

Feminist Humanitarian System Building Block I:

# **Advancing Gender- Transformative Localization**



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# ABOUT THE FEMINIST HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM BUILDING BLOCKS

There is growing global recognition that meeting the needs of girls and women in humanitarian settings requires a fundamental shift in the humanitarian system. While there has been a rise in good commitments, targets, and guidance to better support girls and women in these contexts, gender-sensitive programs, policies, and investments are still the exception, rather than the norm, in humanitarian action. Current efforts to advance gender equality in humanitarian responses are still often piecemeal—targeting one sector or driven by a few teams within larger humanitarian organizations—and not truly mainstreamed in a comprehensive, cross-sectoral, or coordinated way. As a result, actors in the humanitarian system—including donors, leaders at humanitarian organizations, and on-the-ground practitioners—lack a shared understanding of what it means to put a feminist lens on all humanitarian action.

In response, several humanitarian actors have proposed the concept of a “feminist humanitarian system” as a solution for the fragmented approaches that currently exist to support girls and women in these contexts. By definition, a system-wide approach to feminist humanitarian action requires all stakeholders—regardless of their role, sector, or organization—to recognize and play an active part in challenging gender norms and imbalances of power through their work. Put simply, a feminist humanitarian system prioritizes the health, rights, and leadership of the most affected communities in everything it strives to achieve.



**The Feminist Humanitarian System Building Blocks is a Women Deliver-led effort that puts a feminist lens on humanitarian action and promotes the core actions needed to better support girls and women in emergencies by shifting the power dynamics that currently underpin the way aid is delivered.**

By breaking down the ambitious concept of a feminist humanitarian system into a set of tangible actions for girls and women that all humanitarian actors must prioritize (the building blocks), this effort can provide a blueprint of what is needed to drive change. Through these building blocks, we aim to provide a clear, coordinated pathway and the concrete actions necessary to achieve a feminist humanitarian system.

This action brief outlines the first building block, dedicated to a topic that must be a cornerstone of a feminist humanitarian system: gender-transformative localization.

**To get involved and stay updated on the release of future Feminist Humanitarian System Building Blocks, email [humanitarian@womendeliver.org](mailto:humanitarian@womendeliver.org).**

# INTRODUCTION

At its core, building a feminist humanitarian system requires shifting more funding, influence, and decision-making power to girls and women in crisis settings. Significantly scaling up international support for local women-focused civil society organizations (CSOs) must be central to this effort, given their vital contributions in communities affected by armed conflict, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

However, the global localization agenda—which seeks to maximize the role of local, national, and regional actors in humanitarian action—is not currently designed to enable women-focused CSOs to access the funding and opportunities they need to unlock their full power. As a result, there is a strong need and demand for gender-transformative localization: a deliberate effort to ensure women-focused CSOs have the power and resources to meet basic needs and fuel long-term gender-equality gains within their communities.



This building block draws on research, interviews with humanitarian experts, and the outcomes of three consultative meetings convened by Women Deliver (at the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the Implementing Best Practices Initiative’s Regional Meeting in Istanbul, and the Women Deliver 2019 Conference in Vancouver) to outline what is needed for gender-transformative localization. It builds on existing literature to highlight challenges, solutions, and recommendations tied to the following **five priorities for achieving gender-transformative localization**:

## 1. FUNDING:

More tailored, accessible, and sustainable funding opportunities designed for women-focused CSOs, which enable them to meet humanitarian needs in their communities and drive transformative gains in gender equality.

## 2. MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT:

More opportunities for women-focused CSOs to actively participate in and contribute to local, regional, and global decision-making forums that affect their work and lives.

## 3. COORDINATION:

Stronger collaboration between international actors and women-focused CSOs to prevent outsourcing or duplication of their efforts.

## 4. CAPACITY SHARING:

More strategic investments in capacity-strengthening and -sharing opportunities for women-focused CSOs, aligned with their learning priorities.

## 5. ACCOUNTABILITY:

A more concerted effort to ensure women-focused CSOs can provide feedback for programs designed for their communities.



This building block is organized in five sections. The first will define women-focused CSOs and the role that they play in humanitarian action. The second section details the origins of gender-transformative localization and the current status of this agenda. The third section highlights the challenges to this gender-transformative localization, as identified by key informants interviewed and participants at Women Deliver-convened consultations in 2019. A number of humanitarian actors have identified and are implementing encouraging solutions to these challenges, which are shared in the fourth section. The final section lists advocacy recommendations for donors, international organizations, and women-focused CSOs to power progress toward gender-transformative localization.



## SECTION I: What are Women-Focused CSOs?

We define women-focused CSOs as in-country organizations that are national, sub-national, or community based, and that prioritize gender equality and the needs of girls and women as a core element of their work.

These organizations may take different forms, including as informal groups or networks that mobilize around specific needs, or formal organizations that are established with longer-term goals.<sup>1</sup> While some women-focused CSOs organize to respond specifically to humanitarian emergencies, most others have a broader scope and adapt their operations to meet the rising needs of communities due to sudden crises.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, women-focused CSOs can play diverse roles spanning humanitarian preparedness, response, and recovery, and often adopt new responsibilities as needs change. Some of their most documented roles include First Responders, Service Providers, Community Leaders and Advocates, and Resilience Builders.

### FIRST RESPONDERS

When emergencies strike, women-focused CSOs are among the first to respond, including by establishing safe spaces, building temporary shelters, communicating critical information to communities, and distributing food and health supplies.<sup>3</sup> For example, during the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, women’s groups mobilized quickly to help pregnant and breastfeeding women prevent infection.<sup>4</sup>

### SERVICE PROVIDERS

Many women-focused CSOs are also direct service providers during emergencies and their aftermath, leading the implementation of case management programs for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), providing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, and beyond. Their established trust with communities and understanding of local contexts make them among the best-positioned to provide these services—a role international organizations have reinforced by collaborating with them as implementing partners.<sup>5</sup>

### COMMUNITY LEADERS AND ADVOCATES

Girls and women must often assume new formal and informal leadership responsibilities during humanitarian emergencies, particularly in contexts where boys and men are absent because they are missing, detained, or fighting in armed groups.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, crises expose deep-rooted gender inequalities, and women-focused CSOs rise up to challenge them to secure better futures for all. For example, since the Arab Spring, women’s movements have pushed Tunisia to adopt several constitutional protections for women’s equal rights.<sup>7</sup>

### RESILIENCE BUILDERS

Women-focused CSOs have also played a critical role in building the capacity of communities to respond and recover from emergencies. In areas vulnerable to cyclical disasters, early engagement of women-focused CSOs in preparedness efforts helps reduce risks to communities. For example, during Vietnam’s 2013 typhoon, which displaced more than 100,000 people, no evacuations were needed from the homes that worked with a local Women’s Union to develop storm-resistant shelters.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout all this work, women-focused CSOs aim to enhance women’s leadership, transform gender relations, and tackle gender-based norms that assign power to men.<sup>9</sup> As such, their efforts are often described as “gender-transformative,” which means going beyond meeting the basic needs of girls and women to fueling longer-term gender-equality gains within their communities.



## SECTION II: Gender-Transformative Localization in Context

Girls, women, and the organizations they lead have always been powerful agents of change in humanitarian settings, but their contributions were not significantly recognized by the international community until the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in Istanbul in 2016.<sup>10</sup> Here, a roundtable of global leaders acknowledged for the first time that local women-focused CSOs are important leaders in humanitarian efforts across the globe.<sup>11</sup> This high-level recognition prompted a shift in thinking for many international institutions, who until then primarily saw girls and women as helpless victims or passive dependents of aid.<sup>12</sup>

Following the WHS, donors, UN agencies, and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) came together to determine the core priorities of a new global localization agenda. While the precise definition of localization is still debated, WHS consultations generally coalesced around a shared definition for the localization agenda’s core objective: “to maximize the role of local, national, and regional actors in humanitarian action.”<sup>13</sup> The core commitments of the localization agenda are best captured in the Grand Bargain Agreement and Charter for Change (see sidebar), which broadly call for more funding, coordination, and participation opportunities for local and national responders.<sup>14</sup>

The humanitarian localization agenda provides important opportunities to support women-focused CSOs, but does not go far enough to enable their gender-transformative impacts. Both the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change have had limited references or commitments to gender, which has stalled their ability to benefit women-focused CSOs.<sup>15</sup> By focusing on supporting local and national actors “in general,” these efforts have failed to recognize power imbalances within the humanitarian system that make it more difficult for women-focused CSOs to access the resources they need.<sup>16</sup>

The localization agenda will not succeed if organizations focused on gender equality and the health and rights of girls and women are not meaningfully engaged and supported. Members of the humanitarian community who share this sentiment have led research, coordination, and advocacy efforts that aim to put a gender lens on localization. There is an informal Group of Friends of Gender for the Grand Bargain that has been leading policy discussions at the global level and workshops for women-focused CSOs at the field level to encourage uptake of a gender-transformative localization agenda.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, major international NGOs, including ActionAid,<sup>18</sup> CARE,<sup>19</sup> the International Rescue Committee,<sup>20</sup> and Oxfam<sup>21</sup> have all published reports on the topic, based on their lessons learned from field-level implementation. Most recently, the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR)<sup>22</sup> launched a Localization Task Team that is coordinating global and regional workshops on the topic.<sup>23</sup>





## COMMITMENTS TO LOCALIZATION

**GRAND BARGAIN** — The Grand Bargain came out of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, which brought significant global attention to the localization agenda. It commits international donors and aid organizations to providing 25 percent of global humanitarian funding to local and national responders by 2020. However, Grand Bargain signatories<sup>24</sup> are far from reaching the 25 percent funding target, with only about 14 percent of financing reaching local actors either directly or through intermediaries in 2018.<sup>25</sup>

**CHARTER FOR CHANGE** — The Charter for Change is an initiative led by both national and international humanitarian NGOs to change the humanitarian system to enable a more locally-led response. It calls on international NGOs to implement eight commitments that will help strengthen their support for national organizations by 2020, and commits national NGOs to hold them to account. Some of the key commitments include: increasing direct funding to national and local NGOs for humanitarian action; increasing transparency around resource transfers to national and local NGOs; and activating robust organizational support and capacity strengthening.<sup>26</sup>



## SECTION III: Challenges to Gender- Transformative Localization

Despite growing momentum behind gender-transformative localization, major challenges still stand in the way of taking these efforts to scale. The following challenges have been identified by women-focused CSOs, INGOs, UN agencies, and donors who participated in Women Deliver's events on this topic or in key informant interviews.

### CHALLENGE #1

#### Limited Accessible Funding for Women-Focused CSOs in Humanitarian Settings

Though it has increased in past years in parallel with the needs in crisis-affected settings, humanitarian funding is still largely inaccessible for CSOs. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service figures for 2018 indicate that 8.74% of global humanitarian funding was allocated to local and national actors, which was an increase from 2.9% in 2017, and 2% in 2016. Nevertheless, women-focused CSOs still face barriers navigating a system that is donor-driven, project-based, favors international NGOs, and has in place a multitude of requirements that, too often, smaller NGOs and CSOs cannot reasonably meet.

Among most donors, there is a perception that funding local and national CSOs directly is risky. Concerns regarding the absorption capacity of CSOs was noted by donors, international organizations, and CSOs themselves during a poll at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference in Vancouver. This points to a need for increased training, capacity sharing, and better investment in developing CSOs' administrative and financial infrastructure.

Counterterrorism measures, which have been increasingly strengthened and enforced, affect primarily local CSOs working in and serving populations in politically complex crisis areas. However, there continues to be little evidence to the widely held belief that CSOs operating in these contexts are more susceptible to corruption and mismanagement of funds.

Women-focused CSOs also express frustration over the inflexibility of funding opportunities. Existing funding mechanisms and procedures, such as requests for proposals (RFPs) for bilateral government funding, place a heavy burden on CSOs to develop time-consuming, complex proposals. This serves to hinder more nimble, meaningful, and direct partnerships between humanitarian donors and women-focused CSOs.

According to women-focused CSOs, INGOs, and donors that Women Deliver consulted, current humanitarian practice inadvertently forces women-focused CSOs into a cycle of unpredictable, short-term, and project-based funding, which makes it difficult to meet their strategic organizational priorities. Dedicated core funding to support a CSO's overhead, staff salary costs, capacity strengthening, and organizational sustainability is practically impossible to find. Generally, women-focused CSOs can only access opportunities to serve as sub-grantees to INGOs on specific and time-bound programs. For women-focused CSOs, this limits their ability to provide parental leave, childcare, and other important benefits that are necessary for women workforces. In turn, staff retention can be a real challenge, as local staff often seek more stable employment at INGOs, rather than local CSOs.



### CHALLENGE #2

#### Women-Focused CSOs Aren't Meaningfully Engaged in Humanitarian Decision-Making

Localization efforts need to move beyond tokenistic inclusion of women-focused CSOs in spaces occupied by INGOs, UN agencies, and donors. Few opportunities exist for women-focused CSOs to help shape investment agendas, priorities, or influence decision-making forums. When representatives from women-focused CSOs are invited to speak at major global conferences, often they are asked only to share their personal experiences of tragedy and loss, rather than offer expertise, solutions, and policy recommendations.

Logistical barriers such as visa complications, travel costs, and language constraints also are significant obstacles to the meaningful participation of CSOs in global meetings. Invitations for CSOs are often given late and with insufficient support to account for the logistical complexities associated with women from crisis settings traveling to global locations. Additionally, the burden of planning and paperwork required is arduous for women with family care responsibilities. For those who can physically get to these meetings, CSO representatives face humanitarian terminology and jargon that is not easily understood or translatable to local actors. Further, meeting agendas are almost always set beforehand, without consultation of women-focused CSOs, leaving CSO speakers to have to fit their remarks into narratives that are not their own.



CHALLENGE #3

Limited Coordination Between International Actors and Women-Focused CSOs

There remains a need for improved partnerships and coordination between international actors and women-focused CSOs on the ground, from preparedness to recovery efforts. There are few resources dedicated to mapping out women-focused CSOs and their capacities during the preparedness stage, which affects how and when international actors engage with these partners when emergencies strike.

This also affects coordination along the development-humanitarian nexus. Although it is just as critical during times of crises, gender-transformative programming is often relegated to recovery or development efforts. This is reinforced by the cluster system, which is difficult for women-focused CSOs to navigate and access; their limited exposure to this system is often consigned to coordinating with international actors on protection issues only. To enable gender-transformative humanitarian action, the engagement of women-focused CSOs must be mainstreamed throughout and across all sectors, including livelihoods, health, education, food security, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).



Improved partnerships also means requiring INGOs to be context-specific and country-driven in their own humanitarian programs. In consultations with Women

Deliver, many women-focused CSOs that serve as implementing partners expressed that they do not feel adequately supported or respected. In particular, self-articulated priorities of women-focused CSOs—which are driven by community needs—are not often taken into account by INGOs when shaping program objectives. Conditions put forth by INGOs on CSO sub-grantees can also be harmful and harbor distrust if they are not adapted to the context.

CHALLENGE #4

Capacity-Sharing Opportunities Favor International Agendas Over CSO Priorities

Women-focused CSOs express that capacity-strengthening and -sharing opportunities are often shaped by INGOs without proper consultation or understanding of their learning needs. In particular, many women-focused CSOs have expressed a need for earmarked funds for capacity sharing, particularly around advocacy, communications, program management, and fundraising—topics that would support a CSO’s ability to engage more directly in humanitarian action without international intermediaries. However, the vast majority of training and capacity development is delivered in a project-specific manner to enable CSOs to implement an international organization’s programmatic priorities. While these can be potentially useful skills-building opportunities, it is rare that an international organization’s capacity-building and training efforts align with the learning agenda of their CSO partners. Limited data and tracking on capacity gaps for women-focused CSOs also makes it difficult for international actors to invest in capacity strengthening through a more needs-based approach.

In addition, the current model of capacity flowing from international organizations to local actors disregards the important knowledge that women-focused CSOs have to share. International actors should make space for dialogue with women-focused CSOs to understand how capacity can be shared in all directions.

CHALLENGE #5

Insufficient Accountability to Women-Focused CSOs

Gender-transformative programming can look vastly different across contexts. Yet there are few opportunities for women-focused CSOs and the communities they serve to provide feedback for programs that are designed to meet their needs. CSOs implementing gender-transformative programming are not engaged throughout the program cycle, particularly during the design stage, and through implementation and evaluation. This poses a barrier for CSOs to provide input when programs need adaptation or refinement.

Social accountability and other informal mechanisms also are misunderstood and underutilized. This creates very few touchpoints for women-focused CSOs and recipients of aid to provide and receive feedback in a way that is accessible to them. While women-focused CSOs are asked for a multitude of processes and documentation, the same is not asked of INGOs. In that aspect, there is a greater need for transparency from INGOs, particularly in partner selection and funding. Women-focused CSOs have expressed that the right to access information “goes both ways” and that local organizations would greatly benefit from a deeper understanding of INGOs’ decision-making processes in regard to approval or rejection of proposals, as well as RFP requirements and timelines.



SECTION IV: Solutions Supporting Gender-Transformative Localization

Humanitarian organizations are increasingly working together to make gender-transformative localization a reality, including through new sustainable funding opportunities, investing in meaningful engagement, sharing capacity, enhancing coordination, and ensuring accountability. The following examples are a sample of successful approaches that were shared at Women Deliver-convened events and are ready for increased investment, broader implementation, and scale.

FUNDING

More tailored, accessible, and sustainable funding opportunities specifically for women-focused CSOs.

To achieve gender-transformative localization, women-focused CSOs need to be able to access funding that enables them to address the urgent humanitarian needs in their communities and sustain the organization’s core operations so they can continue to serve during a humanitarian response, through recovery and rebuilding.

*Global Fund for Women* finds, funds, and amplifies the work of activists who are building social movements and challenging the status quo. They offer core support, as well as crisis support, to organizations led by historically marginalized groups that are working to build strong, connected movements for gender justice and human rights. *Global Fund for Women* trusts women, girls, trans and gender non-conforming people to know how best to solve the problems in their communities. They provide resources that strengthen the agency, participation, and power of local organizations.

*Global Fund for Women* believes that including a participatory, human rights, and feminist lens into crisis philanthropy can result in more meaningful and



successful interventions, not only to provide immediate relief, but to serve long-term, strategic needs as well. This model puts funds directly in the hands of women leaders and movements, recognizing both the unique needs of girls and women and the unequal power and resourcing dynamics that often disadvantage them. By putting resources and control directly in the hands of local organizations, participatory relief helps communities meet their immediate needs while building resilience to overcome whatever shocks and stresses might come in the future.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENT

More opportunities to participate in local, regional, and global decision-making forums that affect their work and lives.

To achieve gender-transformative localization, humanitarian policy spaces cannot continue to make decisions about how to serve crisis-affected communities without the direct input of the women-focused CSOs on the front lines of humanitarian action.

Women Deliver’s Humanitarian Advocates Program currently partners with five women-focused CSOs from Lebanon to provide training and speaking opportunities to become stronger and more visible advocates for girls and women in their communities. The CSOs work with Women Deliver to identify learning priorities tied to advocacy, communications, fundraising, and program management; assess their own gaps and capacities; and identify global and regional speaking opportunities that could lead their work forward. Driven by these articulated needs, Women Deliver provides an individualized training curriculum for each CSO, supplemented by support in accessing relevant global convenings and negotiations.

Understanding, respecting, and adapting to the local context in which these five women-focused CSOs work and live has proved key to the program’s success. As an INGO with access to important platforms, people, and resources, Women Deliver also recognizes that providing that same access and visibility to partners representing women-focused CSOs will not only accelerate their

organizational goals, but is a step toward creating a more effective feminist humanitarian system for all.

COORDINATION

Stronger collaboration between international organizations and local actors for more effective and longer-term impact of humanitarian efforts.

To achieve gender-transformative localization, international actors must work in close collaboration and partnership with women-focused CSOs and foster opportunities for their active participation and leadership.

Oxfam’s Empowering Local and National Humanitarian Actors (ELNHA) Program in Uganda and Bangladesh works toward building a new humanitarian model that gives responsibility and leadership to local and national humanitarian actors in Bangladesh and Uganda. The belief is that, with the right investment, local and national communities will be able to save more lives in a crisis and affected communities will come back stronger afterward. It disburses funds to local organizations through a capacity development fund and a grant facility that allows local organizations to collectively define the steps to strengthen the local humanitarian system and independently design and implement quality response projects in humanitarian settings. The impact has been that women-focused CSOs are able to design and implement needed programming, participate in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, and then find avenues for new partnerships with international actors and previously inaccessible funding opportunities.



Oxfam understands that, in highly patriarchal systems, working with local organizations without a strong gender analysis and approach can lead to the marginalization of gender issues and of women’s participation. Therefore, Oxfam mobilizes, connects, and supports women-focused CSOs, which has enabled CSOs that previously were absent from humanitarian responses to actively participate in humanitarian advocacy, help shape priorities, run their own humanitarian projects, and access direct funding from other donors.

CAPACITY SHARING

Invest in capacity-sharing opportunities for women-focused CSOs aligned with their learning priorities.

To achieve gender-transformative localization, capacity sharing must flow both from international to local actors, as well as from local to international, focused on the learning needs and priorities of all humanitarian actors.

The Building Local, Thinking Global Initiative is led by Akina Mama Wa Afrika, GBV Prevention Network, Gender Equality Network, Women’s International Peace Centre, International Rescue Committee, El-Karama, and Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa. It aims to promote women’s transformative leadership in GBV emergency preparedness and response by supporting NGO networks of local and national organizations to become local technical resources. The program recognizes that networks of local and national organizations are well placed to play a technical leadership role for their members who are active in emergency responses to violence against girls and women. The goal is to harness the collective strength, access, and power within the humanitarian community to ensure girls and women are protected from GBV in emergencies. It will accomplish this by strengthening the technical and operational capacity of women-focused CSOs and networks to prepare and respond to GBV in emergencies; supporting women-focused CSOs and networks to actively contribute and influence global humanitarian policies, strategies, and funding decisions; strengthening the solidarity between and among

women-focused CSOs; and promoting good practices, learning, and information sharing.

The initiative fosters a coalition that brings together feminist, women-focused CSOs, activists, academics, community-based organizations, NGOs, and regional civil society networks from across Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Ensure women-focused CSOs can provide feedback for programs created for their communities, including during the design, implementation, and evaluation stages.

To achieve gender-transformative localization, international actors must ensure that women-focused CSOs are able to contribute to humanitarian programming in their communities at all stages of the program cycle.

The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies is a global initiative launched in 2013 by the United Kingdom and Sweden with one simple goal: to ensure that every humanitarian response, from the very start, provides safe and comprehensive



services for GBV survivors and mitigates the risks of GBV. Members of the Call to Action include states and donors, international organizations, and NGOs. They have committed to take collective action to address GBV, to be mutually supportive in this lifesaving work, and to hold one another accountable for action.

In an effort to bring the Call to Action’s vision directly to communities affected by crises, UNFPA, the GBV AoR, and the Women’s Refugee Commission, with support from Sweden and the European Union, brought Call to Action members working in Northeast Nigeria, the Nigerian Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, and other stakeholders together to pilot the development and implementation of a two-year Road Map for the most conflict-affected states of Northeast Nigeria—Borno, Adamawa and Yobe. This groundbreaking initiative is informed by the global Call to Action Road Map, but tailored to address the GBV challenges and opportunities in this region. It was officially released in 2018 and currently has 40 committed stakeholders. A second pilot, also undertaken with support from the European Union, is under way in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The DRC Call to Action Road Map was launched in February 2019 and currently has 61 stakeholders. A distinctive aspect of these pilots is the way that local women-focused CSOs are being engaged to ensure that they are full partners in the work and that solutions align with community priorities.



## SECTION V: Advocacy Asks

Realizing gender-transformative localization as a building block of feminist humanitarian action requires commitments from all humanitarian actors, including donors, international organizations and INGOs, as well as women-focused CSOs. The advocacy asks below are extracted from Women Deliver’s consultations, and are actions that all humanitarians can take up to make meaningful contributions to this important agenda.

### FOR DONORS:

- Invest** in research and guidance to help determine best practices for effective partnerships with women-focused CSOs
- Create** multiple models of pooled funds or other funding mechanisms that are accessible to women-focused CSOs
- Ensure** these funds are tailored to local and national contexts through consultations with women-focused CSOs on their priorities and needs
- Commit** to a quota which mandates dedicating at least 25% of all humanitarian funding to support women-focused CSOs directly or through intermediaries and establish definitions and criteria for tracking against these commitments
- Promote** long-term, flexible, and multi-year funding cycles
- Establish** and commit to a quota for core funding in every grant for women-focused CSOs



### FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND INGOs:

- Open** doors to make the cluster system more accessible for women-focused CSOs, including conducting meetings in the local language, ensuring CSOs know if, how often, and where coordination meetings are taking place, and disseminating information from meetings to CSO networks
- Earmark** funds to share capacity with women-focused CSOs in every program
- Mandate** active participation of women-focused CSOs in every decision-making forum that affects them, including speaking roles
- Dedicate** time and budget to travel and logistics support to allow women-focused CSOs to attend international meetings
- Compile** information on available funding opportunities and share it through platforms that can be easily accessed by women-focused CSOs
- Ensure** existing global guidance on social accountability to women-focused CSOs and their communities is used in every emergency
- Invest** in understanding local contexts and hire local staff, particularly women, to serve in leadership positions

### FOR WOMEN-FOCUSED CSOs:

- Enhance** monitoring, evaluation, and learning to measure impact from programming, helping to make an investment case to funders
- Seek out** and request opportunities with donors and sub-grantees to advocate for funding needs and communicate challenges
- Dedicate** time and resources to attend cluster meetings and engage in coordination efforts with international partners
- Build** financial and administrative systems to increase compliance with donor requirements and improve absorption capacity



# CONCLUSION

**Gender-transformative localization is urgently required to ensure that women-focused CSOs have the power and resources to meet basic needs and fuel long-term gender equality gains within their communities.**

All actors in the humanitarian system—regardless of sector, geography, or level—have a role to play in supporting gender-transformative localization. At the global level, donor agencies and international organizations can help drive more strategic investment, engagement, and capacity sharing for women-focused CSOs, while ensuring decisions affecting girls and women are accountable to them. At the local and national level, women-focused CSOs can also be more vocal advocates about the types of funding and support they need to sustain their critical operations and build the internal capacity to receive it. Together, these actions will lay the foundation for a feminist humanitarian system, where the health, rights, and leadership of those most affected by humanitarian crises are prioritized in everything it strives to achieve.



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[22] The GBV AoR is a coordination forum, led by UNFPA, which works collectively to improve the effectiveness and accountability of humanitarian response for the prevention, risk mitigation, and response to all forms of GBV, to ensure that the agency and capacity of survivors is recognized and reinforced and that primary prevention efforts are effectively employed to address underlying gender inequality.

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[28] In 2005 the cluster approach was introduced as a means of more effectively coordinating humanitarian response. Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination.





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