



The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change

Our story

The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) is an advocacy collective of thought leaders, activists, practitioners and academics working globally to end violence against women and girls (VAWG).

COFEM was formed in 2017, as an outcome of a convening held in 2016 where a group of feminist colleagues from humanitarian and development settings around the globe came together to discuss shared concerns in their work for women's equality, empowerment, and safety.

COFEM's key strength lies in the collective expertise and experience of its diverse members, all of whom have made significant contributions to advancing women's rights and ending VAWG in humanitarian and development settings across the world.

What do we do?

COFEM was started in order to address the widespread lack of socio-political analysis of gender inequality in VAWG work, which has increasingly led to the promotion of discourse, policies and interventions that do not address the lived experiences of women and girls. The failure to link acts of sexual and physical violence to the broader context of intersecting oppressions of gender, race, class, patriarchy and post-colonial power undermine and even close space for initiatives that are women-centered, women-led, and rights-driven.

COFEM is particularly concerned with:

- The rise of gender neutrality within humanitarian discourse and practice;
- The emergence of victimhood competition;
- A shift from women- and girl-led movements and activism to a technocratic approach to ending violence;
- Rise in politically neutral interpretations of "gender", as well as "gender-based violence" (GBV);
- A lack of clarity about how VAWG intersects with other forms of interpersonal and collective violence, and;
- A lack of feminist-informed analysis of how to include men and boys in work to eradicate VAWG in a way that is accountable to women and girls.

COFEM's key objectives are:

1. To provide a forum for connection, discussion, problem solving, mutual support and activism to advance feminist, women-centered strategies for ending VAWG and promoting the rights of women and girls;
2. To collectively identify and implement strategies and actions to overcome the challenges facing feminist-informed efforts to address VAWG, and make sure that women and girls remain at the center of all efforts to end VAWG.

A strong start!

The first action for COFEM was to clearly articulate our analysis on critical issues in the new *Feminist Perspectives on Addressing Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) Paper Series*. The series, launched at the 5th Sexual Violence Research Institute (SVRI) Forum, consists of five thought provoking papers:

Paper 1:

How a lack of accountability undermines work to address violence against women and girls

Paper 2:

Reframing language of 'GBV' away from feminist underpinnings

Paper 3:

Finding the balance between scientific and social change goals, approaches and methods

Paper 4:

Funding: Whose priorities?

Paper 5:

Eclipsed: When a broad protection agenda obscures the needs of women and girls

The year ahead...

COFEM is gearing up for a series of exciting activities in 2017–2018. These include:

Feminist Pocketbook:

A concise package of “tip sheets” that will help feminist activists and their allies articulate the importance of feminist-informed approaches to VAWG.

Online COFEM Learning Platform:

An online repository of COFEM's evolving knowledge products and educational materials aimed at bridging the gap between VAWG theory and practice and helping others learn about the importance of centering women and girls in VAWG work.

VAWG Knowledge Summit:

An innovative virtual convening of COFEM colleagues who will provide classroom-style discussion and learning with participants interested in brainstorming solutions to key challenges VAWG practitioners and activists face in development and humanitarian settings globally.

If you would like to join the COFEM community or learn more about our activities and ways to get involved, please drop us a line at cofem.hq@gmail.com.

