

## Guidance Note 0: Overview

### The Women Lead in Emergencies programme methodology



*This guidance note explains what Women Lead in Emergencies is and why it is a core model in CARE’s humanitarian and nexus programming for promoting women’s voice and leadership.*

#### What is Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE)?

CARE’s Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE) programme model **supports women directly affected by crisis to participate** in humanitarian action. It enables **community-based women’s groups** to take a lead in responding to and recovering from natural disasters, conflict and other crises affecting their communities. It provides accessible and **practical guidance and tools** for CARE staff and partners on how to implement WLiE projects with displaced, poor and/or marginalised women to facilitate their participation and leadership in local governance and humanitarian decision-making and action.

#### Why include WLiE in humanitarian programming?

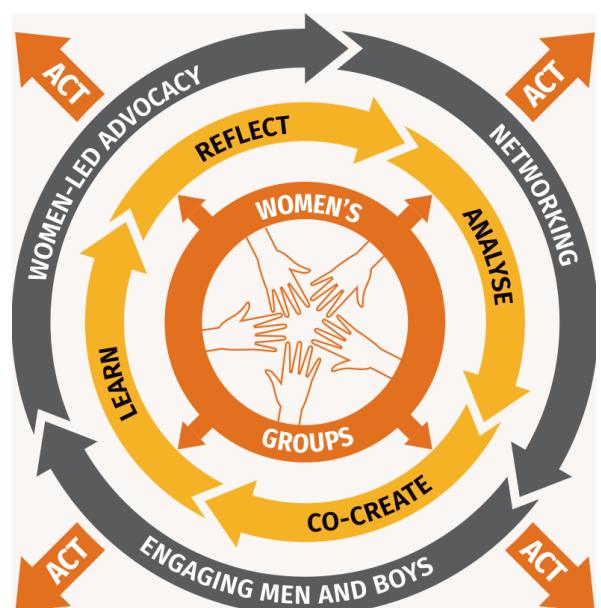
Humanitarian action that includes and responds to the needs of different groups of an affected population is more likely to save lives, reduce harm, and promote dignity and well-being. And inclusive and gender-responsive humanitarian programming can only be achieved when women are empowered to actively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

To support women’s equal voice and leadership, **humanitarian programmes must include targeted activities to address the barriers to women’s participation.** This is why Women’s Voice and Leadership in Emergencies is one of the three focal areas of CARE’s **Gender in Emergencies** programming – along with Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies and Gender-Integrated Sectoral Response. **Women Lead in Emergencies is a proven CARE model for gender-transformative programming** to promote women’s voice and leadership in emergencies.

#### The Women Lead in Emergencies model

The WLiE programming model and toolkit **provides CARE and partner women’s rights organisations with a practical and flexible approach** to working with groups of women directly affected by crisis to increase their voice and leadership.

The WLiE model and projects contains **six activity areas**: Analyse, Reflect, Co-Create, Act, Learn and Engage Men. Each activity area builds on CARE’s tried-and-tested approaches and tools from both development and humanitarian programming. The six activity areas of WLiE projects are **not linear**: some start before others and different activity areas inform and reinforce each other.



**Together they are designed to shift knowledge, power and money to local women's groups to enable them to take actions that help their communities to prepare for, respond to and recover from crisis.** Each activity area is briefly described below, with more detail and tools available in six further WLiE Guidance Notes.

### Analyse

Analyse is **the first activity area** in a WLiE project. In humanitarian contexts, 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 included in, and benefit from, these decisions.

A **Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation (RGA-P)** 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 before, during and after humanitarian crises.

**The primary purpose of the RGA-P is to provide information for project teams to use to design and conduct activities with women's groups and other community members.** The RGA-P helps WLiE project teams (CARE and/or partner staff) to understand:

- who is currently participating in local decisions and community actions in relation to preparing for, responding to and recovering from humanitarian crises,
- what the barriers are to different women's participation in community decision-making, and how they are affected by crisis,
- potential practical entry points to increase women's participation and leadership through the WLiE intervention,
- the potential risks of harm from WLiE activities and how they might be mitigated.

Given the limited availability of analysis and research on local women's participation and leadership in humanitarian contexts and action, **RGA-P reports are also an important advocacy and influencing tool** for project stakeholders.

### Reflect with women's groups

Reflect is **the first activity area conducted with participating women's groups** in a WLiE project.

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 have fewer opportunities to participate or lead in decision-making** than men and, when they do participate, are less likely to be respected and actively listened to. Women's ability to participate is further affected by other characteristics, such as literacy, age, disability and displacement.

Building on learnings from CARE's work using **Social Analysis and Action**, and using findings from the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation (**RGA-P**), WLiE projects use Reflect exercises with participating women's groups to **explore** how gender and other social norms influence people's decisions, behaviour and wellbeing, to **challenge** restrictive or discriminatory values and norms, and to **envision** alternative ideas and behaviours around power, participation and leadership.

To prepare for Reflect activities with women's groups, **CARE staff and partners are encouraged to also reflect on their own values, norms and beliefs** about gender, power, participation and leadership.

### Co-Create with women's groups

The Co-Create activity area of a WLiE project **begins after, and builds on, Analyse and Reflect** activities. Reflect exercises help women to identify their own aspirations for participation and leadership, and the RGA-P supports discussion about the barriers to and opportunities for their increased voice and leadership.

During Co-Create activities, project teams (CARE and/or partner staff) use **participatory tools to support women's groups to:**

- **identify the problems or issues in their community they want to address using the WLiE activity budget** for their group,
- **develop their own Action Plan** detailing how they will achieve their chosen goals, and what measure they will use to monitor and learn from their activities during implementation of their plan.

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

### Act with women's groups

Act is the part of the WLiE project where **women's groups and other stakeholders take actions to move towards their goals to participate more, and in more meaningful ways**, in community decision-making and humanitarian action. **Women group's decide on the actions that are most relevant to them and their communities.** These could include:

- building the foundational capabilities for women's participation, such as confidence, literacy, safety, healing and the support of their families,
- using their activity budget to respond directly to needs and problems in their communities,
- seeking out opportunities to influence decision-makers and advocate for rights, such as meeting with government officials or humanitarian agencies or standing for leadership positions.

**The role of CARE and/or partners during the Act phase of a WLiE project to be supporters, enablers, listeners and allies:** the WLiE project team *helps* to make women's leadership and participation happen but always on the terms of women affected by crisis.

### Learn with women's groups

In a WLiE project, **women's groups are supported to conduct their own monitoring and learning based on their WLiE Action Plans and other WLiE activities.** During the Co-Create activities, WLiE project teams use participatory-based methods and dialogue 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. WLiE project teams are also encouraged to **incorporate participatory methods to centre women's knowledge and learning in WLiE project evaluations**, such as Most Significant Change or Outcome Harvesting with women's groups.

### Engage Men

In addition to activities with women's groups, all WLiE projects also include activities to **engage male relatives and leaders** in supporting women's participation alongside activities with women's groups. Engaging men in WLiE projects is critical to **mitigate the risk of gender-based violence** that is known to increase 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 – especially gender *and* other forms of discrimination – and **build men's support and allyship for equal voice and leadership.**

The **type and extent of activities with men in WLiE will differ** from project to project. Most WLiE projects will involve **reflection and dialogue activities with couples or men's groups**, either as part of the WLiE project or through complementary Engaging Men programming in the community. **At a minimum, there will be activities to build male relatives and leaders' understanding of the purpose and goals of the project**, including sharing findings from the Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation and WLiE Action Plans with male leaders and local authorities.

## 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 and recovery. It is a **flexible** and **adaptive** programming model and toolkit for increasing 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 tested **model and way of working** with women's groups to support their empowerment and participation, that can be integrated into humanitarian assistance in any sector.

WLiE is a gender-transformative approach that 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 **influence** within emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

WLiE also recognises the **power dynamics between women** and within women's groups and makes efforts to strengthen the voice of women 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.

## Who is involved in Women Lead in Emergencies?

Women Lead in Emergencies is a global CARE programming approach that is implemented directly by CARE or by partners (women-led or women's rights organisations). **WLiE project teams** usually include a WLiE Project Manager/Coordinator, WLiE Project Officers/Community Facilitators based within or close to the affected communities, and support from monitoring and evaluation, gender and other sector technical colleagues.

At **confederation level**, the **Global WLiE Team** is hosted by CARE International UK and provides remote and in-person technical support to WLiE project teams (CARE and/or partner staff) on using the WLiE model and toolkit, and on monitoring, evaluation and learning for Women Lead in Emergencies. The Global WLiE Team are also responsible for cross-country coordination, evaluation and learning, refining the WLiE model and toolkit and developing further guidance and tools as needed, and linking WLiE programming to CARE's Gender in Emergencies global programming and advocacy.

---

### Key resources

The WLiE Guidance Notes are available for CARE Staff on the [WLiE CARE Shares site](#). The full WLiE Toolkit is available for CARE Staff on the WLiE Network Teams channel in Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The Toolkit includes:

- Guidance notes and tools for each of the six activity areas of WLiE projects
- MEAL guidance and tools for WLiE projects
- Proposal and project management guidance and tools

For more information, please contact the **Global WLiE Team** at CARE International UK

- **Tam O'Neil**, Team Leader, [oneil@careinternational.org](mailto:oneil@careinternational.org)
- **Meave Murphy**, Deputy Team Leader/Senior Advisor, [meavemurphy@careinternational.org](mailto:meavemurphy@careinternational.org)