

DISASTER RELIEF AND REHABILITATION:
POLICY ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN

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All persons who do not take part.... in hostilities are entitled to respect for their person and honour and they shall be in all circumstances treated humanely without any adverse distinction..... Acts of violence to life, health and physical and mental well being of persons shall be prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever.... Children shall be provided with care and aid they require.

Extracts from : Article 4 , Part II of Additional Protocol II , Geneva Convention

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since 1980, over two million people have died as an immediate result of natural and man-made disasters. The refugee population has grown 500 percent since 1970 compared to a 20 percent growth in the world population, registering nearly 16 million refugees in 1992. This estimation does not include the internally displaced, of which there are 1.2 million in the Philippines alone. More than half of these are women and children. In the year 1992 alone, more than 300 million people have had their homes or livelihoods destroyed directly by disasters and UNICEF estimated about 4 million children to have been permanently disabled due to natural and man-made disasters. Even as this paper is being written, nearly 7 million people are homeless and displaced in Bangladesh due to severe floods (UN DHA Situation Report, 1993).

Other statistics on numbers affected, hectares of land flooded, harvests lost are equally alarming. But statistics, however, alarming will not help reduce disaster impact, unless they are seen by policy makers as a reflection of the human misery,

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