

Climatic Disaster and Women's Vulnerability: A Case Study on Menstrual Hygiene Management of Internally Displaced Women in the Sundarban Regions of India



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'Ethical issues arising in research into health and climate change'

Presented by
Puja Das

Department of Public Health and Mortality Studies
International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)

Mumbai-400088, India

Why this study is needed?



- Climate change caused climatic disaster especially effects on *the women's life*.
- Women's health crisis in terms of *pregnancy, antenatal care, prenatal care and reproductive health* during climatic disaster.
- Climate disasters limiting *basic needs* particularly among the women *during their menstrual days*.
- *Hygiene management* also compromised because of the climatic disaster.

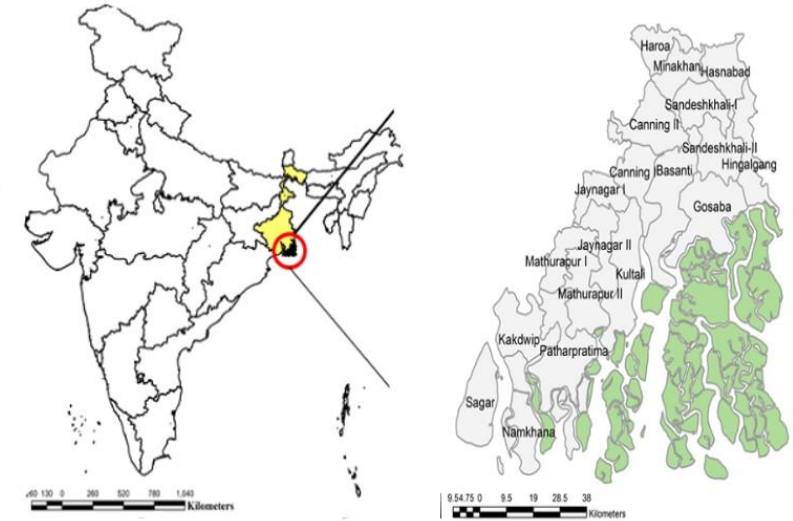
Climate change and menstrual hygiene management



- Climate change *negatively impact* in the different stages of women's life.
- Particularly women's menstrual health is very critical in climatic disaster region.
- Climate disasters limit women's and girls' access to clean water, sanitation and menstrual products for proper hygiene.
- *Displaced women* often face crisis to private place to clean, dry and dispose the menstrual absorbents in the *relief camp*.
- Insufficient menstrual hygiene logistics lead to *reproductive infections* in women.

Description of case study context

- The low-lying *Sundarban delta* is highly disaster-prone due to frequent natural calamities.
- Over the last two decades, storm-surge floods have caused massive livelihood losses. In recent years these are *Fani (2019)*, *Amphan (2020)*, *Yaas(2021)* and *Remal (2024)*.
- Severe disasters have left coastal and riverine households *vulnerable, causing land loss and displacement*.
- Climate-related disasters severely impact *women's health*, especially through *infectious diseases*.



Rationality of this study

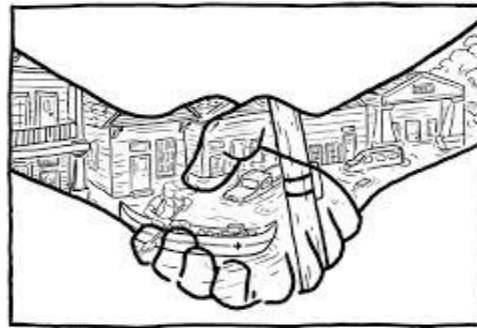
- There are few study conducted on the *menstrual hygiene management in the climate change* context in India.
- Lack of study has been conducted on *menstrual hygiene management and climate change* in the Sundarbans to date.
- This study explores *ethical issues in menstrual health for women displaced by climate disasters.*

Methodology

- This *qualitative case study* was conducted on **Sagar Island** in the disaster-prone Sundarbans region.
- We used *purposive sampling* to select two villages in Sagar Island, where many residents were displaced from Ghoramara Island due to natural disasters.
- Qualitative data was collected via *in depth interviews* using *unstructured questionnaires*.
- *Twenty young adult women* from Bamkinnagar and Ganga Sagar villages experienced menstruation *in the relief camp during floods and cyclones*.

Ethical issues with commentary

- a) *Minimizing risks* and promoting benefits to participants
- b) Obtaining *valid informed consent*
- c) Working with *vulnerable participants*
- d) Protecting participant *confidentiality*
- e) Dealing with *legal implications* of research



Ethical issues with menstrual hygiene management

- During the research, some women declined to sign consent forms *due to cultural sensitivities, increasing the risk of misreporting or underreporting data.*

Ethical issues with menstrual hygiene management

- Due to *cultural taboos* surrounding menstruation, women *struggle to discuss their issues openly*, leading to potential misrepresentation or exaggeration of data.

Ethical issues with menstrual hygiene management

- Collecting menstruation-related information was challenging due to a *lack of private space, compromising participant confidentiality.*

Major findings

- Due to natural disaster, displaced women were *facing crisis of safe and clean water.*
- Displaced women unable to *afford sanitary napkins and must rely on cloths as menstrual absorbents.*
- Sometime, they used *wet cloths* due to *inadequacy of personal space to dry the cloths.*

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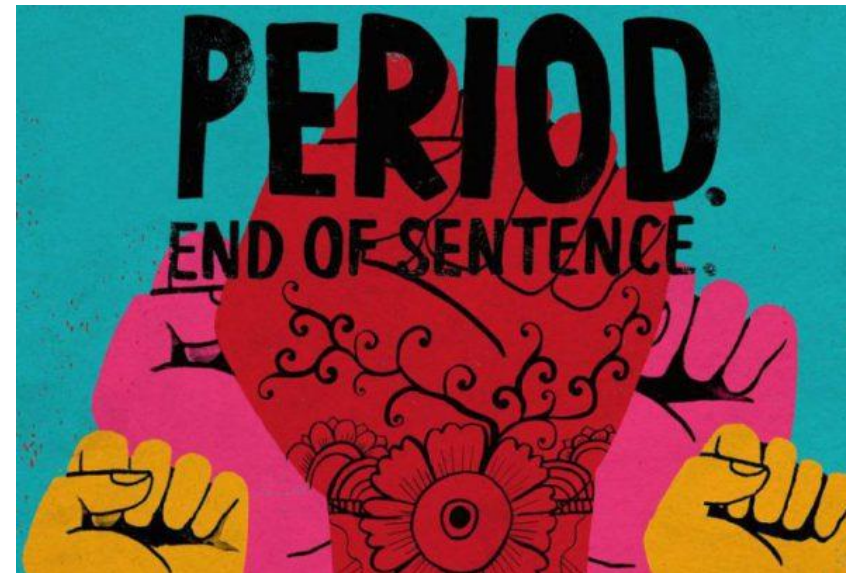
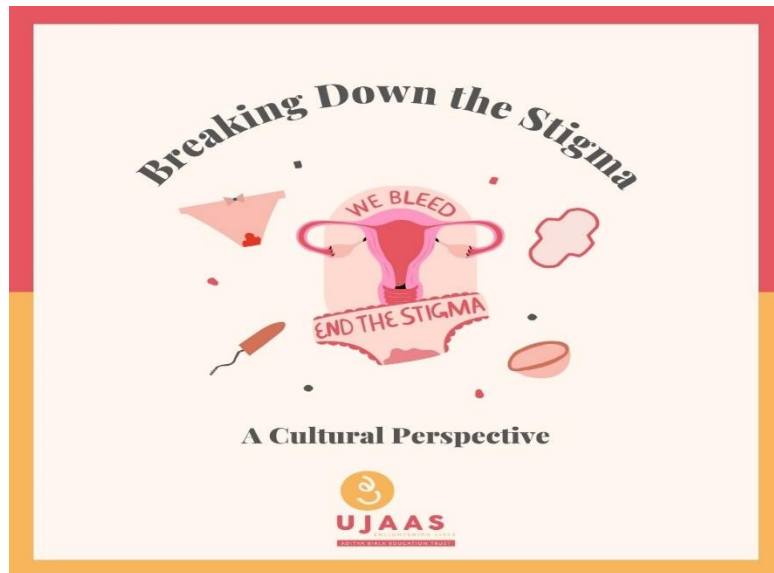
- They were facing the problem of *clean toilet, lack of private space for changing materials.*
- They often struggle to manage *hygiene* and suffer from *infections and rashes due to washing with contaminated water.*

Suggestions

- Emphasizes the need for *gender-specific interventions in disaster preparedness and relief strategies*, raising ethical questions.
- Highlights the *vulnerabilities specifically of displaced women, addressing that menstrual hygiene* is a matter of dignity and human rights, not just health.

Suggestions

- Ensuring *equitable access to MHM* in disasters is obligation for policymakers and researchers, intersecting with the broader challenge of climate justice.



Thank You...