Gender and Disaster Australia

Facilitator Guide

Session 2 - Drivers of gender-based violence: during and following disasters

Objectives

By the end of **Session 2** participants will be familiar with:

- The drivers of gender-based violence
- Why family, domestic and intimate partner violence increase during and following disasters

Time	Content	PowerPoint
15 min	**Title slide – SESSION 2 -** Drivers of gender-based violence *before, during and after disasters*	Slide 1
	Define gender-based violence Gender-based violence refers to harmful threats or acts perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their actual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity **Note** that while gender-based violence includes violence against women, men and LGBTIQA+ people **most gender-based violence is against women**. Use the quote from Our Watch to reiterate GAD Australia's expanded framework: • The forces that underpin gender-based violence against women overlap with those that underpin violence and discrimination against LGBTIQA+ people • Again, these forces relate to **rigid, binary and hierarchical constructions of sex, gender and sexuality**, or as Session 1 put it, dominant constructions of what a man and woman should be.	Slide 2 Slide 3

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	Note - Our Watch is one of Australia's lead organisations for the primary prevention of violence against women.	
	In this Session we will be focusing primarily on gender-based violence against women. Summarise the following slide • Most gender-based violence against women is committed by a current or ex male partner • This includes **domestic** and **family** violence, and **intimate partner** (IPV) violence • If we apply a gender lens, these types of violence might be better described as ***hetero*gendered**	Slide 4
	It is worth noting here the link between the **Climate Crisis** and gender-based violence. As disasters become more frequent and more severe due to our changing climate, a recent UN study revealed a staggering link: for every 1-degree Celsius increase in temperature, gender-based violence increases by 4.7%.	Slide 5
	Domestic and intimate partner violence in same-sex and gender-diverse relationships Rates are similar and, in some contexts, higher than in heterosexual relationships (quote the Australian data). Some violence and control tactics that are particular to LGBTIQA+ relationships and people. <u>Subjecting to heterosexist baiting and abuse</u> • Subject their partner to heterosexist abusive stereotypes • Dissuade their partner from reporting abuse or seeking support by telling them that LGBTIQA+ people's claims are never taken seriously. <u>Threats to out</u> • Where one or both partners are not out or not out to particular groups (Example biological family, work colleagues).	Slide 6

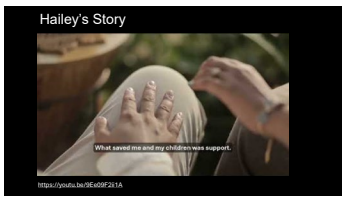
Time	Content	PowerPoint
	Shaming • Drawing on negative religious and cultural stereotypes of LGBTIQA+ people for partners who belong to conservative religious or cultural groups. • Belittling partners who have children by repeating heterosexist stereotypes of LGBTIQA+ people as fake or bad parents. • In an open relationship, berate a partner having too many other regular or casual sexual partners. Increasing social isolation • Restrict a partner's movements outside the domestic space by physical restraint or psychological abuse. • Restrict their partner's contact with LGBTIQA+ friends, support groups, and professional services often by limiting their access to social media. Withholding essentials • Withhold or control access to medications for a partner who is trans and gender diverse. **Note the term Lateral violence** which is harmful behaviour that occurs between people within the same community or peer group. In LGBTIQA+ contexts, it can include exclusion, identity policing, gossip, gatekeeping, discrimination or undermining behaviours directed towards other LGBTIQA+ people. Such behaviours damage psychological safety, belonging and inclusion. **Note the term 'minority stress'** which refers to the additional, chronic stress experienced by people who belong to socially marginalised groups, not because of who they are, but because of how society treats them. It is stress that: • Is socially produced, not individual and accumulates over time • Is layered on top of everyday life stressors and has measurable impacts on mental and physical health The terms comes from psychology and public health as both sectors used it to explain why **LGBTIQA+ people,** and other marginalised groups, show higher rates of:	

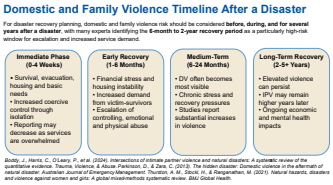
Time	Content	PowerPoint
	• Anxiety and depression • Substance use • Burnout • Poor physical health outcomes *Importantly, minority stress does not locate the problem in the person, it locates the problem in systems, norms and structures*. Further, when people grow up in oppressive social conditions, they may begin to absorb and reflect the messages of that system in how they think, feel and act. This does not mean that they choose oppression, are responsible for it, or that this type of oppression defines them, it means that systems shape behaviour, especially when those systems are persistent, normalised and unavoidable. For further information please see Engender Equality 'LGBTIQA+ Family Violence Practice Guidelines https://engenderequality.org.au/2024-lgbtiqa-family-violence-practice-guidelines/	
	Work through the following slide **The left-hand column** lists the different but often overlapping types of gender-based violence used against women by a current or ex-partner. **Note** a few examples from this list. **Note** these include individual tactics and we need to highlight the use of systems and structures which perpetuate and sustain abuse. Systemic and structural abuse against women occurs when institutions, policies, and power structures consistently disadvantage, silence, or expose women to harm, creating environments where inequality and violence are normalised rather than challenged. **Define coercive control**, because it has only recently been understood as a distinct type of gender-based violence. **Coercive control** refers to a pattern of behaviour used by an individual to dominate, manipulate, intimidate, and exert control over another person in an intimate relationship. Coercive control, unlike physical assault, is primarily	Slide 7

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	psychological and emotional in nature, AND often involves various tactics of intimidation, isolation, degradation, and manipulation. **The right-hand column** These different types of violence are used by abusive individuals as power and control tactics over their partners. In part, they are enabled and justified by the broader dominant structures and values outlined in **Session 1.** **The Power and Control Wheel** was developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minesota (MN). The wheel presents the many ways an abuser uses these different types of violence to: • Exert control over their partners • Keep their victim/partners in a relationship with them Abusers often believe that they have a right and are entitled to control their intimate partners.	
	Rates of domestic and family violence against women in Australia This slide presents recent Australian data on rates of domestic and family presented by the Champions for Change Program. The data demonstrate that: The overwhelming majority of victims are women That rates of gender-based domestic and family violence against women are near at epidemic proportions **Note**- *Champions of Change* is a coalition of CEOs and board-level leaders committed to achieving inclusive gender equality across Australian workplaces by 2030. Pull out 3 or 4 statistics (below is one possible list of 3) Of the 62 women murdered in 2020, 56 were domestic and family violence related Australian women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner.	Slide 8

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	Women with disability are almost twice as likely to experience violence by a cohabiting partner as women without disability **Important Note** that while men are more likely to be killed or assaulted by men unknown to them in a public space, women are more likely to be killed or assaulted by men known to them in their own home. *Champions of Change* do not include data on rates of domestic or family violence against **First Nations women.** However, in 2018 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported that **Aboriginal women were 32 times more likely to be hospitalised** due to family violence than non-Aboriginal women (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018) *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia*. Across every major indicator—victimisation, hospitalisation, homicide, and severity of harm—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience family violence at far higher rates than non-Indigenous women in Australia. aihw.gov.au https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-10-community-safety 67% of First Nations people who experienced physical harm in the previous 12 months reported the perpetrator was a family member or intimate partner. aihw.gov.au First Nations women are far more likely to experience repeated and severe violence than non-Indigenous women. theconversation.com In remote areas, First Nations women are up to 51 times more likely to be hospitalised for assault than non-Indigenous women living in the same regions. indigenoushpf.gov.au Nearly 3 in 4 (72%) assault-related hospitalisations of First Nations people are due to family violence. aihw.gov.au	Slide 9

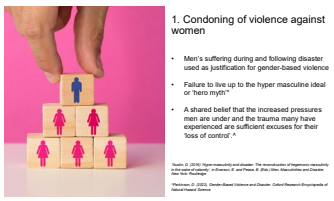
Time	Content	PowerPoint
10 min	**This slide is critical in how we frame how gender-based violence consistently increases in disaster contexts.** Make the point from the slide: Gender-based violence consistently increases during and after disasters – not because disasters *cause* abuse, but because **they intensify the conditions that enable and escalate it.** In this next section we will look at global research and unpack how disasters intensify the conditions that operate to harm women.	Slide 10
	These two slides outline **Australian Research and international Research.** Please work through at your pace and the pace of the group to explore the evidence. **Gender-based violence against women increases during and following disasters.** **Australian Research:** A 2022 review of 39 Australian studies found consistent spikes in domestic and family violence during and after disasters* A survey in early 2020 found that 60% of Victorian family violence practitioners reported an increase in violence against women since the first COVID lockdown and 50 % an increase in severity^ Victoria confirmed that domestic violence increased following the Black Saturday bushfires on February 7, 2009** **International Research** Following Hurricane Katrina in the US in late August 2005, there was a 98% increase in the prevalence of physical victimisation of women, from 4.2% to 8.3%^^ • The third slide presents data showing that rates of gender-based violence remain high in the medium to long term, following disasters. Following Canterbury's earthquakes and aftershocks (2010, 2011) there was an increase in the numbers and severity of reported family violence incidents (immediate and longer-term).*	Slide 11 Slide 12

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	Following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, women residing in the most devastated area had a higher probability of intimate partner violence, both physical and sexual, one to two years after the earthquake than women residing in less affected areas.^ Since 2011, sexual assault reports in Australia have risen every year and since 2017 family violence incident reports have been steadily rising. In 2024, the Australian government acknowledged a national crisis of violence against women, prompting emergency meetings to strengthen prevention. This final slide in the sequence is important to note because it **raises the critical evidence that how we provide services can have a serious impact on violence against women.** We explore this further towards the end of the session.	Slide 13 Slide 14
30 min	**Hailey's Story - 3.30min** **The following video includes content relating to lived experiences of violence, abuse, trauma, and in the context of disasters. This material may be activating for some participants. Please engage with the content at a pace that feels safe for you. Feel free to take a break, leave the room temporarily, or access support if needed.** Group discussion prompt questions: • How might a disaster affect the safety options available to someone experiencing DFV? • What additional barriers could a victim-survivor face when trying to leave an abusive partner during a disaster? • How might emergency responders unknowingly miss signs of DFV during a disaster response?	Slide 15 

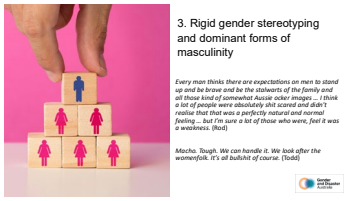
Time	Content	PowerPoint
	• What indicators might suggest that someone is experiencing coercive control or abuse?	
	Domestic and Family violence Timeline After Disaster Provide an overview of the timeline. For disaster recovery planning, domestic and family violence risk should be considered before, during, and for several years after a disaster, with many experts identifying the 6-month to 2-year recovery period as a particularly high-risk window for escalation and increased service demand.	Slide 16 
	Drivers of violence against women **Introduce this slide** - According to *OurWatch*, one of Australia's leading gender-based violence prevention organisations, there are **four gendered drivers** of violence against women: • Condoning of violence against women. • Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public and private life • Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity. • Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control. *OurWatch* asserts that these four drivers are *gendered* because they reflect the unequal power relations between men and women and how these are legitimated and reproduced within: • Institutions and financial and social structures • Dominant social norms, values and practices • Familial and intimate relationships **Note** that the drivers of gender-based violence also contribute to LGBTIQA+ family, domestic and intimate partner violence.	Slide 17

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	Note – As *OurWatch* notes, while the gendered drivers of violence arise from the broader social context of gender inequality, what we referred to in **Session 1** as **dominant constructions**, they also intersect with other forms of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage. This makes an intersectional approach to addressing and preventing gender-based violence essential. **Reinforcing Factors** are conditions that **do not cause violence on their own**, but increase the likelihood, frequency or severity of violence against women when gender inequality is already present. They sit alongside the gendered drivers of violence and help explain why violence is more common or more severe in some contexts than others. Drivers create the conditions for violence. Reinforcing factors make violence worse. **Note:** In our society the drivers and reinforcing factors are always present.	Slide 18
	This slide looks at the **post disaster exacerbating conditions.** Now let's look at this is the context of disasters and post disaster **exacerbating conditions** before we unpack what the drivers mean in disaster. <u>Changes in employment can:</u> - Challenge a man's identity and purpose as provider and head of the family - Fuel resentment of a female partner who is employed For emergency workers and volunteers **a fear** that displaying emotion or seeking professional support following a disaster could: • Disrupt the macho culture of their organisation • Place them under suspicion ('Not man enough') • Cost them work ('He's not up to the job')	Slide 19

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	<u>Grief, loss and trauma</u> The pressure and fear that many men experience in failing to live up to hypermasculine ideals under disaster conditions can lead to: • Suppressing or bottling up emotions • An inability or unwillingness to discuss their feelings of grief and loss (loss of property, friends, or colleagues) • Triggering memories of past trauma • An unwillingness to seek professional help to deal with the effects of disaster-related trauma <u>Alcohol and drug abuse</u> Increased alcohol and drug use can be used to: • Deal with the pain and psychological impacts of disasters • Avoid addressing disaster related pain and trauma and masking behaviours that could be interpreted as unmanly • Excuse anti-social and violent behaviours, which, though damaging, are consistent with dominant macho, masculine stereotypes All reinforcing factors interact with the drivers of gender-based violence. These interactions carry increased risk of men's violence against their female partners during and often long after a disaster. **Conclude** by noting that: • The pressures to conform to gender stereotypes ramp up during and following disasters • Not all men have the same access to authority and position as others (E.g., male entitlement and expectations vary according to race, ethnicity, ability, class, age)	

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	This sequence looks at the impacts of disasters on the drivers of gender-based violence against women **Open** this section by reminding participants that under disaster conditions existing gender inequalities increase including: • A decrease in women's economic independence • Highly polarised, dominant gender stereotypes are exacerbated. This has disaster-specific impacts on the drivers of gender-based violence. 1. **Condoning violence against women -** During and following disasters, violence is more likely to be minimised, excused or justified through narratives of stress, trauma, loss or male suffering. This reduces accountability and increases tolerance of abuse. **Group discussion**	Slide 20 
	2 Men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence in public and private life – 'Disasters often reinforce gendered expectations that position men as protectors and property defenders, and women as caregivers and risk managers. These expectations can shape household decision-making, evacuation choices, perceptions of leadership, and exposure to harm.' Parkinson, D., Pfitzner, N., Williamson, T., & Larkin, M. (2024). *Men, masculinities and disasters: A commentary. Australian Journal of Emergency Management, 39*(4). Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience Disasters often concentrate, increase dependency, and reduce women's autonomy, particularly decision-making power through displacement, loss of income, disrupted services and housing insecurity. Example - During the pandemic many male leaders*	Slide 21

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	• Equated the pandemic with more visible, dramatic types of disasters including fire, flood and war • Used this as a 'disaster stage' on which to perform as hypermasculine, inflated versions of their everyday selves • Drew on, as they reinforced the belief that disasters and disaster decision-making are 'men's business' ***Cox, Patrick (April 28, 2020) 'Fires, orchestras, parachutes. Some other ways to describe coronavirus — besides war'. The World*** **Note** that while we are using data from the COVID-19 pandemic here, the findings are applicable to other types of disasters. <u>Decision making</u> • Many male leaders were invested in characterizing the pandemic in dramatic terms that allowed them to portray themselves as hypermasculine, strong and in control • This drew on and confirmed gender stereotypes that assumed that disasters and their management are 'men's business' • Many working women in heterosexual, nuclear families took up most of the increased familial and domestic responsibilities • Many of these women went part-time, stepped away from decision making roles and withdrew from or decided not to run for public office (E.g. local council) **You may want to also note: Limits to women's independence in public and private life.** In the UK women were more likely than men to have lost of given up their jobs during the pandemic. In Australia migrant women were disproportionately affected by the pandemic In Australia federal subsidies	

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	• Favoured male-dominated industries such as trade and construction • Women were overrepresented in those industries that did not receive similar levels of financial support, such as retail, the creative arts, entertainment, and human services.	
	3. **Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity -** During and following disasters there is increased pressure on men and women to conform to rigid gender roles, including expectations of male control and stoicism, and women's increased responsibility for caring. During and following disasters there is increased pressure on men and women to conform to highly **polarised**, dominant gender stereotypes.* • Pressure on men to step-up and be a hypermasculine version of their everyday selves.^ • Pressure on women to step-down and take increased responsibility for familial, domestic and caring duties** ^*Rushton, A., Phibbs, S., Kenney, C. and Anderson, C. (2020) 'The gendered body politic in disaster policy and practice', International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 47, 101648* ***Leonard, W., Parkinson, D. and Weiss, C.O. (October 2020) Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Victoria's family violence primary prevention workforce. Respect Victoria: Melbourne* Slide Quotes reference: Parkinson, D., & Zara, C. (2013). *Men on Black Saturday: Risks and Opportunities for Change* (Volumes 1 & 2). Women's Health Goulburn North East. **How do disaster reinforce rigid gender roles?** • Men are expected to be hypermasculine versions of their everyday selves. • Take control and demonstrate decisive leadership.	Slide 22 

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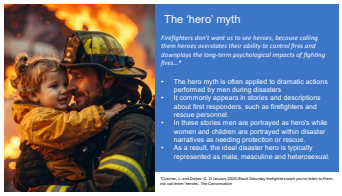
	• Protect vulnerable people including women and children in dominant disaster and recovery discourse. Women are expected to take increased responsibility for familial, domestic and caring duties: • For partners, children and relatives and pets • Put the needs of those in their care above their own needs, both personal and professional • Support men in their professional and leadership roles This slide presents **'Disaster heroism'/the hero myth** in the context of bushfires as an extreme example of the polarisation or rigid, binary gender stereotypes • The hero myth is often applied to dramatic actions performed by men during disasters • It commonly appears in stories and descriptions about first responders, such as firefighters and rescue personnel. • The hero myth relies on a contrast between **heroic, active masculine** behaviours and **helpful**, **passive feminine** behaviours. • In these stories men are portrayed as hero's while women and children are portrayed within disaster narratives as needing protection or rescue. • As a result, the ideal disaster hero is typically represented as male, masculine and heterosexual. *Parkinson, D., Leonard, W. and O'Malley, S. (2024) 'Hero Label: Distortion and Propaganda' in Allison, S.T., Beggan, J.K and Goethals, G.R. (eds) Encyclopedia of Heroism Studies, Springer, Cham, pp. 794-800* **Note** – Polarisation involves defining one sex/gender in opposition to another (what we mean here by pushing the binary logic of dominant gender stereotypes to the extreme). Example to be a hero is to exhibit NONE of the traits associated with being a woman or being feminine. The hero myth and heroic masculinity are built on a denial or rejection of anything seen as feminine or unmanly.	Slide 23 

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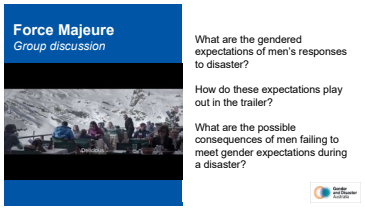
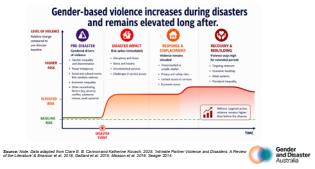
	4. Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control - Disaster contexts can intensify male-dominated institutional cultures, reward hyper-masculine behaviour, and normalise aggression, exclusion and control, particularly within emergency settings. **How do disaster amplify dominance and exclusion in emergency institutions?** This slide highlights how the disaster sector and emergency management: • Are [still] dominated by macho, heteropatriarchal work cultures, values and practices • Promote masculine forms of leadership and professional association • Devalue and marginalise women and those who are feminised (Example women and men, including sexualised stereotypes of gay men)	Slide 24
20 min	**Force Majeure** Short video clip and group discussion <u>Aims</u> This group exercise encourages participants to consider: • What are the gendered expectations of men and women in responding to disasters? • How do these gendered expectations play out in the avalanche clip? • What are the possible consequences of failing to meet gender expectations for men and women? <u>Group Discussion - Activity instructions</u> • Play the short video of the avalanche scene from *Force Majeure* • Warn participants that there is a white-out scene at the height of the avalanche which may trigger	Slide 25 

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	memories of thick smoke and dust storms during past disasters • **Ask** participants to focus on the gendered responses and behaviours displayed by the central family in the video <u>Facilitated discussion</u> (**8 mins**) **Ask** each nominated spokesperson to report on their group's discussion. Draw out some key themes: • What gendered behaviours are displayed in the clip? • Who is the voice of authority? • How do the behaviours of each member of the family conform to OR fail to conform to dominant gender expectations? • What are the possible consequences of failing to conform to gender stereotypes and expectations under disaster conditions?	
	The conceptual model illustrates the well-documented pattern in which levels of domestic and gender-based violence rise sharply after a disaster and remain elevated over an extended period. In other words, this graph shows whilst communities operate 'normally' at a baseline level of gender-based violence, after disaster evidence shows that communities do not return to the 'baseline' level but **remain elevated.** ***Source:*** *Note. Data adapted from Clare E. B. Cannon and Katherine Kovach, 2025. 'Intimate Partner Violence and Disasters: A Review of the Literature' & Enarson et al. 2018; Gaillard et al. 2015; Masson et al. 2016; Seager 2014.* *Parkinson, D. (2009). Investigating the increase in domestic violence post-disaster: Black Saturday bushfires. Journal of Interpersonal Violence.*	Slide 26 

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	Respect Victoria (2025). Understanding the link between climate disasters and gendered violence. *Domestic Violence NSW (2022). Domestic and family violence and disaster management in NSW – Flood Inquiry submission.*	
	Small Group Activity - Divide into two groups Ask one group to answer the question: What risks are created by the disaster? Ask the other group to answer the question: What risks are created by the response? Bring groups together to feedback their responses.	Slide 27
	Summary – this session can be difficult to hear but lets think about what actions you can take and what mitigation strategies emergency services can consider: • **Recognise family and gender-based violence** as a predictable disaster risk, not a secondary issue. • **Embed specialist domestic violence services** in evacuation centres and recovery hubs, planning and recovery meetings and spaces. • **Design safer evacuation** and temporary accommodation with privacy, security, and clear reporting pathways. • **Train emergency personnel** in trauma-informed and gender-aware responses and engage with GAD Australia services. • **Maintain access to policing**, legal protections, housing, and financial support during recovery. • **Plan for long-term recovery**: violence risk remains elevated long after the emergency ends.	Slide 28

Time	Content	PowerPoint
	Break	Slide 29