

#HUMANITARIAN4HER

ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

HOW TO USE YOUR POWER
TO ADVOCATE FOR
WOMEN-FOCUSED CIVIL
SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

Women-focused civil society organizations (CSOs) are powerful agents of change in humanitarian settings. They are first responders, service providers, unwavering advocates, and so much more – but still often overlooked in humanitarian funding and decision-making.

As representatives of international organizations and INGOs, we all play an important role in shifting more power, funding, and support to women-focused CSOs. Regardless of your specific position in your organization, you can use your power to advocate – both internally within your institution and externally to the world – for stronger partnerships with women-focused CSOs.

This guide highlights key actions you can take to be true allies with women-focused CSOs.

Whether you support digital communications and advocacy or program implementation and

M&E, you have the power to push for more gender-sensitive localization. Change starts with you.

FOR DIGITAL MANAGERS & COMMUNICATORS

As communications experts, you have the power to shape narratives that reinforce the impact and expertise of women-focused CSOs in humanitarian settings. Here are some actions you can take in your roles to pass the mic:

- Work with women-focused CSOs your organization engages, admires, or funds to determine if and how they prefer to be highlighted, considering how to do so in a way that is safe and comfortable for them
- Use social media to spotlight the work of women-focused CSOs as appropriate (e.g., through takeovers, posts, tweets, etc.)
- Find opportunities to have women-focused CSOs author or co-author op-eds, blogs, and other media pieces your organization develops
- Consult* women-focused CSOs in communications campaigns that are relevant to their work and lives
- Ensure that photography and graphic design intended to spotlight women-focused CSOs considers their sensitivities and preferences around representation
- Craft organizational messaging that shows how girls, women, and the organizations they lead are change-makers in humanitarian action, not just victims or vulnerable
- Ensure dissemination plans proactively target women-focused CSOs (e.g., reaching out to them for webinar/event participation, sharing new resources, etc.)

* For detailed guidance on how to meaningfully consult and engage girls and women in storytelling efforts, please see Women Deliver's webinar on [Storytelling with a Gender Lens](#).

FOR POLICY & ADVOCACY PROFESSIONALS

As advocates, you have unique access to networking and decision-making forums that women-focused CSOs rarely encounter. Here are some actions you can take to share your power to help elevate the voices of women-focused CSOs:

- Provide logistical and financial assistance to support representatives of women-focused CSOs to attend or speak at major advocacy meetings and conferences your organization leads
- Provide guidance to help women-focused CSOs effectively navigate and prepare for advocacy opportunities
- Plan ahead to hand the mic during your next speaking role to a representative of a women-focused CSO, so they can share relevant expertise and proposed solutions
- Consult women-focused CSOs when drafting talking points or speeches that affect their work and lives
- Engage women-focused CSOs in the development of new policy guidance, research, or technical reports published by your organization
- During meetings and conferences, connect and introduce women-focused CSOs to potential donors and decision-makers who are strategic targets for their advocacy or fundraising

FOR RESEARCHERS & ACADEMICS

As researchers and academics, you have the power to engage women-focused CSOs in building the evidence base for more effective and equitable humanitarian action. Here are some actions you can take to better engage women-focused CSOs in current and future research projects:

- Ensure your research and data collection is disaggregated by age and gender-so that it can be most helpful to women-focused CSOs
- Build research budgets and timelines with the expectation that you will engage women-focused CSOs at the outset on projects that affect their work and lives
- Work with women-focused CSOs to understand research gaps that impede their work and advocacy, and use this information to guide future projects
- Engage women-focused CSOs as true research partners, providing the funding, logistical support, and capacity strengthening they need to contribute effectively
- Provide grants to support the research arms of women-focused CSOs
- Partner with women-focused CSOs in using different research methodologies to ensure the voices of girls and women are included
- Ensure women-focused CSOs are appropriately credited in research projects they support (e.g. as co-authors, contributors, or advisors)

FOR PROGRAM IMPLEMENTERS & FIELD PRACTITIONERS

As field-based implementers, you likely have the greatest direct engagement with women-focused CSOs within your organization, and can use your power to push for more meaningful partnerships. Here are some actions you can take to build and maintain strong partnerships with women-focused CSOs:

- Prioritize partnerships with women-focused CSOs at the outset of all programming, allocating time and budget in your work plans to meet with diverse women-focused CSOs, including those dedicated to LGBTQIA+ communities, persons with disabilities, refugees, and other marginalized groups.
- Collaboratively decide on partnership and program priorities, agendas, and budgets with women-focused CSOs where possible
- Shift towards more strategic and longer-term partnerships with women-focused CSOs, rather than project-based partnerships exclusively
- Shift towards more core and flexible funding for women-focused CSOs, and check in with partners about the resources they need to succeed
- Advocate for the meaningful participation* of women-focused CSOs in coordination mechanisms
- Build training agendas for women-focused CSOs around their learning priorities
- Engage women-focused CSOs throughout the program cycle

* For detailed guidance on how to more meaningfully engage girls and women throughout the program cycle, please see the [IASC Gender with Age Marker](#).

FOR GRANT MANAGERS & DONORS

As grant managers and donors, you have the power to drive strategic resources to help women-focused CSOs sustain their operations and maximize their impact. Here are some actions you can take to better support women-focused CSOs with which your organization partners:

- Consult girls and women affected by crisis, including women-focused CSOs, when drafting Requests for Proposals (RFPs), to ensure shared understanding of what is most needed in communities
- Collaboratively work with women-focused CSOs to determine project timelines, budgets, and work plans where possible
- Consult women-focused CSOs on the type and duration of funding they need to maximize their impact, and find opportunities to provide flexible, long-term, and core funding rather than project-based funding when possible
- Invest in the staff capacity and retention at women-focused CSOs (e.g., providing funding to cover maternity leave, benefits, and recruitment of strategic positions)
- Form partnerships with women-focused CSOs that go beyond subgrantee relationships, treating them as true thought partners throughout the grant
- Require that INGO subgrantees collaborate with women-focused CSOs explicitly in grant requirements

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FOR MONITORING & EVALUATION EXPERTS

As monitoring and evaluation experts, you have the power to ensure women-focused CSOs count, and are counted, in all your organization's humanitarian and development operations. Here are some actions you can take to help your teams use evidence to strengthen partnerships with women-focused CSOs:

- Collect data on current partnerships with women-focused CSOs and assess trends, strengths, and weak spots in how your organization engages with them
- Ensure opportunities exist for women-focused CSOs to provide feedback at regular intervals throughout the partnership
- In addition to soliciting feedback from women-focused CSOs on activities being implemented, also assess the health of the partnership itself – including how to improve trust, effectiveness, and sustainability for continued engagement with women-focused CSOs
- If relevant, request INGO sub-grantees to also report on the number of women-focused CSOs they engage, to obtain a fuller picture of how your organization supports women-focused CSOs

MORE RESOURCES

Remember: we all have the power to be more effective advocates for gender-sensitive localization. Share your lessons learned with #Humanitarian4Her and use these resources to dive deeper on how to better support women-focused CSOs in humanitarian settings:

WOMEN DELIVER: [Advancing Gender-Transformative Localization](#)

OXFAM: [A Feminist Approach to Localization](#)

UN WOMEN: [Gender and the Localization Agenda](#)

NEAR NETWORK: [Localization Performance Measurement Framework](#)