



Women Lead in Emergencies – Guidance Note

Overview: The Women Lead in Emergencies Model

This guidance note explains what Women Lead in Emergencies is and why it is one of the four focal areas of CARE's Gender in Emergencies programming.

What is Women Lead in Emergencies?

CARE's Women Lead in Emergencies programme **supports women directly affected by crisis to participate** in humanitarian action. It enables **women's groups and collectives** to take a lead in responding to and recovering from natural disasters, conflict and other emergencies affecting their communities. It provides accessible and **practical guidance and tools** for CARE staff and partners on ways of working with groups of poor and marginalised women to facilitate their participation and leadership in humanitarian action.

Why include Women Lead in Emergencies in humanitarian programming?

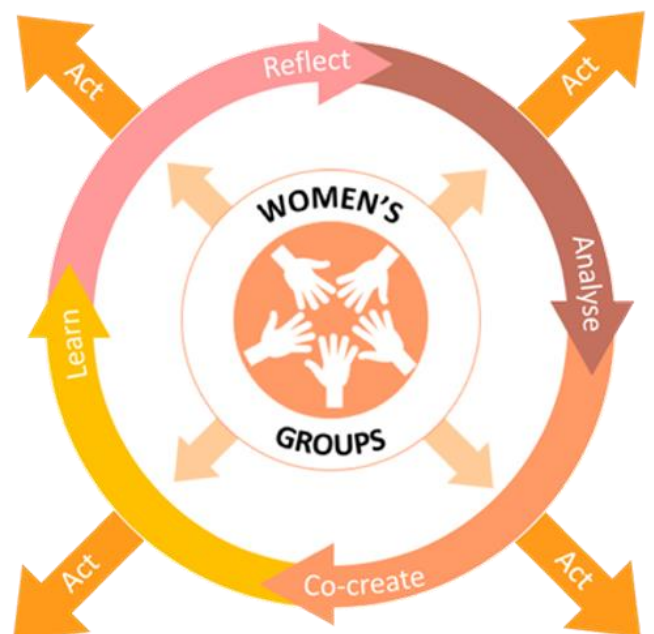
Humanitarian action that is inclusive of different groups of the affected population is more likely to save lives, reduce harm, and promote dignity and well-being. Gender equality in humanitarian programming can only be achieved when women and girls are empowered to actively participate in decisions on how to meet their needs.

To support women's equal voice and leadership, **CARE's multi-sectoral humanitarian programmes must include targeted activities to address the barriers to women's participation.** This is why Women Lead in Emergencies is one of the four focal areas of CARE's approach to **Gender in Emergencies** – along with Rapid Gender Analysis, Minimum Commitments, and Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence.

The Women Lead in Emergencies Model

The Women Lead in Emergencies Model provides CARE humanitarian staff and partners with a **practical and flexible approach** to working with groups of women directly affected by crisis to increase their voice and leadership.

The Model contains **five steps**: Analyse, Reflect, Co-create, Act and Learn. Each step builds on CARE's tried-and-tested approaches and tools from both development and humanitarian programming. The five steps are **not linear**: some steps start before others, but all five continue throughout the Women Lead process, and all steps inform and reinforce each other. **Together they are designed to shift knowledge, power and money to affected women.** Each step is briefly described below, with more detail and tools available in five further Women Lead in Emergencies guidance notes.



Analyse

Analyse is **usually the first activity** within a Women Lead in Emergencies project. In emergencies, there is often little information available about how decisions are made regarding different people's access to entitlements and resources, and how gender and other inequalities affect who is excluded from these decisions.

A **Rapid Gender Analysis on Power** builds a picture of these issues. It integrates CARE's Rapid Gender Analysis with our Governance tools to **focus specifically on the barriers to and opportunities for women's equal participation** and leadership in decision-making during and after emergencies.

The Rapid Gender Analysis on Power **helps us to understand how gender affects people's ability to participate**, whether and how women are organising, and what different women's concerns are and how they might be addressed. It also provides Women Lead in Emergencies project teams with **practical entry points for programming**, to be explored and validated with participating women's groups.

Reflect

The Reflect component of Women Lead in Emergencies **also begins at the start of the project** and continues throughout.

Rigid gender norms create social expectations that women's 'natural' role is homemaker and carer, and men's is leader and provider. These **social norms affect us all** and mean women and girls have fewer opportunities to participate or lead in decision-making than men and boys and, when they do participate, are less likely to be respected and actively listened to. **Everyone involved in Women Lead projects, including CARE staff, partners and communities, need to reflect on their own values, norms and beliefs** about gender, power, participation and leadership.

Building on learning from CARE's work using **Social Analysis and Action**, Women Lead uses Reflect exercises to *explore* how gender norms influence people's decisions and behaviour, to *challenge* restrictive or discriminatory values and norms, and to *envision* alternative ideas and behaviours around power, participation and leadership.

Co-Create

The Co-Create phase of Women Lead **begins after, and builds on, Reflect and Analyse**. Reflect exercises help women to identify their own aspirations for participation and leadership, and the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power supports discussion about the barriers to and opportunities for their increased voice and leadership.

During Co-Create, CARE and partners use **participatory tools to support women's groups to identify their own participation and leadership objectives**, what needs to change for them to participate and lead in meaningful ways, and strategies for achieving those changes. **Women Lead most often works with informal women's groups** and community-based organisations, such as village loans and savings, self-help, solidarity or faith-based groups.

A **Women Lead Action Plan** is used to record the group's collective objectives and actions to increase their participation, voice and leadership in emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

A core aim of Women Lead in Emergencies is to put control of the design and implementation of project activities and learning in the hands of affected women. All Women Lead projects therefore have an **unrestricted activity budget that women themselves decide how to spend**.

Act

Act is the part of the Women Lead process where **women's groups and other stakeholders take actions to move towards their goals to participate more and in more meaningful ways** in humanitarian response. These actions may focus on the foundational capabilities for women's participation, such as confidence, literacy, access to information and solidarity with other women, or they may focus on women's interaction with powerholders and participation in different decision-making forums, such as meeting with government officials or humanitarian agencies or standing for leadership positions.

CARE's role during the Act phase of Women Lead is to be a supporter, enabler, listener and ally: CARE *helps* to make women's leadership and participation happen but always on the terms of women affected by crisis.

Learn

In the Learn phase of Women Lead in Emergencies, CARE and partners **build off the work done in the Co-Create phase** to develop a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework. Women Lead teams use participatory-based methods and dialogues to **enable women's groups to identify what success looks like for them**, and their own strategies for documenting, reporting on and learning from the agreed upon project activities and goals.

All Women Lead in Emergencies projects **also use three of CARE's Global Impact Indicators** to measure women's empowerment and meaningful decision-making, and to support learning and reporting across Women Lead projects and CARE.

What's different about Women Lead in Emergencies?

Women Lead in Emergencies **brings development practice into humanitarian assistance** to enable women's active participation in the design and delivery of humanitarian response. It is a **flexible and adaptive** five-step Model and Toolkit for supporting the power, voice and leadership of women directly affected by crisis. It does not pre-define what women's participation and leadership looks like or means, or what objectives and activities different groups of women will value and prioritise. It is a **modality or way of working** with women's groups to support their empowerment and participation that can be integrated into humanitarian assistance in any sector.

Women Lead in Emergencies focuses on the **quality of women's participation** not the number of women present in decision-making forums. It strengthens the **collective** voice and leadership of women's groups and tackles structural barriers to women having **actual influence** within emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

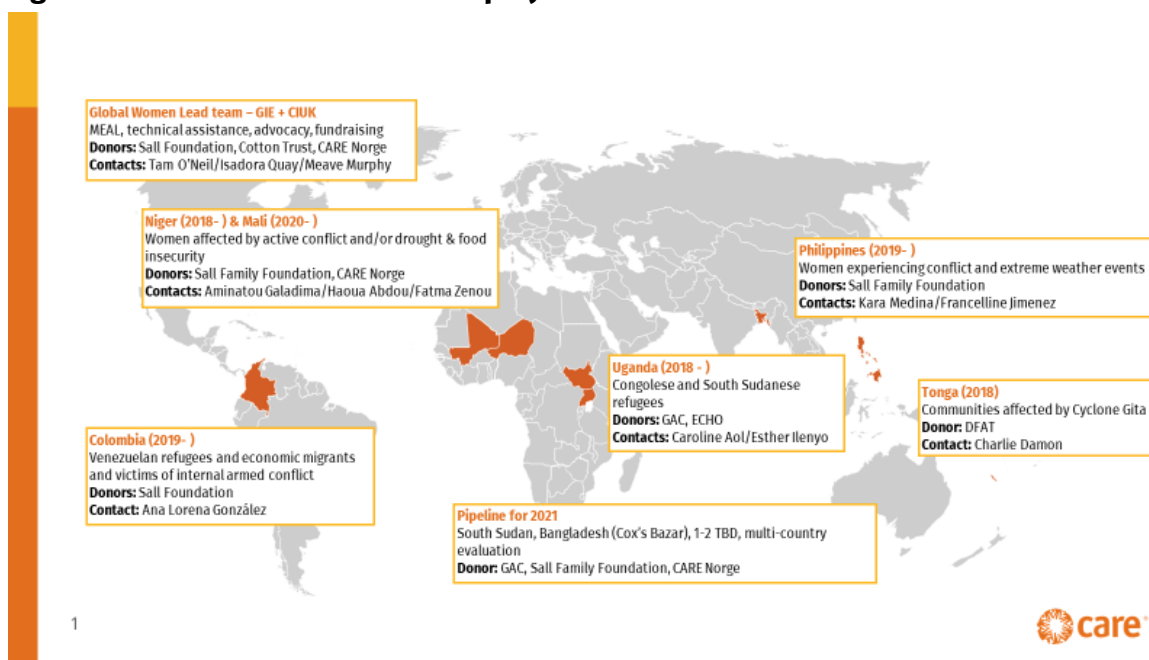
Women Lead recognises the **power dynamics between women** and within women's groups and makes particular efforts to strengthen the voice of women and girls subject to multiple forms of marginalisation. This includes disabled women, indigenous women, young and elderly women, and women of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities.

All Women Lead projects include activities to **engage male relatives and leaders** in gender equality. This is critical to mitigate the increased risk of **gender-based violence** for women active in public life. Working with men to challenge and change harmful behaviour and attitudes is also essential to transform structural inequalities that marginalise the voice and participation of women and girls – and especially gender *and* other forms of discrimination.

Who is involved in Women Lead?

Women Lead in Emergencies is a CARE global programme. At **project level**, Women Lead teams usually include a National Women Lead Project Manager/Coordinator, two Women Lead Project Officers based within or close to the affected communities, and support from MEAL colleagues. However, the staffing structure varies between Women Lead projects and country offices. See Figure 2 for current project locations.

Figure 2: Current CARE Women Lead projects



At **confederation level**, the Women Lead **Global Team** is hosted by CARE International UK’s Inclusive Governance Team and CARE International Secretariat’s Gender in Emergency Team. The Global Women Lead team provides remote and in-person technical support to Women Lead project teams on using the Women Lead Model and Toolkit, and on monitoring, evaluation and learning. It is also responsible for cross-country coordination, evaluation and learning, refining the Women Lead Model and Toolkit and developing further guidance and tools as needed, and linking Women Lead programming to CARE’s Gender in Emergencies global advocacy.

Key resources

The Women Lead in Emergencies Toolkit includes:

- Practitioner Guidance Notes and Tools for the Five Steps of the Women Lead Model
- Women Lead Theory of Change and Global MEAL Plan
- Women Lead Communications Toolkit

The Women Lead Toolkit is available for CARE staff on the Women Lead in Emergencies CARE Shares page.

Want more information?

Women Lead in Emergencies is a joint initiative of the CARE Global Gender in Emergencies Team and the Global Inclusive Governance Team. Email the Global Women Lead Coordinators for more information:

- Tam O'Neil oneil@careinternational.org
- Isadora Quay quay@careinternational.org

Updated August 2020