



SUMMARY



TECHNICAL GUIDANCE NOTE: GENDER AND THE LOCALIZATION AGENDA

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What's the Issue?

Women and girls are disproportionately affected during natural disasters, onset and protracted conflict situations. Pre-existing gender equalities are often exacerbated during crises. Women, men, boys and girls have specific needs, coping skills and resilience strategies during crises, but often women and girls are often more at-risk during conflict and natural disasters. Therefore, gender equitable considerations can re-shape social norms throughout the humanitarian program cycle.

In 2016, at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Member States, donors, UN agencies and NGOs convened to commit to improving local capacities while providing more aid directly to those who are most in need. This commitment is known as the Grand Bargain (GB) and is composed of nine work streams – including localization - which are aimed at improving the responsiveness and accountability of humanitarian action. While the Grand Bargain is recognized as a transformative agenda, gender and women's empowerment and protection are only minimally referenced, leading a number of Grand Bargain signatories to establish the Friends of Gender Group to address this gap.

Localization, within the context of the Grand Bargain, is not defined but signatories committed to “more support and funding tools to local and national responders,” to “making principled humanitarian action as local as possible and as international as necessary”. The objective is improved response through quality, quick and sustained assistance. To achieve these outcomes, local actors are key for the access, acceptance, effectiveness and efficiency. The Grand Bargain “Localization Workstream” has committed to an agenda for localization in four areas: capacity investment and

partnership, coordination, funding and measurement. Thus, localization is the commitment for increased institutional support and direct funding for local and national responders.

From a gender perspective, localization includes focusing on women's rights and women's rights organizations (WLOs and WROs) leadership, roles and capacities in humanitarian settings, including as local and national responders in humanitarian and crisis settings; access to and tracking of financial resources for WROs and WLO; links between meaningful participation and gender equitable outcomes of humanitarian response plans, including protection and prevention/response to gender-based violence (GBV); enhanced visibility and influence through WLO and WRO engagement in priority setting in Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNO) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) through analysis and ensuring responsiveness to the needs and priorities of crisis affected women and girls.



Supporting women's empowerment and inclusion in the design of weather forecast based financing and preparedness in Vietnam. (UN Women)



How UN Women Makes a Difference

I) Funding for Local Women's Organizations

A core commitment of the localization work stream of the Grand Bargain is to increase and support multi-year investments in the institutional capacities of local and national humanitarian actors and to provide at least 25 per cent of humanitarian funding - as directly as possible - to local and national responders. The 2019 Grand Bargain Annual Report asserted that seven signatories (compared to five in 2017) to the GB reported that their funding to local and national actors had met or exceeded the 25 per cent target. However, of the self-reports submitted, localized funding awarded to WROs and WLOs accounted for only 1.9 per cent of total funding allocations, indicating inequitable expenditures and exclusionary practices for those agencies and activists which are not recognized among the "blessed few". However, signatories underscored their progress on integrating gender in the Grand Bargain through gendered cash programming, engaging local and national systems.

Thus, there is limited funding for women's organizations, GBV and GEEWG programmatic interventions in humanitarian settings and donor funding often omits WLOs and WROs due to lack of direct, targeted local funding opportunities and institutional priorities. Not only are women often excluded from funding, but they are also often omitted altogether from humanitarian planning processes. When funding is available, it is often short-term in nature and hinders sustainable and gender transformative programming which can address discriminatory social norms over time. Furthermore, donors are often reluctant to fund local actors due to perceived risks around aid such as contextual risks, institutional risk and reputational risks.

The humanitarian system poses systemic access barriers – structural, operational and financial - to WLOs and WROs, including to the role and participation of women decision makers in the humanitarian space. The lack of access by WROs and WLOs to humanitarian funding cannot be tracked due to the paucity of publicly available evidence which disaggregates funding to women and girls at the global and regional level in humanitarian contexts. There are no financial tracking mechanisms which distill the amount of funding received by WLOs and WROs or which provide a means to report the quantity of funding targeted for women and girls as a separate indicators.

It is therefore recommended that funds for WROs and WLOs are earmarked in support of targeted programming to promote women's leadership, livelihoods and protection in humanitarian settings. This can be an effective way to enhance localization, including by setting funding quotas for WLOs and WROs and/or setting up specific funding mechanisms with a view to providing direct funding for WLOs and WROs. WROs and WLOs have also requested the streamlining of cumbersome funding application procedures and criteria for WLOs and WROs. It is further necessary to invest in capacity strengthening among these organizations on applying for funding schemes dedicated to national and local actors.

At the systemic level, HCTs and other humanitarian coordination mechanisms at country level (gender and cluster coordination) should dedicate spaces for WLO and WRO engagement and advocacy must be scaled up vis-à-vis UN agencies and other humanitarian actors to increase financial and technical support for gender transformative humanitarian action. Similarly, financial tracking tools to monitor funding for local women's organizations and promote accountability among GB signatories must be developed and adopted. Risk mitigation procedures through monitoring, communication, accountability and capacity strengthening tools and systems for WROs and WLOs could be put in place when and where appropriate.

In order to enhance the localization of aid in a gender responsive manner, donors are recommended to develop feminist humanitarian policies to prioritizing gender mainstreaming and gender transformative practices and align these with the principles and commitments of the localization agenda. Donors can further promote a global localization agenda to move away from ad hoc approaches and hold actors accountable to recognized international standards and commitments to GEEWG (for example, IASC Gender Policy and Accountability Framework). Donors should encourage dedicated budget lines for WRO and WLO capacity strengthening and long-term institutional development, which also enables them to engage in advocacy and resource mobilization beyond programme implementation. GEEWG should be promoted through the adoption and roll out of innovative programmatic strategies and partnerships in

humanitarian settings and priority should be given to those organizations that are self-organized and represent crisis-affected women and girls' priorities and needs.

UN agencies and INGOs are recommended to earmark standalone GEEWG and GBV programming in humanitarian contexts; promote equal partnerships by actively strengthening the technical and operational capacity of local partners and integrating two-way feedback mechanisms. They should further develop



"Women leaders in Yemen are present in regions where international humanitarian actors are not. Women know exactly where the humanitarian corridors are and negotiate access. Everywhere, women are the first responders," said Muna Luqman, Founder and Chairperson of the Food4Humanity Foundation. "Yet, everyone acts as if we are new to this field. We have always been at the grass-roots level in Yemen and the local people trust us. More must be done so that funds by international organizations are accessible for local women's organizations. Please listen to us and look at what we are already doing," (Photo: WILPF/ Charlotte Hooij)

II) Participation and Coordination

The role of women and women's rights organizations in humanitarian action can differ according to the type and scope of the response, country typology and context. Women have insight into pre-humanitarian gender inequalities, power relations and cultural considerations that can meaningfully provide an understanding of community-based resilience strategies.

However, WROs and WLOs face several challenges in the humanitarian sphere, including limited engagement and influence on humanitarian coordination mechanisms; structural barriers to accessing resources and decision making spaces; limited visibility of GEEWG issues in HRP and relevant allocations; discriminatory gender norms-social and cultural barriers; humanitarian actors' internal organization and culture; and limited attention and resources for programmes advancing women's leadership in humanitarian settings.

Structural barriers could be addressed by ensuring the participation, active engagement and co-leadership of WLO and WROs, especially as cluster co-leads at national and sub-national levels. Currently, turf wars between WLOs and WROs are common place and the "blessed few" organizations with partnership agreements with international agencies or other large donors are prioritized. WLOs and WROs have limited funding due to limited financial access and patriarchal norms embedded within the humanitarian system. The international coordination processes of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) are opaque and limit access for local women. Reasons for restricted access include the multiple clusters and sub-cluster meetings at the national and sub-national level which can lead to an unmanageable number of meetings held in different places at different times. The complex jargon, language barriers, lack of funding to support transportation to meetings and associated safety risks further limit access.

Social and cultural norms, including inequitable hierarchies and patriarchal notions of leadership, can lead to women and girls having limited to no access to humanitarian action and traditional gender roles dictate women's responsibilities, such as child care and domestic work, that can limit their time and ability to participate in national discussions in addition to restricting access to services. At the same time, there is lack of capacity strengthening opportunities for women and girls, even though WROs and WLOs have coordinated amongst themselves to form networks and alliances for capacity development and strengthening. Within organizations, gender specialists are not in central decision-making positions and gender is not integrated fully into humanitarian programming. Progress tends to depend on individuals in leadership positions. If individuals decide 'it is not their job', siloes continue to exist within organizations. Finally, international organizations are risk averse when partnering with WLOs and WROs.



Trained group of women mediators, responding to conflicts, preventing conflicts and speaking to traditional and religious leaders. Already solved 125 conflicts. Minawao refugee camp, North Cameroon. (Photo: Alice Tata, UN Women Cameroon)

In order to reverse these trends and to better reach the entire population, the active engagement and co-leadership of WLO's and WROs in humanitarian coordination mechanisms are needed. Thus, gender analyses and humanitarian needs assessments must include the participation of WROs and WLOs and they must be supported to take on inclusive and participatory leadership roles at all stages of humanitarian planning processes. Women's leadership should be a distinct programmatic and institutional priority and support should be increased for individual women leaders and for female staff in humanitarian organizations, including through skills development.

Donors should eliminate structural barriers to local and national responders accessing international resources and should also make greater use of funding tools that increase and improve assistance delivered by local and national responders. Multi-year and sustainable approaches to capacity investment for local and national responders must be adopted while funding should also be pooled and earmarked for WLOs and WROs specifically. Moreover, flexible funding for WLOs and WROs should be increased. Sustainable investments should be made in both the establishment and strengthening of feminist humanitarian networks and coalitions and their advocacy efforts. Humanitarian programming should promote social norms that promote inclusion and gender equality and remove practical and social barriers to women's leadership.

Comprehensive leadership programmes are needed to build the support, skills and capacities for women's leadership in local communities and within local and national organizations. Institutional changes in culture, structure and policy in support of inclusive leadership should be forged by the humanitarian community, including taking into account intersectionalities. A standalone pillar in HRP as well as a mainstreaming approach with commitments across the different clusters should be adopted. WLO and WRO participation and leadership in HNO and HRP related decision-making processes and discussions should be further prioritized. In cases where women's access is restricted in relation to humanitarian coordination mechanisms, safe spaces and localized coordination spaces should be provided. In order to promote more equal partnerships, mentoring and peer support between international and national partners should be explored.

III) Partnerships

Women and girls must be considered active partners and social agents of change in identifying protection risks and vulnerabilities of the affected populations. Partnerships are considered an important aspect to addressing GBV in humanitarian settings, but also to promote gender transformative change. However, at present, the principles of partnership do not address the "how" of effective collaboration and partnership between UN/INGOs and WROs/WLOs, while the principles and criteria for partnership should always be clearly articulated, inclusive and transparent for both partners.

Currently, partnerships do not tend to integrate specific considerations or funding for long term institutional capacity development and local actors are often not consulted in program design. This often results in increased risks and unintended consequences for crisis affected women and girls and institutional challenges for local organizations. Moreover, partnerships often do not include the required operational support and many of the partnerships are short-term. Indicators of successful partnerships include the use by international actors of a nuanced vocabulary to describe the nature of the collaborative relationship with WLOs and WROs, which is reflected in formal agreements such as contracts and MoUs.

Partnership MoUs should include a clause on joint reciprocal evaluations and monitoring of the quality of relationship at regular intervals as a sign of a genuine partnership, while whistle-blowing and complaints and response procedures should be embedded in the partnership policy and linked with local accountability mechanisms to ensure accountability to affected populations (AAP). At the same time, purely formalistic and unnecessary due diligence assessments should be avoided as they tend to place an unnecessary burden on WLOs and WROs.

Verbal and non-verbal communications between collaborating entities or between aid agencies and women should always express basic respect and take into account cultural sensitivities and differences around what is considered 'disrespectful' behaviour. The ending of a partnering relationship should be done with practical responsibility and respect for the other partner with an emphasis on shifting the power to the local partner and sustainability. At the same time, it is recommended that local WROs and WLOs prioritize partnerships which are based on principles of transparency and mutual accountability. They should use existing networks to agree on definitions, collaboration and communication points (e.g. safe spaces, gender hubs) to leverage access to humanitarian spaces and funding.

In order to ensure the programmes are fit for purpose, the engagement of WROs and WLOs in all phases of the Humanitarian Planning Cycle, programmatic development, implementation and M&E are necessary, including through the joint identification of risks and designing risk mitigation strategies. International partners should also promote long-term partnerships with WROs and WLOs, contributing to their ability to receive stand-alone funding and scale up their programming in humanitarian settings. Supporting the operational and other costs of local partners by opening up the possibility for overhead funding is a major ask from local WROs and WLOs. Donors should invest in long-term partnerships WRO and WLO institutional capacity strengthening and leadership with a view to contributing to the improved quality of their engagement, service delivery and programming in humanitarian settings. Approaches could include training, policy development, contribution to overhead costs, flexible funding and reporting requirements.



Women leaders of all ages at the Democracy Day celebrations in 2011. The celebration was organized by UN Women and the Institute of Social Studies to recognize the work of elected women representatives around India. The Constitution of India mandates the reservation of 1/3 seats for women in local bodies. Many states now also have 50 percent reservation for women. (Photo: UN Women/Gangajit Singh Chandok)

This also requires the thorough assessment of capacity gaps and needs of WLOs and WROs. It is recommended that international partners integrate institutional capacity strengthening plans and strategies on the basis of such needs assessments and the priorities of local WROs and WLOs. International partners should also support WLOs and WROs in developing their own institutional capacity strengthening plans. Such a long-term approach to capacity development and institutional transformation at the outcome level includes strengthened programming, outreach to communities, governance structures, risk mitigation, advocacy and influence on decision making, financial management, and the attainment of gender equitable results so local partners can scale up their work and engagement with crisis affected populations. Finally, it is recommended that capacity strengthening is aligned with existing risk management and accountability frameworks and performance indexes (e.g. CBPF and CERF) to facilitate access of WROs and WLOs to pooled funding mechanisms.