

ActionAid's Feminist Approach to Protection in Emergencies: Putting Women's Leadership & Rights at the Centre of Humanitarian Response



Women involved in the Rana Plaza response in Bangladesh.

In a world of ever-increasing humanitarian crises, there is growing recognition of the disproportionate impact on women and girls due to widespread gender discrimination and intersecting inequalities.

Women and girls of all ages and abilities face increased risks of violence, exploitation and abuse and their needs are persistently overlooked or ignored. This aggravates existing vulnerabilities in times of crisis.

In emergencies, humanitarian actors are called upon to assume gender based violence is increasing and to take action regardless of concrete evidence¹. Despite this, protection remains one of the lowest-funded areas of intervention in emergencies and is deprioritised at the onset of emergency response². With an estimated 64.3 million women and girls in humanitarian crises, explicit women's rights interventions in humanitarian crises are urgently needed.

Engaging with national actors is critical for achieving successful and sustainable humanitarian outcomes, yet local women's organisations receive a small fraction of the funding available and poor representation in decision making, severely curtailing women's opportunities to lead protection work or to influence the system or resource allocation.

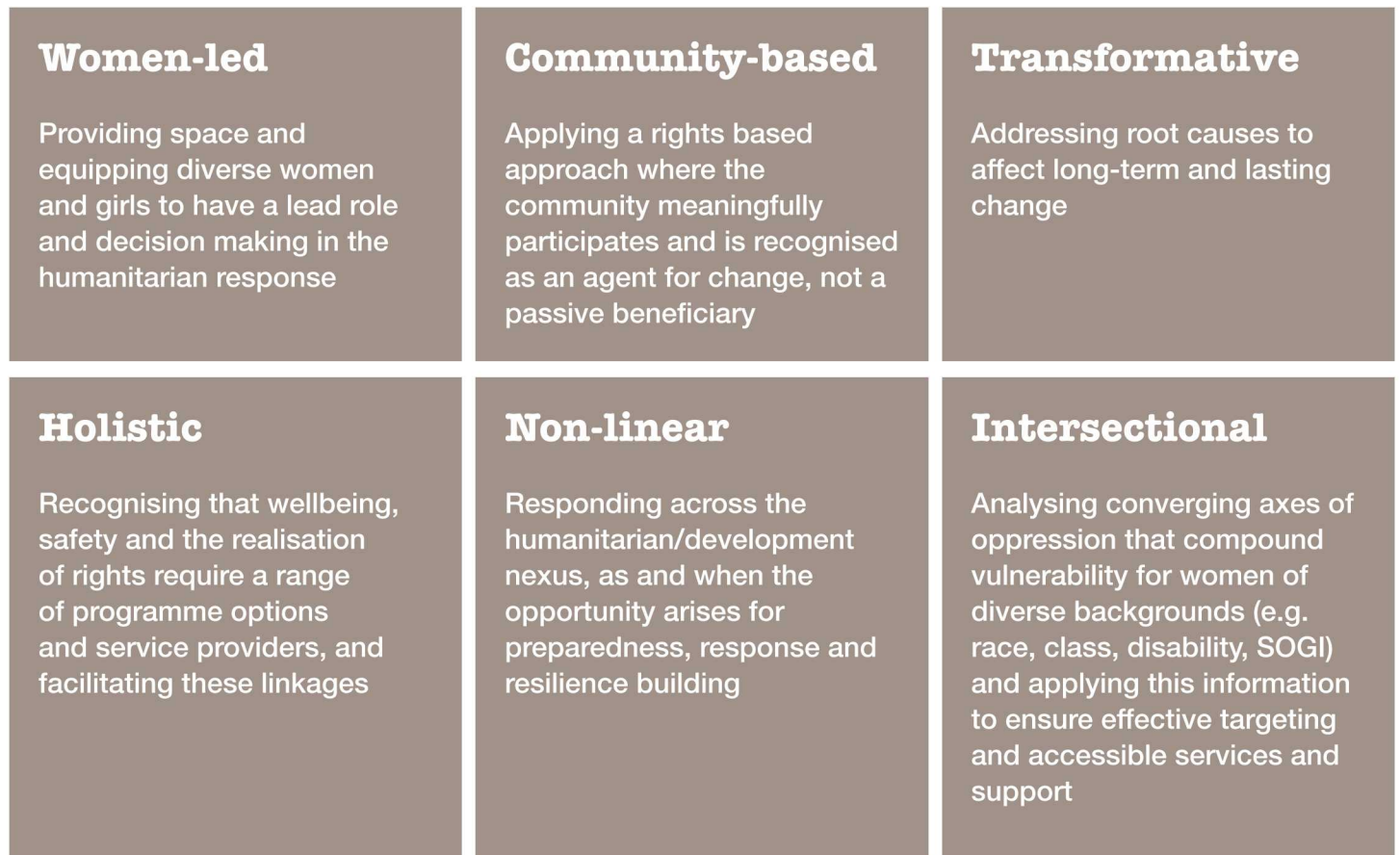
ActionAid's feminist approach to protection aims to support the role, agency and leadership of women in humanitarian action. It is community based and emphasises the essential role of women leaders in strengthening community resilience and protection mechanisms. It puts women's rights and women-led response at the heart of all interventions, while driving safety and dignity for all.

While supporting protection mainstreaming, the **Women-Led Community Based Protection (WLCBP)** approach represents "stand-alone" protection programming with its focus on driving specific protection outcomes for women and girls. It addresses the unrelenting gendered discrimination, barriers and disproportionate risk faced by women from affected populations in humanitarian crises and action. It recognises that emergencies can be a catalyst for transformational change in overcoming longstanding inequality, violence and discrimination towards women and girls, drawing on their experiences as first responders in emergencies.

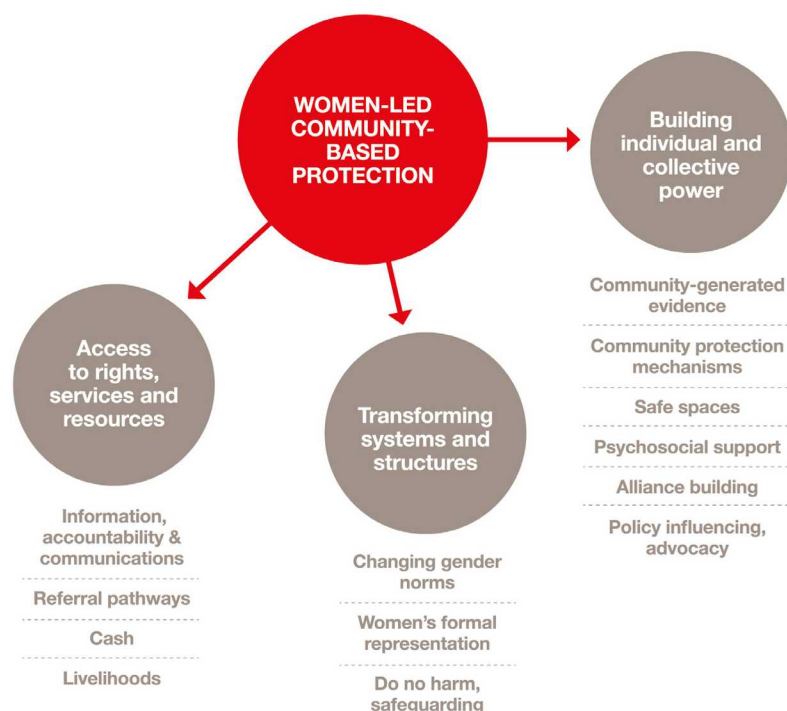
The WLCBP approach is about localising humanitarian action, shifting power and agency as well as financial and technical capacity to local and national women's collectives and organisations. Promoting and enabling women's role and fundamental right to be central actors in humanitarian action will help reduce the current male-dominated and gender biased international humanitarian system and make responses to humanitarian crises more effective and gender transformative.

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Guiding Principles:



The Women-Led Community Based Protection Framework



Working in 45 countries worldwide, ActionAid is scaling up this approach through our humanitarian response efforts around the world, ensuring that women from crisis-affected communities are driving their own protection, and that protection of their rights is prioritised and appropriately resourced. Existing pilots are already demonstrating the incredible potential of this model in driving a more sustainable and gender transformative approach to protection.

For more information please contact emergencies.information@actionaid.org

1 IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action, p2
 2 UNOCHA Financial Tracking Service (UNOCHA FTS) indicates that it has been almost consistently less than 40% funded between the years 2011 and 2018