

Feminist Principles in Humanitarian Contexts



IPPF: A feminist humanitarian organisation

At the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), our commitment to feminist principles in humanitarian action is unwavering. We recognize that structural inequities perpetuate and exacerbate vulnerabilities during crises, disproportionately affecting marginalized, excluded, and under-represented communities.

Globally, there is a rollback on women's and gender rights that can be seen from Afghanistan and Uganda to the US¹. International humanitarian laws for the protection of refugees are being increasingly flouted. Sexual violence is used as a war tactic and a political tool to dehumanize, destabilize, and forcibly displace populations across the globe²; and in the last years, we have seen an increase in sexual violence as a weapon used in conflicts.

By centring human rights and challenging existing inequalities, IPPF strives to advance the rights of women, girls, men and boys and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) people in emergency contexts.

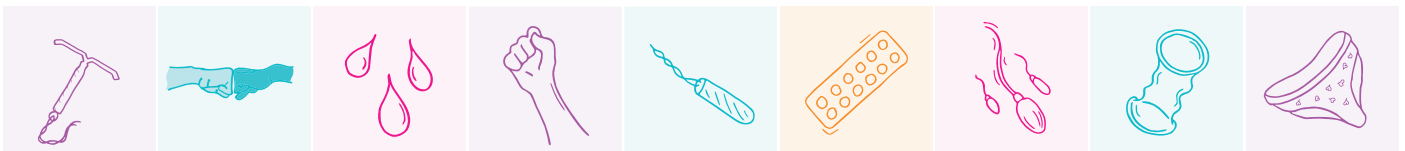
Our approach is holistic, acknowledging that humanitarian work extends beyond crisis

responses. It begins before a crisis occurs and continues through the nexus of humanitarian and development efforts and can resurge during development programming. We reject siloed thinking that separates humanitarian and development interventions and instead emphasises long term resilience.

IPPF allocates substantial resources to humanitarian work, recognizing the lifesaving nature of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in emergencies. We actively advocate for SRHR as a high priority in political agreements, policies, and with our MAs, we actively engage with feminist, gender rights and women-led organizations.

IPPF recognises the need to address intersectionality and experiences of individuals including gender, race, class, sexuality, disability among others, and to ensure that humanitarian responses are inclusive and responsive to a diverse set of needs.

Together, we can create a more just and equitable world – one where SRHR remains at the forefront, even amidst the most challenging circumstances.



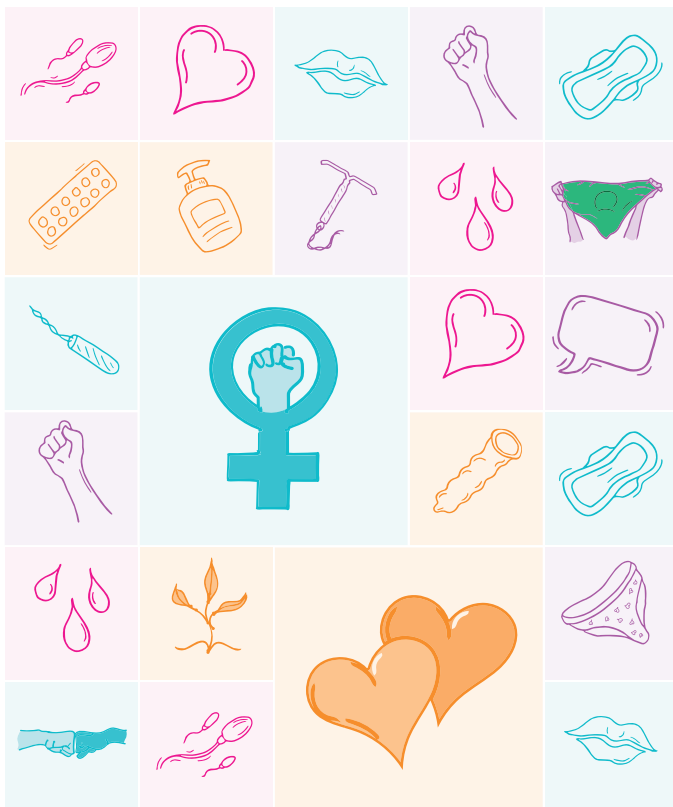
Our Key Principles

Disrupting the Status Quo

Challenging entrenched male power dynamics within humanitarian organizations is essential for fostering equality, inclusivity, and effectiveness in aid efforts.

Gender-transformative action is pivotal. This approach goes beyond simply increasing the representation of women in leadership roles; it involves fundamentally restructuring organizational norms, policies, and practices to address the root causes of gender inequality, including addressing gender-based discrimination and harassment, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect.

Prioritizing the voices and experiences of women and LGBTQI+ in decision-making processes can lead to more holistic and sustainable solutions to complex humanitarian crises. The humanitarian sector should also actively oppose oppressive forces, adhering to ethical principles, and challenging harmful norms. This will help foster innovation, responsiveness, and inclusivity, leading to greater agility, relevance and accountability to partners and communities.



Challenging Patriarchy, Colonisation, and Delivering Tailored Responses

Challenging patriarchy, understanding colonial legacies, and tailoring responses are essential for effective and ethical humanitarian action. Tackling inequity and discriminatory social norms demand customised responses to specific contexts, ensuring intersectionality, disability-inclusive response, antiracism action and respect for diverse beliefs and practices anchored in SRHR and justice.

Challenging Structural Inequalities

Women, girls, LGBTQI+ and marginalized population are most affected by emergencies and sexual and gender-based violence.

Prioritizing urgent needs and responses with a protection lens, discrimination and xenophobia free environment, and embedding gender transformative approaches and community led responses is critical.

Shifting Power and Speaking Out

The voices of women as well as LGBTQI+ and marginalized populations are essential in humanitarian advocacy and responses. These populations, the first to be affected by disasters and conflicts, are also dedicated solution-seekers and true change makers. Fostering their decision-making power and recognizing their leadership is crucial for creating long-lasting change and transformation under a Do No Harm approach. Men and boys should also be considered as strong allies to support and speak out for feminist values.





Local Empowerment and Gender Equity

Incorporating and empowering Member Associations (MAs) and national civil society organisations (CSOs) from women, girls, and LGBTQI+ and marginalized groups and organizations is vital for a swift action. Ensuring their active involvement in leadership roles and coordination mechanisms is essential. Preparedness efforts should consider their specific needs and capacities during stable times. Developing agility and flexibility to deliver faster, needs-based responses during crises is key, creating space for their voices to be heard and their expertise to shape responses.

Human Rights-Based Approach

Empowering women and girls, and marginalized populations as right-based holders and holding duty-bearers accountable for fulfilling their human right obligations during crises is a priority. This can be achieved by addressing the root causes of gender inequality and violence, and by promoting the realization of the full spectrum of human rights for women and girls, LGBTQI+ and other marginalized populations including civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

SRH in Crisis Saving Lives and Restoring Dignity

Highlighting the critical need for SRH and position it as central to humanitarian responses for women, girls and marginalized populations is at the core of our approach. Advocating for the importance of SRHR and ensuring access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health care, including sexual and gender-based violence, across the disaster management cycle is a key role for IPPF MAs and partners.

**Together, we
can create a
more just and
equitable world**

Our Approach



Inclusion in Decision-Making

Advocate for the inclusion of MAs and CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) supporting women and marginalized people in humanitarian decision-making at all levels.

Foster MA representation in country coordination structures and international forums.

Provide targeted support and resources to local women's organizations and LGBTQI+ groups to enable them to lead and participate in humanitarian response efforts effectively.

Gender Transformative Action

Integrate gender-transformative approaches into humanitarian programming by conducting gender analyses to understand the specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and other marginalized groups in crisis-affected populations.

Develop and implement interventions that challenge traditional gender roles and power dynamics.

Support the establishment of representative committees comprised of women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and other marginalized groups to provide input and feedback on humanitarian priorities, strategies, and interventions.

Partnership and Support

Encourage partnerships between MAs and local CSOs and CBOs as part of national response teams.

Provide funding and operational support for these partnerships within response budgets.

Conduct capacity-building initiatives for local women's organizations from grass-roots to national levels to enhance preparedness and response capabilities.

Meaningful Participation

Ensure the involvement and consultation of women in all their diversity in the design, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation of humanitarian programs.

Particularly focus on enabling participation of women with disabilities, LGBTQI+ individuals, indigenous groups, and young women.

Recognize and address the differential impacts of conflict and displacement on conflict-affected women, girls and marginalized groups.

People-led Accountability

Demonstrate our accountability to the local partners, communities and people we serve.

Ensure transparent, responsive, and effective delivery of humanitarian responses.

Ensure people-centred services are accessible safely, and in environments free from coercion, discrimination and stigma.

Policy and Reform

Uphold policies and reforms supporting MAs and CSOs in advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights in humanitarian responses.



To develop this document FCDO, GAC and DFAT policies were reviewed as well as OXFAM, CARE and the feminist humanitarian network principles

1 [The humanitarian implications of a backlash on rights | ODI: Think change](#)

2 [Wartime sexual violence a 'psychological weapon', sets back cause of peace | UN News](#)