attempt to move the agenda beyond its provenance in conflict settings, and through this, demonstrate how ASEAN might carve out its own experience of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, and how it can be operationalised in this region. It is the spirit of the agenda; of greater participation and involvement of women in planning and implementation, that this policy brief hopes to encompass, in envisioning a more united and resilient ASEAN community in the face of natural disasters and the devastation that follows. Outlining the four pillars of prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery in the WPS agenda, and how that might be translated into existing mechanisms and strategies in disaster mitigation, response and recovery are the key objectives of this brief.

#### Recommendations:

- Insert the mandatory participation of women and women's groups in key articles of AADMER by institutionalising women's informal networks.
- Collect and create a disaggregated database for disaster-prone regions.
- Recruit and train more female first responders.
- Include data on "secondary" jobs and where women are concerned, the informal labour sector, to better reflect actual employment.
- Highlight the gendered human security implications post-disaster, that can cause a threat to the wellness of societies and communities.
- Institutionalise gender mainstreaming at all levels of government by devolving necessary political and bureaucratic resources.
- Consider other critical human security implications in times of natural disasters.

## Women of Southeast Asia

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In Southeast Asia, much has been done to promote and protect the rights of women through various mechanisms and institutions, not in the least by ASEAN itself. In addition to all 10 member states ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) has become a platform to engage dialogue with civil society partners on issues and challenges of great concern in the region — violence against both women and children. In addition, the Southeast Asian Women's Caucus on ASEAN, a network of organisations, engages ASEAN to advance the rights of women in the region as a means of ensuring their fundamental human rights. Membership covers all 10 member states and includes East Timor. In addition to these, there are numerous other policies, programmes and protocols in individual member states that address the insecurities faced by women in the region.

### There still exists vulnerability

Unfortunately, women and girls in the region are still vulnerable to various human insecurities. Vulnerability is often defined as multi-layered and multidimensional, created as a result of cultural, economic and political norms found in specific places and at specific times. In a way, the level of vulnerability determines the degree of “freedom” a woman has, and this individual’s exposure to certain insecurities, for example, reduced food consumption and nutritional intake, fewer economic opportunities, limited access to specific health facilities and advice, and even low participation rates in local and national politics. By extension, reduced vulnerability also spells reduced abilities in coping and recovering from traumatic incidences and hence lowering the overall resilience of society.

A good example of how such vulnerability operates can be seen in how natural disasters in the Asia Pacific region affect women and men differently; disproportionately so. The very term “disaster” takes on a whole new dimension for women, many who continue to suffer post-disaster at the hands of a system that has not given enough consideration to the special needs of women. There are biological, social and economic conditions and processes that make women more vulnerable to natural disasters.<sup>3</sup> From prolonged

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<sup>3</sup> Ginige, Kanchana, Dilanthi Amaratunga, and Richard Haigh. “Tackling Women’s Vulnerabilities through Integrating a Gender Perspective into Disaster Risk Reduction in the Built Environment.” *Procedia Economics and Finance* 18 (2014): 327–35.

suffering post-disaster to having less options than men, women and girls suffer significantly longer and hence have longer physical, psychological and emotional recovery times. This points to the urgent need, considering the region is the most disaster-prone, for policymakers, national and international organisations, local governments, and in fact, any agency involved in humanitarian assistance, to develop policies that spell out better strategies to address the special needs of women in the wake of large-scale natural disasters.

## **Gendered Human Insecurities**

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The disproportionate impact of disasters on women and girls is not well-documented. It is hard to address a problem when we do not acknowledge what it is. Below are two areas that are especially impacted by disasters and post-disaster settings.

### **Economic insecurities**

Employment surveys are often targeted at formal sector employment, which means most of the data collected reflect men's experiences as much of the work women contribute may not be classified as "formal". This leaves a gap in knowledge of more than half the population, which makes for poor planning and management strategies that are influenced by this data, especially during the recovery and reconstruction phases. There is also a problem with what is defined as "primary" and "secondary" activities. A woman's primary activity might be her domestic duties of cooking, cleaning, and caring for children, elderly and livestock, for example. But when you extend and include secondary duties, this would include farming, marketing products (i.e., sales of produce), mending equipment etc. Some even run their own businesses from their home in their "spare" time, for instance, pickling vegetables and salting fish or making treats for festivities and occasions, which are then sold to supplement the family income. To illustrate how the inclusion of women's "secondary" work makes a great impact, Mayra Buvinic, an expert from the Centre for Global Development, cites the labour force survey in Uganda in the 1990s.<sup>4</sup> In one year, the survey asked people to state their "primary activity or job". A year later, an additional question

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<sup>4</sup> MacDonald, Charlotte. "Is there a sexist data crisis?" *BBC News*, 18 May 2016. Accessed August 20, 2017. <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-36314061>.



asking participants to state their “secondary activity or job” was added. The recorded number of workers in Uganda soared from 6.5 million to 7.2 million, translating to 700,000 “missing workers”; the majority of whom were women.

In the context of Southeast Asia and natural disasters, there is a need for the collection of greater disaggregated data. This data should then be easily accessed for a more targeted response and recovery, and after, better rehabilitation strategies. The type of data that should be collected is varied. Much of economic/labour force data collected focuses on formal sector employment. If specific data – the number of women working in the informal sectors, the number of hours of work, unpaid work of women including crop/food cultivation – is not collected before the disaster, the extent of the damage post-disaster will not be accurately estimated, which then means less resources will be directed towards “fixing” the problem. Although there are indications of such data collection taking place, it is not done diligently and frequent enough to reflect the true nature of experiences specific to women. Effective strategies for compensation and reinstatement of employment is an important aspect of rebuilding and recovery, and we need to have the full picture of economic losses for all victims — men and women.

## **Food insecurities**

The greatest challenge is the lack of recognition and value for women’s inputs to farming systems across Asia and the developing world. In light of this bias, which contributes to the persistent and dominant view of the farmer as male, and to gender-specific constraints, women farmers are normally seen as “farmers’ wives” rather than economic producers in their own right. Women are responsible for between 60 to 80 per cent of agricultural production across Asia, and yet receive a fraction of the land, credit and inputs (such as improved seeds and fertilisers), agricultural training and information provided to men. The question then arises on what can be done to protect and aid female food producers in Asia in the face of constant threats of natural disasters? Small-scale farms produce around 80 per cent of Southeast Asia’s food, and women account for 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force. In some countries, such as Thailand, they account for the bulk of agricultural labour, performing almost 90 per cent of the work carried out in rice fields. And yet, women farmers are not easily compensated in times of natural disasters with resource allocation in the forms of land and capital. They also tend to be excluded from rebuilding and recovery strategies.

It would be incorrect to say that this exclusion of women has been deliberate, for cultural or other reasons, in agricultural development. As a matter of fact, research points to how Southeast Asia's female food producers fare much better than their counterparts in other parts of Asia or Africa. There are varying degrees of empowerment across the region, with the Philippines and Thailand displaying greater levels of empowerment initiatives for female farmers. In short, regional trends seem to run counter to narratives that paint female food producers as disempowered members of rural communities. Despite these positive revelations, in the aftermath of a disaster and ensuing tumult, gender sensitivity can often be on the back burner; not pressing at that particular time. Protracted food insecurity, more so for women, is commonplace in post-disaster settings.

In rural areas across the region, women are almost exclusively responsible for food and nutrition security for their families. A large proportion of work on farms is done by women. In addition, women are also involved in post-harvest activities such as storage, handling, stocking, processing and marketing. All these warrant much greater involvement of women in disaster mitigation and participation, and consultation during recovery phases.

## **Enhancing Capabilities for Women – A “Revolutionary” Regionalism**

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It has been long and repeatedly demonstrated that empowered women bring about empowered societies. Despite numerous and widespread efforts at gender mainstreaming in health, education, and politics, among other sectors, we still live in a world defined by social divisions that separate men from women, and women from opportunities. Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the goals to end hunger, ensure healthy lives, ensure the availability and sustainable management of water, ensure sustainable use of natural resources and so on, all require effective and long-term involvement of women. As a matter of fact, none of the SDGs will be met with any success without equal partnership. So, prescriptive and normative response to vulnerability is to reduce exposure, enhance coping capacity, strengthen recovery potentiality and bolster damage control (i.e., minimise destructive consequences) via private or public means.

Through the implementation of new laws and policies, and by revamping older ones, governments of the region have taken concrete, actionable steps to promote greater participation of women and ensure their protection

in crisis situations. The shared vision of a people-oriented and socially responsible ASEAN community cannot come to fruition unless all forms of discrimination, deliberate or unintentional, are put to rights.

## **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security**

Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR1325) was a result of greater recognition of the “disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women.”<sup>5</sup> The Resolution serves as the blueprint for the WPS agenda. Adopted in October 2000, SCR1325 was pushed forth within the context of the increasing use of women and children as weapons of war in the 1990s. There was also the glaring absence of women at the peace table and in peacebuilding efforts – a sorry state, considering the disproportionate suffering women faced during conflict.

SCR1325, together with eight other resolutions that followed, forms the WPS agenda. Although its inception is within the plight of women in conflict settings, it is important to understand that the agenda itself is not just about conflict or even just about women. It is a transformative agenda that seeks to create sustainable peace, ensure greater participation, and facilitates the move from gender inequality to gender justice. In its broader vision, the agenda resonates with the objectives of the ASEAN Community post-2015, the region’s objectives for the next decade, and is also contiguous with ASEAN’s human rights agenda.

The WPS agenda is based on four pillars — prevention of violence against women, protection from sexual and gender-based violence, participation of women in all levels of decision-making, and women’s effective and sustained involvement in relief and recovery. With a few exceptions, the agenda is equally applicable to women in any form of crises, including natural disasters. There has been calls for another resolution to address women in natural disaster settings.<sup>6</sup> However, as suggested in this brief, it is possible to use the existing SCR 1325, especially by adapting and incorporating its four pillars to suit the regional context and pressing issues faced here.

There are concerns that the envisioned regional economic integration will perpetuate an ASEAN community, which prioritises other interests over

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<sup>5</sup> “Women, Peace and Security.” *UN Peacekeeping*, 29 March, 2017. <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/issues/women/wps.shtml>.

<sup>6</sup> Shah, Payal, K. *Assisting and Empowering Women Facing Natural Disaster: Drawing From Security Council Resolution 1325*, 15 Colum. J. Gender & L. 710, 715–17

gender justice. These concerns are not unjustified. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that more than one-third of women worldwide experience gender-based violence over the course of their lives, ranging from 37 per cent in women in the African, Eastern Mediterranean, and Southeast Asian regions to 23 per cent in the high-income region and 25 per cent in the European and Western Pacific Regions.<sup>7</sup> This has wider implications on national and regional stability, especially if we expand the definition of “violence” to include “economic violence.”<sup>8</sup> Utilising the WPS agenda as a framework for greater female participation is not only imperative from a moral justice and human rights perspective, but also an important part of any successful economic development strategy.

## **Women and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Efforts in the Region**

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The AADMER stands as a benchmark for regional cooperation and coordination in disaster management and emergency response. It has enhanced regional and national capacities for disaster response in the region. However, the disconnect between various objectives of ASEAN in disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, gender equality and better integration of local communities and networks (a large percentage of which is made up of women), are quite visible when one looks at the agreement closely. Although AADMER mirrors the Hyogo Framework in complying with criteria regarding women, children and other supposedly vulnerable communities, there is no specific mention of women’s participation short of them being seen as a vulnerable group that requires attention. ASEAN Vision 2025 on disaster management once again has no specific information on the inclusion of women’s specific needs and their greater participation. However, you can find it as one of the priority thematic areas adopted in the 2012–2016 Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (ACWC).<sup>9</sup> For example, under the regional action plan

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<sup>7</sup> Straniero, M. “The cost of violence against women”. *Vita Societa Editoriale*, November 25, 2016. <http://www.vitainternational.media/en/article/2016/11/25/the-cost-of-violence-against-women/616/>.

<sup>8</sup> ASEAN 2015. “ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women.” Accessed January 24, 2018. [http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/27th-summit/ASCC\\_documents/ASEAN%20Regional%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Elimination%20of%20Violence%20Against%20WomenAdopted.pdf](http://www.asean.org/storage/images/2015/November/27th-summit/ASCC_documents/ASEAN%20Regional%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Elimination%20of%20Violence%20Against%20WomenAdopted.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> The elimination of violence against women (EVAW) and the elimination of violence against children (EVAC) are among the thematic priority areas in the 2012–2016 ACWC Work Plan adopted at the 5th ACWC Meeting held in July 2012 in Jakarta, Indonesia.

against the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW), it is specifically mentioned that

diverse groups of women suffer from multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities, making them especially vulnerable to violence. They include women with disabilities; women living with and affected by HIV and AIDS; girls; older women; ethnic minority and/or indigenous women; women in conflict with the law; *women living in disaster or conflict-affected areas ...* (italicised for emphasis)<sup>10</sup>

## **A nuanced regional action plan**

What ASEAN should work towards is establishing a regional action plan that is unique in the way it embraces the WPS agenda. It needs a plan that recognises all forms of “violence” against women, including economic insecurities and disadvantages in the labour force. The plan needs to recognise the specific role of women in areas of natural disaster mitigation and response, and especially in relief and recovery. It needs to identify women other than just being part of the “vulnerable populations” and see women as resilient and resourceful individuals. Women (vulnerable or otherwise) should not be so easily labelled as a “group” or just be part of a collective vulnerable community. They constitute 50 per cent (and some cases, more) of the population, and therefore it is ill-advised not to engage with them and take advantage of their strengths.

Women rapidly form informal social networks that allow for the efficient procurement of food, fuel and makeshift shelters. During and after crises, women are forthcoming in their requests for help whereas men are unlikely to do so. This resilience needs to be further enhanced by directing necessary resources their way. The proposed regional plan should encourage humanitarian organisations to activate local women and women’s groups as key personnel in various stages of mitigation and rehabilitation.

Incorporating the WPS agenda into the workings of AADMER can create greater social resilience *vis-à-vis* natural disasters in the region. Natural disasters are not new phenomena in the region. Women (and men) in disaster-prone communities have developed coping mechanisms over the years that have led to a form of social cohesion. These mechanisms should be reinforced. The genuine and effective participation of women will help in this.

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<sup>10</sup> ASEAN 2015. *ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on the Elimination of Violence against Women*.

The WPS agenda should be an important component of disaster response planning and management. This is, in fact, a necessity. There is ample evidence from reports that women are disproportionately affected both during the disaster and in response settings. Cultural/social practices exclude women and girls from participating in simple (childhood) activities, including swimming and climbing trees, which can be life-saving in times of disasters. Other factors that put women at a disadvantage include shying away from rescue because of what they perceived as “indecent” attire, as was the case in Aceh during the 2004 tsunami.<sup>11</sup> An Oxfam report in 2005 highlights how women were extremely affected, stressing their high mortality rates in the 2004 tsunami.<sup>12</sup> A 2007 study on disasters in 141 countries by Neumayer and Plumper revealed that gender differences in mortality rates were directly related to women’s economic and social rights, and that men and boys were given preferential treatment during rescues.<sup>13</sup> Extending beyond the immediate effects, both women and girls suffered from shortages of food and economic resources.

The four pillars that bolster the WPS agenda can be adapted into the disaster response framework. From stages of risk identification and mitigation, to actual response events, recovery and rehabilitation, the ideas of prevention, protection and participation in rehabilitation and recovery, as well as in planning and management correspond to the objectives outlined in AADMER. However, in not having a gendered perspective, AADMER is not as effective a tool as it could be.

The following are recommendations to this end, in AADMER and in the wider pillars of the ASEAN Community. The recommendations aim to weave in the pillars of participation, prevention, protection and role of women in relief and recovery implicitly.

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<sup>11</sup> Oxfam. “The Tsunami’s Impact on Women”. *Oxfam briefing Note*. Oxfam UK: Oxfam International, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Neumayer, Eric, and Thomas Plümer. “The gendered nature of natural disasters: The impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981–2002.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97 (2007): 551–66.

## Recommendations

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### *(I) In the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)*

AADMER does take into account vulnerable groups in disaster settings and has specific provisions, including the inclusion of and consultation with these groups in planning and management. However, the rhetoric of the agreement retains women in their victim roles and denies their active role in the many stages of disaster planning and management into rehabilitation. This reduces the sustainability of rebuilding efforts, as a significant proportion of the population is excluded from these vital stages. This can lead to other forms of insecurity for women post-disaster, including increasing vulnerability and economic insecurity. Persistent gender inequalities would have already worked against women under normal circumstances. These would only be exacerbated in a crisis setting. A gendered perspective to planning and management may significantly reduce these vulnerabilities. There should be increased consultation and participation in preventative strategies (for example, in Disaster Risk Reduction studies especially in assessments of social risk) and actual participation of women in planning strategies to protect women against various insecurities in relief and recovery phases.

- Insert the mandatory participation of women and women's groups in key articles of AADMER (prevention and participation components).

Key articles in AADMER are possible entry points to incorporate the WPS agenda. These include **article three**, which outlines, among other things, the need to extend disaster risk reduction efforts to incorporate sustainable development policies at all levels, and to include all stakeholders, including local communities. In addition, **article six** specifically outlines strengthening community participation, and promoting and utilising local knowledge and practices. This could potentially include women's informal networks that are activated in the event of a crisis, that allows them to procure necessities like food, clothing and shelter before response teams arrive. These point to the possibilities of developing greater resilience in communities.

- Collect and create a disaggregated database for disaster-prone regions (participation component).

The collection of greater disaggregated data at local levels can give a more nuanced situational awareness of the impacts of disasters. In addition, there should also be evidence-based research that supports the incorporation of

“gender inequality” as a component of the social construction of risk. This data should then be easily accessed for a more targeted response and recovery, and after, better rehabilitation strategies.

The type of data that should be collected is varied. This should include indications of domestic violence, different types of violence including that of psychological or emotional trauma, so on and so forth. The data collection should also extend to loss of jobs for women, loss of job opportunities, for example, those working as cleaners, masseuses, chambermaids etc. in resorts that may be closed down for a number of months.

- Recruit and train more female first responders (protection component).

Learning from the Aceh tsunami 2004 experience, where women did not want to be rescued because the responders were men in most cases, the presence of female first responders would have contributed to more lives being saved, especially when entering culturally sensitive regions. Attempts should be made to recruit and train more female staffers at all levels.

## ***(II) In the political-security and economic frameworks of ASEAN***

Any effort towards coming up with a regional approach should include the social, economic and political dimensions of the ASEAN community. As it stands, women are presented as agents of development and feature strongly in the socio-cultural milieu of the region. Not only are women seen as development agents, but also as keepers of culture and custodians of family practices. Although the empowerment of women and capacity-building strategies focused on them are many and varied across states in the region, levels of empowerment will mean little if women do not influence decisions that affect the security of states and by extension, the region.

The integration of ASEAN into a single regional market through the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) compels member states to work towards greater stability in the region. In such an interconnected expanse, disasters that happen in one location can certainly have repercussions elsewhere. The WPS agenda to protect and include women, and prevent violence and atrocities against them should be an overarching framework across the three ASEAN community pillars.

- Include data on “secondary” jobs and where women are concerned, the informal employment sector (protection and rehabilitation components).

The loss of economic security in the aftermath of natural disasters can be devastating to individuals who already have limited financial resources.



Women suffer disproportionately when it comes to economic losses because their “work” is often not accounted for. There should be greater recognition of the types of work people are engaged in, especially in the informal sector. This allows better compensatory measures to be put in place to reduce economic hardships in the aftermath of disasters and during the rebuilding phase.

- Highlight the gendered human security implications post-disaster that can cause a threat to the wellness of societies and communities, through education and advocacy at all levels of governance (protection and rehabilitation components).

Natural disasters and its impact on the economic, food and health securities impact women differently. As a matter of fact, the resilience of nations towards these insecurities can be gauged by how effectively women are able, assisted by institutional mechanisms, to overcome barriers to establish food, health and economic securities. These areas of food and the economy can both directly and indirectly impact a country’s security. It is important that the role women play in these areas be spelt out at the political/security level for any effective change to take place *vis-à-vis* making women more resilient in disaster settings.

- Consider other critical (gendered) human security implications — such as human trafficking – in times of natural disasters (participation, prevention and protection components).

Examples include the increased movement of people that can evolve into issues of (national) security, and possible increased incidence of human trafficking post-disaster, as many women succumb to desperate measures to survive, due to heightened economic insecurities. A disaster in one area, then, has transboundary implications. A regional response that has a nuanced understanding of these movements therefore, becomes necessary.

## Conclusion

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Natural disasters are not discerning. They affect all, men and women, as well as the rich and poor. Supporting the WPS agenda and its four pillars of prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery, using the AADMER platform, and APSC and AEC to create a more disaster “resistant” region therefore becomes imperative. There have been great attempts at including women in disaster response planning, but more can be done. In order to build more resilient communities, the genuine and sustained involvement of women is vital. There is a need to give greater value to experiential knowledge so that mitigation, response and rebuilding strategies can be more effective and sustainable. Increased participation of women, their protection, and their roles in prevention (mitigation), and in recovery and rebuilding are paramount if ASEAN is to develop a resilient and strong community.

## About the Author

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**Dr Tamara Nair** is Research Fellow at the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre) at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. She graduated from the National University of Singapore (NUS) with a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and Geography and went on to train at the National Institute of Education (NIE). She obtained a Masters in Environmental Management, a Graduate Diploma in Arts Research and a PhD in Development Studies from the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. She also holds a Professional Certificate in Project Management accredited by the Institute of Engineers, Singapore from Temasek Polytechnic.

Her current research focuses on issues of power and the biopolitics of hunger in Southeast Asia and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda in the region. Her recent publications have focused on the systematic food insecurities of the Rohingya in Myanmar, and the disenfranchisement of marginalized communities, including women, in local development. She has published in development studies journals; writing on marginalized communities and sustainable development, power and subject creation, and ideas of citizenship.

## **About the Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies**

The **Centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies (NTS Centre)** conducts research and produces policy-relevant analyses aimed at furthering awareness, and building the capacity to address NTS issues and challenges in the Asia Pacific region and beyond. The centre addresses knowledge gaps, facilitates discussions and analyses, engages policymakers and contributes to building institutional capacity in the following areas: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief; Food, Health and Energy Security; Climate Change, Resilience and Sustainable Development; and Peace and Human Security. NTS Centre brings together myriad NTS stakeholders in regular workshops and roundtable discussions, as well as provides a networking platform for NTS research institutions in the Asia Pacific through the NTS-Asia Consortium.

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**Nanyang Technological University**

Block S4, Level B3, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798

Tel: +65 6790 6982 | Fax: +65 6794 0617 | [www.rsis.edu.sg](http://www.rsis.edu.sg)