Surveillance and Health Equity
Considerations in Health Emergencies
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Types of Emergencies

- Natural and Humanitarian disasters
Types of Emergencies

- Outbreaks of Infectious Disease
Some Characteristics of Health Emergencies

- Health crises are not gender neutral.
- All situations begin at local level.
- Initial periods (hours to days to weeks) are characterized by uncertainty.
- First to respond are always local.
- Local capacities can be overwhelmed quickly.
- External support may be limited:
  - By fear
  - By physical constraints
  - Surveillance can be difficult.
Given the local nature of all emergencies, what are the gender issues?

- It depends:
  - In conflict or disasters, women often endure extreme hardship, and
  - Women may provide additional care, domestic and livelihood responsibilities.
  - Relief efforts to help all those affected must encompass cultural norms and women’s role in society to avoid increasing insecurity and reverse gains.
Gender Issues (cont.)

- Women are often in a disadvantaged position in many developing, as well as developed countries.

- Some issues:
  - Incidence of gender-based violence—including rape, human trafficking and domestic abuse—increases exponentially during and after disasters.
  - Most disasters place an undue burden on women and girls who are responsible for unpaid work such as providing care, water and food for households.
Some facts

- Disasters lower women’s life expectancy more than men’s, according to data from 141 countries affected by disaster between 1981 and 2002.

- Women, boys and girls are 14 times more likely than men to die during a disaster.

- Most of the victims trapped in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina were African-American women and their children, the poorest demographic group in that part of the country.

- Following a disaster, it is more likely that women will be victims of domestic and sexual violence; many even avoid using shelters for fear of being sexually assaulted.

Experiencing Disasters

- Women, girls, boys and men experience disasters differently.

- There are gender, biological, economic, occupational, socio-cultural, religious, political factors.

Source: http://apps.who.int/disasters/repo/5509.pdf
## Traditional Gender Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide water</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide food</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter &amp; Sanitation</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel, pots, utensils</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>++</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Health education</td>
<td>+++</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Nutrition</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Vaccination</td>
<td>+++</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Disease control</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maternal/child</td>
<td>+++</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://apps.who.int/disasters/repo/5509.pdf](http://apps.who.int/disasters/repo/5509.pdf)
Shifting Roles in Emergencies

- Existing gender inequalities may be exacerbated while changing gender roles in times of crises can also create new or additional disparities.

- Disaster may lead to unequal access to resources, support services and protection from exploitation and abuse.

- Disruption of societies’ traditional protection systems increases vulnerability.
  - Kenya 2007
  - Lord’s Resistance Army
  - Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria
  - Bulgaria – Syrian refugees

- Women in camps have more sexual violence if sanitation facilities or water points are poorly lit or situated in an out-of-the-way location

Infectious Diseases

- H5N1 avian influenza affects women disproportionately:
  - Females were at increased risk of death (OR 1.75, 95% CI 1.27–2.44)
  - But young age, in particular <5 years of age (OR 0.44, 95% CI 0.25–0.79 for death), was protective.

- Disparities in African American vaccine uptake were result of limited trust in Los Angeles County communities that have been chronically underserved by health care providers.

Source:
http://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0089697
What can we conclude?

- In natural disasters, surveillance systems may be casualties; rough and ready counts of injuries and casualties may be required, with special attention paid to known vulnerable populations.

- In outbreak emergencies, knowledge of the distribution of social determinants will help identify the vulnerable populations.
  - How many are elderly or young, have limited or no English proficiency, experience geographic or cultural isolation?
  - 23 million U.S. residents (roughly 12% of the total population aged 16 to 64 years) have special healthcare needs (SHCN) due to disability.

Source: [http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2646456/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2646456/)
Thank You