

AMPLIFYING
WOMEN'S
VOICE

IN BRIEF

CHARTER OF DEMANDS

by Women Rights and Women Led Organizations
(WROs/WLOs) in Ethiopia, December 2023



Photo: UN Women/ Tensae Yemane

1. Purpose

Women's rights organizations, particularly local groups, are often best placed to respond to humanitarian emergencies, have the trust and knowledge of their communities, and have a comprehensive understanding of women's and girls' gender-based needs, fulfilling a frequently acknowledged service and knowledge gap in humanitarian action. However, both globally and in Ethiopia in particular, women's rights organizations face several challenges to their engagement in the humanitarian sector such as lacking resources and capacities. These organizations often also have limited space to engage in participatory consultation with national and international humanitarian actors on their needs, issues, and demands. Therefore, the purpose of this Charter of Demand is to provide a tool for women-led and women's rights organizations to make their voices and demands heard.

This Charter of Demands is the collective asks and demands from local women's rights and women-led organizations (WROs/WLOs), working on the ground throughout Ethiopia. It is addressed to all humanitarian actors and decision makers in the country. The Charter has captured issues of critical concern to these organizations. The Charter of Demands highlights what action is needed to ensure women's rights in humanitarian response and the meaningful engagement of women's rights and women-led organizations on humanitarian response. It also aims to improve the effectiveness of local and women-led humanitarian efforts and recognize women's leadership

in local humanitarian spaces. We expect the Charter of Demands to influence the work of the Humanitarian Country Team; the humanitarian clusters both nationally and sub-nationally; as well as the Government in Ethiopia as they plan, implement, and monitor their humanitarian response. Additionally, we want to see the Charter influencing all humanitarian stakeholders towards inclusive response to humanitarian situations.

2. Background and humanitarian overview

According to the Ethiopian Humanitarian Response Plan of 2023, more than 20 million people require urgent aid in the country; women and children make up for more than two thirds of those in need. Women and girls' needs have soared in the recent years as a result of violence, insecurity, natural disasters and climate shocks at the same time as their access to basic services, including sexual and reproductive health care, has been severely disrupted. Women face significant barriers to accessing health, social welfare, and justice services. There are also ongoing protection concerns including Gender Based Violence (GBV), child protection matters such as unaccompanied children, neglect and deprivation, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA).²

Humanitarian crises in Ethiopia necessitate full implementation of obligations under the UN Security Council adopted Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, that resolution recognizes the disproportionate and unique impact of armed

¹Humanitarian Response Plan, Ethiopia, 2023.

² Humanitarian Response Plan, Ethiopia, 2023.



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conflict and the importance of women in peace and security processes, by the international community and the Ethiopian government. UNSCR 1325 and many related resolutions call on all parties to the conflict to take special measures to “protect women and girls from gender based violence, in particular rape and all forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict”³ The multiple humanitarian crises ongoing in Ethiopia⁴ notably due to climate shocks such as drought, health crises like cholera outbreaks, and security issues across the nation, present a clear example of the need to align the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda in the humanitarian context to enforce accountability and improve women’s protection and participation.

The emergency response in Ethiopia is being scaled up across sectors and urgent humanitarian assistance has been provided. However, women and girls are facing many challenges due to the breakdown of key services, which are critical to the health, protection, and recovery of the

population especially women and girls; weakened informal and formal protection and accountability mechanisms; disrupted livelihoods, increased displacement, power imbalances, and limited access to resources. Hence, a more gender-sensitive approach is necessary to ensure that the needs of women and girls in conflict are met.

With this background, WROs/WLOs who are often the first responders in crises, throughout Ethiopia express their concern about the protection of women’s rights and the meaningful engagement of women’s organizations in humanitarian coordination, response, and decision-making.

Facilitated by the Network of Ethiopian Women’s Associations (NEWA), with the support of UN Women Ethiopia, this Charter of Demand highlights key asks from national women’s organizations to increase their meaningful participation on humanitarian coordination, response, and decision making.

3. Identifying strengths, challenges, and opportunities of WROs and WLOs

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-line responders during humanitarian crisis, very impactful in terms of providing timely response. • Deliver essential and lifesaving support to crisis affected communities, especially women and girls. • Understand the needs of affected people in their communities. • Have better access to marginalized population in humanitarian crisis and can easily reach them compared to international humanitarian actors 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited skills in humanitarian programming; capacity gaps • Limited technical and operational capacities, for example in developing project proposals. • Limited human and financial resources • Overlapping implementing areas • Challenge in conducting frequent assessment to identify gaps and inform programming of women/girls in humanitarian response. • Limited engagement with humanitarian clusters/ limited decision-making power. • Limited access to information regards to call for proposals, identifying potential donors
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet increasingly complex needs, WROs/WLOs provide diversified support such as SGBV, shelter, WASH, education, and livelihood support. • Provide support for people facing multiple and intersecting exclusions such as impoverished women and girls, women with disabilities, and displaced and refugee women and girls. • WROs/WLOs play an essential role in the implementation of a women-led humanitarian response adapted to the local context. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WROs/WLOs operating in crisis settings are underfunded/less attention given to WROs/WLOs • Lack of information and awareness of the humanitarian architecture • Lack of available funds reaching local and national organizations, especially funding for gender-specific humanitarian work is limited.

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1325>

⁴ Ethiopia | OCHA (unocha.org)



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The challenges WROs/WLOs are facing need be acknowledged and addressed by humanitarian stakeholders, including the Ethiopia Humanitarian Country Team, clusters, government, and donors.

4. Key Demands of WROs/WLOs

There are four key demands from Ethiopian WROs and WLOs as well as CSOs working on humanitarian response.

They are firstly the provision of longer-term funding for WROs and WLOs; secondly the prioritization of strengthening of WRO/WLO's organizational and technical capacities; thirdly the creation of meaningful partnerships with WROs and WLOs and ensuring their full inclusion in decision-making processes; and finally, the demand for improved access to information, communication, and coordination.

1. Provide longer-term funding to WROs and WLOs

- Provide gender-responsive funding, beyond GBV response; increase in access to flexible and un-earmarked funding; access to funding focusing on different humanitarian crises across the country. we should also emphasize on providing psychosocial and trauma healing services. Create awareness for case managers to respond to GBVs caused based on local context/culture.
- Provide specific, direct support to women, girls, elders, children and people with disabilities, and support WROs and WLOs via funds provision and technical support in their interventions and activities related to these groups.
- Provide humanitarian funding opportunities for WROs/WLOs based on their requests, and tailored to the local context and community needs, to better provide multi-sectoral and gender-sensitive support to women and girls in crisis-affected communities.
- Advocacy to donors in terms of increasing multi-year and flexible financing, that is accessible to local and women-led organizations and to increase support for WROs/WLOs operating in crisis settings.
- Humanitarian organizations should provide support and opportunities for income generating activities to survivors of SGBV to enable them to recover economically. Not only humanitarian funding but also availing funds towards vocational training and economic empowerment of women and girls living in impoverished conditions in the city.
- During emergencies, donors should focus on establishing and strengthen Internal Displace person's/ IDPs/ and providing sufficient funds for IDPs.

- Donors and partners of WROs/WLOs should consider the urgency to implement in crisis situations in relation to steps to complete once agreements are made for funding: processes for fund release should be streamlined and run without delays and complicated procedures. CSOs with limited capacities and resources face challenges in complying with multiple-step procedures of registrations for UN portals and similar organizational platforms, thus simplifications and holistic consideration of the working conditions should be noted, and accessibility should be improved accordingly.
- Humanitarian organization should also focus on prevention whenever it is within their capacities and mandates and include WRO/WLO voices as they have intimate knowledge of early warning signs and responses to those.

2. Prioritize strengthening the organizational and technical capacities of WROs and WLOs

- Due to conflicts, many offices of WROs/WLOs have been affected and are lacking in resources and organizational basic supplies and capacities. Hence, it is necessary to provide funding opportunities to build their organizational capacities: relevant and targeted training, such as capacity strengthening on proposal writing, financial management, humanitarian architecture training, development and sharing of tools, mentoring programs etc, as well as equipment.
- To avoid duplications of efforts via providing funds for similar activities/organisations, mapping out existing WROs/WLOs based on thematic areas, their existing mandate, and capacities, as well as the communities they serve is a key strategic action to strengthen the support for these organizations. Furthermore, donors should be actively engaged at the grassroots level such as Woreda- and Kebele-level, development groups, and communities.
- Facilitating experience sharing with national and international humanitarian actors can create peer-to-peer learning and open the door to new funding opportunities. Thus, identifying collaborative opportunities for WROs/WLOs would support their long-term growth and sustainability and overall capacity development.



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3. Create meaningful partnerships with WROs/WLOs and ensure their meaningful engagement in decision-making

- Strengthen opportunities for government, UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs and CSOs to engage with WROs/WLOs and ensure their representation in decision making spaces. Strengthen existing clusters, especially GBV, Education and Health clusters, which are led by government and CSOs. Recruit staff for clusters to follow up the implementation with financial support for other services.
- Advocating and lobbying for WROs/WLOs engagement in inter-agency clusters and humanitarian clusters – providing easy way for WROs/WLOs to be a member of clusters and humanitarian organizations.
- Advocating with UN agencies and bigger NGOs to sub-grant some of the humanitarian funds to WROs/WLOs and focus capacity strengthening activities around proposal writing.

4. Improve access to information, communication, and coordination

- Increasing WROs/WLOs membership across humanitarian clusters at the national and sub-national levels to ensure increased access to information, capacity building and funding opportunities, as well as enhance coordination efforts. (This way WROs/WLOs efforts can tag on to what others are doing and they don't always have to start from scratch).
- Considering that most WROs/WLOs operate at grass root level in hard-to-reach locations, due attention needs to be given to these organizations, for instance during calls for proposals, making eligibility criteria (HR, financial etc.) suitable with WROs/WLOs capacities as well as build their expertise on humanitarian response, for example through staff secondment.
- In terms of improving information sharing, it is recommended that humanitarian actors communicate with WROs/WLOs in more direct and simpler ways – avoiding jargon and using easy terminologies, making UN funding application portals user friendly and less complicated.
- Furthermore, support from other stakeholders in terms of strengthening WROs/WLOs to develop guidelines and standardized tools.
- Availing information dissemination platforms, providing WROs/WLOs with accessible websites and electronic documents where information on call for proposals, funding, and other opportunities can be accessed by these organizations.
- Support media engagement technically and financially: media engagement is considered necessary for promoting gender equality, thus considering media engagement support, particularly for community radio.

5. List of Signatories to the Charter

- Network of Ethiopian Women Association (NEWA)
- Vision With Action Women Development Organization (VAWDO)
- Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Mass Based Association (EWDNA)
- Asalle Pastoralist-multi sectoral development organization (APMDO)
- Timran
- Afar Women Association /AWA/
- Ethiopian Media Women Associations /EMWA/
- Tarcanfi Sustainable Development (TSD)
- Center of Concern
- Mujejegwa Local Women Development Association (MLWDA)
- Benishangul Women's Association (BWA)
- Amhara Women Association (AWA) Good Samaritan Association (GSA)
- Addis Ababa Women Association (AAWA) Beza for Women's Association
- Women Can Do It (WCDI) Dessie Women Association
- Siqqe Women's Development Association (SWDA) Family Service Association (FSA)
- Mekane Eyesus Women Who are Victims of GBV Organization
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