

## Report

# **FROM LOCAL THINKING TO WIDER IMPACT: LOCALIZATION STRATEGY IN GBV RESPONSE AND PREVENTION IN CAMEROON**

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Good Practices from IASC Task Force 5

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# From local thinking to wider impact: Localization strategy in GBV response and prevention in Cameroon

Supporting women-led organizations' participation and leadership in GBV coordination mechanisms

Authors

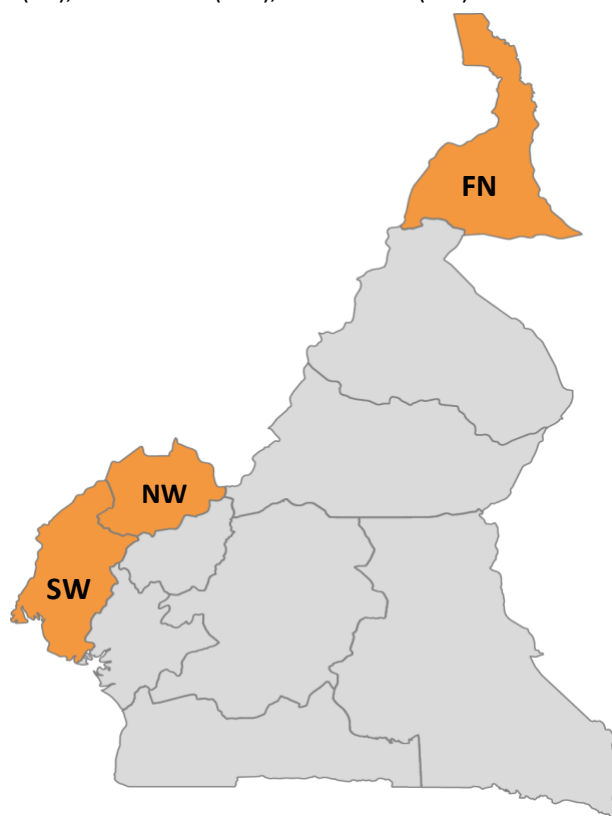
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Geographical coverage

**Country:** Cameroon

**Regions:** Far North (FN), North-West (NW), South-West (SW)



Actors and Stakeholders

The gender-based violence (GBV) sector in Cameroon is funded by a wide range of donors including the EU, US, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), Japan, the UN, and private donors and foundations. GBV implementing partners are made up of UN agencies under the leadership of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), international organizations, national NGOs and women-led and women rights organizations. The partnerships are multi-pronged, including direct contracting, cluster co-facilitation of coordination mechanisms, as well as joint programming and strategy.



People of Concern

The practice targets primarily women and girls, and indirectly all populations affected by the crisis in the north-west, south-west and far north regions. As per the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), 987,400 people need GBV response and prevention services. Quality GBV

This good practice was identified and documented through a template developed on the basis of the [2021 IASC Guidance on Localization](#), which aims at supporting efforts to strengthen the meaningful participation, representation, and leadership of local and national humanitarian actors (L/NAs) within IASC humanitarian coordination structures. Its objective is to share knowledge and inspire progress and positive change regarding the meaningful participation of local actors in Humanitarian Coordination platforms. The original draft of this good practice template was developed by the [KORE \(Knowledge Platform for Emergencies and Resilience\) team](#) in the Office of Emergencies and Resilience of the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#) and was tailored to the needs of this IASC initiative.

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response services will increase the safety and well-being required to ensure access to other humanitarian services and enjoy outcomes of other humanitarian sectors' programming.

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## Gender

Women represent more than 50 per cent of crisis affected populations. However, they disproportionately experience discrimination preventing them from accessing opportunities and decision-making spheres. Humanitarian response cannot be effective without women's participation, and change in the way their role in the humanitarian response is perceived. From simple beneficiaries to decision makers.

To efficiently respond to this, the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) strategy included among its strategic priorities the support to women-led organizations (WLOs) with appropriate indicators to track how many WLOs were supported. In addition, localization is one of the principles the GBV sector has chosen to ensure successful implementation of the Humanitarian Response Plan in 2023. This has been translated into concrete action to build the capacity for WLOs on GBV response, prevention, and coordination in the humanitarian context.



## Context

Cameroon is impacted by three complex and protracted humanitarian crises, namely the Lake Chad Basin, caused by Boko Haram, food insecurity and natural disaster; the North-West and South-West (NWSW) political crisis; and the Central African Republic (CAR) refugee crisis in the East. The crisis displaced 4.7 million people and has affected nine out of the ten regions of the country. According to the HNO, more than 3.2 million people are projected to face acute food insecurity in 2023. The ongoing insecurity situation in NWSW, the food crisis and natural disaster in the FN region and the continuous increase in number of IDPs and subsequently the need for humanitarian assistance.

The protracted nature of the crisis impacts resource availability, with funding resources continuing to shrink leaving many with insufficient or no support at all. The crisis is characterized by human rights violations, including GBV, which remains widespread and disproportionately affects women and girls. In 2022, 11,496 survivors (89 per cent of whom were women), were able to report incidents and to receive at least one type of response service. The GBV coordination continues to work to ensure that GBV prevention and response services are available, sustainable, and of good quality. One of the approaches to achieve this includes strong support to local actors for their effective participation and leadership in coordination.



## Implementation and objective

As part of the localization strategy of the humanitarian response in Cameroon, increasing support to local organizations sought to boost the participation of local actors in the planning and implementation of the humanitarian response. This participation of local actors was not as sub-contractors, but also as active influencing members. UNFPA in Cameroon invested in building the capacity to increase their participation and decision-making agency in the humanitarian response. Beyond being implementing partners, UNFPA now has local actors as leaders of coordination mechanisms and more local organizations engaged in clusters and other coordination fora.



## Methodological approach

### Participation

A successful localization process was not possible or achievable if local actors' participation in coordination mechanisms was not secured. In leading GBV AoR, UNFPA in Cameroon made use of various strategies to ensure sustainable participation of local actors in GBV coordination fora and mechanisms. To ensure effective participation the GBV AoR makes use of the following approaches:

- Meetings are held in the different languages mostly spoken in the region and all members use the language of their preference with translation.
  - The GBV Cluster uses hybrid online and in-person meetings to allow those who are not able to travel or who face lockdowns (like in NWSW where security deteriorates unpredictably) to join and feel they are active members of the groups. Meeting locations are also discussed to ensure there is no additional logistical cost that may reduce participation.
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- Valuing each organization: meetings are hosted by different organizations on a rotating basis to ensure everyone feels seen and valued.
  - Key strategic documents: strategy, analysis, advocacy notes, HNO, HRP are developed jointly with both local and international actors, and their contributions are considered.
  - Consensual decision-making: all members participate in decision-making. Coordination meeting venues and agendas are discussed and validated with all group members, including WLOs. WLOs are involved in advisory groups when there is a need to review or develop a given strategic document.

### **Leadership**

With the protracted nature of the crisis in Cameroon, local leadership is needed to ensure stronger implication of local actors in decision making. In addition, local leadership allows timely intervention during emergencies when humanitarian access becomes restricted. In NWSW, ongoing lockdowns remain a key challenge for humanitarians. Local leadership are allowed to make rapid decisions and ongoing support to ensure humanitarian response continues to be provided for people in need.

For GBV AoR, the sub-cluster co-facilitation terms of reference (ToR) specifies that local actors are prioritized. In locations where they don't have required capacity, an international non-governmental organization (INGO) can be selected with the main task of providing technical support to a local organization for handover during the next co-facilitation term. This approach is paying off as many local actors are performing well and meeting the required conditions for the co-facilitation roles. For example, in the far north GBV sub-cluster groups are co-facilitated by two local organizations with the lead of UNFPA.

### **Capacity strengthening**

In Cameroon, the GBV AoR has been investing in local capacity-building and this includes ongoing training, providing space for coordination leadership, and close collaboration for innovation initiatives with youth and women-led organizations. UNFPA supports peer support learning and experience sharing and has been supporting local organizations to take part in international capacity-building platforms. For example, four WLOs took part in a regional training of trainers on GBV data management.

### **Partnership**

The localization agenda, as a result of the grand bargain commitment, involves different stakeholders including key donors, UN agencies, INGOs, government structures and local organizations. Beyond the contractor's partnership relations, WLOs are taking some leading roles within joint program initiatives and coordination mechanisms. In terms of decision-making, the GBV Sector actively and closely engages with the Coordination of Humanitarian International NGOs (CHINGO) which is part of GBV AoR.

### **Resourcing**

At the HCT level, a commitment to allocate 30 per cent to local actors will increase support to WLOs and WROs in NWSW regions considered by the allocation. Due to the protracted nature of the crisis in Cameroon, localization is being required by different donors and more humanitarian actors are responding anticipatively through intensive capacity-building to local actors, including expanding access to funding opportunities.

For example, one of the main commitments of the action plan developed by the Localization Working Group includes ensuring greater transparency and providing more support and funding tools for local and national stakeholders. The HCR supports local organization platforms to have bilateral discussions with donors to present the positive impact of capacitated local actors, increasing trust and funding decisions.

### **Preparedness, response, and humanitarian-development-peace collaboration**

The leading roles local actors hold in clusters or working groups increases their action field. They participate more in decision-making and influence how the response is planned and provided. Through this partnership, local actors gained capacity and skills that allow them to respond to crises when they happen. For example, WLOs participated on initial assessments

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during the flood in the far north and have been involved in responses based on training they participated in.

Local actors have been able to access hard-to-reach areas in NWSW due to security restrictions. Being from the affected populations, local actors have a better understanding of the local context, including the culture, religion, language, and politics and this allows them to serve as a solid link between preparedness, humanitarian response and development.



### Results and impact

#### **REPRESENTATION**

WLOs are co-facilitating the GBV sub-cluster and participate in decision-making during response planning. They are part of different advisory groups and they held an active role during the meeting—such as doing minutes, facilitating group sessions, and co-facilitating the meeting.

#### **PARTICIPATION:**

More WLOs are active members of GBV response coordination mechanisms. For example, in the far north 70 per cent of the GBV sub-cluster are local actors.

#### **LEADERSHIP**

In the far north the GBV Sub-cluster worked to shift power to WLOs, giving them a larger leadership role in coordination mechanisms. In the far north regions of Cameroon, the GBV Sub-cluster is co-facilitated by WLOs ALVF and AJASSED. This is a result of a capacity-building plan of WLOs around humanitarian coordination. All the ToRs for co-facilitation roles, specify that local actors, particularly WLOs, are prioritized.

#### **PARTNERSHIP:**

More and more WLOs are benefiting from increased capacity-building and positioning towards donors. WLO services quality is increasing and their resource mobilization skills have improved. With this, WLOs will progressively be able to access funding.

#### **CAPACITY STRENGTHENING**

WLO participation as leaders in coordination mechanisms increase their influence in the humanitarian space. The capacity-building they benefited from on various topics, whether programming, sectoral key domains, coordination and humanitarian program cycles, allows a more balanced participation in discussion and influence on how programmes are tailored and designed. WLOs have been engaged actively in discussions and consultations during the HNO process and subsequent tailored response plan.

#### **RESOURCING**

In Cameroon, OCHA hosts the Localization Task Force group with dedicated staff. The GBV AoR lead is a member of the group and participates in meetings and initiatives to ensure WLOs needs are considered.



### Sustainability

The HCT has localization among its commitments, as such all clusters in Cameroon are investing in reinforcing the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs). The new GBV AoR strategy has indeed a pillar on WLOs support and some WLOs in the NWSW have been linked with the call to action thanks to CARE International. In sum, the practice is becoming strongly linked to frameworks creating stronger sustainability. Financially, this led to the HCT decision to apply 30 per cent of funding to CSOs in Central Emergency Response Fund allocations.



### Replicability and upscaling

The GBV AoR is engaging with an international organization in the cluster co-facilitation in the NWSW. One of the main tasks of the co-facilitator will be to strengthen capacity-building for local organizations to ensure they will be able to take on the role from next year. For example, one of the WLOs who led the GBV Sub-cluster in the far north was invited to a UNFPA panel to conduct advocacy for the Sahel region.



### Key learning

- WLOs play a critical role in ensuring humanitarian response is timely and has adequate geographic coverage.
- Investing in local actors' capacity, relationships, and trust building largely contributed to tailoring activities to local priorities for more field-based interventions and a path for sustainability.
- Increased support to local actors and their engagement in decision-making facilitates higher quality advocacy and engagement with donors.
- Funds are still necessary to ensure sustainable transfer of knowledge to local actors.



### Related resources

- GBV AoR Strategy in Cameroon
- GBV AoR structure in Cameroon
- HNO/HRP Cameroon
- Donor briefing on localization in Cameroon



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