

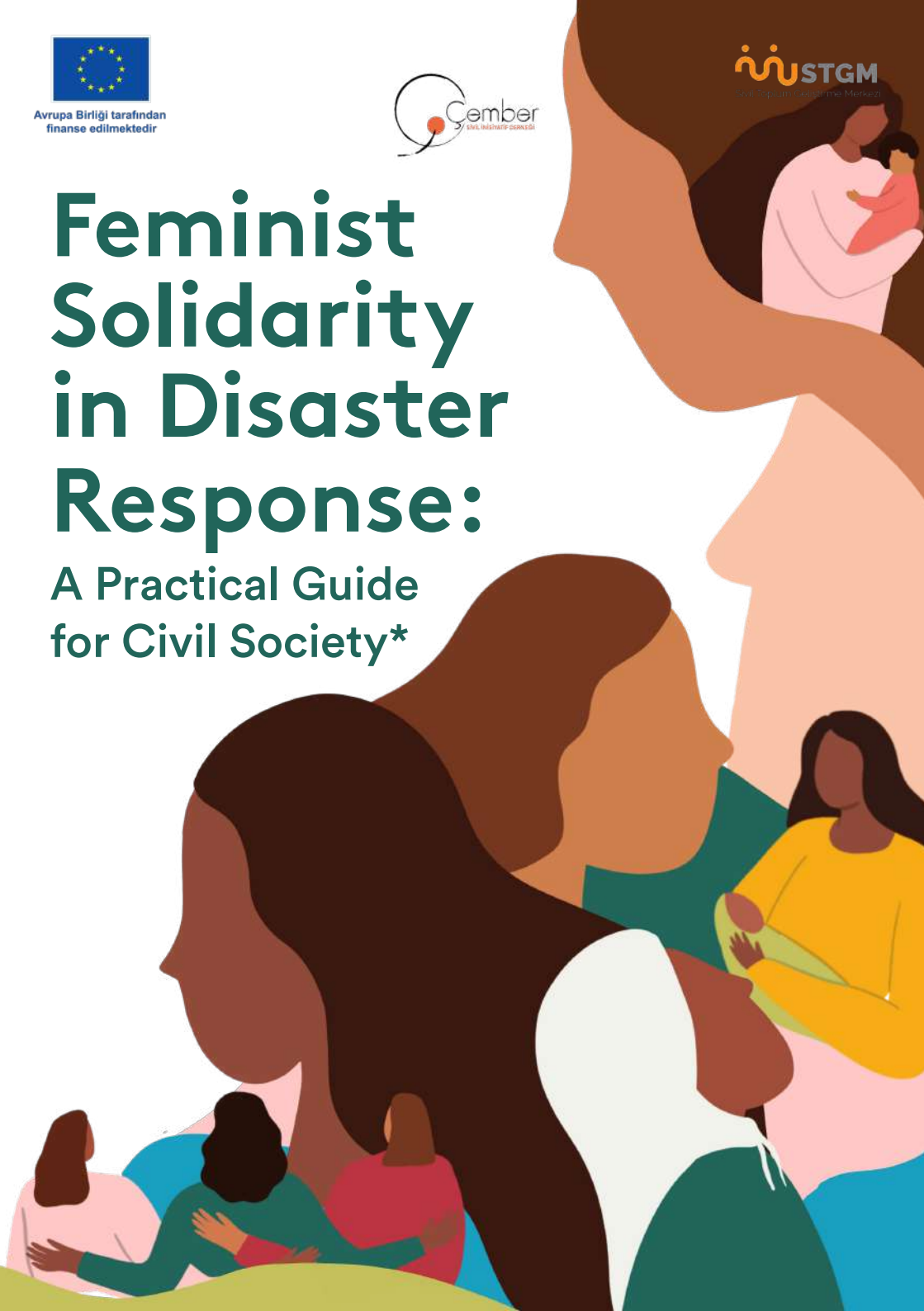


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Feminist Solidarity in Disaster Response:

A Practical Guide
for Civil Society*





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Preparation and Content Development Team

Bahar Aldanmaz Fidan

Gülfer Kırbaş

Merve Ayşe Köseoğlu Güngörmezler

Contributors to the Workshop and Publication Process

Esra Atalay Tuna

İlayda Eskitaşçıoğlu Karavelioğlu

Photography

Merve Ayşe Köseoğlu / ÇemberDE Archive

Graphic Design

Burcu Koleli

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This guide has been prepared by Cember Civil Initiative (CemberDE), a feminist civil society organization based in Türkiye working at the intersection of disaster response, gender equality, and community-based solidarity.

Grounded in field experience following the 6 February 2023 earthquakes, this guide presents practical feminist approaches for civil society organizations, volunteer groups, and humanitarian actors seeking to center women, girls, and marginalized communities as active agents in disaster response and recovery processes.





INTRODUCTION

Numerous reports have been published addressing both the physical destruction and the social and psychosocial consequences of the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes in Türkiye, one of the most devastating disasters in the country's recent history. In addition to [CemberDE's](#) own report, institutions such as [Purposeful](#), [Mor Dayanisma](#), [The Women's Human Rights Association](#), [The Association for Combating Sexual Violence](#), and [Konuşmamız Gerek Association](#) produced reports grounded in feminist perspectives that shed light on field experiences.

These reports demonstrate that services specifically addressing the needs of women and girls played a crucial role in mobilizing women's collective organizing capacity in order to meet essential care-related needs such as food, water, menstrual hygiene products, baby formula, and adult diapers.

During the February 2023 earthquakes, however, many of these services were implemented primarily through the solidarity and advocacy efforts of women's communities.

We hope that in future disasters and crises, such services and inclusive approaches will be systematically undertaken by public institutions. Nevertheless, given the possibility that such institutional responsibility may not fully materialize, we believe it is essential to learn from past experiences and prepare accordingly.

Humanitarian aid is not merely a technical intervention; it is also a social and political process that offers an opportunity to rebuild and strengthen collective life. Despite the experience gained over time, there is still no clearly defined and institutionalized service plan specifically addressing women and girls in disaster contexts. For this reason, the

preparation and dissemination of this guide carries critical importance.

This guide is not only a technical manual for organizations and communities that wish to provide post-disaster support. It is also a reminder that disaster response is never neutral; it either reproduces existing inequalities or actively challenges them through feminist practice. Acting with feminist sensitivity makes visible the needs of women, girls, and socially marginalized groups while recognizing them not merely as beneficiaries, but as agents of knowledge and transformation.

Our aim is to present a feminist guide that can be practically used in future disasters, drawing on both ÇemberDE's own field experience and the reports and resources produced by various institutions. When ÇemberDE first entered the field, the team encountered significant difficulty in accessing Turkish-language resources grounded in the experience of Türkiye. Therefore, the publication of this guide emerged as a necessity for strengthening feminist solidarity and disaster support systems.

The guide first presents ÇemberDE's field experience and subsequently reviews various reports and resources published after the disaster in order to develop an applicable and practice-oriented framework. It aims to facilitate the involvement of organizations and communities that wish to mobilize in future disasters but lack comprehensive humanitarian response plans, enabling them to act from a feminist perspective. At the same time, it seeks to inspire all actors providing post-disaster support to incorporate feminist sensitivity into their practices.

While this guide is grounded in the experience of the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, its principles are not limited to a single national context.



Disaster settings vary significantly across regions and countries, shaped by political structures, cultural norms, economic conditions, and existing inequalities. Civil society actors are therefore encouraged to interpret, adapt, and expand this guide in accordance with their own local realities, institutional capacities, and community dynamics.



July, 2023 Feminist Disaster Tent, Adiyaman - CemberDE, Lider Kadın Derneği and Dayanışmanın Kadın Hali Derneği together

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide has been prepared primarily for:

- Women's organizations, feminist initiatives, and local civil society actors working in disaster and crisis settings
- Volunteer groups and small to medium-sized NGOs entering the field for the first time
- Civil society actors seeking to integrate feminist principles into humanitarian response
- Organizations asking practical questions such as: "What should not be done?" and "How should we act responsibly?"
- Local institutions and humanitarian actors who wish to reassess their practices from a gender-responsive and feminist perspective

Although grounded in the experience of the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye, this guide speaks to civil society actors in different contexts. It does not offer a universal formula. Instead, it provides a feminist framework and practical reflections that can be adapted and expanded according to local realities.

METHODOLOGY

An external researcher with field experience in earthquake response and civil society was involved in the preparation of this guide. The researcher conducted separate semi-structured interviews with members of the ÇemberDE team.

In line with approaches commonly used in disaster literature, the interviews were organized in three sessions focusing on short-, medium-, and long-term post-disaster support experiences. During these interviews, the ÇemberDE team shared both their own field experiences and the insights they had gathered from workshops previously conducted with women who had worked in disaster settings.

Following the preparation of the first draft of the guide, an open-call online workshop was organized for individuals who had actively worked in the field after the 2023 earthquakes. Designed in accordance with participatory approaches in feminist disaster literature, the workshop was conducted in a single two-hour session with nine participants. Although 30 women applied, nine participated. All participants had direct operational or community-based experience in earthquake-affected areas and included women from women's organizations, humanitarian actors, and funding institutions.



1 Atölyeye toplam 30 kadın başvuruda bulunmuş, bu başvurular arasından 9 kişi atölyeye katılım göstermiştir. Katılımcıların tamamı deprem sahasında aktif olarak görev almış; kadın örgütlerinde, insani yardım alanında ve fon kuruluşlarında çalışan kadınlardan oluşmaktadır.

During the workshop, participants' experiences related to post-disaster support processes were compiled. Particular attention was given to:

- Staff well-being needs
- Ethical dilemmas encountered in the field
- Gaps in institutional safeguarding mechanisms
- Shortcomings in inclusivity
- The inadequacy of existing field tools

These contributions were integrated into the guide in order to ensure that both its conceptual framework and practical recommendations are grounded in real field needs.

The development of this guide was carried out in accordance with the core principles¹ of feminist methodology. Feminist approaches emphasize that knowledge production must take into account lived experience, positionality, and relational context. For this reason, the knowledge and expertise of women who worked in the field were placed at the center of this process.

Both the interviews and the workshop were designed as horizontal spaces in which participants could share their field experiences, challenges, invisible labor processes, and well-being needs without hierarchy. Feminist methodological principles — including ethics of care, the do-no-harm principle, minimizing hierarchies, and prioritizing collective knowledge production — shaped both the format and analytical logic of this guide.

Using This Guide

- Throughout this guide, you will come across real examples from the field following the 6 February 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye.
- We share these experiences not as ready-made formulas, but as lived practices shaped by specific conditions, relationships, and constraints. They reflect decisions made in real time, within particular social and cultural contexts.
- As you read them, we invite you to think with them rather than copy them. Every disaster context has its own dynamics, power structures, and community realities. What worked in one place may need to be reshaped in another.
- Consider these examples as starting points — moments where feminist principles met practical challenges. Adapt them, question them, expand them, and most importantly, ground them in your own local context.

This guide was prepared not merely as a technical manual, but as a document grounded in accumulated field experience, collective reflection, solidarity, and an ethical feminist approach.

¹ Hekman, S. (1997). [Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited](#). Signs: Journal of women in culture and society, 22(2), 341-365. ; Ramazanoglu, C., & Holland, J. (2002).

THE ÇEMBERDE APPROACH SHORT TERM

1- Team and Preparation

- If you are not part of a professional emergency response team (such as search and rescue or firefighting units), it is important not to rush directly into the field. Instead, you should wait for reliable information, gather accurate data, and act according to a well-considered plan.
- In the chaotic aftermath of a disaster, it is crucial to maintain contact with trusted women’s networks and communities in or around the affected area. Needs should be carefully mapped and interventions planned accordingly.
- When gathering information from the field, the source of information matters significantly. Information provided by individuals or groups who are not experienced in identifying the specific needs of women and girls may be misleading. For example, someone may state that “there is no need for sanitary pads.” However, distributing sanitary pads once does not resolve menstrual needs. Similarly, sending only small-sized underwear does not meet diverse needs.
- Informal communication channels, such as women’s solidarity networks or mothers’ WhatsApp groups, often provide more accurate and immediate information about real needs.
- For effective intervention, teams should be small, coordinated, and prepared. The presence of individuals who are not psychologically ready, lack field knowledge, or have difficulty following coordination structures may unintentionally create confusion and hinder effective response. In line with the do-no-harm principle, only those who are truly prepared should enter disaster zones. Preparedness includes prior field experience, trauma awareness, psychological and physical resilience, and the ability to work collaboratively.
- The well-being of team members must be prioritized. During the acute phase, regularly asking one another “How are you?”, sharing emotional burdens, and creating space for listening without judgment are simple yet powerful practices.
- Teams should travel with minimal and essential equipment. Bringing unnecessary materials can create logistical difficulties and confusion in the field. In addition, team members’ financial arrangements and health insurance should be clarified in advance.
- Affected communities should not be approached as passive recipients of aid, but as active subjects with their own knowledge, experience, and solidarity practices. A community-centered approach strengthens collective recovery beyond short-term assistance.
- In contexts where women already carry a disproportionate share of care work, this burden increases significantly after disasters. Planning must take this into account. Observing daily routines and developing solutions together with women — for example, creating safe play areas for children — can reduce this burden.

- In the acute phase, feminist safeguarding means ensuring the safety of both teams and community members, protecting privacy, recognizing power relations, and paying particular attention to vulnerable groups.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Reducing Women's Daily Burden

In tent settlements established after the earthquake, women made significant efforts to keep their living spaces clean. Observing this need, a limited number of vacuum cleaners were provided and organized to be used in rotation.

Similarly, while hand-washing clothes had become normalized due to lack of infrastructure, the establishment of a shared laundry facility significantly reduced women's daily workload.

These interventions did not only make daily life practically easier. They also created a sense of being seen. Women expressed that their needs were recognized and taken seriously. This recognition did not only ease daily life; it shifted relational dynamics. When women's everyday labor was acknowledged, space opened for conversations about care work, gender roles, and equality.



Feminist Insight:

Infrastructure is never gender-neutral. Recognizing and redistributing care burdens can shift power relations and open space for structural conversations about gender equality.

- An exit strategy should also be considered from the outset. Although it may be difficult to determine the duration of field presence at the beginning, prolonging fieldwork without clear structure can lead to burnout, mistakes, and tensions within local relationships. The duration of engagement should be realistically aligned with team capacity and evolving field conditions.

Practical safeguarding measures include working in pairs, meeting in safe spaces, avoiding boundary violations, refraining from collecting unnecessary personal data, defining referral pathways in advance for high-risk situations, and identifying vulnerable groups early.

Safeguarding is not an additional component of humanitarian response; it is a foundational feminist principle that shapes how interventions are designed and implemented.

2- Initial Response Priorities

- Being present in the field with the intention of responding to an urgent need identified either by your team or by trusted local contacts is essential.
- In the short term, activities for children should be prioritized. Supporting children's emotional regulation and sense of safety contributes not only to their well-being but also to the stabilization of the broader community.
- It is important to define a specific area of work according to your team's capacity and to provide sustained support in that location. Concentrated and consistent presence builds trust and increases effectiveness.
- In disaster settings, three priority areas for women and girls are:
 - Menstrual health
 - Breastfeeding² and postpartum support
 - Sexual and reproductive health
- As observed following the 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes in Türkiye, access to contraception and reproductive health services was significantly disrupted, increasing the risk of unintended pregnancies.
- When preparing menstrual hygiene kits, attention should be given to diversity and practicality. Kits should include³ clean underwear in different sizes (including bras), sanitary pads of various types and sizes, wet wipes, towels, soap, garbage bags, and disinfectant or cologne.
- Each region has its own cultural, social, and economic characteristics. Ignoring local food practices, clothing norms, and daily habits can render aid ineffective. For example, sending large quantities of unfamiliar food to the region may result in waste. Aid planning must therefore be coordinated with local actors, particularly women's groups.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Cultural Practices and Collective Rituals

In one container settlement, women wanted to gather and prepare aşure together — a culturally meaningful collective cooking ritual and traditional shared dessert prepared in Türkiye. The request was rejected by the settlement administration on the grounds that food was already being distributed and that such an activity was unnecessary.

However, for the women, the issue was not simply about food. Preparing aşure together meant producing collectively, sharing space, and reclaiming agency. Acting through their own initiative strengthened both individual well-being and community belonging.

Similarly, collective mourning practices — such as gathering to sing laments, preparing halva, or creating shared rituals — made it possible to process grief together. Although such practices are often dismissed as secondary or non-essential, they are not symbolic additions to recovery; they are foundational practices through which communities rebuild dignity, belonging, and collective meaning.



Mart 2023, Pazarcık, Kadınlar Birlikte 8 Mart pastası yapıyor.

Feminist Insight:

Cultural practices are not peripheral to recovery. Collective rituals create spaces where agency, belonging, and dignity are restored, especially for women whose labor and grief often remain invisible.

- During rapid fundraising processes, another common challenge is setting unrealistic and overly ambitious targets. Instead, defining limited but achievable goals and focusing on concrete interventions produces more sustainable and visible impact.
- In the immediate aftermath of disasters, institutions and individuals naturally prioritize life-saving assistance. However, as the process evolves, organizations should rely on their core areas of expertise. Gender-based violence often increases during crises. Disruptions in protection mechanisms, poorly designed temporary settlements, and lack of oversight can heighten risks. For this reason, monitoring protection systems and preparing preventive policies in advance are essential.



Şubat, 2023, Pazarek, Oyun Cadiri

2 <https://lllturkiye.org/afet-ve-acil-durum/>

3 <https://konusmamizgerek.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/konusmamizgerek-reglrehberi-rehber-rev3.pdf>

3- Logistics and Field Operations

- Before entering the disaster area, logistical needs such as transportation, accommodation, tents, sleeping bags, and essential supplies should be carefully planned.
- Ensuring that teams possess at least the minimum necessary equipment and resources increases both personal resilience and the effectiveness of field interventions. Ignoring these preparations under the justification of urgency can create additional risks and complications.
- When small teams divide into sub-groups in the field, communication channels must be clearly defined in advance. Alternative communication methods should also be determined in case of network disruptions.
- Whenever possible, materials to be distributed should be procured locally. Local procurement not only reduces logistical burdens but also contributes to strengthening the local economy and existing community networks.
- Time flows differently in disaster contexts. A single day can feel significantly longer due to the intensity of events and emotional strain. Needs may change rapidly. Therefore, ***it is crucial to observe carefully and revise budgets and plans accordingly. Ideally, budgets should be designed with built-in flexibility from the outset.***
- Flexible funding mechanisms enable more responsive and effective interventions in crisis situations. Funding structures that trust field-based observation and allow adaptation to rapidly evolving needs enhance overall impact.

Civil society actors should not hesitate to advocate for flexible funding arrangements when engaging with donors. Flexible funding is not a luxury in crisis contexts; it is a structural requirement for responsive and accountable humanitarian action.

UPRACTICE EXAMPLE

Flexible Funding and Emerging Needs

At the beginning of the response process, a flexible budget framework was agreed upon with the donor. This mutual understanding created trust and allowed field observations to guide decision-making.

As spring approached and temperatures increased, the need for shade structures in tent areas became urgent. Since no organization had allocated a specific budget for this emerging need, the issue remained unaddressed.

Thanks to the flexible budget structure, shade installations were quickly implemented not only in the team's own working areas but also in spaces used by other NGOs and public institutions. This intervention improved both the living conditions of residents and the working conditions of humanitarian actors, demonstrating the concrete value of flexible funding in disaster response.



Adiyaman, 2023

Feminist Insight:

Responsiveness requires flexibility. Rigid funding structures can reproduce harm by ignoring evolving needs, while flexible resources enable context-sensitive and accountable intervention.

- The design of temporary living spaces must consider the needs of women and girls. The chaotic environment of post-disaster settings can unexpectedly create opportunities to influence planning and decision-making processes. Even small interventions during the establishment of new settlements or service areas can significantly improve long-term safety, accessibility, and dignity.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Feminist Observation and Functional Design

A small suggestion made regarding the layout and placement of toilets significantly improved the functionality and safety of spaces that disaster-affected communities would use for more than a year.

During the establishment of a container settlement⁴, there was an opportunity to meet directly with engineers responsible for the design. Drawing from previous experience in tent settlements, the team suggested that laundry facilities should not be centralized in a single location but distributed throughout the area. They also recommended creating multiple children's play areas rather than concentrating them in one place, and planning both indoor and outdoor communal gathering spaces.

These seemingly minor design decisions made everyday life safer and more accessible for residents.



Adiyaman, Eylül 2023, K15 Container Houses Construction Process

Feminist Insight:

Space is political. Settlement design shapes safety, mobility, and access. Small gender-aware design interventions can produce long-term structural impact.

- As soon as possible, communication and coordination should be established with other civil society organizations and humanitarian actors operating in the field. Coordination is essential for preventing duplication of efforts, ensuring continuity, and maximizing collective impact. If a coordination mechanism already exists, it should be joined. If not, efforts should be made to contribute to the establishment of one. For small teams in particular, direct communication with public institutions and international actors may not always be efficient.

⁴ The container settlement referenced in this example refers to the K15 area established in Adiyaman by İzmit Municipality following the 2023 earthquakes.

Civil coordination structures can facilitate communication and reduce operational risks. It is important to acknowledge that no single organization can respond to every need encountered in the field. Making referrals through coordination mechanisms reduces both psychological and physical burdens on teams.

Feminist Insight:

Coordination is not merely technical; it is relational. When institutional mechanisms fail, solidarity-based civil coordination can create accountability and collective power.

PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Adiyaman Civil Society Solidarity Group

Following the 2023 earthquake, inclusive coordination mechanisms led by public institutions and international actors were not effectively established in Adiyaman. In contexts where official coordination mechanisms are weak, delayed, or exclusionary, civil society-led coordination structures can fill critical gaps.

As a result, volunteers and civil society organizations created their own civil coordination structure.

In the first year, meetings were held weekly; in the second year, biweekly – both online and in person. Through this structure, organizations operating in the region were able to stay informed about one another's activities.

This coordination mechanism prevented duplication of efforts, ensured more efficient use of resources, strengthened solidarity among teams, and contributed to the creation of long-term local impact.

<https://anit417.org/adiyamansiviltoplumuanlatiyor/>



4- Feminist Distribution Methods

- During the fieldwork, two different feminist distribution models were implemented.
- Community participation is fundamental for feminist distribution practices.

- The "Shop Model"

In this model, women are invited into a private and safe space and allowed to select the items they need themselves. As women expressed, this experience felt "like going to the market."

- The "Package Model"

In this model, tents are visited individually and personalized packages are distributed according to clothing and shoe size. Rather than distributing standardized materials, this approach takes individual differences into account and aims to ensure fairness and appropriateness.



Organizing distribution together with women affected by the earthquake.

- Spending one or two days observing the field before initiating distribution helps ensure that needs are correctly identified. Conducting distribution over a defined period also prevents chaos and builds trust.
- It is important to recognize and support women's and girls' leadership within the community. In every field context, there are women whose voices are trusted and who influence collective decisions. Listening to these women makes invisible needs visible.
- At the same time, women's experiences and needs are not homogeneous. Ensuring diversity and representation strengthens inclusivity.
- It is also important to clearly define the role of civil society actors. The aim is not to replace the state but to act in solidarity. Transparency regarding who you are, what resources you have, and how materials are sourced prevents misunderstandings and tension.

Dükkan Modeli



Paket Modeli





- Feminist principles should be defended even in difficult circumstances. For example, throwing aid materials from vehicles into chaotic crowds can undermine dignity. Similarly, distributing sweets or toys in excessive or uncoordinated ways may unintentionally create tension within communities.
- Intervening constructively in such practices is part of ethical responsibility in the field.



THE ÇEMBERDE APPROACH MEDIUM TERM

Community Support Work

- In the medium term, it is important to create safe spaces where women can talk about their own problems and needs and develop their own action plans. These spaces do not have to be only physical; creating a safe environment through approach and relationship-building is also effective.
- These spaces should be designed in a way that supports women's well-being, and their content must be determined according to the community's own demands.
- For example, opening production areas that women are already familiar with — such as sewing or knitting courses — helps them feel closer to the process and supports healing through production. Here, production is understood not merely as income-generating activity, but as collective making and the rebuilding of social connection. Such production groups also strengthen the sense of community and make it easier for women to build their own support mechanisms.
- For the sustainability of these activities, it is critically important that trainers emerge from within the community; activities conducted with trainers coming from outside will mostly be temporary, and this reduces impact.
- *The most important point in this process is to provide regular and continuous support; in this way, trust is built and maintained.*
- The trust relationship that is established has a healing effect both for women and for those providing support.



Adiyaman, 2023 - First day of the knitting course in the shaded area of the tent city



PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Community Empowerment: Supporting Their Ability to Take Action

When we met Aysel after the earthquake, she did not feel ready to reopen a course due to the major losses she had experienced. We said to her, “We will do it together,” and took the first step by starting a sewing and knitting course in a small container. Bedriye was also with Aysel; they brought the women together, and we provided the space and materials.

What seemed like a simple production process soon turned into a space of solidarity. When Aysel said one day, “After the course started, I no longer felt the same need for therapy; this place is healing me,” we clearly saw the power of the space that had been created. Within three months, something far more than a course group had formed: a community that listens to one another, supports one another, and stands in solidarity.

When they said, “We no longer want to be referred to as victims, but as strong women who produce,” we determined the direction of this process together. The women prepared an action plan, developed a budget, met with authorities, and expanded their space.

Today, Aysel is not only a trainer; she is a leader who brings women together, builds community, and initiates change. This story shows us that when the right conditions and a safe space are provided, women do not only hold on to life; they transform it.

Community-based production is not only an economic activity; it is a feminist recovery strategy that rebuilds agency, collective identity, and long-term resilience.



Sewing course launched and expanding, Adiyaman, 2024



First visit to the sewing instructor, Adiyaman, 2023

THE ÇEMBERDE APPROACH LONG TERM

Opportunities for Social Transformation

- Disasters shake not only physical structures but also social structures and perceptions; while these disruptions may negatively affect gender equality, they can also create new opportunities.
- In temporary living areas, it becomes possible for women to come together more frequently and become more visible in the public sphere. This situation offers opportunities for sharing experiences, recognizing common problems, and taking initiative together.



Adiyaman, 2023, On the final night of the tent settlement before its removal, a storytelling session and conversation with women and children who did not know what they would face after moving to containers

- Women's individual and collective empowerment through developing their own tools creates a lasting foundation for social transformation.
- Considering that local governments may also be open to egalitarian transformation during such extraordinary processes, it is important to seek collaboration with them. Working closely with local administrations during the reconstruction process plays a critical role in enabling institutions to develop a more gender-equal approach.
- As women, being actively involved in the post-disaster process does not only mean providing support to the community; it also creates a strong space of agency and political subjecthood for us. The feedback we have received in the field shows that this process has strengthened us both individually and collectively. Due to social prejudices, women taking initiative during a destructive process such as a disaster is often not expected. However, stepping forward, making decisions, taking action, and mobilizing others during this period assumes a transformative role — one that questions social norms and enables us to move beyond our own limits. For this reason, *women's presence in the field after disasters is not limited to providing support; it also opens the door to a process of empowerment and transformation that challenges gender norms.*
- Disasters expose the fragility of existing systems, but they also reveal the transformative potential of collective feminist action.

ENGAGING INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS THROUGH FEMINIST REINTERPRETATION

This guide has been prepared in strong alignment with internationally recognized normative frameworks and policy documents in the field of disaster and humanitarian action, to which Türkiye is a party and which therefore carry binding obligations. However, the guide's approach does not limit itself to merely referencing these frameworks; it reinterprets them through a feminist, local, and experience-based perspective and translates them into practices that can be implemented in the field. In this respect, the guide offers a concrete example of how international norms can acquire transformative power within local contexts.

The principles of inclusivity, community participation, and strengthening local capacity set out in the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction \(2015–2030\)](#) are consistent with the overall approach of this guide. The guide addresses disasters not only as moments of response but together with prevention, preparedness, and reconstruction processes. However, within the Sendai Framework, women are often addressed under the category of “vulnerable groups”; this approach does not sufficiently make visible women's roles as knowledge producers, decision-makers, and transformative actors in disaster contexts. Such framing risks obscuring women's political agency and leadership in disaster contexts. This guide goes beyond that limited framing by positioning women not as passive beneficiaries, but as actors who are subjects of the post-disaster process.

This approach is also strongly aligned with the [Sendai Framework Gender Action Plan \(GP\) \(2015-2030\)](#) which is the principal global action plan currently in force for gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and is used by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) as the foundational instrument for mainstreaming gender equality in disaster risk reduction. By defining the meaningful participation, leadership, and decision-making roles of women and girls across all stages of disaster risk reduction as a central principle, the Sendai GAP advances the limited gender perspective of the original Sendai Framework. The feminist safeguarding approach included in this guide, distribution methods centered on dignity and subjecthood, interventions that make care work visible, and community-based empowerment practices concretize the field-level counterparts of this stronger and more transformative framework articulated in the Sendai GAP.

Although [IASC \(Inter-Agency Standing Committee\) Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action](#) is not legally binding, it provides a foundational framework for mainstreaming gender equality in humanitarian programming and is widely referenced by the United Nations system, international organizations, and humanitarian actors.

In alignment with the IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action, this guide analyzes in detail the differentiated needs of women and girls; however, it does not address these needs solely within a service-delivery framework. Feminist distribution models, by centering dignity, subjecthood, and the right to choose, offer alternatives that transform standard aid practices. In this respect, the guide promotes women-led service design.

The [Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards \(Sphere Handbook\)](#), developed as a joint initiative of civil society organizations working in humanitarian action and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, constitutes a global reference framework that defines shared ethical and operational principles in humanitarian assistance. Although not legally binding, it is widely recognized internationally due to its grounding in collective institutional experience. The Sphere principles of dignity, participation, accountability, and safety are directly related to the practical recommendations of this guide. While safe space design, feedback mechanisms, and context-based adaptation practices concretize Sphere standards, the guide deepens this technical framework through a political perspective that makes gender and power relations visible.

In alignment with international guidance on combating gender-based violence — particularly the [Istanbul Convention \(Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence\)](#) — issues of privacy, safety, and access risks are addressed; however, the guide treats violence not only as a risk to be prevented, but as a social issue that can be transformed through women’s solidarity. Similarly, the Grand Bargain and the localization agenda are reframed in the guide not merely as technical principles, but as feminist and political instruments of transformation.

Finally, the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#), the [CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation No. 37](#) on the gender-related dimensions of climate change, disaster risk reduction and women’s human rights, as well as the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) and its current review process ([Beijing+30](#)), recognize that women in disaster and crisis contexts are not only groups in need of protection but rights-holders who must participate meaningfully in decision-making processes; they emphasize strengthening women’s leadership, addressing gender equality as an integral component of disaster risk reduction and humanitarian policies, and affirming the continued responsibilities of states in these areas. These principles constitute the foundational framework upon which this guide is based. The guide seeks to strengthen and operationalize the field-level application of the principles and obligations defined in these documents.

In alignment with these international normative frameworks, the guide adopts a feminist approach that centers women’s subjecthood, leadership, and experience-based knowledge production in disaster and humanitarian contexts; by offering concrete steps on how these principles can be implemented in the field, it aims to bridge the gap between policy documents and practice.

Rather than merely implementing international norms, this guide demonstrates how feminist practice from the ground can reshape the meaning and application of those norms.



