



Rappresentanza Permanente d'Italia  
ONU - New York



## Side Event

### Commission on the Status of Women sixty-nine (CSW69)

#### Title: Exploring the Impacts of Women-Led Engagements with Donors Partners

**Date:** Wednesday, March 12

**Time:** 08:30 to 10:00 AM EST

**Location:** UN Women HQ, Rooms 1924 + 1925  
220 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017

**Co-Hosts:** United Nations Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), Care International UK (CIUK), What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale (What Works II), Canada, Italy, Spain

**Countries Represented:** Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Colombia, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Ukraine.

**Registration link:** <https://forms.gle/xCrqMaFtjinkPRzM8>

**Livestream link:** <https://youtube.com/live/UZ5qvKzTQqU?feature=share>

**Webpage:** <https://wphfund.org/exploring-the-impacts-of-women-led-engagements-with-donor-partners/>

#### Event Overview

At this year's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), the spotlight will be on the progress made—and the challenges that remain—in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Pfa<sup>1</sup>). With a strong emphasis on women's leadership and<sup>2</sup> this side event will tackle one of the most pressing questions of our time: how can women-led organizations (WLOs) gain greater influence in funding decisions that shape humanitarian action and gender equality efforts worldwide.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-womenc/csw69-2025>

<sup>2</sup> UN Women (1995). Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

[https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA\\_E\\_Final\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/PFA_E_Final_WEB.pdf) p. 119

A panel featuring several women leaders from across the world will explore how their increased engagement with donors has not only expanded funding access for their organizations but also advanced their advocacy goals of localizing funding streams, flattening donor-recipient hierarchies, and amplifying the diverse needs of women and girls in humanitarian settings.

Panellists will also provide recommendations on how INGOs, women’s networks, and donors can work together to create stronger, more equitable partnerships that truly center the work and the voices of WLOs. Donors will leave with concrete, evidence-based recommendations on how to better deliver on their commitments to locally-led approaches and more effective humanitarian responses.

### Event Objectives

- To understand the value add of increasing direct contact and engagement between WLOs, women’s networks and humanitarian donors.
- To learn which advocacy and funding goals have been successful as a result of increased engagement, and which have still been left behind, particularly in humanitarian, crisis, and displacement settings.
- To share best practices based on evidence and examples from the field with INGOs, WLOs, women’s networks and UN agencies, and donors alike to continue and build upon their efforts to increase this engagement in the most strategic and appropriate manner.
- To generate recommendations to the international community for how to advance donor engagement goals for WLOs and women’s networks meaningful participation and leadership.

### Proposed Agenda

Time	Remarks	Responsible
10 minutes	<b>Welcoming remarks</b>	Ana M. Alonso, Ambassador-at-Large for Feminist Foreign Policy of Spain  & Tonni Brodber, WPHF Head of Secretariat
5 minutes	<b>Remarks from CARE International UK</b>	Dorothy Sang, Head of Advocacy and Policy
50 minutes	<b>Moderated Panel: WLOs’ and women’s networks’ insights into their experiences with donor engagement</b>  <b>Moderator:</b> - Jeanne Frangieh, Lebanon, HDA)  <b>Panelists:</b>  1. <b>Ukraine</b> Iryna Trokhym – Center Women's Perspectives (CWP) 2. <b>DRC</b> Nelly Mbangi – Sauti Ya Mama Mukongomani (SMM)	Moderator: Jeanne Frangieh (Himaya Daeem Aataa - Lebanon)

	<p>3. <b>Afghanistan</b> Zarqa Yaftali – Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF)</p> <p>4. <b>Palestine</b> Shahd Sataria – Palestinian Working Women Society for Development</p> <p>5. <b>Kenya</b>, Angelina Mwadala Cikanda – Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW)</p>	
15 minutes	<p><b>5 interventions from the floor (3 mins each)</b></p> <p><b>Iraq</b> (Taban Shores), <b>Nepal</b> (Sunita Mainali), <b>DRC</b> (Claudine Tsongo), <b>Pakistan</b> (Fajer Pasha Rabia) <b>Colombia</b> (Maria Luisa Ramirez).</p>	<p>Moderator: Jeanne Frangieh (Himaya Daema Aataa-Lebanon)</p> <p>Moderator: Jeanne Frangieh (Himaya Daema Aataa-Lebanon)</p>
5 minutes	<b>Concluding</b>	<p>Sonia Farrey, Deputy Director of the Gender and Children in Conflict Department in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, UK</p> <p>&amp;</p> <p>Eliza Elisson</p>
5 minutes	<b>Closing Remarks</b>	Italy

## **Background**

Accessing multi-year, flexible funding is one of the greatest persistent challenges facing Women-Led Organizations (WLOs) and women’s networks across the world. Global humanitarian actors have made significant commitments, including the Grand Bargain commitment to increase funding to local and national responders (including WLOs) to 25%.<sup>3</sup> Yet only 1.2% of humanitarian funding went to local actors in 2022,<sup>4</sup> and a much smaller amount reached WLOs (an amount that is nearly impossible to assess as financial tracking systems are not set up to publicly track it).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, despite the 25% Grand Bargain goal, signatories have only been required to publicly report against that goal recently, after some reticence to doing so, demonstrating that they are perhaps not making as much progress toward it as they should be.

In making these goals a reality, an important first step is for humanitarian donors -- particularly government donors -- to increase their direct contact and relationships with WLOs and women’s networks to foster mutual understanding and fruitful collaborations. Research shows that donors recognize the importance of establishing direct contact with WLOs and women’s networks, yet most of them fail to follow through and meet with women

<sup>3</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2016). The Grand Bargain: A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need. P. 5. [chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2017-02/grand\\_bargain\\_final\\_22\\_may\\_final-2\\_0.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2017-02/grand_bargain_final_22_may_final-2_0.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Development Initiatives (2023). Global Humanitarian Assistance Report (2023). P.16 <https://devinit.org/resources/global-humanitarian-assistance-report-2023/> Note: this includes actors at the local and national levels.

<sup>5</sup> CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk (2024) Funding for Women’s Rights Organizations in Humanitarian Crises.P.8. [https://wps-helpdesk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WPS066-WRO-in-crises\\_FINAL-to-upload-1.pdf](https://wps-helpdesk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/WPS066-WRO-in-crises_FINAL-to-upload-1.pdf)

leaders regularly.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, it is crucial to generate evidence to demonstrate the impacts that this engagement can have on the work of WLOs and women's networks, so that donors recognize the importance of and expand upon this practice.

### **CARE International UK**

Since 2020 CARE has piloted an "Equitable Partnership Approach" (EPA)<sup>7</sup> to demonstrate how INGOs can play a role in narrowing the gap between donors and WLOs by facilitating relationships and engagement wherever possible. Through the EPA, WLOs are supported to have direct access to donors and to global advocacy opportunities, beyond the scope of an individual program, as well as provided capacity strengthening opportunities for enhancing their approaches to donor engagement and resource mobilization. As a result of this approach, several WLO leaders have successfully increased their contact and engagement with prominent donors in the humanitarian sector over the past few years. This valuable case study of increased donor engagement allows for exploration of the specific impacts WLOs have seen as a result of their increased engagement with donors. This captures the impact not only on WLO fundraising goals, but also the advancement of their advocacy goals related to the localization of funding, opportunities to lead humanitarian coordination and response, and more. The intentional analysis of the impacts of donor engagement on this group of WLOs can provide evidence not only to convince donors of the importance of meeting their goals of increasing engagement with WLOs, but also to encourage other INGOs to use their unique positionality to also play facilitating roles between WLOs and donors.

### **United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund**

Women-led organizations and feminist networks have transformative power of leveraging diverse women's expertise for impactful collaborations with donors and UN agencies. By informing donor decisions with their lived experiences, WLOs and women's networks shift funding practices to be more inclusive, equitable, and aligned with the realities on the ground. For example, WLOs and women's networks play a role in shaping the decision-making structures and priorities of multi-partner trust funds such as the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF). By engaging directly in consultations and governance mechanisms at global and national level, WLOs influence WPHF's strategic direction, project design, and allocation of resources. This participatory approach enhances impact by ensuring that donor funding remains responsive to the needs of women-led organizations (WLOs) and feminist networks and addresses the complex challenges faced by WLOs and women's networks on the frontlines of crises. Consultations with WLOs and women's networks have also informed the design of targeted Funding Windows and Funding Initiatives. The strategic partnership of the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) with the women's network 'Action Network on Forced Displacement' and Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development serves as a prime example. Through the Initiative, women leaders from the Action Network on Forced Displacement are directly informing and shaping funding decisions by deciding on the selection of countries, participating in the preselection of projects, and sharing their expertise with women's organizations in the WPHF Mentorship Scheme. By informing donor decisions with their lived experiences, WLOs and women's networks shift funding practices to be more inclusive, equitable, and aligned with the realities on the ground.

Moreover, through its Global Learning Hub (L-HUB) and in collaboration with German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO), WPHF hosted the '**Global Women's Forum for Peace & Humanitarian Action**' (GWF) in May 2023. The Forum brought together 200 actors, including 87 women civil society representatives from 29 countries, as well as members from international organizations, I/NGO, academics, and government representatives. The GWF 2023 aimed to provide women's CSOs with a space to strategize and identify joint advocacy priorities; an opportunity to network and build coalitions; and greater visibility for their work and achievements. After three days rich with learnings and exchanges, an outcome statement was collectively drafted, reflecting a wide range of women's civil society voices, who named the [Berlin Declaration](#) 2023. The declaration puts forth key priorities and calls peace and

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<sup>6</sup> Caritas Europa (2023). *Unfulfilled Promises Addressing the gap between commitments and practice in locally led humanitarian action*. [https://www.caritas.eu/locally-led-humanitarian-action/#Report\\_PDF](https://www.caritas.eu/locally-led-humanitarian-action/#Report_PDF)

<sup>7</sup> CARE. *Partnering with Women-Led Organizations (WLOs) and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs)*. Emergency Toolkit. <https://www.careemergencytoolkit.org/partnership/3-gender-in-localisation/partnering-with-womens-rights-organisations-wros/>

humanitarian stakeholders to invest in women civil society leaders' transformational work in conflict and crisis settings across the globe, it also recognizes the importance of fostering and amplifying movement-building and solidarity. The Forum also resulted in the creation of several Regional joint advocacy actions between the participating organizations, which were designed around movement building and demanding donors and different stakeholders to prioritizing Women's Agenda in humanitarian context and adapt their mechanisms to respond to the WLO needs.

#### **What Works to Prevent Violence: Impact at Scale**

Despite clear evidence that feminist activism works to end VAWG and realize gender justice, women's rights and feminist organizations are severely underfunded. "99% of gender-related international aid fails to reach women's rights and feminist organizations directly," according to the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) determined that among the \$10 billion given to civil society organizations (CSOs) for gender equality work in 2014, 92% went to international non-governmental organizations, leaving just 8% to go directly to CSOs in the Global South.

The 'What Works to Prevent Violence – Impact at Scale' Programme (What Works II) is a seven-year initiative funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) that builds on the success of 'What Works I' to scale-up effective and innovative interventions to stop violence before it starts.

What Works II hopes to provide much-needed leadership toward more inclusive, accessible structures. Supporting 13 projects across 11 countries, What Works II is funding specialist women's rights organisations with deep local knowledge and understanding of their communities, aiming to support evidence-based, locally-led change. Internalizing equity and respect within partnerships and throughout the entire aid infrastructure can help realize WROs and donors' collective vision of a violence-free world. WROs can, and do, deliver change when provided with the resources, trust and support needed to thrive.