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Guidance Note

On the meaningful engagement of local women's and girls' organisations (LWGOs) in ECW-supported investments

I. PURPOSE

This guidance note is primarily aimed at ECW Secretariat staff to provide guidance to country teams on the operationalization of ECW's commitment to meaningfully engage with local women's and girls' organisations in the design, implementation, and monitoring of ECW supported investments (FERs and particularly MYRPs) so that the voices of women, girls and organizations representing them are heard in the design and delivery of ECW investments. It is expected, as a result, that ECW investments are adequately and effectively responding to their needs, capacities and concerns, for gender-responsive EiEPC.

II. RATIONALE

Local women's and girls' organisations have traditionally been overlooked within humanitarian coordination and decision-making platforms, including in EiE/PC, reinforcing underlying inequalities that obstruct access to humanitarian services for women, girls and others excluded on the basis of their gender¹.

ECW supports the localization agenda of the Grand Bargain² agreement and is committed to transferring funds as directly as possible to local and national providers. Moreover, the standards and procedures of the ECW Gender Policy and Accountability Framework³ clearly require grants to have partnerships with *“women led non-governmental organizations which support the implementation of relevant international norms and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”*. This is consistent with the ECW Gender Policy minimum gender performance indicator 3.5, which tracks the *“number of partnerships with women's NGOs [and national /regional/ global INGOs and networks] working on GEEWG”*. This has implications throughout all the stages of the FER and MYRP grant cycle. This guidance note aims to provide concrete steps for Country leads and country teams to meaningfully engage with women-led organisations in line with the requirements of the ECW Gender Policy and global best practices. Additionally, in July 2021, ECW joined the Call to Action on GBViE, and made the commitment that “women-led organizations are systematically involved in the

design/implementation of the ECW-supported multi-year resilience programmes (MYRPs)”.



A student sits at the teacher's table in a learning centre
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III. DEFINITION

Various denominations and definitions of women's organisations, women-led organisations, girls-led, or women's rights organisations are in use, making tracking of impact, participation and funding a challenge, and impeding accountability for crisis affected women and girls. In line with the IASC's efforts to harmonize a common denomination and definition for use by the humanitarian system, ECW, refers in this guidance note and in all subsequent document to “local women's and girls' organisations (LWGOs)”.

Local women's and girls' organisations⁴ are defined as:

1. Organisations whose **mandate** is to advance gender equality and women's and/or girls' rights and have a demonstrated commitment to the principles outlined in the IASC Gender Policy and other relevant global normative frameworks and commitments to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in crisis settings, such as girls' education or gender equality in education⁵

1. IASC Guidance on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms | IASC (interagencystandingcommittee.org)

2. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Guidance%20note%20on%20gender%20responsive%20localisation%20May%202020.pdf>

3. <https://www.educationcannotwait.org/download/ecw-gender-policy-and-accountability-framework-january-2020/>

4. Whilst the IASC definition focuses on WGOs, ECW does not exclude organisations working with a focus on non-binary/LGBTQ+ rights on the basis of an intersectional approach.

5. [iasc-policy-on-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls-in-humanitarian-action.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-policy-on-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls-in-humanitarian-action.pdf) (interagencystandingcommittee.org)

2. Organisations that **design, implement and monitor targeted activities** for women's and girls' rights, advancing their access to resources, economic opportunities, humanitarian services, including protection and humanitarian decision making/planning processes
3. Whose **staffing** is majority women and girls in all their diversity: at least 50%⁶
4. Whose **leadership** is majority women and girls in all their diversity: at least 75%
5. Can demonstrate **accountability** to women and girls, including through the coordination of community-based protection and feedback mechanisms that are tailored to women's and girls' needs.

Note: This guidance note applies particularly for MYRPs as ECW has made the explicit commitment that 100% of the MYRPs developed in 2023 [will] involve local women organizations in the design/implementation of the MYRPs. ECW recognizes that for FERs, the development timeline (usually between 6 to 8 weeks) may not allow the same level of engagement in the design phase as the MYRP development timeline, and that resources may be more limited for FERs during the implementation phase. However, as much as possible, FER country teams and grantees should be invited to follow this guidance as much as possible.

IV. STEPS TO ENGAGE WITH LOCAL WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' ORGANIZATIONS IN ECW INVESTMENTS

Design phase

- Identify the list of LWGOs active in the field of EiEPC in-country in consultation with gender actors (GiHA, GBV sub-clusters, Ministry of Women Affairs, UN agencies, INGOs working on gender and women and girls' empowerment and others as relevant)
- Involve WGOs in the MYRP development committee
- Involve WGOs in needs analysis, including gender analysis, ToC, intervention strategies, RF, and budgetslocal

Grantee selection process

- Ensure women's and girls' organisations are systematically part of the consortia-based approached supported by ECW (at least one third of local organisations part of a consortium with an international organisation). Provide written justification to ECW when the above criteria is not fulfilled.
- For grantees, ensure a % of the overall budget is dedicated to capacity strengthening of the local consortia organisations, including LWGOs.

Implementation phase

- Involve LWGOs in MYRP steering committee
- Involve LWGOs at annual reviews (ensure the presence of at least one LWGOs).

6. As per the UN Portal Definition with support from several UN agencies

M&E

- Involve LWGOs in Community feedback and complaint mechanisms, including in safety audits and GBV risk mitigation measurement.

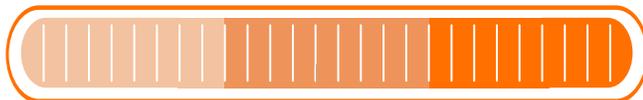
Resource Mobilization

- In all resource mobilisation efforts at country level, ensure WGOs involved through the consortia approach are visible, fully engaged, and included in the resource mobilisation efforts.

V. ECW MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to track progress towards achieving its commitments, ECW will monitor in all its MYRPs:

- The number of WGOs involved in the design phase as well the degree of their involvement (to ensure meaningful engagement rather than tokenistic) following the following LWGO's engagement continuum scale:



ABSENT

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MEANINGFUL

- The number of WGOs recipient of ECW funding through a consortia-based approach. This means that grantees (UN agencies or INGOs) will be required to report on the timeliness of their channeling of the funds to local WGOs, as well as the quality of partnership, and funding cascaded to local WGOs groups.

Additionally, in order to ensure long-term sustainability, INGOs/UN agencies grantees, are expected to:

- Adhere to ECW's commitment to meaningfully engage LWGOs in the MYRP design and implementation process and report on it.
- Dedicate a % of the overall grantee budget to capacity strengthening on gender (including governance issues) of the local consortia organisations, including WGOs.
- Ensure LWGOs partners in the MYRP are fully aware and involved in the resource mobilization process at country level for sustainability.



Two adolescent girls reading together.
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V. RECOMMENDED TOOLS TO GO FURTHER

- 🔗 Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream: Guidance note on gender-responsive localisation: <https://bit.ly/30UnFeM>
- 🔗 Humanitarian Funding, Partnerships and Coordination in the COVID-19 crisis: Perspectives from local women-led organisations and women's rights organisations: <https://bit.ly/3oVwZqL>
- 🔗 We Must Do Better Amplifying Women and Girls in Crises: A Feminist Assessment of the Humanitarian Aid System's Support of Women- and Girl-Led Organizations during the COVID-19 Pandemic <https://bit.ly/3FNdojv>



Education Cannot Wait [\[ECW\]](#) is the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises. We support and protect holistic learning outcomes for refugee, internally displaced and other crisis-affected girls and boys, so no one is left behind. ECW is administered under UNICEF's financial, human resources and administrative rules and regulations; operations are run by the Fund's own independent governance structure.

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