



Women Lead in Emergencies – Guidance Note

Co-Create: facilitating a Women Lead Action Plan

This guidance note explains what Co-Create means in the context of a Women Lead in Emergencies project and how to facilitate it.

What does Co-Create mean in the context of Women Lead?

Women Lead in Emergencies is a five-step Model for supporting groups of women directly affected by crisis to participate and lead in emergency preparedness, response and recovery in and beyond their communities.

In the Co-Create phase of Women Lead, **CARE and partners use participatory tools and facilitated dialogue to enable women's groups to collectively identify their own goals, problems and strategies for participation and leadership.** Co-Create activities are therefore at the heart of Women Lead by enabling crisis-affected women to have control of the design and implementation of project activities and learning, with the support of CARE and partners.

Why do we Co-Create as part of Women Lead?

Empowerment is a process of personal and social change through which people with little power gain more power, meaningful choices and control within and over their lives. Women's leadership and participation is about women's ability to influence decisions that affect their lives. It is an essential part of women's journeys of empowerment and a necessary condition for achieving gender equality.

Telling women what participation and leadership should mean to them, or what activities or changes in their lives and communities they need, is not empowering. Instead, **Co-Create activities are about accompanying women's groups as they:**

- analyse their own situation and local realities;
- identify their own needs and aspirations for participation and leadership;
- identify which decision-making spaces they would like to participate in and in what ways;
- identify what changes are needed for them to realise their goals;
- develop shared actions to overcome barriers to participating more, or in more meaningful ways, in humanitarian response and recovery, and/or to capitalise on new opportunities arising from crisis.

This process of co-creation enables women to recognise themselves as autonomous individuals with rights self-determination, the capacity to make collective decisions and to lead in both private and public life. The co-creation process is also an opportunity for women to develop and make visible their strengths and creativity, and to build trust and solidarity with other women in their group and communities.

Who is involved in Co-Create?

The **National Women Lead Project Manager/Coordinator** is responsible for managing the Co-Create activities in liaison with other project staff. They may facilitate Co-Create themselves, or this may be done by project partners with experience in women's empowerment and participation, such as local women's rights organisations.

Co-Creation itself is done by women's groups involved in the project, with the support of CARE or partners. Where possible, Women Lead works with and through **existing women's groups** (formal and informal). There are several reasons for this. Women's groups that are already meeting for another purpose – community work (health, protection), worship, savings, livelihoods, solidarity, etc. – are more likely to continue to meet after the Women Lead project ends, especially if they have been meeting independently of support from humanitarian actors. Women who are already organising or known to each other are also more likely to be more ready to collectively Reflect, Analyse and Co-Create. And, women who are already receiving support or organising to meet basic needs and generate income are in a better position to consider becoming more active in their community and humanitarian assistance.

The **Global Women Lead team** are responsible for providing technical support to the National Women Lead Coordinator, remotely or in person.

How to Co-Create in Women Lead?

Unlike most emergency programmes, the only pre-defined activities in Women Lead are the activities associated with facilitating the five steps or phases of the Model (see Women Lead Overview and Act guidance notes). This is because Women Lead supports women's groups to develop their own Women Lead Action Plan during the Co-Create phase, and to use this to make decisions about how to spend the Women Lead activity budget.

Co-Create activities will be adapted to the needs of the women's groups, the context and the CARE project (e.g. if Women Lead is a component of a multi-sector project). However, there are some **core principles that should inform all Co-Create processes**:

- **Women's groups lead in the design and implementation of Action Plans**, including goal/outcome identification, strategies for achieving change, what to spend the activity budget on, and learning.
- The **role of CARE and partners** is to facilitate women's groups to collectively identify their goals and aspirations for participation and leadership, the strategies for achieving the changes they wish to see, and what support they need to achieve it.
- CARE and partners are sensitive to the need to **avoid doing harm** through Co-Create activities. This includes being aware of unequal power relations and conflicts *within* communities and groups, as well as discussing the risks of public participation for women and how they can be mitigated.

Women Lead has a set of tools for Co-Create that draws from CARE's experience facilitating community action planning in development and governance programming. **Key tools for Co-Create in Women Lead** are:

- **Dialogue on leadership and participation:** Invites women to tell their individual stories of leadership and participation and reflect as a group on what leadership and participation in public life means to them and what change they would like to see.

- **Dialogue around the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power:** Facilitates discussion of the findings to verify/refine what women's groups see as the main barriers to, and opportunities for, their leadership and participation, and to identify their priority areas for action.
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** Supports women to analyse who – e.g. community leaders, humanitarian actors, government agencies or service providers – is currently making decisions about their and their communities' access to different entitlements and resources, to identify who they want to engage with or influence, and to develop strategies and entry points for action.
- **Women Lead Action Planning:** Supports women to develop an Action Plan detailing their collective vision, the changes (outcomes) they want to see, the activities needed to get there, and how they will know if they have achieved what they wanted to.

When does Co-Create happen in Women Lead?

Co-Create **builds on Reflect and Analyse activities** in the Women Lead project. It only begins once the first Reflect activities and the first draft of the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power report have been completed (see Reflect and Analyse guidance notes).

Co-Create can be a bounded set of activities – for example, women's groups may take three specific sessions to develop their Action Plan, which is documented in written or picture form. But it can also be more fluid – for example, women's groups may identify some actions they would like to take together during initial Reflect sessions at the beginning of their engagement with the project and then, after carrying those out, they may feel ready to identify a broader set of actions.

Other than the core principles above, **there is no right or wrong way to do Co-Create:** its timing and format will depend on the women's groups and the project.

Why is documenting Co-Create processes important?

Documenting the process and outcomes of Co-Create process is important for trust and accountability. It helps to ensure the Women's Groups are clear about what has been decided, including what the activity budget will be spent on, and that there is consensus. It helps to ensure that CARE/partners and women's groups are clear on their different responsibilities – for example, what actions women have agreed that they will take individually or collectively, what support CARE/partners have agreed to provide, how and when – so that people are more able to hold each other accountable to those agreements.

Documenting Action Plans is also needed to track progress towards goals, by both the women's groups and CARE. As part of developing their Action Plan, women's groups also develop progress markers – or indicators – that enable them to measure and reflect on change in relation to their action plans and to adapt their activities as needed (see Learn Guidance Note).

The **National Women Lead Project Manager/Coordinator** is responsible for documenting the aspirations/goals and chosen actions of each of the women's groups participating in Women Lead. **Women Lead Action Plans do not need to follow conventional formats** of a community action plan – for example, it could be a diagram(s), picture(s), audio or video.

Key resources

- Women Lead in Emergencies Co-Create tools
- CARE Community Action Planning Manual

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:

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Updated August 2020