



# CARE Rapid Gender Analysis on Power INCREASE: Northern Samar, Philippines

November 2020



## **Acknowledgments**

The conduct of the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power (RGA-POW) in Northern Samar was led by INCREASE field staff from Leyte Center for Development, Inc. (LCDE). CARE Philippines' INCREASE team initiated the development of this report, with technical support provided by CARE Philippines' WLIE Coordinator and Project Officer.

Our many thanks to the nine women's groups from the Municipalities of Mapanas, and Palapag, Northern Samar for sharing their stories and validating the RGA-POW findings, and to Tam O'Neil, along with the Women Lead in Emergencies Team for their invaluable support to the RGA-POW process and report.

Cover photos © Ashley Venerable and LCDE

## Contents

---

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	3
Methodology	4
Demographic Profile	5
Women's Participation and Leadership	7
Positions and roles	
Humanitarian system accountability mechanisms	
Women's organisations, groups, etc.	
Barriers to women's public participation and leadership	
Risks from support to women's public participation	15
Promising directions for Women Lead in INCREASE	16
Gaps and areas for further research	18
Conclusions	19
References	22
Annexes	23

## Acronyms

---

AADC	Agri-Aqua Development Coalition-Mindanao *AADC is INCREASE's local implementing CSO partner in Surigao del Sur
BLGU	Barangay Local Government Unit
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
DOST	Department of Science and Technology
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DRR-CCA	Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation
DRRM	Disaster Risk Reduction and Management
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FHH	Female Headed Household
GAD	Gender and Development
GBV	Gender-based violence
HH	Household
INCREASE	Philippines – Increasing the Resilience to Natural Hazards Project
IRM	Integrated Risk Management
LCDE	Leyte Center for Development *LCDE is INCREASE's local implementing CSO partner in Northern Samar province
LGU	Local Government Unit
MLGU	Municipal Local Government Unit
MSWDO	Municipal Social Welfare and Development Office
PDM	Post-Distribution Monitoring *Mechanism that assesses the affected community's feedback on the quality, effectiveness, sufficiency, etc. of the response carried out by humanitarian actors
RGA-POW	Rapid Gender Analysis on Power
WAP	Women Action Plan
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WLiE	Women Lead in Emergencies

# Executive Summary

---

**Vulnerable groups – particularly women – suffer most from natural and man-made hazards.** Now more than ever, there is a need to account for their needs and interests in public decision-making spaces to ensure that community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) mechanisms and governance structures are effective, inclusive, and are sustainably adopted. Providing women with the opportunity and ability to actively participate in DRR planning and solutions not only amplifies their voice in decisions that affect their lives, but also harnesses their potential in leading community DRR work.

Aimed at increasing the resilience of small-scale farmers, fisher folk – with focus given to female headed-households and women collectives in its partner communities, Project INCREASE<sup>1</sup> sought to augment its women engagement activities and advocacy work through (1) piloting the Women Lead in Emergencies (WLIE) action research model in its activities, and (2) drawing insights from the **Rapid Gender Analysis on Power (RGA-POW)** conducted in nine crisis-affected barangays in Mapanas, and Palapag, Northern Samar, Philippines covered by the project.

**This RGA-POW provides information about the different needs, capacities and aspirations of women – with a focus on the structural and relational barriers to, and opportunities for women’s leadership and public participation during and after emergencies,** as well as relevant information on the local context from previous studies (e.g. post-distribution monitoring reports, rapid gender analyses, etc.).

Apart from demonstrating that women do have power and exercise this with other women, the report also outlines underlying reasons for limited public voice and decision-making for different groups of women, and identifies potential resistors and risks, as well as present opportunities and actions that can address observed barriers. Thus, providing promising directions for WLIE in INCREASE.

## Key Findings

- **Women’s roles and power in communities and emergency response.** By law, women have equal rights to participate in public decision-making spaces, both formal and informal. Women in elected positions in barangays have equal voting powers as men but are often appointed to positions perceived to be ‘fit for women’. Community women *with enough capacity, skills, and influence as ‘extension workers’* have also been actively working with the barangay officials as volunteers planning for and responding to emergencies, and have built their capacity to conduct damage and needs assessments, support the management of evacuation centres and attend to the needs of evacuees who are mostly women, children, and the elderly, and undertake administrative tasks.

Women exercise *power with* other women when they come together for economic purposes, especially during emergencies – as livelihood opportunities are a common key concern that form the basis for women’s organising, while maintaining the potential for the space to be maximised for women’s rights education or confidence-building training. Where women interact, it is the elected women and influential women (who are professionals, owners of small businesses, and are educated) who lead and guide other community women who often perceive themselves as ‘supporters’.

- **Community women express aspirations to participate in community DRR, however, social and gender norms determine how much or how little they can exercise their rights, voice and actively engage in public decision-making.** Where it is deemed “natural” or “right” for men and husbands to have the final say on where women go or to what extent they can take part in spaces beyond the

---

<sup>1</sup> “Philippines – Increasing the Resilience to Natural Hazards” (INCREASE) is a resilience project implemented by CARE in partnership with local organisations

home, women are in one way or another limited in where, when, and how they can participate. Where it is “natural” or expected for women to take on long hours of unpaid care and domestic work while also contributing to the household income daily, women are subtly and systematically disincentivised to attend community activities or trainings intended to improve their technical know-how or provide them with the confidence necessary to speak up. These barriers to participation are even greater for women from particulate groups of women – such as women with disability, adolescents, elderly, who are indigent or less educated, and/or of a diverse gender identity.

While women are active in providing for the needs of their families and communities during crisis, they are less present and respected in formal decision-making positions and processes. Even for women who are in elected government roles in the barangay or are in a more advantaged socio-economic position, their public influence is perceived as being more limited than their male peers and, in the private sphere, they are still beholden to their male family members’ allowance or approval.

## Opportunities to increase women’s public participation and leadership

- **Community women say they feel more confident lobbying for rights and providing feedback to power-holders when they are part of a collective, and they want to organise and, for some, to gain accreditation for their groups/organisations.** These groups can be supported to increase their organisational capacity, accompanied through accreditation processes if they choose this, and equipped with the knowledge and skills to more confidently exercise their voice in public fora and to engage with decision-makers.

Since activities in these project areas have been more geared towards immediate emergency responses, the WLIE pilot in itself is an opportunity to explore possibilities for, and finally focus on, specific ways to increase women’s public participation and leadership. While new or increased risks – as a result of increased women’s participation, may arise in the private sphere and in public places, protection feedback mechanisms (that are often not functional or accessible) must be strengthened.

- **Deliberately engage persons and groups<sup>2</sup> who are most likely to resist changes that disrupt gender norms.** It is equally important to conduct specifically activities to work with men and boys in communities to shift unequal gender and to mitigate potential backlash to women’s organising and public activities. Ensure they feel part of the process – to make allies of them, in the attempt to make women-led and women-focused DRR activities succeed.
- **Elected women leaders and gender equality allies in the municipal and barangay offices – particularly the DRRM units high interest and relatively high influence to drive positive changes in women’s limited public participation and leadership.** Activities to try to secure the support and buy-in of decision-makers, such as municipal mayors and local barangay councils, should be prioritised – as some decision-makers may not be as supportive to activities related to women’s organising as an approach to increasing community women’s increased participation in designing and delivering emergency responses.

---

<sup>2</sup> Likely resisters (i.e. persons or groups currently in/with power (men/women comfortably in elected positions, male family members accustomed to women at home)

# Introduction

## Background

The project, “**Philippines – Increasing the Resilience to Natural Hazards (INCREASE)**,” aims to increase the resilience of 45,000 women and men small-scale farmers and fishers, including 720 extreme poor female-headed households, to natural hazards and the effects of climate change. The project endeavours to strengthen the disaster preparedness and risk reduction capacities of vulnerable communities, through:

- 1) Early warning and disaster risk reduction (DRR) mechanisms involving vulnerable groups;
- 2) Resilient livelihood strategies for female-headed extremely poor households (FHH); and
- 3) Disaster and climate risk governance.

INCREASE operates in Northern Samar<sup>3</sup> which is among the poorest and most hazard-prone provinces in the country. Two typhoons (Kammuri in December 2019, Vongfong in May 2020) hit Northern Samar, placing the province in a state of calamity twice in a span of five months. As of November 2020, livelihoods hit by the typhoon in May have not seen recovery. Province-wide quarantines were also imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting people’s movement and alternative livelihood options.

Vulnerable groups – and particularly women – suffer most from these natural and man-made hazards. Now more than ever, there is a need to account for their needs and interests in public decision-making spaces to ensure that community-based DRR mechanisms and governance structures are effective, inclusive, and are sustainably adopted. **Providing women with the opportunity and ability to actively participate in DRR planning and solutions not only amplifies their voice in decisions that affect their lives, but also harnesses their potential in leading community DRR work.** Thus, INCREASE continuously seeks to augment its women engagement activities and advocacy work with initiatives that promote equal voice, women’s leadership, and meaningful participation.

INCREASE piloted CARE’s Women Lead in Emergencies (WLIE) iterative action learning model (Fig. 1). It was used to guide women leaders in designing, integrating, and implementing women-defined solutions in relevant Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) development and sectoral plans, and to support women’s leadership in increasing community resilience.

The pilot provided tools and resources that can support INCREASE staff, partners, and women in communities to iteratively **reflect** on women’s voice, leadership and representation; **analyse** gender and power in public decision-making; **co-create** strategies to address barriers to their public voice and participation; **act** on what women themselves have designed; and **learn** in/from the process.

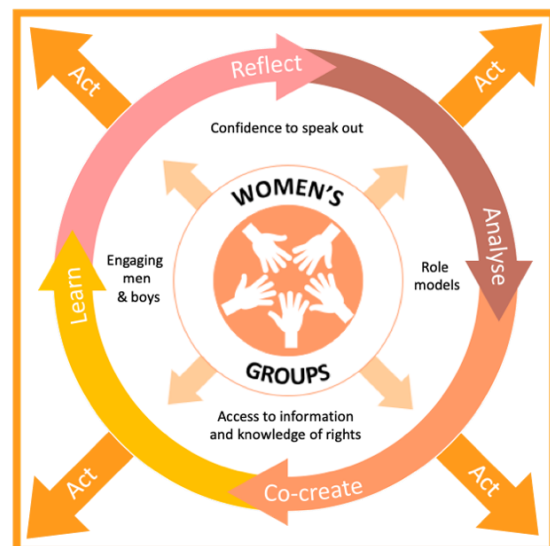


Fig. 1 The Women Lead Model

<sup>3</sup> In July 2020, RGA-POW included in its scope Surigao del Sur – another INCREASE area where the pilot was set to be implemented. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in the province, it was decided to only have Northern Samar as the sole pilot site for WLIE. Data and information on Surigao del Sur have been excluded in this third version.



The pilot integration in INCREASE programming did not conduct separate women engagement sessions. Instead, such resources were used to enhance existing women-engagement activities and their resilience-building initiatives. WLIE activities were conducted in partnership with Leyte Center for Development (LCDE) in Northern Samar.

## Objectives of the RGA-POW in INCREASE

In July 2020, the RGA-POW aimed to:

- 1) analyse crisis-affected women's access to, and influence within, public decision-making spaces;
- 2) get a sense of crisis-affected women's aspirations and existing barriers that hinder realisation;
- 3) identify promising entry points for working with women's groups to increase their active participation and leadership in humanitarian decision-making; and
- 4) identify gaps in the analysis that can be addressed through ongoing data collection and analysis.

Data and analysis conducted in July 2020 also served as a baseline of what “power relations” look like in INCREASE communities — how power is expressed between and among stakeholders, and how these dynamics may impact women and men.

The updated version of this RGA-POW (November 2020) incorporates validated data and new information gathered from women's groups engaged in Northern Samar between August-November 2020.

## Methodology

---

**A Rapid Gender Analysis on Power (RGA-POW)** provides information about the different needs, capacities and aspirations of women and adolescent girls in a crisis, with a focus on the structural and relational barriers to and opportunities for women's leadership and public participation during and after conflict and emergencies. It is built up progressively over time: using a range of primary and secondary information to understand (1) gender roles and relations and (2) the sources and distribution of power and decision-making, and how they may change during emergencies. RGA-POW uses the tools and approaches of both Gender Analysis and Power Analysis Frameworks and adapts them to the tight time-frames, rapidly changing contexts, and insecure environments that often characterise humanitarian interventions.

**Research timeline and instruments.** The RGA-POW was undertaken from 15 June to 24 June 2020, and initial analyses took place in July 2020, producing the first version of this report. Between September and November 2020, key highlights from the initial analyses were validated on the ground through engaging women's groups – integrating clarifications and updates in the present version (November 2020).

Research methods included a mix of primary data gathering activities and document reviews. In July 2020, LCDE conducted key informant interviews (KIIs) with five women leaders. The INCREASE team with the WLIE coordinator undertook tool development, gendered stakeholder analysis exercises, and secondary data review. Secondary data incorporated: (1) the INCREASE baseline assessment report (Nov 2019), (2) the project's initial gender analysis (Nov 2019), and (3) the START Kammuri Response Post-Distribution Monitoring (PDM) Report (Feb 2020).

In September 2020, field facilitators from LCDE started to facilitate women-focused discussions in nine pilot barangays – gathering both qualitative and quantitative primary data. RGA-POW validation questions and probes aimed at addressing data gaps were integrated into existing session design frameworks and exercises



typically used in community-based activities for INCREASE (e.g. community risk assessments). No secondary data review was conducted in the November 2020 update.

**Limitations:** The latest government demographic and vulnerability data for Northern Samar is from 2017 and has therefore been supplemented by PDM data in Northern Samar where CARE recently implemented a response. In July 2020, a comprehensive list of existing informal groups in the project areas was still being developed, hence primary data on membership, decision-making structures, and quality of women participation were not available at the time.

Primary data collection for nine INCREASE-covered barangays in Northern Samar was prioritised from September to November 2020. Discussions with women-only groups were prioritised over KIIs with power-holders in formal decision-making structures and community-based stakeholder mapping activities, due to limited availability and timeline of activities, as well as social distancing measures observed on the ground. Thus, insights on relationships between women leaders in formal and informal decision making structures, and across various community groups and stakeholders including men, remain limited.

As of writing, verifiable gender-disaggregated data on formal decision-making structures and usage of existing humanitarian accountability mechanisms in the project areas are not available, as documenting such information is not often prioritised at the local level.

## Overview and demographic profile of project sites

---

INCREASE is present in the municipalities of Mapanas and Palapag in Northern Samar, which is one of the poorest and most hazard-prone provinces in the country. Palapag is a third-class municipality located at the northernmost part of Samar Island. Its location in the mountains allows agricultural activities but excessive rainfall and frequent typhoons limit cultivation. Mapanas is a 5th class municipality where fishing is the major livelihood activity, although fisherfolk need to travel to a neighbouring municipality (Gamay) to sell their catch.

### Emergency context

Northern Samar is one of the provinces most frequently hit by typhoons in the Philippines. In December 2019, Typhoon Kammuri devastated the province, placing it under a state of calamity. Damage to crops, property, and infrastructure was pegged at over P335 million, with around 47,781 families affected.<sup>4</sup> Province-wide quarantines were also imposed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, limiting people's movement and negatively affecting their livelihood. While on lockdown, the province was hit by Typhoon Vongfong, and Northern Samar was again declared in a state of calamity. According to the PDRPMC, 128,034 families have been affected, while the agriculture sector recorded PHP 132 million worth of damage and PHP 127.2 million loss from destroyed public infrastructure. As of November 2020, livelihoods hit by the typhoons have not seen recovery.

Relevant sex and age-disaggregated data of crisis-affected populations in Northern Samar<sup>5</sup> are summarised below:

---

<sup>4</sup> Source: Northern Samar Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction Management Council (PDRPMC)

<sup>5</sup> Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population, Report No. 2 – Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics Northern Samar, June 2017.

Demographic information	Mapanas	Palapag
Total population	14,025	34,286
Male (%)	52.4	51.6
Female (%)	47.6	48.4
0-14 years (%)	39.4	38.4
15-64 years (%)	56	55.7
65+ years (%)	4.7	5.9
Household size (ave)	5	4.9
Total no. of households	2,785	6,957
Female-headed household (%)	10	13.4
Literacy rate, male (15-24 yrs old)	98	98.8
Literacy rate, female (15-24 yrs old)	99.5	99.4

There is no available data on (1) maternal and infant mortality rates, (2) domestic violence rates, and the (3) proportion of population with disability, at the municipal level.

To supplement government statistics above, the PDM activities for the Kammuri Response also provide insight into the demographic profile of (four of the most remote) crisis-affected communities in Northern Samar. Based on two surveys covering 324 people (224 female, 100 male) between February to March 2020, the average household size is 5.3; and for those with children, the average number of children below five years of age is 1.46. 55% of the respondents are between ages 18-50, while 22% are above 51. The elderly consist of 10.8% of the respondents, while 2.46% are with disabilities.

Out of 224 women respondents, 26% are female household heads; 75.9% are in their child-bearing years, and 14.7% are pregnant / lactating mothers. PDM data also shows that in Northern Samar's most remote and poorest communities, more female-headed households are reported and **it is women who are more vulnerable**. (Fig 2)

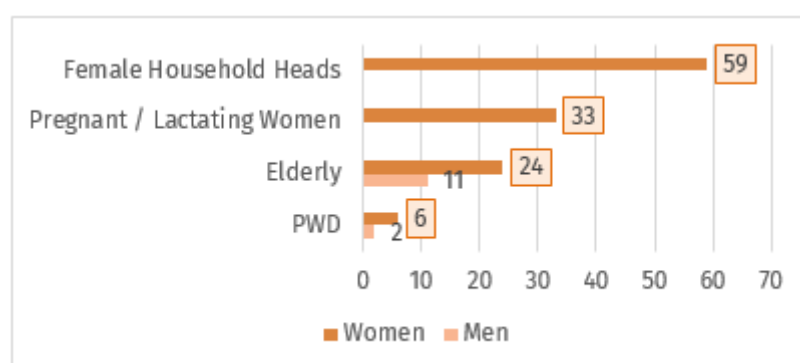


Figure 2. Vulnerability data (Kammuri Response PDMs)

Based on a CARE-conducted RGA of the Taal Volcano eruption in Batangas, and the following RGA for COVID-19 in the National Capital Region, women (particularly pregnant and lactating) and children whose shelters were damaged tend to be more susceptible to elements and GBV due to lack of privacy and unavailability of women and child friendly spaces in the area. This is on top of other vulnerabilities brought by the typhoon such as psychological trauma, lack of source of income, destroyed houses, disrupted schooling, and lack of capacity to recuperate from the effects of the typhoon on their families.

Secondary data review did not provide any information on how the most recent typhoons had altered the demographics of the communities pre- and post-crisis.

# Women's Participation and Leadership

## Decision-making Positions and Roles in Public Sphere

### Formal decision-making structures

Communities in the Philippines, including Northern Samar, are governed by local government units (LGUs), comprising Municipal Local Government Units (MLGU) and within those, Barangay Local Government Units (BLGU). Prior to launching any activities, field teams must seek approval and support from MLGU staff, and coordinate with elected BLGU officials in cascading project/response initiatives on the ground. It is through the BLGU, which includes civil servants/administrative departments and the elected members of the barangay council, that field teams can set meetings and organise community gatherings at the barangay level. During emergencies, it is also the barangay council that formally decides over emergency response planning, evacuation, and aid provision activities.

**Men dominate these formal decision-making spaces and political groups.** There are women administrators and elected councillors in BLGUs and MLGUs, but they are often appointed to positions perceived to be 'fit for women' (e.g. health worker, barangay secretary, gender focal point, nutrition scholar).

Elected women seated in barangay councils usually take on roles of leading community mobilisation, overseeing administrative work, and information dissemination, among other things.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, the RGA-POW validation discussions with women's groups highlighted that it is mostly elected women leaders who manage evacuation protocols, evacuation camps [and the needs of the evacuees], "handle" violence against women and children (VAWC) cases, and *lead* women volunteers in times of emergencies (see informal decision-making structures).

On the other hand, men are usually in-charge of *heavy lifting* work associated to shelter repair efforts, clearing of debris in farms, [usually done along with other men in the community], and other matters related to livelihood, as they are perceived to be physically stronger than women.

*"Ang pinaka-mainpluwensiya naman sa aming barangay ay yung mga babaeng nagta-trabaho na may (regular) income at ang mga professional."* (The most influential women in our barangay are those who are employed with regular income, and those who are professionals).

**Note:** Other influential women usually included in formal and informal community meetings include the *kapitana* (elected barangay captain who is a woman, or a wife of a barangay captain), a woman barangay councillor, a popular barangay health worker, and a

The barangay women leaders interviewed as key informants in this RGA-POW specified that they also initiate women-focused activities and voice the concerns and suggestions of women. **Elected women are recognised by their peers as having significant influence in formal decision-making spaces and while their voice may not always hold the same weight as their male counterparts**, these women are given equal power in casting votes during formal decision-making sessions.<sup>7</sup>

In barangays where residential areas are scattered (usually in more remote locations), *purok* (subset of a barangay) leaders are commonly appointed by serving local barangay officials to serve in the *first line of LGU leadership* – albeit not being elected/holding a formal position. *Purok* leaders are usually tasked to be the focal points in their own *puroks*, representing the *purok* constituency, and are expected to report to and

<sup>6</sup> INCREASE [Baseline Assessment Report](#) and [Gender Analysis](#), November 2019. (Women-only and men-only focus groups)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

cooperate with the barangay council. Recognised as a significant leadership position among community members, the role can be granted to both men and women. A person's strong affiliation and trustworthiness to elected council members is observed to be critical factors in the selection. Oftentimes, a barangay council member can also be recognised as a *purok* leader.

As of November 2020, gender-disaggregation of leadership positions in formal decision-making spaces and across changes in administration was not available. These positions are often not documented and monitored at the local level (municipal, barangay, *purok*). There is also no verifiable data on how women's roles in formal decision-making spaces have changed over time.

Community women in formal fora. Elected barangay officials are known to community members, as their neighbours and acquaintances in tight-knit communities and can be easily approached by them. However, the gap in power and influence between elected officials and community members is apparent in formal community assemblies and meetings, which the elected officials preside over.

The *active* participation of community women in public spaces can be restrained. For example, female respondents in Northern Samar described perceiving their individual constructive criticism as “unnecessary” in formal fora, although it is unclear if this is due to government's (un)responsiveness, or a larger sociocultural structure that reinforces that women's voices are acceptable only in particular spaces.<sup>8</sup> In KIIs, elected women leaders said that community women rarely contribute to formal discussions because they feel “shy” and “ashamed”, and that they lack knowledge and self-confidence [to participate]. While community women regularly attend community meetings and consultation sessions (more frequently than men) and consider themselves as active participants, they are keenly aware that they as women are not the final decision-makers.<sup>9</sup> As they collectively recognise the need for confidence-building, the RGA-POW validation session with women's groups also established that women see the formal space as an avenue to exercise their potential individual and collective voice with other women to contribute to discussions, ask for support needed, and voice out their concerns.

Men of the community, on the other hand, are more likely to engage in political activities and formal fora where decision-making is involved, compared to informal groups. They are also more likely to interact with, or directly bring their concerns to, elected barangay leaders compared to women and women organised in informal groups.<sup>10</sup>

Women-led/rights organisations. There are no formally established rights-based organisations, and no other regional CSOs with ongoing projects or emergency responses in project-covered barangays apart from INCREASE staff from CARE and LCDE.

### **Informal decision-making structures**

There are several informal peer networks and groups in Northern Samar, where community members – mostly women – share similar activities and interests. These informal groups are loosely formed, with varying degrees of organisation in membership and decision-making. The following sections discuss how community women participate, decide, and exhibit leadership in these informal spaces, as well how they interact with other women and men who are in power.

---

<sup>8</sup> INCREASE Baseline Assessment Report and Gender Analysis, November 2019. (Women-only and men-only focus groups)

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

Social assistance beneficiaries: At the household level, the role of seeking assistance from LGUs, government agencies (e.g. Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program [4Ps], livelihood packages, etc.), and CSO responders is fulfilled by women. They are expected to be in-the-know of any available provisions, as well as to cooperate with other women in order to provide for any other household needs that are not met by government or NGOs. FGDs conducted during the post-Kammuri response establish that community members widely accept this responsibility being attributed to women, and is also embraced by women themselves; it is **one of the things they perceive/are perceived to do better than men**. While not always organised under a collective, women household representatives would attend the same community orientations and undergo the same resource-mobilising processes together.

Municipal social welfare and development offices (MSWDOs) often cascade financial assistance and alternative income-generating activities for solo parents at the municipal level. Thus, administratively organising solo parents under associations become strategic and efficient for MSWDOs. In our project areas, there are more solo parents who are women, than men (59% in Mapanas, 67.5% in Palapag)<sup>11</sup>.

During the RGA-POW validation session held in Brgy. Quezon, Mapanas, one participant claimed, *“noon, wala pang mga NGO na tumutulong sa amin. Sanay ang mga kababaihan na kami-kami lang ang nag-uusap kung ano ang dapat gawin para sa pagbangon at paghahanda sa kalamidad.”*

(Before, there were no NGOs who can help us. Women in the community were used to only us – between and among ourselves – discussing what to do, and how to recover from and prepare for emergencies.)

Informal peer networks composed mostly of women, their neighbours, friends, and family members not only interact in spaces where common interests and activities take them, but also allow members to seek and offer socioeconomic support for their households during emergencies. Bilaterally, women (who are tasked to manage their household finances) may approach other women in times of need, ensure repayment, and settle any financial obligations.

In tightly-knit, disaster-prone communities such as Mapanas and Palapag where diverse income sources are not available, one’s reliability and trustworthiness within the network can either help strengthen or sever one’s influence and support systems. Thus, both men and women see this as a critical factor in their recovery.<sup>12</sup>

The RGA-POW validation sessions also highlighted that apart from helping their households recover economically, **informal peer networks also strengthen their sense of unity and solidarity with other women** in the community.

Farmers groups. Women farmers tend to comprise the majority membership of agricultural associations in INCREASE project areas where agriculture is the main livelihood, as is the case in Mapanas, Northern Samar. For example, 70% of the Jubasan Farmers Association are women, and as of this writing, the collective’s president is also a woman. Along with other livelihood- or commodity-focused groups, farmers’ groups focus on how their members can improve productivity, reduce losses, and explore alternative sources of income during lean seasons. Women farmers have directly expressed interest in joining a formal organization for women only, specifically to gain “demand-driven” knowledge and skills in livelihood activities.<sup>13</sup> In RGA-POW validation sessions, women farmers also indicated that **membership in farming / livelihood associations gave them access to productive resources and groups that can provide economic aid** (i.e. seeds for planting in Jubasan, lending communities and savings groups in Osmeña).

<sup>11</sup> 2016 National Household Targeting System, Department of Social Welfare and Development & UN OCHA

<sup>12</sup> INCREASE Baseline Assessment Report and Gender Analysis, November 2019. (Women-only and men-only focus groups)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

Women volunteers. Being agents of recovery is not a role that is confined to the household. In the Philippines' crisis-hit communities, where resources are scarce and dependence on social cohesion is high, it is mostly community women (i.e. oftentimes, these are barangay health workers, and those with administrative work skills) who volunteer to take part and support the barangay council and formal decision-makers in organising community meetings, disseminating information, mobilising community members, and distributing available aid from government and other donors – albeit not organised under a formal group.

In summary, the RGA-POW validation sessions were able to validate **commonly-cited consensus on dynamics/relationships between and among community women in informal and formal decision-making structures**, during emergencies:

- (1) In formal spaces, elected women officials (within the barangay council and along with other male council members) **decide on what to do** during emergencies, *how* to disseminate information and direct community action, *who* among community members can be engaged in activities, and *what* resources to mobilise to manage evacuation centres and address the needs of affected households;
- (2) Women volunteers and community members *with enough capacity, skills, and influence* to mobilise other community members and augment BLGU work are engaged by the barangay council – oftentimes elected women – to provide community monitoring, administrative, and social mobilisation support, during emergencies. It is in these informal roles that they are regarded as “extension workers” of the BLGU.

A woman leader interviewed for this RGA-POW said, “*kapag may kalamidad, - tulad ng bagyo na may mga bakwit, ang mga kababaihan ay itinuturing na kapantay ng mga kalalakihan hindi lang sa barangay kundi pati rin sa kanilang mga bahay dahil sila na ang mas namamahala sa mga nagbabakwit.*”

(During calamities, especially during monsoon season where evacuation measures are implemented, women are seen as equal to men [both in private and public spaces], because women are the ones who manage evacuees).

It was highlighted in the RGA-POW validation sessions that there are women volunteers who (over the years of doing emergency response planning work), have built their capacity in conducting damage needs assessments, supporting the management of evacuation centres and attending to the needs of evacuees who are mostly women, children, and the elderly, and undertaking needed reports and documentation requirements for the BLGU. RGA-POW interview respondents said that community women volunteers are regarded as women who lead in such cases where they demonstrate **initiative, capability and strength during emergencies**.

- (3) Lastly, crisis-affected women in the community (whose meaningful participation and leadership in public spaces remain restricted unlike elected women and women volunteers), focus their efforts towards preparedness and response actions in one's household, sourcing aid provisions and resources, and reaching out to informal peers to offer/ask for support, and looking after especially disadvantaged neighbours (i.e. those with disabilities, elderly women living alone, etc.). **In accessing social assistance, women in the community often go to informal actors for any inquiries or requests, before directly approaching formally elected leaders and aid providers**. Generally, there is willingness to cooperate with and follow the actions of women volunteer- and elected women-led during emergencies.



Despite subtle nuances on how dynamics and roles between and among women in the community are perceived in public spaces, these women (whether you are elected/possess influence) continue to find themselves interacting in the same spaces – as social assistance beneficiaries, as women farmers, as neighbours, and as women organisation members aspiring for a better life for themselves and their communities. Insights on women's groups, their individual and collective needs, aspirations, and proposed actions are explored below.

## Humanitarian system accountability mechanisms

At present, there are no humanitarian organisations other than CARE actively delivering responses in INCREASE's WLIE pilot sites. In Northern Samar, CARE and LCDE remain to be the sole aid providers of our target municipalities, following Kammuri. While hotlines and feedback boxes have been formally introduced in our response areas, the majority of community members still prefer to provide feedback and seek support through informal or face-to-face channels – specifically approaching local community leaders (24%), CARE and LCDE staff (23.6%), and local authority (14.8%).<sup>14</sup>

Gender-disaggregated analysis on preferred accountability mechanisms and channels was not included in the PDM report, however it was validated in the RGA-POW discussions that women are more likely to approach informal actors (i.e. women volunteers, including NGO volunteers) for requests and inquiries, over directly approaching aid providers and elected officials. It has also been observed that technology and connectivity-dependent accountability mechanisms are not sustainably adopted, and are not effective due to the lack of proper infrastructure and availability of hardware (e.g. cell phones). Monitoring visits and dissemination of visibility materials and information sheets that promote transparency and reiteration of emergency response processes, as provided by INCREASE and LCDE, are therefore critical.<sup>15</sup>

There are women's desks in most of the barangay halls, but not all protection feedback mechanisms at the barangay level have complied with the national government's minimum gender and development (GAD) requirements to be considered functional. Likewise, there are gender-based violence (GBV) cases and solo parent program focal points who cater to victims and concerned citizens who physically report their issues. However, these focal points report to the municipal government, are not permanently stationed in the barangays, and only conduct visits when they need to provide technical support in handling sensitive cases.<sup>16</sup> Efforts by barangay leaders (oftentimes elected women who support municipal staff in handling VAWC cases at the barangay level) have also been made in requesting for accessible crisis centres in the barangays where confidential sessions and consultation services can be provided to concerned community members in Mapanas.

## Women's needs, capabilities and aspirations

As of November 2020, the RGA-POW validation sessions were able to confirm that there is at least one informal women-only group in every project-covered barangay. Through INCREASE, the WLIE pilot in Northern Samar was able to engage a total of nine women's groups – with whom facilitators have validated initial findings of the RGA-POW. While these groups remain informal in nature, the majority were intent on formalising as an organisation, creating their by-laws, and accomplishing administrative requirements needed to do so.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> CARE's Post-Distribution Monitoring Report, Life-saving WASH and Shelter Response, Typhoon Kammuri August 2020.

<sup>15</sup> CARE's Typhoon Kammuri Post-Distribution Monitoring Report, February 2020.

<sup>16</sup> INCREASE [Baseline Assessment Report](#) and [Gender Analysis](#), November 2019. (Women-only and men-only focus groups, household surveys)

<sup>17</sup> Given the tight timeline under the WLIE pilot in Northern Samar, the women's groups prioritised the implementation of their Women Action Plans (WAPs), with pending plans to finish registration processes in the coming months



As part of the Reflect sessions, the RGA-POW validation process, and Co-create sessions, the following insights on women's needs, capacities, and aspirations in life were documented:

- (1) Most **pressing needs** collectively identified by women include **access to adequate health equipment** (i.e. nebuliser, medicine, hygiene kits, first aid kits, and thermal scanners – especially amid COVID-19). Oftentimes, medicine is not readily available and facilities are inadequate – especially for pregnant women who need to travel on foot, and cannot afford medical services. Sick children, and those with asthma also need treatment. Project areas are frequented by typhoons, agricultural damage and losses (i.e. selling products at a loss), and dependence in provision of agricultural input post-emergencies threaten crisis-affected people of food insecurity, especially those who depend on small-scale farming. **Income generating activities and resources** that can add value to existing value chains using locally-sourced resources (i.e. processing of turmeric, meat, herbal gardening, etc.) were cited as an urgent need, along with **stockpiling of resources in preparation for future emergencies** (i.e. soap, hygiene materials sensitive to needs of women and girls, rice, etc.). Amid COVID-19 and the most recent shift to technology-dependent education modalities, having **affordable network connectivity infrastructure** that will allow children's access to modified education channels (i.e. downloading of modules, satisfying requirements for online classes, etc.) at reasonable costs was also one of the issues flagged by mothers, and women teachers.
- (2) In addressing these needs, women leverage their individual and collective **capacities** to provide for their households, while bringing about positive change in their community. Apart from relying on their **agency** (i.e. positive thinking, individual skillsets, and strengths), and **productive resources** present in the community (i.e. physical: plot of land for potential livelihood, raw materials, and socioeconomic: finance/lending groups, peers, etc.), women see **organising** (and their membership in farmers' organisations, solo parents' associations, women's groups, etc.) **as a way to access additional resources** (i.e. government aid where membership to a women's group is mandatory), **participate in public spaces** (i.e. parents-teachers' association meetings in schools, women's month celebration, etc.), **and amplify their voice** in airing their concerns and suggestions in public spaces (i.e. community assemblies, etc.).

While women's groups engaged demonstrated varying degrees of maturity – with some only starting to organise, while others have implemented activities in the past, it was apparent in the Reflect sessions that **women recognise their power in achieving their goals, harnessing each other's strengths, and building resilience through working together**. Differing needs and capacities among elderly women, and younger women became apparent as they started to implement their women action plans – a window of opportunity for the younger generation to learn from, and extend support to the elderly. Despite having different interpretations of what women's voice/power is, there is confidence found in organising that women can act towards their aspirations.

- (3) Similar to how women in the community identified their needs and significant issues that mostly affect them, their individual and collective aspirations are not one to only benefit them individually or collectively – as women – rather a realisation of the positive changes they want to see in their households, peers, and in the community as whole. Commonly-cited aspirations defined in the reflect sessions include **owning [productive] resources** (i.e. own land, livestock, income-generating assets and equipment); a **community with adequate basic social services** (i.e. infrastructure for children's education, health infrastructure, etc.), and **personal well-being associated with self-efficacy and agreeable social status/position**.

The RGA-POW validation sessions also highlighted that in groups where membership is dominated by women (see informal decision-making structures), their goals and interests are sensitive to women's needs, capacities, and aspirations in life – with particular focus on their group's objectives (i.e. economic stability through viable livelihoods, etc.).

## Barriers to women's public participation and leadership

Significant quotes from women during the RGA-POW validation sessions: *"Ang mga kababaihan, hindi makapag-isip ng mga plan dahil humihina sila lalo na kung nakikita nila ang sira sa loob ng bahay."* (Women cannot think of plans because their spirit weakens whenever they see the extent of damage in their homes.)

*"Ang mga babae ay may partikular na kahinaan sa pagtingin ng mga lalaki, kanyang pamilya, at sosyedad. May mga bagay na nakalaan lang para sa mga babae."* (Men, families, and the society in general perceive women having particular weaknesses. There are things that are meant [to be given to and fulfilled by] women.)

Social norms that position men as "stronger decision makers" are a barrier. It is apparent through the shared statements during the focus groups of INCREASE baseline assessment that men's decisions are more respected by male and female family members. Culturally, perceptions that "women are not as important as men" also still persist.

During the RGA-POW validation sessions, a woman from Brgy. Siljagon, Mapanas was quoted saying, *"sa ating kultura, ang mga babae ay pangalawa lamang sa mga lalake... kahit sa mga interview, ang mga lalake ang nilalagay na pangalan kahit babae ang ini-interview."* (In our culture, women are also second to men. Even during interviews, women [interviewees] give the men's names instead of theirs [for official documentation.] Where social

norms dictate that women do not even have an identity autonomous to men's, it is reasonable to presume that community members will also give less value to women's views and decisions.

Women's decisions, when allowed, are also often subject to men's approval even in women's participation in community work or any activities outside the home. In the RGA-POW validation sessions across nine barangays, women often recalled feeling hesitant in making decisions, out of fear of their husbands. Despite this hesitation, majority of women respondents claimed that in cases where their husbands' decisions bring harm to the household, woman usually intervene and may take part in the decision-making. Women are also usually allowed to participate in public life and decision-making, in cases where the activity is perceived to bring benefits to the household, and no housework and childcare is left unattended.

Women are constantly tied to household management and care work. In Northern Samar, the consensus seems to be an adherence to the sociocultural norm that "men work, and women stay at home" – even when the reality is that, in addition to unpaid care and other household work, women also contribute in livelihood or income-earning activities, while also devoting time for community engagement.

Overwhelmed as they take on these multiple roles consecutively – and sometimes all at once – while not having the resources to pay others for childcare nor the time and bandwidth outside [unpaid] care and domestic work, women find that their participation in public spaces is further constrained – on top of existing gender norms.

*"Kadalasang humahadlang sa kababaihan para sa partisipasyon sa barangay ay ang kanyang pamilya – lalo na ang mga kalalakihan, kasi sila ang naghahanapbuhay. Kaya ang mga kababihan ay minsan nalilimitahan dahil sila ang nagbabantay sa mga bata at gumagawa ng mga gawaing bahay."*

(What hinders women participation in community activities are their families – especially men. Because men are the ones engaged in livelihood activities, women's participation is limited because it is the women who look after kids and do household chores.

Women have less access to and control of household income and assets than men and this undermines their confidence in actively participation in public fora and the communities' perception of them as leaders. There is a clear gender income gap and, across all income brackets men make more money and benefit from having more established market connections compared to women. Despite the consensus that women are regarded as household finance managers, men are the ones who ultimately decide on productive assets while women's control is often limited to non-business equipment used in the household. Oftentimes, livelihood and skills trainings are designed for male participants (who are usually the “breadwinners”) and fail to accommodate women's interests and capacities.<sup>18</sup>

In communities where influence is measured by one's economic security, adeptness, and social capital, **women who earn less, have limited control of assets, and who are denied opportunities to learn “productive” skills are regarded as having less influence by other members of the community.** Barangay women leader KII respondents indicated that, when given the chance to contribute in informal and formal decision-making spaces, women who are not regarded as influential by the community lack confidence to take part in discussions, and are reluctant to contribute in decision-making. In RGA-POW validation sessions, there is a consensus that women who are not “economically productive” mostly depend on their husbands/partners to make household decisions.

*“Ang iba naman nahihiya sa pakikisalamuha sa karamihan dahil kulang sa pinag-aralan o hind sila marunong bumasa at sumulat.”*

(Other [women] feel shy to interact with the community, and in assemblies, because they lack the education – with some not knowing how to read or write.)

Women with low literacy rates and limited knowledge of DRR are less likely to take part in discussions and voice their suggestions. The majority of community women attend community assemblies. However, those with low literacy rates and limited knowledge in topics like DRR are unable to meaningfully engage and voice their suggestions – out of the fear of being “wrong” and not knowing enough.

Accounts gathered from FGDs in the baseline assessment suggest that women with low literacy rates and limited knowledge would often leave the decision-making and planning to the educated and/or elected women and men because “such matters are only discussed by those who can decide.” These women express that they would be “happy to receive guidance” from decision-makers on what to do, as well as cooperate in areas where they can act (e.g. support community mobilisation, support informal peer networks, etc.). In cases where discussion topics are relatable to women's lives and experiences, women participants in the RGA-POW validation sessions expressed more willingness and confidence in speaking up and taking part.

Some groups of women face additional barriers to participation because of the way that gender intersects with other forms of disadvantage and marginalisation. **There are specific barriers for particular groups of women:** women of child-bearing age are more time-poor, adolescents are less likely to be listened to, elderly women living alone are unable to work, female solo parents have limited support systems and are forced to be independent, women farmers' livelihood are especially vulnerable to natural hazards – suffering more losses compared to other livelihood options, etc. **Intersecting vulnerabilities also mean that other barriers identified are more severe,** e.g. women with disabilities have even less livelihood opportunities.

Government statistics<sup>19</sup> support that it is more likely for female-headed households to live below the national poverty line, and for these households to also contain members of other similarly vulnerable populations such as the elderly, underage children or infants, and persons with disability.

<sup>18</sup> INCREASE Baseline Assessment Report and Gender Analysis, November 2019. (Women-only and men-only focus groups)

<sup>19</sup> Philippines Gender in Brief (<http://bit.ly/PHLgenderinbrief>), v. March 2020.

## Risks from support to women's public participation

---

Women may face backlash from men in their households: Husbands can exercise their household influence to “keep women at home”, reinforce barriers to their meaningful public participation, and/or pressure them to withdraw their membership in livelihood associations or women's collectives. In RGA-POW validation sessions, women have expressed that those involved in different types of programming (within or outside INCREASE and WLIE), face the risk of not being able to consistently participate – especially if men perceive these activities to be time consuming, economically unproductive, or to be competing with priorities women are expected to prioritise (i.e. care work, household chores, helping out in the farm, etc.).

In mitigating this, field facilitators schedule community sessions with women following their availability, and around the time when farm work is not at its peak. The project team is also engaging men – especially elected male leaders and barangay officials – who may also support WLIE in advocating women participation in public spaces, as well as help gather support from men and boys.

Lack of access to GBV services. The risk of violence for women participation in WLIE is particularly problematic because, in all project areas, functional women's desks are not available at the barangay level. While some areas have municipal women's desks, these are inaccessible to community women because it takes effort, time, and resources to reach them. Online and phone-based support are being put in place by CARE and LCDE, but phone signal and access to digital technology is limited due to the areas' remote geographical locations. Higher police visibility is observed in barangays where municipal offices are located (*poblacions*), and other areas reachable through land travel. The barangays that INCREASE works in are remote and barangay marshals (*tanods* – for safety and security), and women volunteers (usually barangay health workers doing monitoring work) reporting under the barangay councils are the first points of contact for any concerns on safety, security, and VAWC-related cases.

Even outside of WLIE activities, the INCREASE team consistently incorporates the engagement of men and boys to help mitigate the risk of GBV.

'Red-tagging'<sup>20</sup> – where people or organisations are marked by government as anti-regime – has led to arrests and killings of activists and human rights defenders. With the activities promoting women's higher participation in governance, and eventually leading to women realizing and asserting their rights, women may face red-tagging, which in turn would hinder their participation in activities. This is particularly heightened in INCREASE barangays where military presence has intensified. The INCREASE team and partners continue to track and mitigate these risks in its regularly updated safety and security assessments and contingency plans. As of November 2020, increased military presence in some INCREASE barangays have caused postponements of activities, following the recommendation of barangay councils.

---

<sup>20</sup> “Red-tagging” in the Philippines refers to the identification of organisations, groups, or individuals who are critical of the actions of the current government, and are tagged as either “communists”, “terrorists” or both. Humanitarian actors, among civil society actors – who are oftentimes red-tagged, continue to face safety and security risks as militarisation of rural communities intensify.

## Promising directions for WLIE in INCREASE

---

This section outlines promising entry points and directions for increasing women's meaningful participation in decision-making in Northern Samar. WLIE is a five-element approach to working with collectives of women to Reflect, Analyse, Co-Create, Act and Learn. Women themselves will choose specific activities to implement, with this section providing potential entry points for the team and women's groups to consider. The one exception is that, whether or not specifically requested by women's groups, WLIE activities will continue to deliberately engage male relatives and leaders in recognition that this is necessary to challenge and change community norms around women's participation, and to mitigate risks to women who are active in public life.

### Build on existing opportunities for women's leadership

Supporting women and vulnerable groups to participate in meaningful ways in public decision-making spaces (e.g. formal fora presided over by barangay and municipal council members, proposed DRR committees at the barangay level [not yet existing], etc.) is critical to INCREASE's objective of ensuring vulnerable community members are part of DRR planning, and community resilience-building. Below are opportunities that can be built on for women's leadership:

- 1) Women say that they want to organise. In FGDs, women have expressed their confidence in lobbying for rights or providing feedback to power-holders *when they are part of a collective*. When women are not organised, they have indicated a desire to do so. This is a good sign for the project's intent to engage and organise women through the WLIE pilot; recognising that women's organising is a key element to (individual and collective) empowerment, even if and when "empowerment" may be understood and felt differently by different groups of women.

**Update:** As of November 2020, LCDE was able to confirm that most of the informal women's groups engaged are intent on formalising their organisation in the future. Given the tight timeline under the WLIE pilot in Northern Samar, the women's groups prioritised the implementation of their Women Action Plans (WAP), with pending plans to finish registration processes in the coming months.

- 2) Integrating the WLIE pilot in INCREASE programming also serves as an opportunity to increase women's meaningful participation in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation training and activities; and is a platform for working hand in hand with women to address the public and private participation barriers that they face. The INCREASE team will explore which specific groups of women WLIE might work with in coordination with formal (i.e. BLGU, MLGU) and informal community groups (e.g. farmers' groups, women volunteers, etc.). Crucial to this effort is engaging the municipal GAD focal points, along with municipal agricultural officers and social welfare and development officers, to take part in INCREASE/WLIE project activities as resource speakers or participants. As local duty-bearers with high interest in women's leadership,<sup>21</sup> GAD focal points are necessary allies for women's groups to influence change, or at least lobby for, women's meaningful public participation in formal decision-making spaces.

**Update:** As of November 2020, LCDE was able to pilot WLIE and integrate session design and advocacy messaging in INCREASE activities – effectively engaging women's groups through reflect sessions, which include the RGA-POW validation session, co-creation sessions, and women action planning, and implementation. The pilot was also able to engage resource persons at the municipal level who were

---

<sup>21</sup> INCREASE baseline assessment KII; to be validated for RGA-POW v.2

asked to conduct training, and women engagement sessions as part of the WAP implementation. While the timeline of activities was rather short to conduct regular consultation sessions – as requested by municipal officials during the baseline assessment KIIs, the WLIE pilot served as a big step towards such efforts.

- 3) There are existing initiatives (or points of organising) that women are involved in for WLIE to engage with/build on. In Mapanas, the women of the community come together to organise the annual municipality-wide “Women’s Day”. In Palapag, women farmers in one barangay are organised in a non-accredited livelihood association. There are occasions where women have organically convened, often around economic interests or activities. Women-focused activities that recognise women’s individual and collective strengths build solidarity and can potentially be transformational in gradually challenging norms and gender bias.

## Address barriers to women’s participation

By ensuring that the project increases women’s individual agency, builds on women’s organising, meaningfully engages men and boys, and coordinates sustainably with the political and socioeconomic structure, it can genuinely and substantially build inclusive, gender-equal, disaster-resilient communities. From our initial gender and power analysis and KIIs with women leaders, there is an expressed need and interest to:

- 1) Build women’s knowledge in responding to, preparing for, and recovering from emergencies. Women’s participation in DRR trainings, design of early action measures, contingency planning, and community drills will allow them to build on existing local knowledge in resilience-building, and enable them to make better informed decisions in implementing community measures during emergencies. It is also in these spaces that they co-create solutions and break through participation barriers together.
- 2) Build women’s confidence to exercise their voice. To do so, it is essential to equip women with skills to effectively communicate their ideas, demands, and suggestions in public fora. Confidence in expressing oneself and building solidarity among women community members help amplify their public voice and enable them to gain recognition for their individual and collective influence.

**Update:** As of November 2020, all community risk assessments conducted through INCREASE integrated WLIE reflect, co-create, and WAP implementation session designs – employing participatory methodologies and women-only discussions that touch on the different vulnerabilities faced by women, those with intersecting identities, and their roles in community DRR.

Specifically, barriers and opportunities in their participation in the public space were discussed, and information provided on the various informal and formal decision-making structures and actors in emergencies.

According to a woman leader interviewed for the RGA-POW KII, “*maganda ang magiging pagtanggap ng mga tao sa ganitong aktibidad. Kailangan na malaman nila na mayroong magtuturo tungkol sa mga usaping pangkarapatan ng kababaihan. Para madagdagan ang impluwensiya ng kababaihan ay kailangan din ng karagdagang edukasyon para sa kababaihan sa usapin ng [kanilang] karapatan.*”

(People will receive such interventions positively – the need to know that there are people who will teach them about women’s rights. To increase women’s influence, knowledge and capacity building activities and women’s right education are needed.)



- 3) Provide women with opportunities for economic empowerment. Women's influence in public life and decision-making is closely associated with women's economic power including during emergencies. Critical to increasing women's influence in formal decision-making spaces is helping them gain and have control over their own assets and income and to have equal say in decisions about household finances. KIIs highlight **strong community perceptions that in public decision-making spaces, motions forwarded by economically empowered women are treated with respect and have better chances of being taken into consideration by the community or decision-makers.** Such insight is not to discount persons with less influence; rather, enabling women to engage in sustainable livelihood activities increases their control of resources, which in turn enhances their influence and boosts their capacity to support members of the community during emergencies.

INCREASE will be providing livelihood trainings to community members as part of its programming. Specifically, livelihood support/provision of inputs will be granted to selected female-headed households in INCREASE-covered barangays. In the event where WAPs designed by women's groups are also centred on livelihood activities, LCDE will be setting sustainability measures in place to ensure that women in the community benefit in the longer term. Technical support from the INCREASE Resilient Livelihood Specialist will also be made available – as needed.

**Update:** As of November 2020, two out of nine WAPs are focused on livelihood activities (i.e. turmeric processing, and meat processing).

- 4) Conduct specific activities to work with men in shifting social norms. Men in the community must be engaged and be made aware of INCREASE and WLIE's processes and approach (particularly the specific focus on women's organising and capacity building) to establish a common understanding, to secure buy-in, and to avoid potential backlash in private and public spheres. Creating spaces and opportunities for women and men of the communities to (1) analyse the economic, political, and sociocultural stakeholders in their ecosystem, and (2) examine their power and relations relative to these stakeholders, can help them identify their points of influence and collaboration.

**Update:** As of November 2020, the INCREASE team has developed IEC materials (in the form of comic books) easily conveying advocacy messages promoting women empowerment and their meaningful participation and leadership in public spaces, as well as comic-strips focused on engaging men and boys. Posters that will supplement advocacy messaging will also be posted in high-traffic areas in INCREASE barangays where WLIE is piloted.

- 5) Organise networking activities between community women and their leaders, as well as with gender focal points at the municipal level. Periodic meet-ups and dialogue can increase women's social capital, access to information, and experience of lobbying and influencing power-holders.

## Gaps and areas for further research

---

The first version of the INCREASE project's Rapid Gender Analysis on Power was developed in July 2020. COVID-19 restrictions limited primary data collection at the time, postponing primary data collection. Between September-November 2020, RGA-POW validation sessions, along with WLIE's Reflect, Co-create, Act, and Learn sessions were integrated with ongoing INCREASE activities. While KIIs with other stakeholders – particularly power holders in DRR decision-making structures, follow-up interviews, as well as stakeholder mapping activities were scheduled, these were not realised due to the given timeline for field activities. As of November



2020, Mapanas and Palapag are still placed under varying community quarantine measures imposed by the government.

This version (November 2020) validates initial analyses made in July 2020 – integrating additional information relevant to the deepening of analyses, particularly on: areas of women’s participation (e.g. access, presence and influence in both formal and informal decision-making spaces, and how much influence they have in practice); unpacking relations between/among different groups of women, and understanding the relationship between women leaders – particularly those who are in the formal structure (e.g. elected vs. those who are not).

Following through the study’s list of gaps outlined in Annex 5, there are other areas of analysis that need to be pursued, and are recommended to be included in pending Reflect and Learn sessions, as well as further Rapid Gender Analyses in the area.

## Conclusions

---

### ***Women’s roles and power in communities and emergency response***

In some, but not all, barangays women exercise *power with* other women when they come together for economic purposes – this is a useful starting point as livelihood opportunities are a common key concern that form the basis for women’s organising, while maintaining the potential for the space to be maximised for women’s rights education or confidence-building training. In other areas, government-led community affairs provide resources and time for women to mobilise, although the municipal Women’s Day as an organising point is less sustainable than the relatively more enduring nature of livelihood associations.

By law, women have equal rights to participate in public decision-making, both formal and informal. Women in elected positions in barangays have equal voting powers as men but are often appointed to positions perceived to be ‘fit for women’. In times of emergency, elected women in barangay councils take on the role of leading community mobilisation, overseeing administrative work and information dissemination. Barangay health workers (majority of whom are female) have an indispensable role in needs assessments and relief distributions. To a certain degree, this enables them to shape or influence the design of emergency responses – and if this is something that they are able to do individually or collectively.

The barangay council engage women community members *with enough capacity, skills, and influence* as volunteer ‘extension workers’ of the BLGU during emergencies to undertake monitoring, administrative tasks and to mobilise other community members. Other community women focus their efforts towards preparedness and response actions in one’s household and sourcing aid provisions and resources through informal/peer networks, as well as looking after especially disadvantaged neighbours (i.e. those with disabilities, elderly women living alone, etc.).

### ***Underlying reasons for limited public voice and decision-making for different groups of women***

For women in Northern Samar, social and gender norms determine how much or how little they can exercise their rights, voice and actively engage in public decision-making.

Where it is deemed “natural” or “right” for men and husbands to have the final say on where women go or to what extent they can take part in spaces beyond the home or the field, women are in one way or another limited in where, when, and how they can participate. Where it is “natural” or expected for women to take on eight to ten hours of unpaid care and domestic work every day while also contributing to the household

income by taking on daily tasks in farming, fishing, and snack-selling, women are subtly and systematically disincentivised to attend community activities or trainings intended to improve their technical know-how or provide them with the confidence necessary to speak and speak up.

Women express aspirations to participate in DRR but question their ability to participate in meaningful ways: gender and other power dynamics hinder their ability to speak up or they lack confidence to participate actively because they do not have – or perceive themselves not to have – the necessary education, technical know-how and practical skills to contribute. Access to technology is another barrier to participation, especially for women from incredibly remote rural areas.

Where women are not aware of their right to participate, provided with opportunities to reflect together and with men on unequal gender roles and relations, and/or provided with opportunities to gain new knowledge and skills, DRR systems default to what is “natural”. In other words, women’s voice and priorities are not actively sought and included and their capabilities are not harnessed. Women are instead consigned to the tough work of making ends meet within their households and to implementing (but not designing) emergency response activities such as relief distribution on a voluntary basis within their communities.

These barriers to participation are even greater for women from particulate groups of women – such as women with disability, adolescents, elderly, who are indigent or less educated, and/or of a diverse gender identity. In times and crises, women who face intersecting forms of oppression are often listened to less and have less decision-making power in the design and delivery of humanitarian response.

Finally, while women are active in providing for the needs of their families and communities during crisis, they are less present and respected in formal decision-making positions and processes. Even for women who are in elected government roles in the barangay or are in a more advantaged socio-economic position, their public influence is perceived as being more limited than their male peers and, in the private sphere, they are still beholden to their male family members’ allowance or approval.

### ***Opportunities to increase women’s public participation and leadership***

Some community women have also been actively working with the barangay officials as volunteers planning for and responding to emergencies, and have built their capacity to conduct damage needs assessments, support the management of evacuation centres and attend to the needs of evacuees who are mostly women, children, and the elderly, and undertake documentation for the BLGU. Women’s knowledge and ability to lead in emergency response can be further supported through DRR training, including design of early action measures and contingency planning.

Community women also say they feel more confident lobbying for rights and providing feedback to power-holders when they are part of a collective, and they want to organise and, for some, to gain accreditation for their groups/organisations. These groups can be supported to increase their organisational capacity, accompanied through accreditation processes if they choose this, and equipped with the knowledge and skills to more confidently exercise their voice in public fora and to engage with decision-makers.

Elected women leaders and gender equality allies in the municipal and barangay offices – particularly the DRRM units – are key stakeholders with high interest and relatively high influence to drive positive changes in women’s limited public participation and leadership.

Activities to try to secure the support and buy-in of LGU decision-makers, such as municipal mayors and local barangay councils, should be prioritised – as some decision-makers may not be as supportive to activities

related to women's organising as an approach to increasing community women's increased participation in designing and delivering emergency responses. It is equally important to conduct specifically activities to work with men in communities to shift unequal gender and to mitigate potential backlash to women's organising and public activities. There are no women's rights organisations or other humanitarian agencies in the project areas. However, CARE's local CSO partner, LCDE, serves as an ally and driver of change – as LGUs and communities trust them (hence some influence in working with communities to increase women's participation and leadership) and they are committed to humanitarian standards and women's empowerment principles (hence relatively high interest in doing so).

Since activities in these project areas have been more geared towards immediate emergency responses, the WLIE pilot in itself is an opportunity to explore possibilities for, and finally focus on, specific ways to increase women's public participation and leadership.

### ***Potential resistors and risks***

Persons or groups currently in/with power (men/women comfortably in elected positions, male family members accustomed to women at home) are most likely to resist changes that disrupt gender norms in private and public spaces and increase the decision-making power and leadership of community women in humanitarian action. In Northern Samar, the way to gain their support is to deliberately engage them and to ensure they feel part of the process – to make allies of them, in the attempt to make women-led and women-focused DRR activities succeed. This is all the more crucial in the formal sphere, as M/BLGUs are often the first and sole touchpoints of CARE staff and partners in project implementation.

New or increased risks as a result of WLIE activities may arise in the private sphere and in public spaces. This is of particular concern because protection feedback mechanisms are often not functional or accessible to communities. Where activities may disrupt traditional household dynamics or increase GBV risk, the project team have incorporated this in their activity designs as a similar conclusion was drawn in the January 2020 baseline assessment, and GBV risk identification and mitigation mechanisms are being developed. Where WLIE activities may challenge public decision-making structures or traditional sensitivities, the project team have safety and security risk assessments and contingency plans in place to respond.

## References

---

- [1] Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population, Report No. 2 – Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics Northern Samar, June 2017  
Retrieved from: [https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/08\\_Nothern%20Samar.pdf](https://psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/08_Nothern%20Samar.pdf)
- [2] Philippine Statistics Authority, 2015 Census of Population, Report No. 2 – Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics Surigao del Sur, June 2017. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/16\\_Surigao%20del%20Sur.pdf](http://www.psa.gov.ph/sites/default/files/16_Surigao%20del%20Sur.pdf)
- [3] INCREASE Baseline Assessment Report. January 2020. Retrieved from:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1szpCg92FJCEZ4yY9o0MI6EARxgLEuovH/view?usp=sharing>
- [4] INCREASE Gender Analysis. January 2020. Retrieved from: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K-Pvs3EH9wxdt1lmOB06R0e4vdb0vRyX/view?usp=sharing>
- [5] Post-Distribution Monitoring Report, Typhoon Kammuri Response. February 2020. Retrieved from:  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K-Pvs3EH9wxdt1lmOB06R0e4vdb0vRyX/view?usp=sharing>
- [6] Post-Distribution Monitoring Report, Life-saving WASH and Shelter Response, Typhoon Kammuri.  
Retrieved from: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/10iBwU5SjyHKu\\_whmde\\_1Y7AF8Cc4oxQb/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/10iBwU5SjyHKu_whmde_1Y7AF8Cc4oxQb/view?usp=sharing)

## Annexes

---

*Documents are linked unless indicated otherwise.*

### Annex 1: Philippines Gender in Brief

- <http://bit.ly/PHLgenderinbrief>

### Annex 2: INCREASE project materials

- INCREASE Project Briefer
- INCREASE Baseline Assessment Report
- INCREASE Initial Gender Analysis

### Annex 3: Tools and resources used

- RGA-POW Stakeholder Mapping Tool
- RGA-POW KII for Women Leaders
- INCREASE Baseline Assessment FGD Tool - Men
- INCREASE Baseline Assessment FGD Tool - Women

### Annex 4: Gendered stakeholder maps

Maps of key stakeholders in Northern Samar and Surigao del Sur, drafted by CARE INCREASE project staff in a gendered stakeholder analysis exercise; to be validated with women in the community

### Annex 5: Checklist of gaps and areas for further research

A developing list of RGA-P gaps, suggested analysis areas, and staff reflection points for further research

## **CARE Philippines**

**Francelline Jimenez**

INCREASE Project Manager  
francelline.jimenez@care.org

**Winonna Fernando**

INCREASE-WLIE Focal Point  
winonna.fernando@care.org

**Kara Medina**

WLIE Philippines Coordinator  
kara.medina@care.org

**Celeste Barroso**

WLIE PH Project Officer  
celeste.barroso@care.org