

NATURAL DISASTERS, WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH IN REFUGEE SHELTER

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The World Meteorological Organization stated that the period from 2021 to 2025 was the hottest on record. This resulted in extreme heat waves, forest fires, prolonged drought, and flash floods.

In late November 2025, natural disasters, including floods and landslides, occurred on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia, specifically in the provinces of Aceh, North Sumatra, and West Sumatra. This disaster began with the formation of tropical cyclone Senyar in the Indian Ocean. This tropical cyclone brought prolonged heavy rain, resulting in flash floods and landslides.

This disaster caused thousands of deaths. Furthermore, it has left thousands of people homeless and forced to live in refugee shelters (depending on the availability of new housing or the suitability of their old homes for re-occupation).

Living in a refugee shelter is not easy, especially for infants, toddlers, pregnant women, postpartum & breastfeeding mothers, and the elderly. This is especially true when there is no certainty about how long they will have to stay in the shelters.

At the early stages of a disaster, when the emergency response period is established, the government and the community's top priorities are evacuating victims and meeting basic needs such as food, clean water, temporary shelter, and medical treatment. During this emergency response period, assistance is typically widely available, both from the government, the community, and NGOs.

Issues related to women's and children's health emerge after several weeks of the emergency response period, and people remain in refugee shelters, which face numerous limitations, such as limited toilets and overcrowding in

tents. Furthermore, nutritional needs are often a separate issue.

Children, pregnant women, and breastfeeding mothers struggle to meet their nutritional needs because meals prepared in refugee shelters are typically prepared in communal kitchens, resulting in uniform meals and no differentiation between individuals. This makes it difficult for some refugee groups who require priority nutrition. In addition to nutritional challenges, other health issues often arise in refugee camps, such as skin diseases, cough & diarrhoea.

Given the frequent occurrence of natural disasters that lead to long-term displacement, it is necessary to evaluate disaster management and health services during the emergency response and post-disaster rehabilitation periods. This is to ensure that women and children receive standard health services and their nutritional needs are met.