

The Role Of Libu Perempuan In Addressing Violence Against Women In The Petobo Temporary Shelter

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the role of the non-governmental organization (NGO) Libu Perempuan in addressing cases of violence against women in the Petobo Temporary Shelter (Huntara), Palu City, following the natural disaster of September 28, 2018. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings show that Libu Perempuan plays a vital role as an agent of social change and facilitator through the establishment of the Women's Friendly Space (RRP) and the Women's and Children's Protection Task Force (Satgas PPA). Libu Perempuan provides integrated services, including emotional assistance, psychological counseling, safe shelter provision, economic empowerment training (livelihood), and legal assistance. During the post-disaster period from 2018 to 2019, numerous cases of gender-based violence were recorded at the Petobo Temporary Shelter, with domestic violence accounting for 44 cases and child marriage accounting for 41 cases as the most prevalent cases. This study concludes that addressing gender-based violence in post-disaster settings requires a holistic approach and close cross-sectoral coordination among NGOs, local governments, and local communities to ensure the safety and recovery of survivors.

Keywords: Violence against women; Libu Perempuan; natural disaster; Petobo Temporary Shelter; Women's Friendly Space

1. Introduction

Indonesia is one of the countries most exposed to natural hazards due to its location along active tectonic zones and its vulnerability to earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, floods, and other hazards. The disaster that struck Central Sulawesi on September 28, 2018, produced particularly severe social consequences. A magnitude 7.5 earthquake was followed by a tsunami and liquefaction, causing extensive destruction across Palu, Sigi, and Donggala. Petobo, one of the areas severely affected by liquefaction, experienced massive physical destruction and population displacement. For affected communities, therefore, the disaster was not merely an environmental event but also a profound disruption of housing, livelihoods, family life, community networks, and everyday forms of social protection.

Such disruptions are especially important from a gender perspective. Disaster impacts are not socially neutral because vulnerability is shaped by pre-existing inequalities, access to resources, social roles, and institutional forms of protection. A global mixed-methods systematic review by Thurston, Stöckl, and Ranganathan (2021) found evidence linking disaster exposure with increased violence against women and girls (VAWG). Their synthesis identifies several pathways through which this relationship can occur, including increased post-disaster stressors, environments that enable violence,

and the exacerbation of underlying drivers of gender-based violence. Research following natural disasters in Nepal similarly demonstrates the importance of examining the intersection between displacement, gender, and violence rather than treating reconstruction simply as a question of restoring physical infrastructure (Bradley et al. 2023).

Displacement can intensify these vulnerabilities by reorganizing everyday social and spatial arrangements. Families that previously lived in private households may suddenly have to share temporary spaces, sanitation facilities, and other resources with larger displaced populations. Under such conditions, privacy, security, and established community protection mechanisms can be weakened. Evidence from disaster-prone communities in Bangladesh shows that women experienced concerns related to abuse in shelters, inadequate privacy, hygiene problems, toilet facilities, and the absence of secure gender-segregated living arrangements (Fatema et al. 2023). These findings suggest that temporary shelters should not be understood merely as neutral sites of humanitarian accommodation. Their physical design and social organization may shape women's experiences of security, privacy, health, and exposure to violence.

Post-disaster vulnerability is also connected to changes in household and community conditions. Loss of livelihoods, displacement, diminished privacy, disrupted social support, and economic insecurity can intersect with gender inequalities that existed before a disaster. The systematic review conducted by Thurston, Stöckl, and Ranganathan (2021) is particularly important in this regard because it cautions against interpreting disasters themselves as a singular cause of violence. Instead, disasters can intensify existing stressors and structural drivers while simultaneously creating environments in which violence becomes more difficult to prevent or address. This perspective moves the analysis beyond an understanding of women simply as inherently vulnerable disaster victims. It directs attention to the broader social and institutional conditions through which vulnerability is produced and reproduced.

This framework is highly relevant to the post-disaster conditions observed at the Petobo Temporary Shelter. Records used in the present study show that Libu Perempuan handled 130 cases between October 2018 and October 2019. Domestic violence constituted the largest category, with 44 cases, followed by 41 cases of child marriage. The records also included rape, sexual harassment and attempted rape, peeping in evacuation toilets, and cases categorized as reproductive health problems and depression. Rather than representing isolated individual incidents, the diversity of these cases indicates a wider configuration of insecurity confronting women and girls during displacement.

Child marriage represents another important dimension of vulnerability associated with crisis and displacement. Comparative evidence on displaced populations indicates that child marriage needs to be understood in relation to broader legal, social, and economic conditions rather than as an isolated family decision. More recent research on

forced displacement has similarly highlighted how economic precarity and gender norms constrain decisions surrounding child marriage and argues that responses must include educational opportunities and economic security alongside efforts to transform gender norms. Although these contexts differ from Petobo, they demonstrate the analytical importance of examining child marriage within the wider social conditions produced by displacement.

These vulnerabilities highlight the importance of gender-responsive protection mechanisms during humanitarian emergencies. One increasingly important intervention in humanitarian settings is the establishment of Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS). A systematic review by Stark et al. (2022) shows that safe-space interventions have been widely employed to address the needs of women and girls in humanitarian contexts. The review found moderate improvements in psychosocial well-being, social support, and attitudes toward rites of passage in several evaluations, while also emphasizing the limited amount of rigorous evidence available regarding their overall effectiveness. Rather than treating safe spaces solely as physical locations, contemporary humanitarian practice therefore positions them within wider processes of protection, psychosocial support, access to services, social networking, and women's empowerment.

The Indonesian context provides an especially relevant institutional framework for understanding such interventions. UNFPA Indonesia describes Ruang Ramah Perempuan (Women Friendly Spaces) as spaces in which women and girls can rebuild social networks, obtain social support and relevant skills, access non-stigmatizing multisectoral gender-based violence services, and obtain information concerning women's rights and reproductive health. The framework also recognizes Women Friendly Spaces as part of community-based mechanisms for responding to GBV in emergency situations. Importantly for the present case, the Indonesian guidance developed by UNFPA in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection drew on lessons from humanitarian interventions in Central Sulawesi in 2018–2019.

However, the existence of formal frameworks does not in itself explain how locally embedded organizations translate such mechanisms into everyday practices of protection. This issue is particularly significant in Petobo. Following the September 2018 disaster, Libu Perempuan, in collaboration with UNFPA, initially established a Women's Friendly Tent (Tenda Ramah Perempuan/TRP), which subsequently developed into the Women's Friendly Space (Ruang Ramah Perempuan/RRP) after survivors were relocated to temporary shelter. Its activities extended beyond receiving reports of violence to include psychosocial assistance, trauma-related support, livelihood and life-skills activities, economic empowerment, and community education.

The case also needs to be located within the evolving literature on gender-responsive recovery in Palu. Recent research examining gender mainstreaming in post-disaster recovery policy in Palu reports continuing challenges related to gender-disaggregated data, gender-neutral policy implementation, institutional understanding of gender

mainstreaming, women's participation, and wider sociocultural conditions. Such evidence underlines the importance of examining actors operating between formal institutions and disaster-affected communities.

Against this background, an important empirical gap remains in understanding how a locally embedded women's NGO transforms a humanitarian safe-space intervention into a community-based mechanism for preventing, identifying, referring, and responding to gender-based violence within a post-disaster temporary settlement. Existing international scholarship has established the relationship between disaster conditions and gendered vulnerability, while research on safe spaces has examined their potential contribution in humanitarian settings. What remains less visible, particularly in the Central Sulawesi context, is the organizational and community-level process through which protection, referral, psychosocial recovery, economic empowerment, and local participation are connected in practice.

Therefore, this study examines the role of Libu Perempuan in preventing and responding to violence against women in the Petobo Temporary Shelter in Palu, Central Sulawesi. Specifically, it analyzes the functions of the Women's Friendly Space, the mechanisms through which cases of violence were identified and referred, and the forms of collaboration developed among community actors, civil society organizations, and formal service providers. By doing so, the study seeks to contribute to the literature on gender-responsive disaster recovery by demonstrating how community-based protection mechanisms operate within the social realities of post-disaster displacement.

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to develop an in-depth understanding of the practices and social processes through which gender-based violence was addressed in a post-disaster temporary settlement. A qualitative design was considered appropriate because the study sought to examine not merely the occurrence of violence, but also the roles of relevant actors, institutional responses, case-handling mechanisms, and experiences surrounding women's protection in a disaster-affected community. The study was conducted at the Petobo Temporary Shelter (Huntara) in Palu City, Central Sulawesi, one of the temporary residential settings established following the September 2018 disaster.

Methodological transparency is particularly important in interview-based qualitative studies. Tong, Sainsbury, and Craig (2007), through the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ), identify participant selection, research setting, data-collection procedures, derivation of themes, and presentation of supporting quotations as important elements in reporting qualitative research. COREQ organizes qualitative reporting into three broad domains: the research team and reflexivity, study design, and data analysis and reporting. Accordingly, the present study describes the

selection of informants, sources of data, data-collection techniques, analytical procedures, and strategies used to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in, experience with, or knowledge of women's protection and violence-response mechanisms in the Petobo Temporary Shelter. Purposive selection enabled the study to capture perspectives from actors occupying different positions within the post-disaster protection system rather than treating the phenomenon exclusively from a single institutional standpoint.

A total of six informants participated in the study. They represented both formal and community-based actors involved in protection and assistance: Dewi Rana, Director of Libu Perempuan and a social worker; Eddy Suswanto, Secretary of the Petobo Village Head's Office; Nurmi, Coordinator of the Women's Friendly Space at the Petobo Temporary Shelter; Iwan Herawan, Coordinator of the Women's and Children's Protection Task Force in Petobo; Nur Ulan Sari, a survivor of violence and a member of Community-Based Integrated Child Protection (PATBM); and a social volunteer involved in field assistance. These categories are reported in the original manuscript.

The inclusion of participants occupying different positions was important for examining the phenomenon at several interconnected levels: NGO intervention, community-based protection, village-level institutional involvement, field assistance, and the experience of a survivor. This diversity of perspectives supported comparison across sources when interpreting how violence was identified, referred, and addressed. Data were generated from three complementary sources: in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentary materials. In-depth interviews were guided by a structured interview guide focusing on the history and development of Libu Perempuan's intervention, the operation of the Women's Friendly Space (Ruang Ramah Perempuan/RRP), procedures for identifying and handling cases, inter-institutional referral processes, and survivors' responses to the assistance provided. The use of interviews was intended to capture the perspectives and practical knowledge of actors directly involved in post-disaster women's protection.

Participant observation complemented the interview material by enabling direct observation of daily activities, counseling-related services, and social interactions within the Women's Friendly Space. Documentary sources were also examined, particularly Libu Perempuan's records of cases handled during 2018–2019, field documentation, and official permission documents. These three sources of evidence were already identified in the original research design. Combining interview, observational, and documentary material also provided a basis for examining consistencies and differences among sources. Morgan (2024) notes that triangulation can contribute to the credibility, rigor, and trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry, while also emphasizing the importance of clearly identifying how triangulation is employed. In the present study, triangulation was therefore used to compare information derived from actors occupying different

institutional and community positions and to examine interview accounts alongside observational and documentary evidence.

Data analysis was conducted inductively and continuously throughout the research process. The material obtained from interviews, observations, and documents was reduced and organized according to recurring issues relevant to the research objectives. The analysis focused particularly on patterns concerning the functions of the Women's Friendly Space, mechanisms for handling and referring cases of violence, forms of institutional coordination, categories of violence documented during displacement, and interventions directed toward survivor protection and recovery.

The analytical process moved from organization of the empirical material toward identification and interpretation of recurring patterns across the data. This approach allowed the findings to be developed from the empirical material rather than imposing categories unrelated to participants' accounts and field observations. Contemporary discussions of thematic analysis similarly emphasize the importance of maintaining methodological coherence between the approach to analysis, coding practices, theme development, and interpretation. Braun and Clarke (2021), for example, caution that thematic analysis encompasses different methodological orientations and that quality depends on coherence between theoretical assumptions and analytical practice rather than the mechanical application of generic coding procedures.

The presentation of findings consequently combines the institutional practices identified in the data with evidence concerning recorded cases of violence and the experiences of actors involved in women's protection. Where appropriate, participants' accounts can be presented as supporting quotations so that the connection between empirical evidence and analytical interpretation remains visible. Supporting quotations and transparent explanation of theme development are among the reporting elements emphasized by COREQ for interview-based qualitative research.

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through data-source and methodological triangulation. Information obtained from interviews was considered alongside field observations and documentary evidence, including records of cases handled by Libu Perempuan. Perspectives from NGO personnel were also considered alongside those of village-government actors, community protection actors, volunteers, and a survivor. This enabled the analysis to consider the protection mechanism from several positions within the local response system. Triangulation should not be understood simply as a procedural requirement. Morgan (2024) argues that different forms of triangulation need to be clearly distinguished and explains their role in enhancing rigor, credibility, and trustworthiness in qualitative studies. In this study, triangulation was particularly useful for examining whether accounts of institutional roles and case-handling practices were supported by evidence generated through different data sources.

Research concerning violence against women requires particular ethical sensitivity because violence constitutes a sensitive research topic and raises methodological as well as ethical challenges that differ from many other forms of social inquiry. Fraga (2016) specifically identifies violence research as a sensitive field requiring careful attention to methodological and ethical issues. This consideration becomes particularly significant when research involves survivors experiencing intersecting conditions of violence, trauma, and displacement.

Recent methodological literature concerning qualitative research with gender-based violence survivors in displaced communities similarly emphasizes participants' safety, dignity, agency, cultural sensitivity, and the importance of minimizing risks of re-traumatization. These principles provide an appropriate ethical framework for interpreting the sensitive qualitative material examined in the present study. Importantly, however, the available research documentation does not specify the formal ethical-clearance number, consent procedure, anonymization procedure, or interview-recording arrangements. These details should therefore be added to the final manuscript only if they are documented in the original research records.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 From Emergency Response to a Women's Friendly Space

Following the disaster of September 28, 2018, Libu Perempuan, in collaboration with UNFPA, established a Women's Friendly Tent (Tenda Ramah Perempuan, TRP) as an initial response to the needs of women affected by the disaster. When survivors were subsequently relocated to the Petobo Temporary Shelter (Huntara), this intervention developed into the Women's Friendly Space (Ruang Ramah Perempuan, RRP). The transition from a temporary tent to a dedicated friendly space marked an important development in the provision of protection services because the RRP became a specific location where women and girls could report violence, obtain assistance, and access further support.

The field data identified four interconnected functions of the RRP. First, it operated as a safe space and complaint point for women experiencing or at risk of violence. Women could report problems and obtain initial assistance within a setting specifically oriented toward their protection. Second, the RRP provided emotional and psychosocial assistance, including activities intended to support psychological recovery. Third, the intervention incorporated livelihood, life-skills, and economic empowerment activities for eligible women. Fourth, preventive activities were extended beyond individual survivors through community campaigns and the Desa/Kampung Siaga program, which involved customary, religious, health, and Women's and Children's Protection Task Force (Satgas PPA) actors.

These findings demonstrate that the RRP combined response, recovery, empowerment, and prevention rather than functioning solely as an emergency reporting

facility. This distinction is important because evidence from humanitarian settings indicates that Women and Girls Safe Spaces have been implemented as mechanisms to respond to the needs of women and girls affected by crisis. A systematic review by Stark et al. (2022) identified seven evaluations of such programs and found moderate improvements in psychosocial well-being, social support, and attitudes toward rites of passage in three evaluations, although the review also emphasized that rigorous quantitative evidence remains limited.

The Petobo case therefore provides empirical insight into how such a protective space operated within a specific post-disaster community. Rather than being confined to a physical facility, the RRP connected individual assistance with community-level interventions and women's recovery activities. This multidimensional function becomes especially relevant in disaster-affected settlements where protection problems intersect with loss of privacy, disrupted livelihoods, insecure living arrangements, and weakened everyday support systems. Research among disaster-affected women in Bangladesh, for example, documented concerns regarding privacy, shelter safety, inadequate hygiene and toilet facilities, and risks of abuse during displacement.

3.2 An Integrated Case-Handling and Referral Mechanism

The findings further reveal that reported cases were handled through a multi-stage referral process rather than through a single organizational intervention. The process began with an initial assessment conducted by RRP volunteers. At this stage, information concerning the survivor's identity, age, address, and chronology of the incident was collected. The case was subsequently discussed and classified through coordination between the Libu Perempuan team and social workers from the Social Affairs Office.

Cases requiring legal intervention were referred through coordination involving the Regional Office of Women's Empowerment, Child Protection, Population Control, and Family Planning (DP3A) and the Women's and Children's Protection Task Force of the Central Sulawesi Regional Police (Satgas PPA Polda Sulteng). Cases involving immediate safety concerns or serious sexual violence could be referred to the safe shelter operated by PKBI Central Sulawesi. Psychological recovery needs were referred to psychologists from Yayasan Pulih.

The empirical structure of the mechanism can therefore be summarized as:

Reporting → Initial assessment → Case classification → Referral → Specialized services → Recovery support

Importantly, the mechanism connected community-based identification with more specialized services. The RRP operated at the point closest to women in the temporary settlement, while cases requiring additional intervention could be connected to legal, psychological, social, or shelter-based services. Thus, the institutional response observed in Petobo was characterized by functional differentiation combined with cross-institutional referral.

Another important development was the establishment and training of a 12-member Women's and Children's Protection Task Force (Satgas PPA) in Petobo, facilitated by Libu

Perempuan and DP3A. Its establishment extended protection beyond direct service provision by Libu Perempuan and introduced a community-level component into the response mechanism.

Recent evidence from Central Sulawesi supports the broader relevance of these protection arrangements. A 2026 qualitative study of post-earthquake GBV in Donggala identified sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence and specifically recommended gender-sensitive disaster management, safe spaces, and strengthened legal protection mechanisms. The Petobo findings add a complementary perspective by showing empirically how a local NGO, a women's safe space, community protection actors, and formal service providers were connected within an operational referral network.

3.3 Patterns of Violence and Vulnerability in the Petobo Temporary Shelter

Records from the Libu Perempuan Office document 130 cases across seven recorded categories between October 2018 and October 2019. Domestic violence constituted the largest category with 44 cases (33.8%), closely followed by child marriage with 41 cases (31.5%). Reproductive health problems and depression accounted for 30 cases (23.1%). The remaining records consisted of sexual harassment and attempted rape (six cases), rape (four cases), peeping in evacuation toilets (four cases), and violence by authorities (one case). The raw case counts and reporting period come directly from the article's primary-data table.

Table 1. Cases Handled by Libu Perempuan

Type of case	Number	Percentage*
Domestic violence	44	33.8%
Child marriage	41	31.5%
Reproductive health problems & depression	30	23.1%
Sexual harassment & attempted rape	6	4.6%
Rape	4	3.1%
Peeping in evacuation toilets	4	3.1%
Violence by authorities	1	0.8%
Total	130	100%

*Percentages are calculated from the 130 recorded cases reported in the original dataset. Raw figures: Primary Data, Libu Perempuan Office (2019).

The distribution indicates that women's protection needs in the Petobo Temporary Shelter cannot be reduced to a single category of violence. Domestic violence and child marriage together accounted for 85 of the 130 recorded cases (65.4%), while the remaining records point to sexual violence, privacy and sanitation-related insecurity, reproductive-health concerns, and psychological problems.

Domestic violence constituted the largest category recorded by Libu Perempuan. The original data associate these cases with difficult family circumstances during

displacement, including loss of housing and livelihoods, psychological pressure, and limited privacy in temporary accommodation. The prominence of domestic violence in the Petobo records is consistent with the importance placed on intimate partner violence in international post-disaster research. A 2024 systematic review examining 27 quantitative studies found an association between IPV and natural disasters across different disaster types and countries. Importantly, however, the authors state that available evidence does not establish whether disasters create new cases of IPV or exacerbate existing violence.

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Libu Perempuan's role in the Petobo Temporary Shelter extended beyond responding to individual cases of violence. Through the Women's Friendly Space (RRP) and the Women's and Children's Protection Task Force (Satgas PPA), the organization developed a community-based protection mechanism that connected case identification and reporting with psychosocial support, referral to specialized services, livelihood activities, and preventive interventions. The referral mechanism linked community-level assistance with legal, psychological, social, and safe-shelter services, showing the importance of coordination between locally embedded civil society organizations, community actors, and formal service providers in post-disaster settings.

The pattern of cases recorded in Petobo further demonstrates that post-disaster protection cannot be separated from the wider social conditions of displacement. Of the 130 cases documented between October 2018 and October 2019, domestic violence and child marriage together accounted for 85 cases, while other records included sexual violence, reproductive-health and psychological problems, and privacy-related insecurity. These findings indicate that women's vulnerability in temporary settlements is multidimensional and therefore requires responses that integrate immediate protection with psychosocial recovery, economic empowerment, and community-based prevention.

The Petobo experience therefore suggests that gender-responsive disaster recovery should treat women's protection as an integral component of recovery rather than as a supplementary emergency service. Post-disaster planning should strengthen accessible community-based protection and referral mechanisms while ensuring safer living environments and sustained institutional support for psychosocial recovery, safe shelter, and women's economic empowerment. In this sense, the contribution of Libu Perempuan lies not only in assisting survivors but also in connecting humanitarian protection, formal services, and local community participation within a more integrated system of post-disaster recovery.

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