



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office



Wilton Park



Report

**Women's rights organisations and
movements in crises: pathways to progress**

Monday 5 – Wednesday 7 February 2024

WP3274

In partnership with:



FORD
FOUNDATION





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Background to the dialogue series

The Women and Girls Wilton Park Series, launched as part of the [FCDO's International Women and Girls Strategy \(2023-2030\)](#) aims to create space to interrogate and build consensus around how to effectively tackle priority issues that are central to women and girls' rights, freedom and potential.

One such issue is current approaches to crises response. Women-led organisations (WLO) and women's rights organisations (WRO) and movements play a critical role in crises, with an increasing number of studies affirming that they have consistently applied innovative ways of working and responded to widespread humanitarian needs, whilst pursuing collective action and intersectional approaches. Despite this, they remain consistently underfunded and excluded from meaningful participation in humanitarian decision-making.

The challenges that WLOs and WROs face are well documented, and this event convened actors to identify concrete and feasible proposals for change within existing humanitarian systems, and for innovative approaches as part of a wider resourcing ecosystem.

A focus on the experiences of refugee WLO, women-led Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs) and LGBTQI+ organisations and activists aimed to ensure that proposals for change address, and do not further entrench, barriers faced by representative groups facing marginalisation. The use of the terms WLO and WRO throughout this report is intended to be inclusive of all groups, including the transgender community.

Executive Summary

Over 50 participants from over 30 countries representing diverse WLOs, WROs, OPDs, LGBTQI+ organisations, women's and feminist funds, national governments, philanthropy, INGOs and humanitarian actors discussed imagining a healthy crisis resourcing system for WLOs and WROs, strategic approaches to ensuring resources reach these organisations, diversity and inclusion of underrepresented groups, women's leadership in coordination and decision making, learning from innovation and pathways to progress. The meeting comes at a critical moment in time with increasing prevalence of threats to civic space, and global attempts to roll back rights for women and LGBTQI+ people.

Key themes to emerge from the discussion included understanding crisis from the perspective of communities, the unique but under recognized contributions made by

WROs and WLOs in crisis settings, the importance of collective care and reframing humanitarian action in the context of crisis and humanitarian response, accountability and risk taking, and exploring the drivers of accountability and risk taking within crisis response funding.

Key messages

Reframing crisis

1. People marginalised by gender discrimination and exclusions, facing multiple and intersecting forms of marginalisation such as disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and refugee and displacement status live in a constant state of crisis. This state of crisis is not innate; it is a result of deep political, economic and social inequities, and is further exacerbated by critical events, disasters, and conflict.
2. 'Crisis', as defined by the humanitarian system, requires reframing to address long-term and embedded crises as they are experienced by communities and by marginalised groups, and to support and facilitate collective care.
3. There is also a need to acknowledge and address the different 'languages' spoken by key stakeholders and strive to adopt common understandings and language for effective collaboration.
4. WROs and WLOs play a critical, holistic crisis response role which is under-recognized by most mainstream humanitarian actors.

Women's Rights and Feminist Organisations as responders to crisis

5. WLOs, WROs, feminist organisations, and other constituency-led groups are responding to crises on the front line in communities, often with little or no pay, frequently putting themselves at personal risk. WROs and WLOs understand solutions across all sectors, have political imaginations, can take practical action, and most importantly have the trust of, and are accountable to their communities.
6. With credibility, trust and accountability to the community firmly in place, these organisations respond before international organisations arrive and remain after they leave, providing unique care and support in ways that are inaccessible to the humanitarian system.
7. Due to their genuine local positioning and ability to reach community members, the outcome of humanitarian responses would improve if more and better-quality funding was made accessible to WLOs, WROs and feminist organisations to enable them to scale up their complementary activities. WLOs, WROs, and feminist organisations need supporting and strengthening before an emergency hits, to maximise opportunities to respond effectively, and inclusively.
8. Women's and Feminist Funds, embedded within women's rights movements, are an effective, existing funding mechanism designed to provide quality partnerships and support to WROs and WLOs. They operate at the national, regional and multi-regional level, offer flexible funding and accompaniment to grantee partners, and, collectively, have significant absorption capacity.

Collective care and reframing humanitarian action

9. WLOs, WROs, and feminist organisations put collective care at the centre of their efforts, understanding that wellbeing is critical to sustain solidarity and action in communities.
10. Maintaining the ecosystem, or collective tissue that binds feminist organisations, movements, and networks through collective care is a political act. Collective care and wellbeing can offer a model for reframing humanitarian action, with the quality of care and mutual aid requiring a similar standard to security.

"Sudan is a mirror for humanitarian failure"

11. 'Capacity building' efforts to strengthen WLOs, WROs, and feminist organisations are often northern-centric, and focus on training organisations in how to operate within the structures and constraints of the humanitarian system rather than genuinely valuing and harnessing the power of local knowledge, leadership, networks, and action.
12. While efforts have been made to reframe humanitarian action through a localisation agenda and feminist frameworks, these conceptualisations and commitments made by humanitarian actors often remain at a global level and do not have meaningful impact during local and national implementation.
13. WROs, WLOs, and feminist organisations face severe constraints to access humanitarian funds, including inability to meet stringent due diligence processes which are often applied in the same way to large INGOs as to national WROs. Successful examples of those working in the intermediary space, most notably Women's and Feminist Funds, channel flexible ODA and philanthropic funds, allowing WLOs and WROs to centre their own strategies, and maintain feminist values and work on local responses effectively. However, Women's Funds are unable to support all the eligible proposals they receive due to limited resources; demand far exceeds supply. In addition, some WLOs, and WROs are unaware of these funds, and do not know how to apply.

Diversity, inclusion, and intersectionality

"We have to get away from the idea that there is a mainstream population and then there are fringe groups. It is diversity all the way down."

14. The humanitarian system is not always able to respond to diverse needs and to recognise intersecting vulnerabilities in communities; the system often reinforces existing power dynamics, including through continuing to marginalise those who are already marginalised.
15. Gender and inclusion within the humanitarian sector are too often still viewed as a 'problem to be solved' rather than as an effective way to serve the right people at the right time. Mainstreaming gender and inclusion in a manner which truly supports excluded groups takes time and dedicated resources; without this, it can turn into a bureaucratic exercise for which no one takes responsibility.
16. WLOs, WROs, and feminist organisations often work outside the formal humanitarian system and ensure meaningful inclusion of underrepresented groups including disabled people, LGBTQI communities, refugees and migrants, and others.

Accountability and risk taking

"How do we embrace risk, not avoid it? Moving money is a political act."

17. Bilateral donors face significant and deep structural constraints to fund WLOs and WROs directly which relates to capacity, value for money, and risk taking. It is time consuming and expensive to allocate funds directly to small organisations and carries reputational and political risk for the donor in their home country. Using intermediaries, such as the UN and INGOS, is more cost effective and less risky for donors.
18. Accountability of the humanitarian system to WLOs, WROs, feminist organisations and communities in upholding inclusive, feminist and gender-based principles and goals is lacking. Dangers and negative repercussions, such as withdrawal of financial support, exist when local organisations attempt to hold international actors accountable for decision-making and how funding is allocated.
19. While there is a common desire for collaboration, there is a perceived sense of competition, and of 'us and them' within the complex ecosystem of donors, recipients and intermediaries, which is not conducive to understanding and collective action.
20. Establishing reverse or mutual due diligence processes within the humanitarian system for organisations to hold donors and Humanitarian Country Teams accountable for policies and practices on inclusion and local action would be a strong

move. However, this must not divert local energy and political imagination away from community-level drive for change.

Ways forward: a summary

“Funding for feminist organisations ‘is not a money problem, it’s a distribution problem.”

Participants identified actions in several areas:

Strengthen overarching action

21. Build strong political vision and a long-term strategy with multiple stakeholders to create a shared agenda.
22. Reframe the humanitarian system to ensure WLOs and WROs can access flexible long-term support.
23. Consistently advocate women’s rights and leadership, create political and policy spaces in which women can engage meaningfully, and redefine women’s leadership to better empower local WLOs and WROs specifically to participate.

Support new partnerships and ways of working

24. Explore ideas for potential new partnerships between humanitarian donors and actors, and women’s and feminist funds.
25. Improve communication and information about Women’s Funds and how to access them to WLOs and WROs across the world, and particularly in crises affected contexts.
26. Learn from pilots of ‘reverse due diligence’ in the LGBTQI+ sector and explore, with donors, how this could be broadened to hold the humanitarian system to account.

Strengthen existing systems

27. Continue to explore streamlining due diligence processes between donors and UN agencies to reduce the burden of auditing and reporting on WLOs and WROs and embed realities and understandings of ‘inclusive’ localisation.
28. Nurture new generations of multi-donor and country-based pooled funds and continue to improve accessibility and quality of funding of existing funds for WROs and WLOs.
29. Take action for equitable partnerships with WROs and WLOs within the multilateral system.
30. Make better use of diaspora networks and recognize their role in humanitarian crises.

Respect underlying principles

31. Invest in strengthening and sustaining WLOs and WROs over the long term, rather than only responding when there is a crisis, and promote and invest in social change processes that address underlying conditions of inequality and marginalisation.
32. Respect local and indigenous languages and create opportunities and environments in which to accommodate them in the donor space.
33. Recognise the power imbalance between large scale international donors and smaller grassroots WROs and WLOs, to acknowledge and address differences, and empower WROs and WLOs to have a stronger and more meaningful voice.

Dialogue themes

The following points summarise the participants' deep feminist reflection and transnational conversation about what it means to support WLOs and WROs in crisis.

Understanding crisis: meanings, definitions, and language

34. Current frameworks for understanding crisis are inadequate. Crisis should be understood as any moment in which the ability of communities to meet their own needs is challenged.
35. Crises from the perspective of the humanitarian system, as defined by the international community, look very different to other types of crises that communities live on a day-to-day basis. These types of crises do not grab media headlines, or attention from the humanitarian system.
36. Crises, crisis response, and the role of WROs and WLOs are also described differently, using different language, depending on the organisational perspective.
37. People marginalised by gender discrimination and exclusions, who face multiple and intersecting forms of marginalisation such as disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity and refugee and displacement status live in a constant state of crisis. As one participant noted, "Just to be a girl is to live on the front line of crisis. All girls navigate violence, some more than others".
38. Crises are not spontaneous and separate events; they are born out of colonialism, authoritarianism, and injustice. Crises are not apolitical, and vulnerability is not innate but rather the product of social, political, and economic inequities. Through this understanding, and a deeper political analysis, emergency responses could and should be more sensitive to existing gender and inequalities in communities.
39. Crises are becoming increasingly layered and influenced by intersecting issues of economics, climate, conflict, geopolitics, transnational influence, and others. Crises are cyclical and protracted, yet the humanitarian system is designed for rapid onset. Crises are transcending borders in new ways with huge implications for international actors' responses. Taking risks and moving money in times of layered crises is a political act, and more contested and difficult than before.
40. Gaps exist between how a crisis is defined by international actors and the community that experiences it. The humanitarian system struggles to ensure inclusion and equality because the system is not designed to put people at the centre or to consider people's complex set of needs in a holistic way. Communities are often silenced during a crisis, not treated as participants and experts.
41. The world is experiencing multiple and protracted crises, for example in Afghanistan, Palestine Somalia, Sudan, Syria, DRC, Ukraine, Yemen and elsewhere. In an era of social media, public opinion is easily influenced around crisis response. Communication about the role of ODA is not always positive, especially when donor countries themselves are experiencing domestic economic difficulties, presenting political complexities for donors.
42. WLOs, WROs, feminist organisations, and other groups are responding to crises daily in countries and geographical areas where this work is not recognised as such. In crises as defined by the international community, women, WLOs and WROs are also leading the response as soon as an event happens, reaching people and communities before international actors arrive, and staying when they leave.

WLOs, WROs, and feminist organisations: effective responders in crises and emergencies

43. WLOs, WROs and feminist organisations exist and operate successfully because they are part of communities, and inclusive of those people affected by crises. They

"Crises break the social fabric of our communities through violence and inequalities."

"For the most marginalised, there's a sense of crisis all the time."

"The etymology of crisis means turning point - what happens when everything is shattered and what can emerge from this in an emergency?"

“Within 24 hours, we were supporting people and most big NGOs did not do that.”

“Responses are led by courageous women on the ground, often supported by people in the diaspora.”

“Normative understandings of public private divide play out just as much in the humanitarian sector as in other parts of life.”

“Organisations and feminist justice movements are breaking ground on collective care, knowing that our North Star is to sustain activism.”

have legitimacy and credibility and are accepted by and accessible to the community, making them extremely well placed to respond to crises in the way they do.

44. In the absence of an international response, WLOs and WROs are ever-present already working on the ground and are well positioned to be first responders in a crisis. These organisations attempt to meet people’s basic needs such as food, water, safety, shelter, and psychosocial support, often at rapid speed, whether they are funded to do so or not. These organisations form a connective tissue that can transcend crisis through both resilience and being prepared to work across all sectors, responding to all needs and groups of people.
45. WLO and WRO leadership, and participation in decision-making spaces are critical for encouraging the increase of donor and government partnerships with WLOs and WROs, and delivering humanitarian support through locally led efforts.
46. While women of different generations and levels of experience are taking leadership roles locally – often volunteering, working on the front line and in danger – many do not consider themselves to be leaders, and neither is it seen as leadership through a humanitarian lens. Women’s leadership, much like women’s unpaid and underpaid work in homes and communities, becomes normalised and invisible.
47. In the ecosystem of responding to crises, WLOs and WROs efforts can be undermined as barriers to accessing humanitarian funds are multiple and severe. They include lack of capacity and lack of opportunity to apply for funds, and lack of financial support to attend decision-making meetings even when invited.
48. Capacity building efforts that take place to strengthen WLOs and WROs ability to enter the humanitarian system are mainly run by INGOs, and in the words of one WLO participant, “teach us how to do their work”. This northern-centric model does not sufficiently accommodate or value local knowledge and power in the community.
49. Often women are only invited to contribute to discussions when the focus is on gender-based violence (GBV). Yet WLOs and WROs work across holistic and multi-sectoral issues and are experts in the political and economic realities in which they live. Women know and can speak about health, water, displacement, peace, development and more, and are often strong mediators and negotiators, sometimes with armed actors. However, WLOs, WROs, and LGBTQI+ organisations are often expected to look and perform in a certain way, justifying their presence at the table.

Collective care and reframing humanitarian action

50. Feminist holistic protection of WLOs and WROs puts collective care at the centre of all efforts, with the understanding that sustaining action for the care of communities is the most important goal. The care and wellbeing of those women responding to crises must be a priority. Survival means maintaining the ecosystem, or collective tissue that binds feminist organisations, movements, and networks. In this context, collective care is a political act.
51. WLOs and WROs face opposition and backlash to their actions from right wing groups, corporations, criminal groups, and political actors, and sometimes even from donors, making collective care an even more crucial foundation for the feminist movement.
52. Efforts have been made to reframe humanitarian action, such as through a localisation agenda, but remain inadequate to address core problems. Many donor agencies and INGOs have established feminist frameworks, commitments to supporting WROs, and a localisation agenda aiming to ensure local leadership, empowerment, and participation. However, these policies are often devised at global level, and there is little understanding or uptake of this in practice at the local level. Often donors end up funding elite organisations in capitals that do not have access and relationships to grassroots organisations.

“Humanitarian action is not neutral.”

“If you want WLOs to fit into your northern NGO model, you are wrong. It won't work. We need to challenge the model. We are different and varied.”

“The humanitarian system atomises people, working through sectors and clusters. And people are not like this, they are complex.”

53. Localisation also tends to ignore the efforts of the diaspora, where strong collective funding and support to communities is taking place. For example, a Sudanese American coalition diaspora of physicians is working to provide salaries to doctors and health workers in the absence of a fully functioning Ministry of Health.
54. WLOs and WROs are unable to meet the stringent conditions for direct access to funds, including due diligence, reporting, data and evidence. Capacity building efforts that take place with WLOs and WROs are mainly run by INGOs, and in the words of one participant, “Teach us how to do their work”. This northern-centric model does not sufficiently accommodate or value local knowledge and power in the community to conduct work effectively.
55. Due to existing systems and structures of the aid system, money flows to large international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in the humanitarian space to act as trusted intermediaries, rather than to WLOs, WROs, and women's movements who are implementing work, and taking risks, daily on the front line. A study analysing cost structures for the UN and INGOs showed that local intermediaries can pass on money with 32% more cost efficiency than international actors.
56. Successful examples of WLOs and WROs as recipients of funds can be seen through the role of those working in the intermediary space, such as Women's and Feminist Funds; these can channel funds from bilateral ODA and philanthropic donors directly to grassroots WLOs and WROs without bureaucratic complications, ensuring smaller sums of money can be delivered quickly. For many WLOs and WROs, access to Women's Funds have allowed them to maintain feminist values, while continuing to work on their local response effectively. However, the demand for these funds from WLOs and WROs far exceeds the supply, and more support is needed to ensure that organisations are aware of and can access financing.
57. WROs also asserted their desire to be funded directly, and not always via another organisation. There is a need to invest in WROs and work towards the longer-term goal of direct funding.
58. Across the world, some funds are arriving at local women's organisations in hard-to-reach places such as Gaza, Afghanistan, and Sudan, through creative means such as Western Union, and mobile banking applications. This focus is on moving money to activists safely, rather than on donor compliance.
59. Currently, the path for funds to arrive at community level is often too long, too inconsistent, and limited in scale. For WLOs and WROs to thrive and be in a strong position to respond to communities in crisis, they need strengthening well before an emergency event takes place.

What is a Women's Fund?

‘Women's and feminist funds are public fundraising foundations that work to realize the power of grassroots women, girls, trans, non-binary and intersex movements around the world by providing them with sustained financial and other resources to realize their vision of social justice.’

[Prospera International Network of Women's Funds](#)

Diversity, inclusion, intersectionality

60. In trying to imagine a healthy crisis resourcing system, participants identified a lot of failures. Humanitarian action, in the traditional sense, often serves to reinforce existing power dynamics, including through continuing to marginalise those already marginalised. Needs assessment processes are not fit for purpose, and while purporting to meet the needs of the most vulnerable people in communities, efforts fall short.

“Accessible means accessible for everyone.”

“We were told that LGBTQI is not a priority. We have to ask how much they really care.”

“There's no such thing as a 'mainstream' population. It is diverse all the way across.”

“The world is complicated. And comprised of diverse groups. Get used to it.”

“We think of trust as a garden, a place to grow with care and time.”

“Trust is sometimes the only currency we have.”

61. The humanitarian system is unable to respond to diverse needs, include all marginalised groups, and recognise intersecting vulnerabilities in communities in the way that WLOs and WROs can. WLOs and WROs can operate outside of formal societal structures and sectors to respond to needs as they find them among the community.
62. For example, while large-scale international support goes to Ukraine, the needs of women with disabilities are not addressed; bomb shelters that were provided and built with UN and international support were inaccessible to those with disabilities. Through a women-led Organisations of Persons with Disability (OPD), funding was specifically sought and gained for Ukraine's first ever accessible bomb shelter.
63. Across the world, LGBTQI+ people and organisations face stigma, discrimination, criminalisation, and violence. In workplaces, schools, healthcare facilities or justice contexts, LGBTQI people face discrimination and shocking treatment. Lives are often lives in crisis all the time. These challenges can create the perception that LGBTQI people are too hard to work with in humanitarian crises, and that work will be too dangerous. Few bilateral organisations or international organisations have a dedicated LGBTQI humanitarian inclusion staff member.
64. Humanitarian programming is not neutral and creates opportunities and access, elevating certain voices and not others. Often funding benefits those who create marginalisation and inequalities in the first place. Recognising that humanitarian aid can serve to reproduce inequalities and exclusion, and addressing this by working to re-balance power imbalances through a significant shift in support to grassroots organisations and movements would be a step towards a more just system.
65. Humans have interconnected needs through a range of dimensions including age, disability, gender, sexual identity, and others so how can a humanitarian system be geared towards a person in a more holistic way?
66. How can inclusion be meaningful? Inclusion per se is not necessarily transformative, as it can easily become a tick box exercise. Mainstreaming work to support excluded groups can be harmful, because when issues are mainstreamed, without dedicated time and resources, they become no one's responsibility and can fade into the background. Specific underrepresented groups deserve unique attention to ensure inclusion. Genuine inclusion and addressing the intersections of vulnerability in communities require huge capacity and work by those who understand deeply the issues that people face.

Accountability and risk taking

67. Accountability is fundamental in the humanitarian system, and in the donor recipient relationship which should extend to mutual accountability for how funds are spent, and for decisions about how funds are allocated. Accountability of recipients to donors; accountability of donors and the humanitarian system to WLOs and WROs; and accountability of WLOs and WROs to the communities in which they work are all critical elements of mutual accountability.
68. Accountability for achieving feminist and gender goals in the humanitarian space is lacking across all areas of international work, including peace and development. An independent review of the UN system's capacity to deliver on gender equality showed dismal results, with the needs of women and girls being neglected across the board.
69. Communities, WLOs, WROs and other grassroots organisations have a role to play in participating in accountability processes and holding actors accountable for how humanitarian money is being spent at the local level. However, due to imbalanced power dynamics in the donor recipient relationship, it is a risk for organisations to hold donors and partners mutually accountable. One example from a WRO said that when they voiced their opinions to those within the UN system, they saw potential

funding partnerships suddenly withdrawn. Ensuring that donors are accountable, and asking questions of international leadership, carries risk for local organisations.

“Policies and feminist values at the global level are good but at country level some of the practices are so patriarchal.”

“Whether it is \$100 or \$10 million, both require the same resources internally to distribute.”

“We need very nuanced, sophisticated, informed, and clever approaches to reach the places that humanitarian aid normally can't reach.”

70. While there is a lot of money in the system, there is a problem with distributing it. Multiple reasons and structural constraints explain why it is extremely challenging for bilateral donors to fund individual WLOs and WROs directly. It is time consuming and expensive to allocate funds directly to small organisations, because the programme management capacity required to administer a large grant is the same capacity as a small grant.
71. To administer thousands of small grants, donor bureaucracy and capacity need to increase hugely, therefore increasing donor costs and reducing the amount of money available to recipient countries.
72. Donors also face risks and are accountable for taxpayer money to ensure funds are spent in the way they were intended, get value for money, and avoid backlash in their countries' broadcast media. As transferring money during crises is a political act, donors aim to minimise their risk through the systems and processes they have created and embedded.
73. Donor organisations demand accountability from organisations for funding through stringent due diligence processes, including financial audits and reporting. While many WROs and WLOs have financial management and reporting systems in place, they often do not meet very strict and varied donor standards.
74. As donors do not wish to take risks without due diligence processes in place, it is therefore in the remit of larger INGOs and funding recipients such as the UN in the humanitarian space to be accountable for funds. Suggestions emerged for donors to streamline their due diligence processes, so that smaller recipient organisations need to undertake only one due diligence process that would cover a range of donors.
75. Donors acknowledged the constraints they face, their desire to reframe the way they work with WLOs and WROs, and their ambition to find solutions to collaborate with and support the work of WLOs and WROs. While pockets of good practice exist, learning and knowledge sharing is necessary to scale up and move forward. Women's Funds offer a potential avenue for donors to form partnerships and increase access to quality funding for WROs and WLOs.
76. One promising avenue is increasing collaboration and partnerships between humanitarian donors and agencies and women's and feminist funds, allowing the funds to provide quality support and equitable partnerships to diverse WROs and feminist groups, whilst also providing donors with a means to reach a vibrant landscape of grassroots groups at scale.
77. Suggestions to challenge the existing system include reverse due diligence process so that organisations hold donors, INGOs and Humanitarian Country Teams accountable for how they meaningfully embed gender and inclusive and support local action and WLOs and WROs.
78. At the same time, it is vital to avoid diverting local energy into the humanitarian system in ways that stifle ambition and desire for change. For example, after a crisis, local WLOs and WROs have seen incredible political imagination among young girls, and being drawn into the humanitarian system might dampen their drive.

Ways forward

Participants discussed and identified tangible areas for action by the humanitarian system to tackle the problems identified during the meeting. Discussion spanned the need to balance short term and opportunistic action with long-term goals and the generation of 'bold new ideas' while working with operational realities.

“There is no innovation that will save us - we only have each other, our ability to organise, and the ability to move resources to where it was always meant to go.”

“Change happens in act of doing.”

“We should not be thinking outside the box - we should burn the box. We should turn the system upside down.”

Donors and partners can take action in the following areas:

Strengthen overarching action

79. Build strong political visioning and a long-term strategy across multiple stakeholders globally, including donors, humanitarian actors, WROs and WLOs to analyse root causes of the problem and challenges and create a shared agenda to conceive and implement practical approaches. Model and pilot approaches, beginning small and strategically.
80. Reframe the humanitarian system to ensure WLOs and WROs can access long-term support. Creating a platform for a dialogue between humanitarian, peace, and development platforms to build allegiances, share lessons learnt and create a new vision is a first step.
81. Consistently advocate women’s rights and leadership internally and externally, create spaces for participation in decision-making early on and engage WLOs and WROs meaningful on cross-sectoral issues, not just on GBV.
82. Create political and policy spaces for WLOs and WROs to engage with donors and intermediaries to find solutions and support mutual accountability processes.
83. Redefine women’s leadership, recognise existing female leaders, provide funding to women for their participation in coordination and decision-making roles, and find ways to empower WLOs and WROs, including protecting them against violence, abuse, exploitation, and backlash.

Support new partnerships and ways of working

84. Explore ideas for potential new partnerships between humanitarian donors and actors, and women’s and feminist funds to strengthen the work of these funds in providing quality support to diverse WLOs/WROs and grassroots groups in crises. Simultaneously, this would help to address some of the challenges that donors face in providing funding to WLOs and WROs at scale.
85. Continuing conversations between humanitarian and feminist actors are needed to build understanding of each other’s systems, values, terminology, and incentives. Women’s Funds may not have engaged with the international humanitarian system/actors, and vice versa.
86. To ensure the feminist funding ecosystem is not instrumentalised, it is necessary to proceed with caution. Create stronger coordination and care between Women’s and Feminist Funds and WLOs, WROs, and feminist organisations responding in crisis contexts while exploring how to increase the funding that flows through these funds to WLOs and WROs.
87. Improve communication and information about Women’s Funds and how to access them to WLOs and WROs across the world, particularly in crises affected contexts. Support WLOs and WROs to better understand the important role of Women’s Funds in flowing flexible, core funding to WLOs and WROs, and to act as advocates for these funds.
88. Learn from pilots of ‘reverse due diligence’ in the LGBTQI+ sector and explore, with donors, how this could be broadened more widely as a tool and approach to hold the humanitarian system to account.

Strengthen existing systems

89. Continue to explore avenues for ‘passporting’ and streamlining due diligence processes between donors and UN agencies to reduce the burden of auditing and reporting on WLOs and WROs. Embed the realities and understandings of ‘inclusive’ localisation into the development of donor localisation strategies and policies, and

“The humanitarian system has a greater problem with capacity than women’s organisations do.”

invite WLOs, WROs, OPDs, LGBTQI+ organisations and women’s funds into the development of these.

90. Nurture new generations of multi-donor and country-based pooled funds and continue to improve accessibility and quality of funding of existing funds, including changing how allocations are made, earmarking funds to feminist organisations, and increasing cash support to community-based organisations.
91. Take action for equitable partnerships with WROs and WLOs within the multilateral system and consider how to use the UN Gender Review to drive momentum around equality. Recognise that it is not a choice between funding WROs directly or through women’s funds, and that bilateral and multilateral programmes and partnerships all have a role.
92. Make better use of diaspora networks and their role in humanitarian crises, especially those that are linked to WROs and WLOs.

Respect underlying principles

93. Invest in strengthening and sustaining WLOs and WROs over the long term, rather than only responding when there is a crisis. Taking an ‘ecosystem approach’ and strengthening the connective tissue on the ground will support communities to transcend crisis through resilience. Promote and invest in social change processes that address underlying conditions of inequality and marginalisation, thereby moving towards a more just and equitable system for all.
94. Respect local and indigenous languages and create opportunities and environments in which to accommodate them in the donor space, to ensure that all WLOs and WROs’ perspectives are heard and responded to, not just those in English. Included in this is exploring different modalities for submitting proposals and reporting, such as video or audio submissions.
95. Recognise the power imbalance between large scale international donors and smaller grassroots WROs and WLOs, to acknowledge and address differences, and empower WROs and WLOs to have a stronger and more meaningful voice.

Conclusion

The meeting created space for feminist reflection, solidarity and energy to identify ways for the humanitarian system to better harness and support the power of local feminist, WLOs, and WRO action in communities before, during, and after crises and to promote the understanding that many communities are constantly in crisis. Participants expressed a desire for this type of meeting to occur again, continuing the important conversation and taking ideas forward into action. The knowledge shared and lessons learned will be taken forward by the different groups of stakeholders represented, including via an immediate donor follow up coordination meeting and ongoing collaboration between stakeholders to identify tangible next steps.

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