



Women Respond

Guidance Note

How to listen to women
who are leading change



December 2025

Summary

Women Respond is an ongoing listening initiative to understand women’s experiences—so we can bring their voices to influence decisions and ensure our work is driven by their needs.

This Guidance Note supports in-country teams with understanding and implementing the Women Respond process, from survey design to data usage.

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About Women Respond

Traditional data collection methods often fail to capture real-time needs or reflect the realities women and girls face. Women Respond is our way of finding out what women need, now and over time, across numerous locations.



Photo: Bui Hoang Quan/CARE Vietnam

Women Respond grew out of a need to understand the real-time impacts of COVID on women in communities around the world.

While it started with the pandemic, it has since evolved to explore women’s experiences of a broader range of crises including natural disasters, economic downturns, conflict, and other shocks with direct impact on communities.

It now draws on insights from CARE’s network of 30 million savings group members.

Since 2020, Women Respond has amplified the voices of 38,000 people (3/4 of them women) across 28 countries.

Women Respond aims to bring women and girls' voices to the center of response & recovery.

Our goal is to:

- **Collaborate** better with women and girls in their community actions
- **Improve** CARE's programs
- **Influence others** to act on women's priorities

Using [adaptable survey tools](#), it gathers and consolidates data on challenges, responses and needs in a global dashboard to highlight trends and priorities.

More than just a survey, Women Respond catalyzes action by putting information in the hands of those with power to create change—from the women leading change in local communities to organizations coordinating global response and recovery efforts.

Women Respond findings are shared locally, nationally and globally to influence decision-making and programming to center women's needs and experiences.

While Women Respond prioritizes women and girls, it also engages men and boys in listening and data-driven action, because we believe community-wide solutions are essential for long-term resilience.



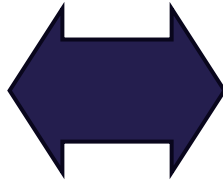
Core components of Women Respond:

- Regular and continuous listening
- Centering women's and communities' leadership and action
- Shared ownership of data
- Linkage with existing programs for impact
- Ethical practice: informed consent, safety, & confidentiality

Why women?



Women are hardest hit in emergencies



Women are often the first responders

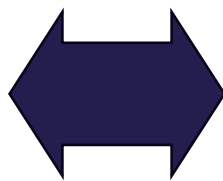
Women are hardest hit in emergencies—they eat less, face particular safety risks, struggle to access healthcare and other services, and often take on more caregiving responsibilities.

But despite this, women are often the first responders—they care for families, organize community action, and support response and recovery under pressure.

Why Women Respond?



Women know what's needed



Women's views are left out

Women know what's needed—their roles give them unique insights into community needs and priorities.

But despite this, women's views are left out—their perspectives are frequently excluded from global data on crises, and therefore on decision-making processes at local, national, and international levels.

What makes Women Respond successful?



Flexible to fit the context

Different countries use different survey platforms depending on what is safest and most accessible.



Ongoing over time

Regular surveys with similar populations in the same countries allow us to track trends and changes over time.



Looks at the big picture

A set of core questions allows us to pool data across regions, generating broader insights at both the regional and global levels.



Focuses on women, not other agendas

The whole process is rooted in community engagement and prioritizes the voices of women and girls from planning to publication.



Shifts away from one-way extraction

The process combines frequent inquiry with active feedback loops, ensuring women not only contribute to the findings but also engage on how these are shared locally and globally.



Photo: Terhas Berhe / CARE

Guidance for program teams

How is Women Respond used by programs?

Women Respond is designed to be flexible and adaptable across diverse contexts and target groups. Shaped by five years of implementation and learning, it continues to evolve through ongoing feedback from women and communities. CARE aims to ensure the process remains non-extractive and supports collaborative, meaningful engagement and discussion.

Who can be part of Women Respond?

Any country team or partner can amplify the voices of women in communities by contributing to Women Respond.

Women Respond supports in-country teams to develop and use the core survey tools, then the data and insights from women and communities feed back into the global Women Respond dashboard.

Women Respond offers:

- A quantitative survey guide adaptable to the context
- A qualitative interview guide
- A shared data dashboard supporting country specific and cross-country analysis.
- A dedicated coordinator for technical & training support
- Recommendations for survey options and technology integration.

How does Women Respond work?

Women Respond is more than a survey. It combines regular inquiry with feedback loops that engage women in shaping and sharing findings locally and globally.

Women Respond can be a **standalone listening exercise** or the questions can be **added to monitoring and research for an existing program.**

Even when a standalone exercise, Women Respond surveys should always be linked to an ongoing project or program to ensure women and communities are engaged throughout.

Women Respond has four stages:



Prepare

6-8 weeks

Survey

4-6 weeks

Analyze & Share

3-5 weeks +

Act

Ongoing

- Prepare teams
- Engage communities
- Agree questions
- Confirm survey format
- Plan for feedback and sharing
- Test, refine & finalize survey

- First round quantitative
- Second round quantitative with qualitative
- OR
- Integrated into program MEL

- Data review & consolidation
- Analysis
- Preliminary sharing with women, communities & partners
- Knowledge products
- External sharing

- Adapt programs
- Community-led action
- Advocacy & influencing

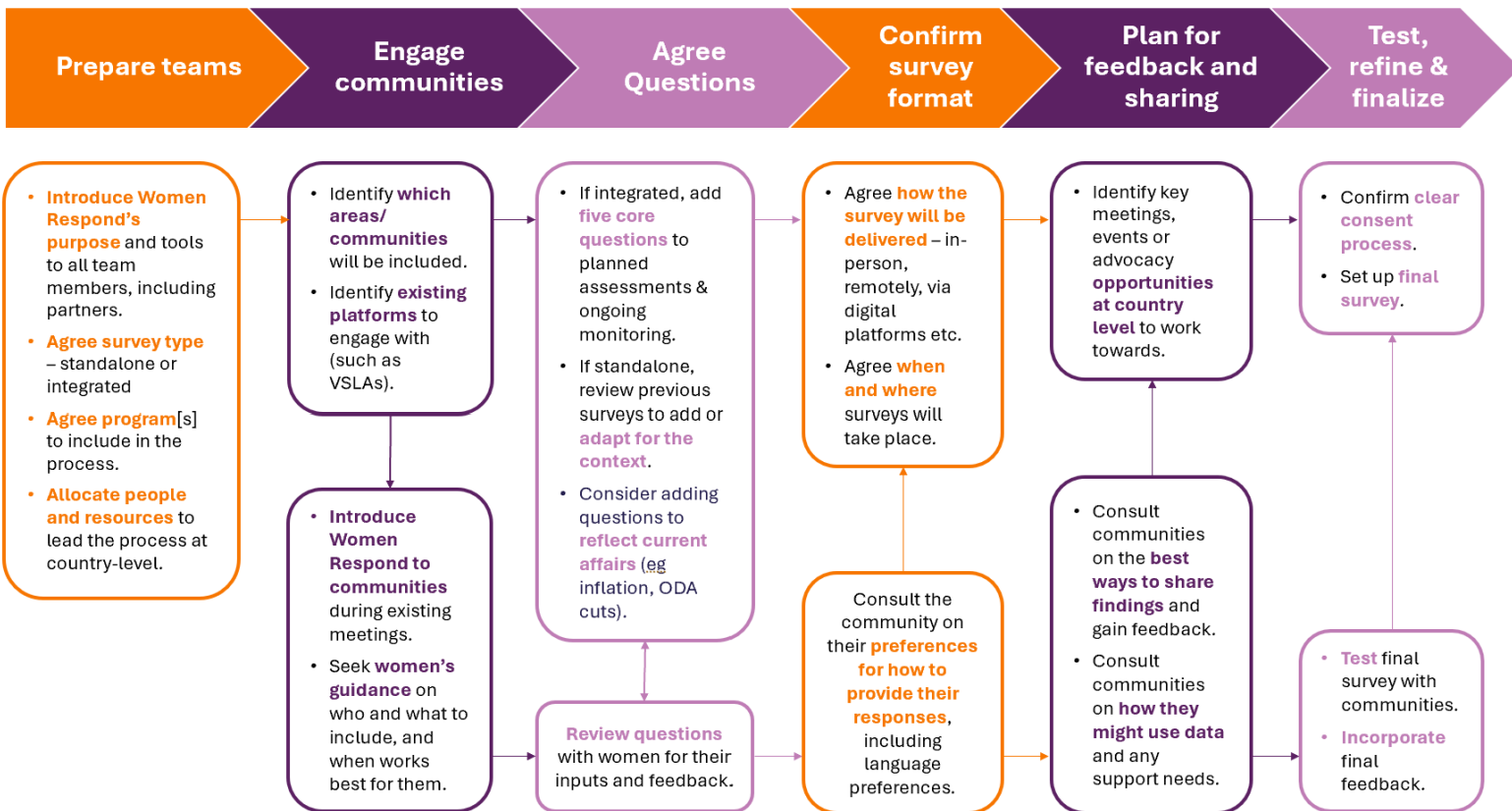


Prepare

Resources:

- [Women Respond on CARE Shares](#)
- [Quantitative Survey Guide](#)
- [Qualitative Survey Guide](#)

To set up Women Respond effectively, CARE recommends starting with program team orientation, early community engagement, and planning that fits the local context and priorities.



Prepare teams

- Assess program and country readiness by identifying critical data needs and confirming how Women Respond data will be used.
- Build a shared understanding of the Women Respond approach with all members of the implementing team

(including partners), emphasizing its participatory and listening-based methodology. This may include program/project managers, MEL advisors, livelihood or financial inclusion advisors, and women's empowerment advisors from CARE and partner organizations.



- Clarify whether the survey will be integrated into existing MEL frameworks or implemented as a standalone initiative, and identify which programs it will align with.
- Ensure adequate resources—time, funding, and staffing—are allocated to support meaningful engagement. Involve program managers, MEL staff, and technical specialists early.
- Clearly define roles and responsibilities with the survey team to ensure quality and timely data collection and analysis.

Engage communities

- Within the team, confirm which project areas and participant groups will be included, using existing program participant information, other datasets and secondary resources to support planning.
- Within communities, leverage existing platforms such as savings groups and community meetings to introduce the Women Respond initiative and begin initial consultation on preferred formats for surveying and engaging with data.
- Collaborate with women leaders and groups to map stakeholders and identify additional groups to include.
- Consider the diversity of participants to be included—age, displacement status, disability, and socioeconomic factors all influence needs and perspectives.

Community engagement should start during the preparation phase, not just at implementation. Early involvement helps build ownership and ensures the process is relevant to women and communities.

- Consider including service providers relevant to the focus of the program the survey is aligned with, such as health workers, Community-Based Trainers, or farmer service providers.
- Identify survey times that align with women's schedules, avoiding peak farming season and planning around other dates or times which may limit their full participation.
- Assess potential risks to participants and engage communities on the best ways to mitigate these.

Agree questions

For standalone surveys:

- Review the quantitative survey guide. This includes questions to understand women's overall experience, the challenges they face and the actions they are taking.
- Adapt for the context, including location, language, VSLA maturity, political situation, current global affairs, specific crises or other relevant factors.



- Tailor questions to different groups and avoid unnecessary complexity. Always ask: How will this data support action?
- Review the questions with participants, asking what makes sense, what needs to change, and what questions they would like to include.

Questions focus on three core areas:

1. Challenges faced
2. Priority needs
3. Actions taken

Integrated surveys:

- Integrate Women Respond across the project's existing Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework.
- Include core Women Respond questions in at least two monitoring assessments annually, as well as in program baseline and endline surveys.

Confirm survey format

- Consult communities on preferred methods of participation—including survey timing (to avoid farming season or other events), language, and locations to meet for the survey and the dissemination.

- Agree how the survey will be delivered, drawing on past experiences to identify effective data collection methods. Surveys may be conducted in-person or remotely via SMS, IVR, phone calls, or other digital platforms, depending on feasibility, access, and appropriateness for respondents.
- Where possible, prioritize training and engaging community-based trainers and VSLA members using mobile tools. Ensure digital tools are accessible and appropriate for the context, considering literacy and connectivity.

Surveys may be conducted in-person or remotely via SMS, IVR, phone calls, or other digital platforms, depending on feasibility and access.

WOMEN RESPOND IN ACTION:

In an interactive voice response (IVR) survey in Uganda, in addition to the standard informed consent and sensitization, VSLA members informed what dates in the week and time they prefer to receive the call, and the IVR survey was administered at times of their choosing.



Plan for feedback and sharing

- Within the team, discuss how the data will support program activities and learning.
- Ask communities how they want to receive findings and provide further inputs. Develop appropriate feedback mechanisms to facilitate these discussions.
- Within communities, discuss how they might want to use data and what support they might need.
- Identify key events and opportunities for sharing insights, documenting in a communications plan the audience, platform, and who will lead engagement.
- Consider potential risks throughout the process and plan actions to mitigate these. This includes assessing any safety risks relating to how data is gathered and stored, and ensuring participants' privacy is considered when planning how to share data.

From the outset, plan how findings will be shared & used.

Test, refine & finalize survey

- Translate and validate in relevant languages, reviewing translations with communities to ensure the questions are clear.

- Incorporate community feedback to refine the survey.
- Setup any digital aspects.
- Test with staff, partners, and community members—using meetings or planned digital platforms—and adjust language and format based on feedback.
- Finalize survey questions and setup, including training data collectors and configuring digital tools where applicable.
- Confirm a clear consent process which includes the survey's purpose, how data will be used, and the voluntary nature of participation, and prepare any needed documentation formats.

Final surveys should conform with CARE's ethical standards, including informed consent, confidentiality, and do-no-harm approach.

WOMEN RESPOND IN ACTION:

In Nigeria, communities highlighted challenges with phone battery life. They suggested dividing the qualitative interview into sections and conducting the interview on different days.



Survey

Resources:

- [Three key questions to integrate](#)
- [Quantitative Survey Guide](#)
- [Qualitative Survey Guide](#)

Integrated surveys

Long-term programs

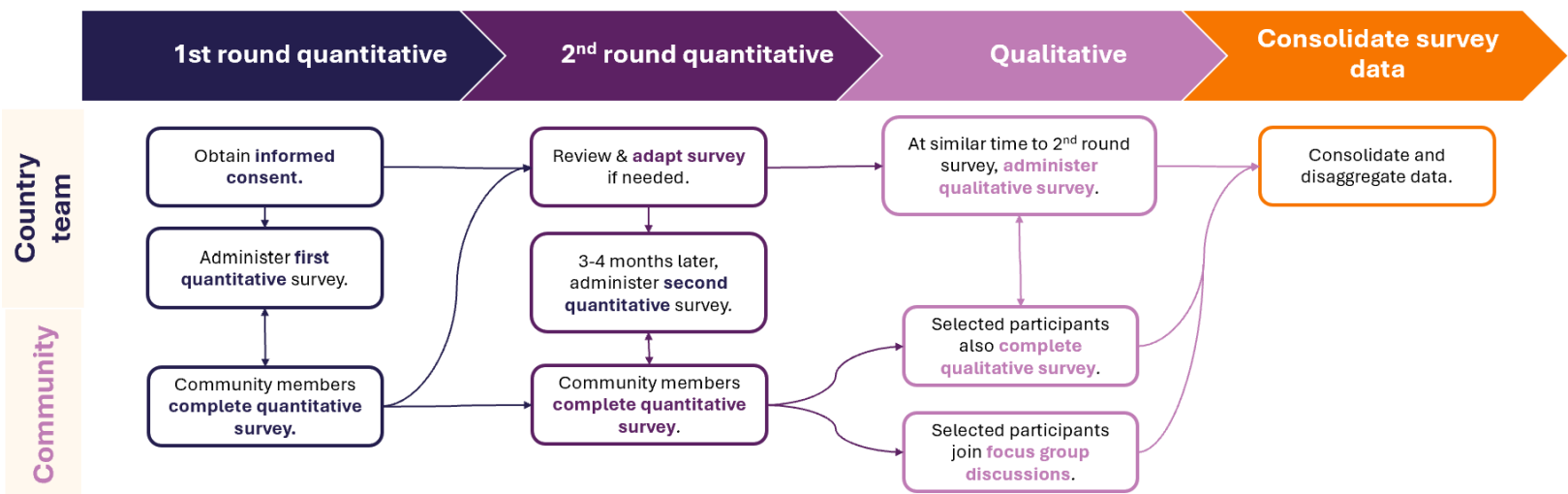
When integrated into an existing program’s Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework, core Women Respond questions should be included in at least two monitoring assessments annually, as well as i-program baseline and endline surveys.

Rapid assessments during emergencies

Core Women Respond questions can be added to emergency needs assessments such as Rapid Humanitarian Analysis or In-depth Analysis.

Standalone surveys

To effectively capture evolving community needs and changes over time, CARE recommends conducting two rounds of quantitative data collection and one round of qualitative data collection each year for the standalone Women Respond initiative.





1st round quantitative survey

Before launching the first round, ensure all logistical and ethical foundations are in place:

- **Training:** Where relevant, train data collectors—including community-based trainers, VSLA members, or partner staff—on the survey tool, consent process, and data collection methods. Training should also highlight the importance of community engagement to build trust with participants and how best to engage in active listening.
- **Digital Setup:** If using digital tools (e.g., IVR, SMS, mobile apps), confirm feasibility, accessibility, and language compatibility. Test tools with community members to ensure usability.
- **Consent:** Clearly communicate the survey's purpose, how data will be used, and the voluntary nature of participation. Consent must be informed and culturally appropriate.

2nd round quantitative survey

The second round should reflect learning and feedback from the first:

- **Adaptation:** Update the survey tool based on community feedback and evolving context. Let women's voices shape both the content and delivery of questions.

Six months should be the maximum time frame gap between surveys.

- **Timing:** Plan a 3-4 month gap between the first quantitative round and the qualitative survey. This allows time to share preliminary findings, gather feedback, and refine follow-up questions. Depending on context-specific needs and challenges, a 5-6 month gap between surveys can be considered. Having a longer timeframe may capture changes related to weather, seasons, local socio-economic factors, or any shifts that might occur following the first round. A 3-4 months gap works well in most cases, but the interval may extend up to six months maximum to maintain data quality and engagement.

Qualitative survey

Qualitative data collection is a critical component of the Women Respond process, designed to deepen understanding of community experiences and validate trends identified in quantitative data. It includes:

- **Format:**
 - **Individual interviews** with selected participants from the first-round quantitative survey.
 - **Focus group discussions** with diverse women's groups and community stakeholders.



- **Timing:** While there should be a gap following the first quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews can be conducted alongside the second quantitative round to support deeper reflection and learning.

Consolidate survey data

Ensure data is disaggregated and representative:

- **Minimum standards:** Disaggregate all data by sex and age.
- **Contextual relevance:** Consider additional variables such as ethnicity, religion, disability, and displacement status, depending on the context.

Data quality assurance should follow standard validation processes as in any survey.

WOMEN RESPOND IN ACTION:

In Northwest Syria, after the first data collection, local partners and communities highlighted many VSLiE members may plan to go back to Syria from Türkiye. The second round survey was updated to include questions about participants' 'return' plan and how they aim to continue their VSLA functions.



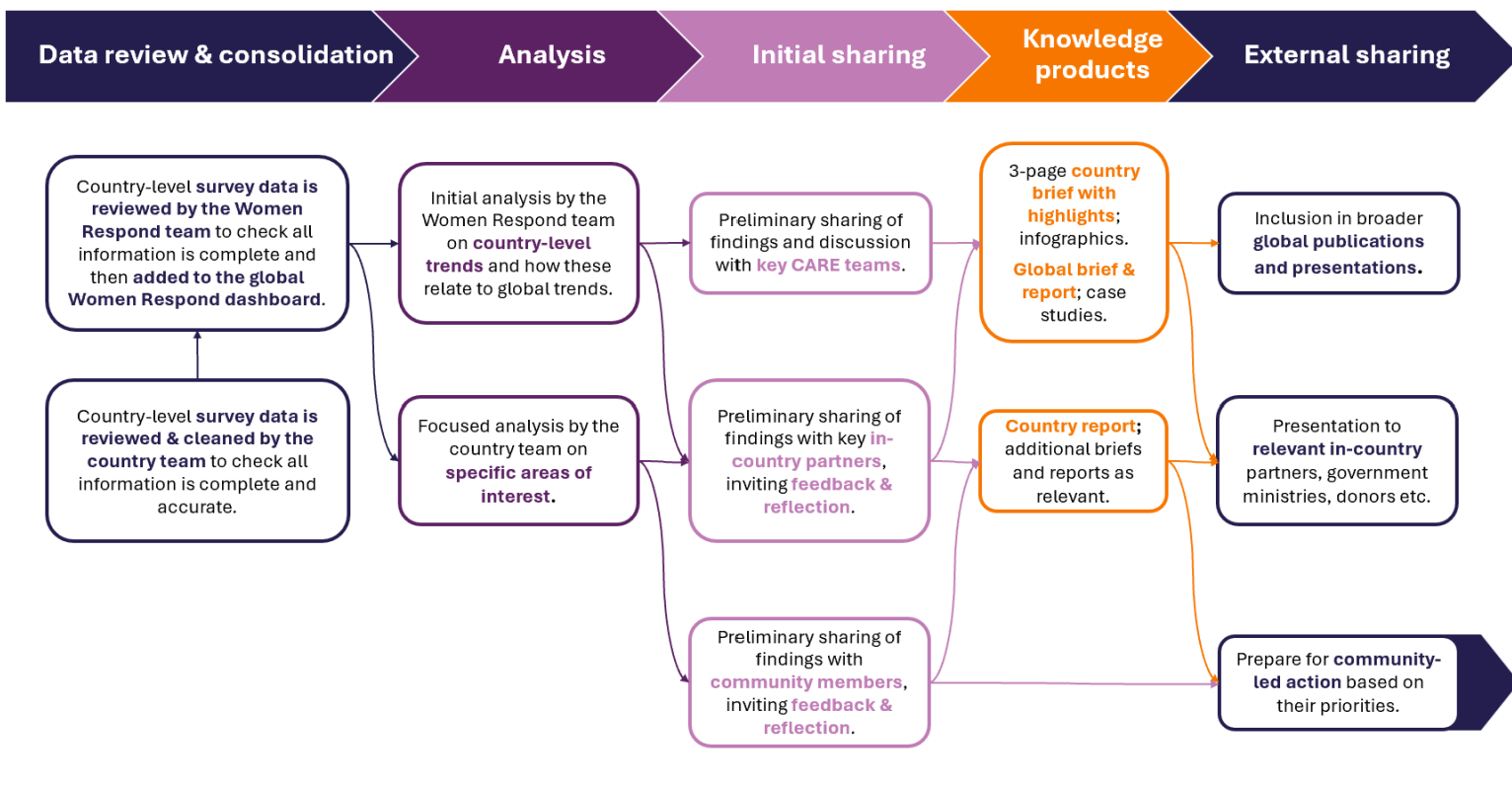


Analyze & share

Resources:

- [Women Respond Dashboard](#)
- [Sample global knowledge products](#)
- [Sample country-specific knowledge products](#)

Preliminary results spark valuable discussions and help validate findings. Community reflection on the data they helped generate leads to deeper, more accurate analysis.



Data review & consolidation

- Review and clean survey data to check all information is complete and accurate.
- Share with Women Respond team for review.
- Verified data is uploaded to the global Women Respond dashboard.

Analysis

- Country teams engage in specific analysis for country-specific reports and briefs, considering any layer of findings (ethnicity, youth, IDP etc) relevant to their context and based on their priorities.
- Global teams review overarching trends within the country and how these relate to global trends.



Don't wait for a final report. Early sharing of insights is essential.

Preliminary sharing

- Share initial findings with women, VSLAs, and community members as part of the validation process. Make sure to share the findings in ways that work for the community and the context.
- Use planned feedback mechanisms (from the preparation phase) to create space for communities to challenge, interpret, and add to the findings.
- Engage local partners, government stakeholders, and community leaders to broaden the dialogue and build collective ownership.
- Share preliminary findings with relevant CARE teams to invite reflection and inform future advocacy plans.

Strategic sharing of results with external actors is key to influencing change.

Knowledge products

- Develop short country briefs (maximum 4 pages) with highlights and infographics.
- Develop country report.
- Develop case studies.
- Contribute to global briefs & report.

External sharing

- Work with women and community members to identify the **key messages** they wish to highlight.
- Ensure data is accessible to communities and partners.
- Develop tailored presentations and communications for in-country partners, government ministries, donors, and other relevant contacts.
- Include data and insights in broader global publications and presentations.

When organizing or discussing findings, continue to assess and manage risks. Some conversations may need to be held separately with women, community leaders or other actors.

WOMEN RESPOND IN ACTION:

In Niger, women VSLA leaders used the findings to inform what was covered on a community radio show. One of the VSLA leaders said the Women Respond data helped her, the group, and the community to understand and learn from each other and identify solutions to their collective challenges, such as disease prevention.

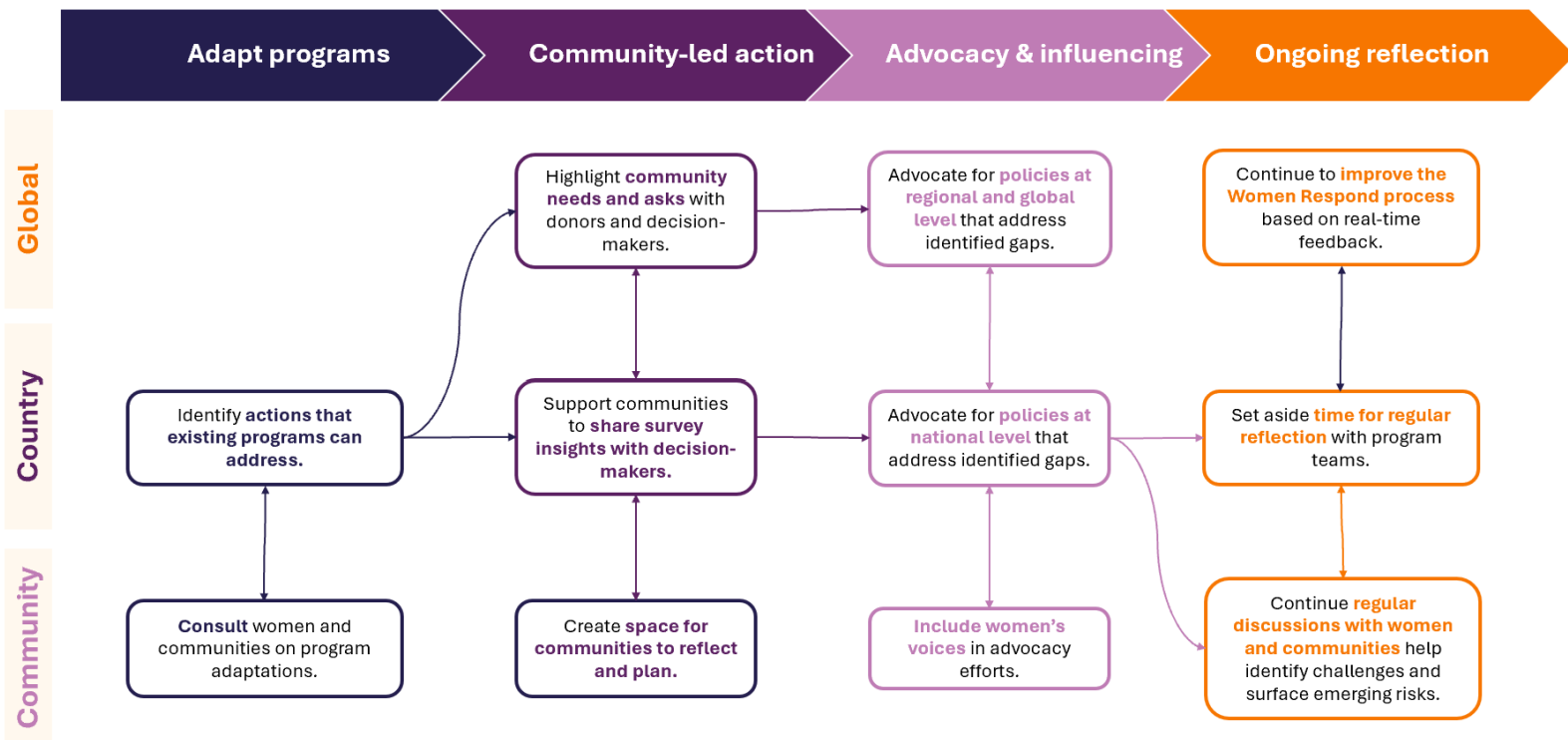


Act

Resources:

- [Sample global knowledge products](#)
- [Sample country-specific knowledge products](#)
- [Case study examples](#)

Translate Women Respond findings into meaningful program changes, support community-led action, and foster ongoing learning and advocacy.



Adapt programs

Use survey findings to adapt existing program activities and inform program design:

- Incorporate key results and insights to inform program design, ensuring that projects are tailored to women and communities' priorities.
- Identify key results that can be addressed within current projects, incorporating insights from women, VSLAs, and communities.
- Some adaptations can be made immediately; others may align better with quarterly or annual planning cycles. Collaborate with program teams to schedule and integrate changes accordingly.
- Be transparent about which issues cannot be addressed directly. Document these for future program design or to engage other actors who may be better positioned to respond.



WOMEN RESPOND IN ACTION:

In Ethiopia, Women Respond findings prompted CARE to provide cash assistance to 300 community members.

Community-led action

- Support VSLAs and women's groups in defining how they want to use the findings, such as what actions they want to take and what support they need from CARE and others.
- Create opportunities for women to share their priorities with decision-makers.
- Highlight community needs and asks with donors and decision-makers as appropriate.

Advocacy & influencing

- Identify opportunities at local and national level to advocate for policies that address the gaps identified. This involves updating the initial communications plan and adding additional opportunities.
- Regularly update global advocacy teams on Women Respond findings.
- Ensure inclusion of women's voices in advocacy efforts.
- Document advocacy actions and outcomes to build evidence of the power of centering women's voices and leadership.



Photo: CARE Nigeria



Learn more at care.org/womenrespond

CARE staff can also learn more on [CARE Shares](#).

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Note: Links to resources in this document connect to content internal CARE content. Partners from other organizations who wish to access Women Respond materials can contact Kalkidan Lakew Yihun (Kalkidan.LakewYihun@care.org), Program Coordinator, Women Respond.