



## A FEMINIST APPROACH TO LOCALIZATION:

HOW CANADA CAN SUPPORT THE  
LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
ACTORS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



# OXFAM CANADA

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
1.	INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT: LOCALIZATION AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION	3
	Box 1: Canada's commitments	4
	Who are women's rights actors?	5
	Box 2: A feminist approach	5
2.	MAKING THE CASE FOR SUPPORT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION	6
	Acting as first responders in their communities and meeting women's needs	6
	Supporting gender equality and transformation over the long term	7
	Case study 1: African Women and Youth Action for Development	7
	Advocating for women's rights and building movements for change	8
	Case study 2: Bangladesh Women's Humanitarian Platform	9
	Laying the ground for sustainable peacebuilding and recovery	10
	Box 3: Women, peace and security	11
3.	CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION	12
	Recognition and prioritization of gender equality and women's rights	12
	Case study 3: The Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation responds to the Marawi City conflict	13
	Lack of quality funding and unequal approaches to partnership	14
	Building and maintaining organizational capacity to be strong humanitarian actors	14
	Access to decision-making spaces and meaningful participation	15
	Security and closing spaces for women's rights	15
	Lack of holistic program approaches	16
4.	SUPPORTING THE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS: ENTRY POINTS FOR CANADA	17
	Bridge the gap between development, humanitarian and peacebuilding policy and programming and apply a feminist approach	17
	Support standalone gender in emergencies programming	18
	Build an approach across humanitarian action that supports quality funding and a feminist approach to partnership for women's rights actors	18
	Recommendations for INGOs and international actors	19
	ANNEX 1: INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS	20
	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	21
	NOTES	22



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local and national women's rights actors play an important role in humanitarian action. As established members of a community, they are well placed to deliver assistance quickly in a crisis and understand the needs of women in that context. Whether they are delivering assistance which is context appropriate and understanding of local norms, or advising other humanitarian actors on how to best support women in their communities, women's rights actors can help ensure that humanitarian action is effective at meeting women's needs.

They also bring a holistic and gender-transformative approach that bridges across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and can provide for long-term positive changes for the security and well-being of communities. This perspective makes them particularly effective in responding to the opportunities brought on in emergencies to transform gender relations and to tackle inequalities. Their work challenges patriarchal norms, which underlie gender inequality and the marginalization of women, and supports women's agency. Despite this, they are not always recognized as humanitarian actors, face difficulties in accessing funding and typically have less power in the partnerships they do have.

It is time for those women's rights organizations, activists and movements that take a rights-based, intersectional approach to achieving gender equality to have their leadership supported in the humanitarian sector. Supporting the leadership of local and national women's rights actors is a key part of a feminist approach to humanitarian action. It is also particularly important to the implementation of the localization agenda, which aims to shift power from international to national and local actors in crisis-affected countries, based on the recognition of the importance of local actors to more sustainable and effective humanitarian outcomes.

The Government of Canada has in place commitments to support the leadership of women and women's organisations in local humanitarian action. In order to make these commitments a reality, it will be essential to understand the challenges they face, and the best forms of international assistance that would support them. This report presents findings of research with women's rights actors involved in humanitarian action. It is intended to contribute to discussions on how to apply feminist principles to aid and foreign policy.

The research suggests that despite differences in the contexts in which women's rights actors are working, there are often commonalities in what they see as challenges and barriers, and priorities for change. This includes the lack of recognition and prioritization of gender equality and women's rights in humanitarian

action, where issues such as violence against women and sexual and reproductive health and rights are not considered 'life saving' interventions. The link between gender equality and security is also not well understood. Where funding is available for their work, women's rights actors report it is rarely long term, flexible or able cover their core running costs, making it hard to build and maintain capacity and be effective and innovative in programming. Due to the nature of their work, women's rights actors also face particular security threats and restrictions on their leadership.

These challenges are further hampered by the lack of policy coherence between humanitarian, conflict and development work. Canada currently manages these with different 'pillars' of work with different funding streams without strong coordination. This siloed approach does not reflect the reality on the ground, however. Interventions in humanitarian and conflict settings typically require both short- and long-term programming that meets immediate basic needs, but also lay the foundation for sustainable and peaceful recovery. As discussed in this report, women's rights actors are often working across these areas, and supporting communities in being prepared and resilient in responding to emergencies, throughout crises and beyond.

In order to best respond to the realities of communities, and support long term, sustainable transformation, it is necessary to have in place policies and approaches that span development, humanitarian and security work from a feminist perspective. That will require new ways of working and partnerships with women's rights actors. The Government of Canada has three main entry points to do this:

## **BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND PEACE AND SECURITY AND APPLY A FEMINIST APPROACH:**

- Develop a humanitarian policy which bridges humanitarian action and peacebuilding, increases attention to disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and is in line with the Feminist International Assistance Policy.
- Increase opportunities for multi-year humanitarian funding, ensuring longer term and predictable support.
- Bolster gender programmatic capacity and expertise within the International Humanitarian Assistance section of Global Affairs Canada to ensure that gender and partnerships with women's rights actors are prioritized in calls for proposals and project reviews.



*Participants at a workshop discuss the role of women's rights actors in humanitarian action*

### **SUPPORT STANDALONE GENDER IN EMERGENCIES PROGRAMMING:**

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- Provide dedicated funding for standalone gender in emergencies programming through its humanitarian assistance pool and strengthen gender mainstreaming.
- Align humanitarian assistance commitments with the Feminist International Assistance Policy by dedicating at least 15% of humanitarian funding to gender in emergencies programming, ensuring a significant amount of this is allocated to supporting local and national women's rights actors.

### **BUILD AN APPROACH ACROSS HUMANITARIAN ACTION THAT BETTER ENABLES SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS:**

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- Create opportunities and incentivize humanitarian assistance to support the leadership of women's rights actors, particularly by providing long-term, flexible and core funding.
- Identify and use a variety of funding mechanisms to reach women's rights organisations, movements and networks. This should include funding through partnerships with women's funds and INGOs, but also through regional funds and consortiums which bring together various organizations with different skill sets.
- Track and report on the funding that is being received by women's rights actors for humanitarian action, and evaluate impacts to support broader understanding of their role.

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT: LOCALIZATION AND WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Humanitarian crises have different impacts and consequences on women, girls, men and boys. These impacts, which in most cases disproportionately harm women and girls, are too often misunderstood and neglected by governments and humanitarian organizations in their interventions. This means that humanitarian interventions have often failed to protect women's rights and at times exacerbate existing unequal gender relations and power structures. Part of the reason for such results is unequal power and privilege in the humanitarian sector, which is shaped by patriarchal structures and a North-South imbalance, where humanitarian actors from the global North have significantly more power than counterparts from the South, including those from the very places where crises are occurring.

Currently, the large majority of humanitarian funds go to United Nations (UN) agencies, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs).<sup>1</sup> In 2016, local and national actors directly received 2% of international humanitarian assistance from donors.<sup>2</sup> The majority of this went to local and national governments, with civil society organizations directly receiving just 0.3%.<sup>3</sup> No global reporting measure exists for tracking how humanitarian funds are reaching women's rights actors, however they consistently report difficulty in accessing funding. This situation results in humanitarian action that is not led by, or accountable to, women or the communities where it is happening.

The localization agenda in the humanitarian sector aims to address the North-South imbalance by shifting power from international actors to national and local actors in crisis-affected countries. In 2016, donors, UN agencies and INGOs together agreed the Grand Bargain,<sup>4</sup> which includes the commitment that 25% of global humanitarian assistance will go as directly as possible to local and national actors by 2020. A feminist approach to localization would seek to further tackle power imbalances and patriarchal structures in humanitarian action by shifting power to national and local women's rights actors, which should result in improved outcomes for women and girls and their communities.

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Women's leadership in local humanitarian contexts takes many forms, from women organizing and delivering basic needs for families and communities, to women taking up economic and political leadership roles. Women's leadership must be a priority in the localization agenda. So far, women are under-represented at all levels of decision making in the humanitarian sector, which undermines the effectiveness of humanitarian action and its potential for transformative changes in support of gender equality.<sup>5</sup> Transforming gender roles is a project of generations, but can be jump-started in moments of crisis as traditional societal structures are disrupted.<sup>6</sup> Initiatives to intentionally support such changes as part of humanitarian action are limited, however, with less than 2% of all humanitarian programs between 2011 and 2014 having gender equality as a primary goal.<sup>7</sup>

As the humanitarian sector shifts power and resources to national and local actors, there are both opportunities and risks for women's rights actors. There is potential to take advantage of new funding opportunities, experience more ownership of programs and have strengthened voices in humanitarian spaces for strategy and decision making. However, there is also a risk that if localization fails to include women's rights actors, or does so in a way that is not driven by their leadership, the process will perpetuate and deepen the challenges that they face and reinforce gendered inequalities between civil society organizations.



This paper presents findings of research with women’s rights actors involved in humanitarian action, and makes suggestions for how the findings could inform Canada’s approach to feminist aid and foreign policy. Specifically it discusses how Canada can realize a feminist approach to localization by supporting women’s rights actors. Oxfam is exploring how feminist principles can improve our own humanitarian work. The Canadian government is committed to this approach through its Feminist International Assistance Policy and has policy commitments in place to increase the leadership of women’s organizations in humanitarian action (see Box 1). The report focuses on the impacts that women’s rights actors can have in humanitarian settings, the challenges that they face and how Canada could take a more deliberate, robust feminist approach to localization by supporting their leadership. Such an approach would require new ways of working that bridges the nexus between humanitarian assistance, peace and security and development policies.

Humanitarian actors are increasingly recognizing the need to work in ways that are more community-led and focused on local partnership. These changes to our ways of working will require time as well as ongoing learning and experimentation. Oxfam Canada approaches this research acknowledging that we have progress to make in this area. This is why the report includes not only recommendations for the Canadian government, but also for ourselves and our INGO peers.

Beyond supporting more effective humanitarian action, shifting power to national and local actors with a focus on women’s rights is an important part of addressing the power imbalances in the humanitarian sector that lead to sexual exploitation and abuse. While sexual exploitation and abuse is carried out by all kinds of actors, international, national and local, a humanitarian sector that is more accountable to communities, and particularly supports the leadership of women’s rights actors, will be more effective at prevention.

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### BOX 1: CANADA’S COMMITMENTS

- At the World Humanitarian Summit, Canada committed to: ‘Empower Women and Girls as change agents and leaders, including by increasing support for local women’s groups to participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.’<sup>8</sup>
- The Feminist International Assistance Policy states: ‘Because of the specific risks that humanitarian crises create for women and girls, Canada also commits to increase its support for women and girls in its humanitarian response efforts and for local groups providing emergency assistance, including local women’s organizations.’<sup>9</sup>
- The National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security includes this objective: ‘Increase the meaningful participation of women, women’s organizations and networks in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict statebuilding.’<sup>10</sup>

In writing this report, it is not proposed that women’s rights actors should be the sole responders in humanitarian settings. It would be very difficult to meet humanitarian needs without the surge capacity and technical expertise provided by other including national organisations, governments and international humanitarian organizations. Rather, the starting point is the understanding that the humanitarian sector is too heavily skewed in one direction and thus would benefit from more involvement of women’s rights actors, including in the areas of disaster risk reduction, protracted displacement, and peace and reconciliation. Local actors are on the ground before, during and after humanitarian crises and therefore need to be involved consistently across all phases of the humanitarian and development spectrum.

A feminist approach to humanitarian assistance would also not be only about empowering women’s rights actors. Governments and INGOs have a variety of options to promote a feminist approach.. Investment in strong gender analyses, gender-transformative programming, and feminist monitoring, learning and evaluation are some of the many examples. This report does not seek to outline a comprehensive vision of how to make the humanitarian sector more feminist. Its focus is specifically on exploring how Canada can support



**BOX 2: A FEMINIST APPROACH**

A feminist approach is one that goes beyond targeting women and girls to address the root causes of gender inequality. These causes persist through unequal power relations between women and men as well as the patriarchal norms and structures that shape societies. A feminist approach to humanitarian action must be transformative in that it seeks to change these power dynamics. Such an approach should also be intersectional, taking into account the multiple forms of discrimination that different women, in all their diversity, face.

Importantly, a feminist approach involves supporting women's agency and decision making by moving beyond seeing them as beneficiaries to recognize, value and support their leadership. It should also reconsider traditional hierarchical notions of leadership to recognize the different ways that leadership must be exercised to create more equal structures as well as place more emphasis on collective organizing.<sup>11</sup>

A key aspect of a feminist approach to localization is how partnerships with women's rights actors are formed and managed. Both the localization agenda and a feminist approach call for more equal partnerships between international, national and local actors, which at the moment are very unequal (see more in section 3).<sup>12</sup>

women's rights actors in humanitarian action as one aspect of such an approach (see Box 2).

This report is based on a literature review, interviews with women's rights actors and a three-day workshop with INGO humanitarian program managers, women's rights actors and UN agency representatives (see Annex for details). As part of the research, we also spoke with representatives of other humanitarian agencies and Canadian organizations that support women's rights actors.

## WHO ARE WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS?

For this research, we define women's rights actors as local and national organizations, activists and movements which are primarily women-led and have rights-based, transformative and intersectional approach. These can be organized and registered organizations, but also loose networks of women's rights activists. A transformative agenda is one that takes into account and seeks to address the unequal power dynamics that cause gender inequality. An intersectional approach addresses the multiple forms of discrimination that lead to marginalization.

In its commitments, Canada uses the terms 'women's organizations' and 'local women's groups'. In order to enact a feminist approach, the research suggests that it is necessary to go beyond these terms and include a focus on women's rights. It may not always be possible for actors to publicly identify themselves with this definition due to the security threat that can be posed. Therefore when Canada is identifying who the best partners may be, there is a need for a nuanced, context-specific approach.

# 2. MAKING THE CASE FOR SUPPORT: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Women's rights actors play crucial roles in humanitarian action and longer-term recovery after a crisis. Their work is rooted in the realities of their communities and often focuses on long-term social norm changes that involve engaging multiple levels of a society.

Women's rights actors play crucial roles in humanitarian action and longer-term recovery after a crisis. Their work is rooted in the realities of their communities and often focuses on long-term social norm changes that involve engaging multiple levels of a society. Whether working on influencing policy change at the national level or challenging existing behaviors and attitudes towards women's rights at the community level, these actors have the long-term view of connecting with different institutions and stakeholders, bringing diverse voices to various spaces, and thereby bridging the humanitarian-development-peace divide.

This section presents the findings of the research related to understanding the role that women's rights actors play and types of changes that they achieve.

## ACTING AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND MEETING WOMEN'S NEEDS

As established members of a community, local women's rights actors are well placed to deliver assistance quickly in a crisis and understand the needs of women in that context. Often this is because they can spot early warning signs of women's rights being restricted (see case study 1 for example). They may also be able to access areas where international actors have not been able to reach or remain. For example, when the Islamic State invaded the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, women mobilized immediately to set up emergency escape routes for human rights defenders and urgent humanitarian aid deliveries, even as large international aid agencies were pulling out of the danger zones.

This is also true for slow-onset emergencies. The *Association pour le Développement Économique et*

*Social (ADES)* in Burkina Faso carry out environmental and maternal health work in communities that have recently been affected by drought.<sup>13</sup> Adapting its programs to respond to this crisis, which has been relatively slow onset and is long term, has become a core part of its work. Programs now include building women's resilience to drought by helping them grow and transform new, high-value and drought-resistant species of plants. Such programmes are important to ensure that existing gender inequalities in access to economic resources and livelihoods are not exacerbated in emergencies.

Involving women's rights actors can help move humanitarian action beyond a 'one-size-fits-all approach' and tailor assistance to particular communities. Without such involvement, assistance can fail to understand a context and thus be ineffective. For example, after the 2015 Nepal earthquake, *Women Human Rights*, a local women's rights organization, heard reports of rural communities being given sanitary pads, which are not commonly used by women there, and food items that are not part of their diet.<sup>14</sup> Local women's groups instead organized to distribute cloths that women use for menstrual hygiene and more suitable food.

In addition to carrying out such work themselves, women's rights actors can support other humanitarian actors to improve their response, by supporting gender assessments or monitoring and evaluation of assistance.<sup>15</sup> Such support mitigates the risks of missing crucial information or worse – when they are not consulted, assistance may inadvertently reinforce harmful gender norms. In the eastern part of Sri Lanka, for example, Muslim communities have matrilineal land rights. During the government and international humanitarian aid response after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, resources and deeds to new houses were given only to men, ignoring this practice and upending traditional gender practices that had protected women.<sup>16</sup>

## SUPPORTING GENDER EQUALITY AND TRANSFORMATION OVER THE LONG TERM

Beyond meeting women's needs, women's rights actors often work in innovative ways to guide and deliver gender-transformative humanitarian action. Since their work often involves challenging patriarchal norms and supporting women's agency, their work is more comprehensive and includes tackling issues that are often not seen as a life-saving priority in emergency settings, such as violence against women. The risk of such violence can increase significantly in emergencies, in some conflict settings, more than 70% of women have experienced gender based violence.<sup>17</sup>

The work of *African Women and Youth Action for Development (AWYAD)* (case study 1), which focuses on challenging the norms underpinning violence against women in refugee contexts, and the role that the *Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation (AMDF)* (case study 3) has played in implementing sexual health programs with displaced communities are illustrative of the types of work women's rights actors do.

Women's rights actors can also adapt successful approaches used in their long-term work to a humanitarian setting to improve outcomes. In the Philippines, for instance, Oxfam built experience integrating initiatives to address women's heavy and unequal responsibilities for unpaid care work with women's rights organizations as partners. This experience led to an unpaid care work analysis being used in delivering a humanitarian cash-for-work program, where women who were acting as caregivers for their families after a natural disaster or conflict were included in the cash programming. Their inclusion challenged social norms about what constitutes work and the value of women's roles in communities, which can contribute towards gender equality in the long term.

Previous Oxfam research<sup>18</sup> showed that, compared to the rest of the humanitarian sector, women's rights actors take a broader perception of what constitutes a crisis and their work often bridges areas traditionally siloed into development, conflict or emergency. For example, women's organizations working on food security describe a broad perception of risk including both systemic shocks and risks at the individual and household levels. While issues such as violence against women, male migration and local crop failure are often considered to be long-term development issues, these women's organizations understood them to be part of the humanitarian-development spectrum.<sup>19</sup>

### CASE STUDY 1: African Women and Youth Action for Development

**A**WYAD was founded in Uganda in 2010, with the goal of empowering vulnerable women and youth.

Uganda's refugee-hosting model is one of the most progressive in the world. Uganda does not follow a policy of refugee encampment. Most refugees reside alongside Ugandan citizens in rural settlements, towns and cities.<sup>20</sup> Refugees use available public health services, have access to universal primary and lower secondary education, and engage in economic activities. Uganda's generous approach and geographic location, with ongoing conflicts in neighbouring South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo, has made it one of the top five refugee-hosting countries worldwide. It currently hosts an estimated 1.3 million refugees, with approximately 84% of new arrivals being women and children.<sup>21</sup>

In this context, there are a number of safety and protection challenges for refugees and host communities. Displaced women have lost their social support systems and are at increased risk for multiple forms of gender-based violence including sexual violence, domestic violence, early marriage and trafficking. AWYAD works on prevention and awareness building by - among other interventions - establishing community protection committees, task forces on gender-based violence and community watch groups and training them to identify and refer cases. As a local organization, AWYAD understands the social and cultural norms underpinning violence and how they differ across communities. For example, in some refugee communities, there is a belief that men who do not beat women do not love them. In order to prevent violence, it is necessary to understand that belief and address it head on.

AWYAD is also addressing security challenges posed by reports of an increased number of guns

in refugee-hosting areas, which has created tension in refugee and host communities and threatens everyone's safety – especially women. AWYAD is supporting community dialogues and peace forums between host communities and refugees to build social cohesion as well as advocating for a stronger role for local governments in managing refugee affairs. Currently, local governments receive little support from the central government and other humanitarian partners, while the Refugee Act of 2006 does not give them a mandate to do such work. Yet, local governments have a key role to play in bolstering existing protection structures such as the police, the judiciary, local councils and district protection coordinating committees, which can support refugee women and children even after emergency responses.

**“In every emergency situation, women and children are exposed to higher risks and levels of vulnerability than any other group of people. In such situations, women's rights organisations respond first before any other, become the safe zone for these suffering women and always strive to restore hope in their lives and give them a new meaning of life even after emergency situations. Humanitarian agencies should support women's rights organisations with the required technical and financial capacity to effectively, and sustainably respond to the needs of vulnerable women.”**

– Ritah Nansereko,  
Executive Director of AWYAD

## ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND BUILDING MOVEMENTS FOR CHANGE

Women's rights actors play an important role in engaging decision makers at different levels to support accountability for gender-transformative responses and advocate for women's rights. Their expertise can provide insights into what kinds of policies and programs are needed and, if kept engaged, they can act as effective watchdogs for policy implementation. In Bangladesh, the *Bangladesh Women's Humanitarian Platform* (see case study 2) was consulted during national humanitarian policy dialogues on how to ensure gender equality was addressed.<sup>22</sup> Organizations have also used this platform with the media to raise awareness of women's rights issues in refugee communities in Cox's Bazar.

To strengthen their advocacy, women's rights actors often work in networks and alliances. Especially if they are working as individuals, Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) strategically rely on broad networks as a way to avoid being singled out during crackdowns on human rights organizations. In Turkey, LGBTQI+ activists have found increased safety through collaborating with a broad base of groups including women's and anti-discrimination organizations.<sup>23</sup> By building coalitions, they have been able to advance gender equality issues and gain momentum in otherwise repressive socio-political climates. Networks that have been created, like those in Bangladesh and Turkey, are invaluable channels that could be leveraged through international humanitarian responses during emergencies.

Women's rights actors can also support women's participation at the community level to help shape community decisions that better support gender equality and women's voices. Such support can involve working differently than traditional models. For example, the Centre de développement intégral de l'enfant rural (CEDIER), an organization in the Democratic Republic of Congo, identifies women as the heads of households in all its needs assessments. Its executive director explained that women tend to think of all family members' needs above their own, whereas men do not. As a result, women identify a much greater variety of needs, such as cooking items and hygiene products – things that men generally fail to mention.<sup>24</sup>

## CASE STUDY 2: Bangladesh Women's Humanitarian Platform

**W**omen's rights organizations in Bangladesh have recently formed the Bangladesh Women's Humanitarian Platform in an effort to become stronger humanitarian actors and represent the rights of women in emergency responses. Although there are vibrant and strong women's rights organizations in the country, they have so far not been systematically involved in humanitarian responses or represented within decision-making spaces during emergencies.

In November 2017, over 30 representatives from women's rights organizations held a workshop to discuss their experiences in humanitarian work. At this workshop, they decided to form a platform through which they could work systematically together, learn and build their capacity, and influence the humanitarian community in Bangladesh to adopt a strong focus on gender equality and women's rights.

Experiences of humanitarian work vary across the platform. Some organizations have been involved in localized responses when floods or cyclones have affected their communities and have been able to support gender-sensitive responses with their in-depth knowledge of contexts. Others have not been involved in humanitarian work, but are influential actors on the issue of violence against women and girls and they would like to see greater attention to this in humanitarian action in Bangladesh.

Although it is relatively new, the platform has already been able to influence the humanitarian community in Bangladesh. It provided an avenue to include women's rights organizations in a national policy review. Moreover, organizations have visited Cox's Bazar to document the experiences of Rohingya women refugees and held a press conference to call for a stronger focus on gender and women's rights in the humanitarian response. Working collectively has enabled them to have a stronger voice and to build their capacity.

The platform has identified joint priorities, which include capacity building in humanitarian practices and principles, influencing humanitarian policies from a women's rights perspective and increasing the support they provide in emergency responses. It is currently funded as part of Oxfam's Enabling Local and National Humanitarian Actors program.<sup>25</sup>



*Momotaz Khatun, Executive Director, Ashroy Foundation and member of the Bangladesh Women's Humanitarian Platform*



## LAYING THE GROUND FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING AND RECOVERY

In conflict settings, the need to bridge the divide between humanitarian, development and peace interventions is needed in order to lay the ground for sustainable peace. Women's rights actors play a key role in conflict settings taking on a variety of roles to mitigate the impacts of the conflict on communities and working towards sustainable conflict resolution and recovery. These actors are carrying out a broad range of activities under the umbrella of 'peacebuilding', which often encompasses efforts well beyond the organizations' mandates or the training of individuals within them. In many instances, women's rights actors promote broader societal transformations that can lead to positive sustainable peace.

A major focus of women's rights actors from a humanitarian angle, is their role in protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence and supporting survivors. With rape being used as a weapon of war in many conflict settings, women's rights actors provide medical and psychosocial support to survivors and setting up safe houses. Numerous women's rights organizations in conflict settings grew out of the need to address the specific needs of sexual violence survivors but often their activities expand as they aim to tackle the root causes of violence. *SOEFFPADI*, a coalition of 40 women's rights organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, formed to support sexual violence survivors by establishing a clinic to medically treat survivors and providing psychosocial support.<sup>27</sup> Their work then expanded to include skills and vocational training for survivors and working to reintegrate them into their communities. The coalition is currently promoting women's leadership supporting them to stand as candidates in elections, and reducing violence by supporting young men to find jobs.

Women take an active role in resolving crises, although most of that work is generally not perceived as work and is rendered invisible. For example, in Syria women's rights actors and informal activist networks have, since the outbreak of the conflict, stepped into a number of roles including negotiating access in contested areas and advocating for peaceful solutions between warring regions and factions, forming alliances and contributing to negotiations and peace talks where they can. This work is important as research on inclusive transition processes strongly shows that the presence of women at formal peace negotiations brings new perspectives to the table that can 'produce positive gains for women and shape a more sustainable and meaningful peace'.<sup>28</sup> Also, peace talks are 60% less likely to fail if they include the participation of civil society and women's groups.<sup>29</sup>

Research in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka has found that women and men living in crisis have very different perceptions of what peace would constitute.<sup>30</sup> Men emphasized the absence of formal conflict and insecurity, the establishment of formal structures such as those related to governance and justice, and the need for infrastructure such as roads, while women's understanding of peace tended to start at the level of family and community and included peace in the home, education, individual rights and freedoms (including freedom of movement), absence of domestic violence, and food security.<sup>31</sup> The fact that there is a strong link between gender equality and security makes it even more pertinent to ensure women's rights actors are supported to do their work, particularly when it comes to addressing patriarchal structures that have led to insecurity to begin with. Research shows that women's advancement is critical to securing stability and to reducing political violence as countries with greater gender equality are more secure and resilient to crises.<sup>32</sup>



**BOX 3: WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

For over a decade, the UN has nominally led intergovernmental efforts on women, peace and security since the UN Security Council passed resolution 1325 in 2000. The resolution includes four pillars:

**PREVENTION:**

Strengthening efforts to prevent violence, including sexual violence, against women and girls in peace operations, fragile states and conflict-affected situations.

**PARTICIPATION:**

Advocating for the active and meaningful participation and representation of women and local women's groups in peace and security activities, including peace processes.

**PROTECTION:**

Protecting women's and girls' human rights by helping to ensure their safety, physical and mental health, well-being, economic security, and equality; promoting and protecting the security and rights of women and girls; and protecting women and girls from violence, including sexual violence.

**RELIEF AND RECOVERY:**

Promoting and working to ensure women's equal access to humanitarian and development assistance; and promoting aid services that support the specific needs and capacities of women and girls in all relief and recovery efforts.

The resolution represented a landmark moment following decades of engagement and advocacy, but implementation has lagged behind expectations with most attention focused on women's participation rather than their roles in protection, relief and recovery efforts. Since 2000, the UN Security Council has passed several sister resolutions to resolution 1325. Most notably, resolution 2242 of 2015 recognized the role that women's organizations can play in meaningfully translating commitment to action. Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security includes commitments to empower local and national women's organizations, and recognizes their importance in driving and sustaining positive changes.

# 3. CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Despite the evidence that women's rights actors play a crucial role in humanitarian responses, they are currently not systematically included as partners and face considerable negative impacts due to the humanitarian sector's ways of working. Canada's commitments to increase their leadership are welcome, but to implement them will require listening to these actors, understanding the challenges as they see them and responding to dismantle structural barriers to their leadership. The research found that despite differences in the contexts in which women's rights actors are working, there are often commonalities in what they see as challenges, barriers and priorities for change.

A number of these challenges, such as building humanitarian capacity and accessing suitable funding, are experienced by all types of local and national organizations. For women's rights actors, however, they are intensified due to the lack of investment in women's rights in the humanitarian sector as well as gender inequality in the communities where they work, which can restrict their leadership or create particular threats to their security.

## RECOGNITION AND PRIORITIZATION OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Throughout this research, women's rights actors consistently stated that their work is not recognized or valued in humanitarian action. Particularly in disaster-prone areas or contexts with protracted conflict, they see their work as preparing for and responding to crisis, but it is not always recognized as such. In contexts where emergencies are sudden, women's rights actors we spoke with emphasized that it is inevitable they will respond because of the effect on the communities in which they are rooted. For example, when conflict broke out in Marawi City in the Philippines, the whole community that Al-Majudilah Development Foundation (AMDF) works with was affected, which meant that it had to refocus on responding to the conflict by delivering work focused on women's rights to displaced communities (see case study 3).

**"No matter where you are everyone says that now is not the time to talk about these issues. There is no such thing as women's rights. We are in a war now, there is a massive humanitarian crisis. They say now is not the time."<sup>33</sup>**

The lack of recognition of women's rights actors is in part due to patriarchal notions of leadership that see women as in need of protection, rather than as active leaders with agency and unique capabilities and access in their communities. In many contexts, women's rights actors are on average smaller than mainstream organizations and have fewer existing networks and less influence with international actors. This situation means that as international actors think through how to better work with local actors, mainstream organizations are seen as best placed to readily increase their humanitarian work given existing capacity and networks, which in turn reinforces the marginalization of women's rights actors. Also, since international actors often use the stated vision and mission of organizations to find alignment with their program aims, marginalization can be partly due to women's rights actors not always having humanitarian responses included in their mandate. Without an explicit focus on humanitarian relief, they can miss out on partnerships.

There is also a tendency within the humanitarian sector to not see gender equality or women's rights as a core part of humanitarian action, or to consider it work that should happen after the 'life-saving' response has been delivered. Research with women's rights organizations in conflict-affected countries of the Middle East and North Africa found that as humanitarian assistance has scaled up in the region, it has had the effect of sidetracking their core gender justice work, which is not included in donor agendas.<sup>34</sup> These organizations are told 'now is not the time' to work on women's rights and asked instead to deliver specific types of programming that donors have prioritized.

For a feminist approach, it is important to recognize the leadership of women's rights actors in humanitarian work as well as the work that they do as life-saving and essential to humanitarian action. This recognition should be reflected in priorities and the funding made available.

## CASE STUDY 3: The Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation responds to the Marawi City conflict

Humanitarian work is not the mandate of AMDF, but when the Marawi City conflict broke out in May 2017, it quickly responded to support the communities with which it works. AMDF is a Muslim women-led organization that works on peacebuilding initiatives and programs that empower Muslim women on the island of Mindanao. The five-month conflict between the government of the Philippines and Islamic militants caused widespread devastation and displacement in Marawi City, where the latter are based. Since AMDF is a local organization, all staff members were affected, either losing their homes or being forced to move.

Women faced heightened risks during the crisis, including threats of violence and harassment in evacuation centres, and an estimated 18,000 were pregnant or new mothers.<sup>35</sup>

AMDF is one of Oxfam's local non-governmental organizations supported in the Marawi City conflict response. As a local women's rights organization, AMDF has been able to deliver culturally sensitive emergency response services to communities as well as long-term gender-transformative projects. Its 'family conversation' program brings displaced communities together for day-long guided conversations on protection and sexual and reproductive health. Participants are also asked about their experiences at the evacuation centres, so that what is provided there can be shaped by their needs.

The work of AMDF is aimed at enabling the full participation of women and girls to ensure that their needs and vulnerabilities are visible, understood and adequately addressed. In contrast to the traditional international response, working in partnership with AMDF has enabled women's rights to be prioritized and programs to be led by local women embedded in the community.

**"During conflict, the population of women in evacuation centres is bigger than men. Women affected by conflict are more vulnerable to sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Thus, it is crucial to have women at the frontlines of giving humanitarian aid. We understand women's needs better."**

– Representative of AMDF (name withheld for privacy purposes)



*Responding to a crisis in the Philippines*

## LACK OF QUALITY FUNDING AND UNEQUAL APPROACHES TO PARTNERSHIP

The lack of quality funding available to women's rights actors was consistently raised in the research and throughout the literature. Quality funding would be long term and predictable, allowing actors to define their approaches and priorities. It would also cover core costs, meaning overheads necessary to sustain an organization such as rent and equipment. Currently, women's rights actors report that funding is usually tied to specific objectives and activities defined by international actors, does not cover core costs and is often short term. The lack of quality funding makes it difficult to build and maintain capacity and develop institutionally, as they are unable to offer long-term job security to staff and at times have to scale back – losing people who had been trained – if there are gaps in funding between emergencies. It also limits their opportunity to use their expertise and context-specific knowledge to shape programs as well as share learning with partners to help influence practices in the future.

With limited funding and resources available, women's rights actors also find themselves competing against each other for donor funds. Providing funding on a long-term basis, as well as seeking to bridge gaps between programs on disaster risk reduction, preparedness and emergency responses, could help reduce competition, since local actors would not have to scale up and down as funding becomes available in times of crisis. Our interviewees expressed the need for funding for collaboration and partnerships between local and national actors, which is a useful strategy to increase impact.

**Quality funding would be long term and predictable, allowing actors to define their approaches and priorities. It would also cover core costs.**

The nature of rapid-onset emergencies means that donors need to disperse funds for interventions quickly and on a large scale, which is in contrast with this type of funding. The fact that women's rights actors tend to be smaller also limits their ability to respond at the scale desired during a crisis. However, the majority of today's humanitarian situations are protracted, so in these contexts, providing quality funding for women's rights actors would not only be possible with different funding models, but also strategic to reduce long-term causes of fragility and reach marginalized populations vulnerable to crisis.

## BUILDING AND MAINTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO BE STRONG HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

Throughout our interviews, women's rights actors noted that the two main areas where they would like support in order to be stronger humanitarian actors were in technical knowledge of the humanitarian sector and operational capacity. Training on humanitarian principles, standards and processes were mentioned as priorities for technical capacity building, particularly as it would support them in accessing funding. Setting up financial systems, especially to be able to manage larger grants, human resources, and monitoring, evaluation and learning processes, were mentioned as operational capacity needs.

It is also important to consider what a feminist approach to capacity building would look like. Such an approach would recognize the agency and leadership of women's rights actors and allow them to use increased resources to strengthen their work, rather than become tools to implement the existing agendas of international actors. Local and national organizations should be able to analyze their capacities and define their needs and priorities, rather than having a 'one-size-fits-all approach'. Innovation should be used in the approach and a focus on embedding capacity in organizations over individuals should be adopted. Rather than using traditional workshops delivered by international actors, peer-to-peer learning, mentoring and secondment programs could be considered and South-South learning opportunities could be supported.

The long-term sustainability of capacity building was also raised as an issue. One factor hindering sustainability is staff retention, with women's rights actors reporting that once staff are trained, they are more likely to leave for opportunities with international actors, especially in contexts where humanitarian assistance is being scaled up. The Charter for Change, an agreement among over 30 INGOs aimed at supporting local capacity, includes actions to address this issue including compensating local organizations and supporting their capacity over the long term.<sup>36</sup>

Capacity building should also be viewed as a two-way process, where international actors learn from and adopt the approaches of women's rights actors, especially since many international actors struggle to adequately implement gender-sensitive or transformative programming. Women's rights actors are often skilled at tracking the impact of their work from a gender-transformative perspective, specifically capturing and understanding long-term changes in power relations and social norms, which are valuable skills that could be adopted by other actors.

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## ACCESS TO DECISION-MAKING SPACES AND MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Women’s rights actors play a role in influencing humanitarian policies at the national and local levels to address gender inequality (see section 2). Currently, however, they are not consistently included in decision-making spaces and can experience barriers to accessing them. Our interviewees were working in different contexts and at different levels, so therefore were interested in having greater representation in very different decision-making spaces. Some interviewees mentioned the lack of transparency and access to the cluster system through which humanitarian responses are organized at the country level. Local and national organizations are not typically represented in these spaces and if they are, women’s rights actors are unlikely to be included. Language can also be a barrier since conversations often happen in English. While actors with whom we spoke expressed the need for these spaces to be more open and transparent as well as for the possibility of meaningful engagement with them, being brought into these formal spaces was not necessarily seen as a priority for all women’s rights actors.

For some, it was more important to gain access to local disaster management committees, which would enable them to influence how resources are being distributed in their communities. Others reported national-level discussions as being the most relevant for them. For example, the Dominican Republic has institutionalized the participation of women’s rights actors in its disaster risk management system. There is a Protection, Gender and Age Advisory Group within the government’s National Emergency Commission. This multi-stakeholder advisory group is a legal entity that includes a range of civil society stakeholders, including women’s rights actors. It provides policy advice to the commission and ensures that vulnerable people affected and displaced by disasters are well protected.

Increasing the participation of women’s rights actors also requires understanding the full range of barriers to women’s voices and leadership, such as patriarchal norms. Some actors to whom we spoke described how women are not used to speaking up and making decisions at the community level, so they need to have their confidence built to do so and be supported to respond to any backlash that may come from their communities or families. Moreover, women are responsible for a higher proportion of unpaid care and domestic work, which can limit their time available to take part in discussions. For instance, they may not be able to travel to take part in national-level discussions without support in place. Our interviewees also reflected on the patriarchal nature of the humanitarian sector itself, with lower representation of women in decision-making roles normalizing the lack of participation from women’s rights actors from civil society.

## SECURITY AND CLOSING SPACES FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS

In many parts of the world, closing civil society space is being used as a tactic to restrict democracy and government accountability. It is often linked with a highly patriarchal ideology.<sup>37</sup> In these contexts, women’s rights actors face particular security threats due to their aims of advancing gender equality and have frequently reported gendered attacks, such as sexualized violence, intended to silence them.<sup>38</sup> Such violence is a human rights violation and restricts the work that women’s rights actors can carry out. Research by MamaCash, for example, found that women’s rights groups in India have had to stop their visits to communities because of attacks from conservative groups that act with impunity.<sup>39</sup> In Yemen, female staff from women’s rights organizations have reported being stopped at checkpoints more frequently and having more difficulty moving around than their male counterparts.<sup>40</sup> Donor practices can exacerbate security risks, by not carefully considering partners’ requirements to use their logos to brand work, which can draw more attention to women’s rights actors.<sup>41</sup>

Women’s rights actors use various strategies to continue their work in these difficult contexts, including adapting their language, using social media to highlight what is happening to a wider audience and building networks of solidarity and support between activists.<sup>42</sup> Donors and international actors can better support these types of strategies by providing flexible funding, valuing and investing in collective organizing and ensuring their approaches to identifying partners are nuanced and context-specific, taking into account the restrictions women’s rights actors might be facing in meeting normal partnership criteria.



## LACK OF HOLISTIC PROGRAM APPROACHES

Currently, there is a lack of donor policy coherence between humanitarian, conflict and development work, which are often managed with different funding streams and through different agencies or departments. Alongside this, women's rights actors discussed the need for extra attention to the enabling environment for building strong organizations. For example, the Association Munyu des femmes de la Comoé in Burkina Faso stated that the main role it plays in humanitarian action is disaster risk reduction through awareness raising and training for women, using a gendered understanding of vulnerability to disaster.<sup>43</sup> But the broader development context, including high levels of illiteracy and disempowerment of women, is a constraining factor. To build women's resilience and leadership in humanitarian settings, we must support the realization of their rights more broadly.

Likewise, the Association Nadjeh, which works with Palestinian refugee women in Lebanon, highlighted the difficulty of pushing for transformative change in a context where its beneficiaries have no or limited national rights.<sup>44</sup> Although many Palestinian refugee families have lived in Lebanon for generations, they are still not allowed to work legally and excluded from key facets of social, political and economic life. This is especially true for Palestinian women, who are among the most marginalized members of society. Long-term holistic interventions are needed to address this situation, but they are difficult to implement within the short durations of humanitarian projects and funding cycles.



# 4. SUPPORTING THE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS: ENTRY POINTS FOR CANADA

Canada has made commitments to support the leadership of women's rights actors in its Feminist International Assistance Policy, its National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and at the World Humanitarian Summit (see Box 1). In order to best respond to the realities of women's rights actors and support long-term, sustainable transformation, building programs and policies that bring these areas of work together and bridging what are currently siloed areas of work is necessary. Investing in new ways of working, particularly targeted gender in emergencies programming, and adopting practices that will allow greater partnership with women's rights actors is also critical. Below we outline these three main entry points.

## BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITARIAN AND PEACEBUILDING POLICY AND PROGRAMMING AND APPLY A FEMINIST APPROACH

Canada currently does not have a humanitarian policy, though a growing proportion of Canadian official development assistance is dedicated towards humanitarian assistance. To address this gap, Canada should design and adopt a feminist humanitarian policy in line with and designed to work coherently with the Feminist International Assistance Policy and National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. Such a policy should reflect a comprehensive approach to humanitarian assistance, prioritize gender equality and women's rights and embrace the localization agenda.

For women's rights actors operating in crisis contexts, there are not always clear distinctions between development, humanitarian and peacebuilding work. Currently, Canadian policies and assistance are operating along these divides, without strong frameworks to bring them together. These 'silos' make it hard to

build a comprehensive approach to supporting the leadership of women's rights actors and establish long-term partnerships through preparedness, conflict prevention and disaster risk reduction. A longer-term and integrated approach that recognizes the overlap between humanitarian crises and development assistance would be more effective in strengthening partners and speaking to their realities and enable scaling up, particularly in countries and regions where crises are frequent or protracted.

At the international level, the humanitarian sector is recognizing the importance of this approach. The Agenda for Humanity calls for a 'New Way of Working' to more effectively reduce risk and vulnerability and the need for crisis responses over the long term. Such shifts will support a long-term approach to partnership and improve the implementation of gender-transformative work in these areas. One key aspect of this is bridging the gap between development and humanitarian assistance and investing more in two key aspects, preparedness and disaster risk reduction, which currently falls through the gap between development and humanitarian action in Canada's approach.

### THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Develop a humanitarian policy which bridges humanitarian action and peacebuilding, increases attention to disaster risk reduction and preparedness, and is in line with the Feminist International Assistance Policy.
- Increase opportunities for multi-year humanitarian funding, ensuring longer term and more predictable support
- Bolster gender programmatic capacity and expertise within the International Humanitarian Assistance section of Global Affairs Canada to ensure that gender and partnerships with women's rights actors are prioritized in calls for proposals and project reviews.

## SUPPORT STANDALONE GENDER IN EMERGENCIES PROGRAMMING

Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy has a welcome ambition for gender-responsive humanitarian action. It commits to preventing and responding to gender-based violence, supporting the full range of sexual and reproductive health and rights and strengthening women's local leadership during humanitarian crises. However, there are currently no standalone gender in emergencies funding opportunities. This is a barrier to innovation and supporting women's leadership because there are no funding envelopes or programmatic opportunities for partners to develop programs in this area. It also undermines the enabling environment for the leadership of women's rights actors since it sends a message that gender equality and women's rights are not core parts of humanitarian responses.

Mainstreaming gender into humanitarian work is needed, but alone is insufficient to transform the humanitarian sector. Specific attention, resources and initiatives are also needed to adequately address gender inequality. In line with commitments, focused programs should include supporting the leadership of women's rights actors. Initiatives could also include capacity building to empower women's rights actors to respond to humanitarian crises or advocate for the inclusion of women's needs and interests in humanitarian responses.

Standalone gender in emergencies programming should also redefine timelines, success and results, given the long term and non-linear process of gender transformative agendas. Women's rights actors building their strength and resilience should count as a success or result in its own right.

### THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Provide dedicated funding for standalone gender in emergencies programming through its humanitarian assistance pool and strengthen gender mainstreaming.
- Align humanitarian assistance commitments with the Feminist International Assistance Policy by dedicating at least 15% of humanitarian funding to gender in emergencies programming, ensuring a significant amount of this is allocated to supporting local and national women's rights actors.

## BUILD AN APPROACH ACROSS HUMANITARIAN ACTION THAT SUPPORTS QUALITY FUNDING AND A FEMINIST APPROACH TO PARTNERSHIP FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS

The current framework for Canada's humanitarian assistance contains barriers to increasing support for women's rights actors. However there are opportunities for adopting new approaches and working with both new and existing partners to help overcome these. Currently, Canada's commitments use the term 'women's organizations', which does not ensure that selected partners will have gender-transformative agendas. It also does not reflect the whole spectrum of actors working on gender-transformative programming, especially in contexts where civil society space is restricted and support for women's rights is low. Movements, informal networks and individuals must be explicitly recognized and supported. First steps should be to define which actors Canada intends to empower and have staff be able to identify these actors in their fields of work.

To increase opportunities for funding and partnerships with women's rights actors, Canada should employ a variety of mechanisms that best suit particular contexts. Where it is not possible to fund these actors directly, for example because they are organized through informal networks, existing partners such as women's funds, INGOs, UN agencies and international women's rights organisations should be enabled and incentivized to support their leadership in humanitarian action. They should also be encouraged to develop meaningful partnerships that challenge rather than reinforce unequal dynamics between international and national and local actors.

Recognizing the nature of funding has a large impact on whether it supports women's rights actors to achieve their goals, opportunities should be maximized for greater core funding and multi-year, flexible funding. Women's rights actors should be able to define what types of support they need in terms of building technical and organizational capacities. Programs should also be designed to address gendered barriers to leadership and support access to decision making spaces.

Currently, quantitative evidence on the impacts of women's rights actors in humanitarian action is limited since adequate investments are not being made to understand their roles. Canada could support further understanding of the role these actors play and the impact they bring to humanitarian action through funding research and systematically monitoring and evaluating the work that they do.

## THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD:

- Create opportunities and incentivize humanitarian assistance to support the leadership of women's rights actors, particularly by providing long-term, flexible and core funding.
- Identify and use a variety of funding mechanisms to reach women's rights organisations, movements and networks. This should include funding through partnerships with women's funds and INGOs, but also through regional funds and consortiums which bring together various organizations with different skill sets.
- Track and report on the funding that is being received by women's rights actors for humanitarian action, and evaluate impacts to support broader understanding of their role.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INGOS AND INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

The humanitarian sector's 'Me Too' movement has shown that many INGOs, including Oxfam, still have progress to make to ensure that humanitarian programming is community-led, is inspired by feminist principles and values and promotes local partnership. We know that the government and our supporters are keen to see the progress that we are making. We must all rise to this challenge and build a humanitarian sector that is more accountable to women and girls.

## SUPPORT WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS AS PARTNERS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

- Increase the number of humanitarian partnerships with women's rights actors, including in preparedness, disaster risk reduction and conflict prevention work as well as emergencies.
- Ensure that partnerships are as equal as possible, with partners involved at all stages of planning humanitarian action, including design and monitoring, evaluation and learning. Provide long term, core funding.
- Help facilitate the participation of women's rights actors in decision and policy making spaces.
- Support alliance building and fund consortiums, platforms and pooled funds that would allow smaller organizations to join with larger ones to access funding and build their capacity.

## BUILD THE EVIDENCE BASE AND BEST PRACTICE FOR SUPPORTING THE LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS:

- Conduct monitoring, evaluation and learning about partnerships with women's rights actors and capacity-building efforts and share what is learned internally and externally.
- Track and report on funding that is being used to partner with women's rights organizations in order to measure its impact.

## SUPPORT GENDER EQUALITY IN LOCAL HUMANITARIAN ACTION:

- Provide training on gender equality to local humanitarian organizations, in collaboration with (and preferably led by) local women's rights actors.
- Support efforts to engage men as allies in encouraging women's leadership in humanitarian action.
- Make changes in ways of working, particularly around staff hiring and training, to ensure that staff have the right competencies to support local humanitarian leadership, women's leadership and gender justice.

# ANNEX 1

## INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTORS

Interviewees for our research were chosen to represent a range of geographic areas, focus areas (at both the local and national levels), sizes of organizations and types of humanitarian contexts. Although some interviewees were not engaged with Oxfam or other international humanitarian organizations, the majority of organizations whose representatives were interviewed are current or previous Oxfam partners, which means that bias may have been introduced to the research. To counteract such bias as much as possible, the report also draws on research findings from other sources, and a literature review was undertaken.

As part of the research, an author also attended an Oxfam Asia regional workshop entitled 'Women's Leadership in Humanitarian Action'. This had the objective of bringing together Oxfam staff and partners to discuss opportunities and challenges in supporting women's rights actors in humanitarian responses.

This study has been developed in consultation with the following organizations:

- Association pour le Développement Économique et Social, Burkina Faso
- Centre de développement intégral de l'enfant rural, Democratic Republic of Congo
- Tewa, Nepal
- Gramin Mahila Srijansheel Pariwar, Nepal
- Association Munyu des Femmes de la Comoé, Burkina Faso
- Association Najdeh, Lebanon
- All Girls Foundation Yemen, Yemen
- Women Human Rights, Nepal
- African Women and Youth Action for Development, Uganda
- Al-Mujadilah Development Foundation, the Philippines
- Ashroy Foundation, Bangladesh
- KAKASA, the Philippines
- Yaung Chi Thit, Myanmar
- Mujeres en Desarrollo Dominicana, Dominican Republic

The report does not necessarily represent the views or policies of these organisations.

We also drew on previously conducted Oxfam Canada research that covered the Latin American and Caribbean region more extensively, particularly:

L. Ravon. (2014). *Resilience in Times of Food Insecurity: Reflecting on the experiences of women's organizations*. Oxfam International. Retrieved 23rd May from <https://www.oxfam.ca/our-work/publications/resilience-in-times-of-food-insecurity>

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written by Brittany Lambert, Francesca Rhodes and Mayssam Zaaroura.

This report was written to share research results, to contribute to public debate and to invite feedback on development and humanitarian policy and practice. It does not necessarily reflect Oxfam policy positions. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of Oxfam.

Published June 2018.

Photos on pages 3 and 9 by Pooja Kishnani

Photo on page 13 by Genevieve Estacaan/Oxfam

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