

## 1. Purpose of this Document

CARE's focus on gender equality (GE) has evolved and taken shape across members and countries offices at different times, and within our programmatic, organizational, but also branding and marketing work. This has led different parts of CARE to interpret and apply concepts differently.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify key concepts and strategies to ensure that CARE has common and coherent understanding, practice and communication of gender equality across and within members and country offices. It provides the words and the positions that all CARE staff should use when representing our development and humanitarian work internally and externally.

## 2. Background

Over the past decade, CARE made a committed transition from a focus on women's empowerment (WE) to a focus on GE. Based on learning from the Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII)<sup>2</sup> on women's empowerment and a series of internal processes, CARE has confirmed its commitment to GE from a programmatic and organizational perspective in both its development and humanitarian work. This has been operationalized through the endorsement by the CI board of directors in 2009 of the CI Gender Policy, the setting up of CI working groups on different aspects of gender and women's empowerment, the new Humanitarian Strategy of 2012 and CARE 2020 Vision which puts GE at the heart of CARE's work.

CARE's humanitarian response and developmental work aims at meeting the different needs of affected populations and enabling women and girls to not only realize their rights but gain from the experience to address systems and structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Understanding gender differences, inequalities and capacities improves the effectiveness of our humanitarian and developmental programmatic work and is the shared responsibility of all aid actors.



<sup>1</sup>The CI Gender Network (CIGN) is made up of CI members only. The CIGN was set up with the aim to lead changes needed at the organizational level to move gender forward and build on responsible masculinity. The CI Gender Policy has driven most of the work done by the CIGN. In 2009, all CI members endorsed the policy which defines CARE's explicit commitment to promote gender equality.

<sup>2</sup>For further information about the SII (2005), please check the following website: <http://pqdl.care.org/sii/default.aspx>

### 3. CARE's conceptual understanding and definitions of Gender related terminologies and WE

**Gender** is not the biological differences between men and women, boys and girls. Gender is a social construct that defines what it means to be a man or woman, boy or girl in a given society – it carries specific roles, status and expectations within households, communities and culture<sup>3</sup>. Individuals may also self-identify as neither male or female, or both male and female.

**Gender equity** is the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure fairness, strategies and measures must often be available to compensate for women's historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on a level playing field. Equity leads to equality.

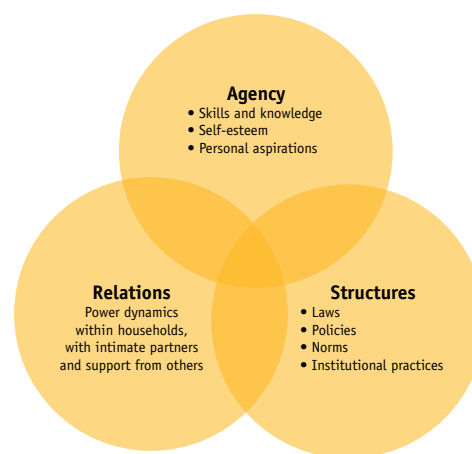
**Gender equality** - or equality between women and men - refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys and men of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. A critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, with a focus on identifying and redressing power imbalances. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life changes are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male.

**Gender Transformative Approach** refers to program approaches or activities that seek to build equitable social norms and structures in addition to individual gender-equitable behavior. CARE does gender transformative work by focusing on two approaches: women's empowerment and men's engagement.

**Women's Empowerment** CARE understands that it takes much more than simply including women in its projects to make progress towards WE and GE. CARE's current theory and framework for women's empowerment grew out of research and reflection undertaken during the multi-year Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII). The SII was a systematic, organization-wide assessment of CARE's programming aimed at deepening our understanding of the impact of CARE's work and factors contributing to women's empowerment and gender equality. Based on this and other work, CARE defines women's empowerment as the **combined effect of changes** in:

- a woman's own knowledge, skills and abilities (agency),
- the societal norms, customs, institutions and policies that shape her choices in life (structures), and
- the power relationships through which she negotiates her path (relations).

This comprehensive understanding of empowerment requires not only to increase women's individual *agency* but also to change structural barriers in order to shift social and cultural norms, policies and key relationships in ways that allow women and men to step into new roles. Experience and evidences from the SII indicate that progress across all these 3 dimensions of empowerment is needed to achieve sustainable results. It is key to understand that **women's empowerment is one of the approach** used by CARE to reach the ultimate goal of **gender equality** (section 5 of the document will provide further elements of CARE's approach to address GE).



<sup>3</sup>Historically, attention to gender relations has been driven by the need to address women's needs and circumstances as they are typically more disadvantaged than men. Increasingly, however, the actors for social change and the humanitarian community are recognizing the need to know more about discrimination that men and boys face in society, in poverty and in crisis situations.

#### 4. Why CARE puts gender equality at the heart of its work?

Evidence from a number of sources, as well as CARE's analysis of the underlying causes of poverty across its programmes around the world, overwhelmingly demonstrates that gender discrimination - or the denial of women's basic human rights - is one of the major causes of poverty. The majority of the world's poor are women because of this discrimination. Of the 1.3 billion people who live in absolute poverty around the globe, a disproportionately large percent are women. For these women, poverty doesn't just mean scarcity and want. It means rights denied, opportunities curtailed and voices silenced. Emergencies have different impacts on men and women and often change households' dynamics. Women are disproportionately affected by natural disasters and face specific challenges in armed conflict. Consider the following few facts<sup>4</sup>:

- Over half a million women continue to die each year from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes.
- Rates of HIV infection among women are rapidly increasing. Among those 15-24 years of age, young women now constitute the majority of those newly infected, in part because of their economic and social vulnerability.
- Gender-based violence kills and disables as many women between the ages of 15 and 44 as cancer. More often than not, perpetrators go unpunished.
- Many of the countries that have ratified CEDAW<sup>5</sup> still have discriminatory laws governing marriage, land, property and inheritance.
- On average, greater numbers of women die during and after natural disasters than men, with up to four times more women killed after the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

If CARE seeks a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome, we must address gender inequality. Working on gender equality means that we ensure that both women and men are consulted and that their different needs are taken into consideration from the design throughout the implementation and evaluation of our work. Even though a critical aspect of promoting gender equality is the empowerment of women, working on gender equality doesn't mean that we work exclusively with women, disregarding boys and men's rights and needs. It means though that we work with women, girls, boys and men to *free* women's potential to the benefit of society as a whole. The benefits of women's empowerment are not limited to women. Global evidence suggests that female and male citizens of more equitable societies are, on average, wealthier, healthier, and better educated than in countries where women are most marginalized<sup>6</sup>.



<sup>4</sup>Sources: the United National Populations Fund

<sup>5</sup>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

<sup>6</sup>CARE. Strong women, strong communities: CARE's holistic approach to empowering women and girls in the fight against poverty, May 2010 <http://www.care.org/downloads/womens-empowerment-report-201005.pdf>

## 5. What is CARE's approach to address Gender Inequality?

There are different strategies to achieve Gender Equality. Only a gender analysis of the specific context in which CARE wants to intervene will allow us to define the most effective strategy and the most relevant programme. The section below highlights the core elements of CARE's approach to gender equality.

### CARE's commitment towards gender transformative change

The CI Gender Policy and CARE 2020 Vision<sup>7</sup> are explicit in their focus on gender equality for both humanitarian and development programming. Gender equality requires a transformative change approach which seeks to transform gender roles, alter structures that maintain inequality and promotes gender-equitable relationships between men and women. While there is a wide recognition in our sector that all programming work should be at a minimum gender sensitive, CARE has a commitment to be - whenever possible - gender transformative (i.e. to shift the balance of power in gender relations so it is more equally shared).

A gender transformative approach is different from a gender sensitive approach. A gender sensitive programme will respond to the different needs and constraints of individuals based on their gender and sexuality. These activities significantly improve women's (or men's) access to protection, treatment or care. But by themselves they do little to change larger contextual issues that lie at the root of gender inequality. While it is essential for CARE programming to be gender sensitive, this is not sufficient to fundamentally alter the balance of power in gender relations.

To guide development and humanitarian programme teams to understand their approach to gender, CARE has a conceptual tool known as the Gender continuum<sup>8</sup>. The tool categorizes approaches by how we treat gender norms and inequities in the design, implementation and evaluation of our programmatic initiative.



At the far left of the continuum, the terms *gender harmful* refers to program approaches reinforcing inequitable gender stereotypes, or dis-empowering certain people in the process of achieving program goals.

**Example:** A poster that shows a person, who is HIV-positive as a skeleton, bringing the risk of death to others, will reinforce negative stereotypes and will not empower those who are living with HIV. Showing only virile, strong men in condom advertisements reinforces a common stereotype of masculinity.

At the far right of the continuum, the term *gender transformative* refers to program approaches or activities actively seeking to build equitable social norms and structures in addition to individual gender-equitable behavior.

**Example:** The EMPOWER program in Benin provides support to women affected by gender based violence; the program works not only with women providing them legal assistance and safe havens, but also with the judiciary, the police and law makers to ensure that cases are dealt with sensitively and effectively, ending years of systemic impunity for GBV in Benin.

<sup>7</sup>In 2009, CARE International's Gender Policy was adopted by CARE International's Board. This harmonized policy represents the first step for CI to take a cohesive and coordinated approach to gender. The policy commits each CI members to a clear mandate to promote gender equality - organizationally and programmatically. Additionally, CARE International's (CI's) 2020 Vision, elaborated in 2010, calls for a CARE that operates with a foundation of rights-based approaches and gender analysis, confronts gender discrimination and places particular focus on 'empowering poor women and girls' in its development work.

<sup>8</sup>For further information on this tool, please refer to the following link: <http://pqdl.care.org/gendertoolkit/Pages/gender%20continuum.aspx>

## Women's empowerment

As mentioned earlier on, women's empowerment is a core approach to tackle gender inequality. Addressing gender inequality implies working closely with girls and women so they are no longer victims of poverty but rather contributing to change the context in which they live<sup>9</sup>.

For CARE, WE is about human rights, while recognizing the wider impact of WE on poverty reduction. CARE aligns its work with the CEDAW international framework which defines discrimination against women on a universal basis, forming an important bill of rights for women worldwide. When contributing to WE, CARE seeks to work across the continuum of women's lives, including during childhood, adolescence, youth and maturity. The empowerment framework remains the same, but programmatic approaches are carefully tailored to meet the needs of the age group(s) in question. Supporting women's empowerment<sup>10</sup> is therefore necessary to challenge and change the context in which women live in the development-emergency-resilience-transition-development continuum.

## Women's empowerment is not only a means to end poverty

For CARE the empowerment of women and girls is more than an effective tool or instrument for poverty reduction and economic development (e.g. the 'return on investment' argument or what is commonly known as the 'instrumentalist approach'). We recognize, based on CARE's own experience and the global evidence, that addressing gender inequality and women's empowerment can be an effective strategy for reducing poverty. However, this is not the only motivation for CARE's focus on WE. Our focus on WE stems from a firm commitment to facilitating the realization of women's human rights as an end in itself. As a rights-based organization, gender equality is part of our long-term vision for social justice and poverty alleviation, and therefore an essential goal in itself. This is particularly important as we engage with others since the instrumentalist approach compromises CARE's integrity and credibility when advancing women's rights and gender equality especially in partnership with feminist movements around the world. The instrumentalist approach also tends to reinforce gender-traditional roles rather than challenge them. For example:

- Focusing on women in child health programming assumes women have the power, decision-making and sole responsibility to care for children without challenging the prevailing gender norms around (shared) parental responsibility.
- Gender-based violence programming might focus on saving and protecting women from men but not on the gender norms that enable men to beat their partners and the police to turn a blind eye, and may ignore the fact that gender-based violence is also directed at men and boys.



<sup>9</sup>Please refer to page 2 for a full understanding of CARE's definition of women's empowerment.

<sup>10</sup>Empowerment is to be understood as per the Empowerment framework defined in page 2 of this document.

## Working with men and boys

Structural and social changes necessary for gender equality requires that everyone in society, including men and boys, change their behaviors and attitudes.

CARE is increasingly working to engage men and boys as equal partners with women and girls to change social structures and rules and challenge power imbalances that limit full enjoyment of rights and opportunities. We find that a programmatic focus that includes men and women leads to the most sustainable gains. Instead of viewing men and women as oppositional groups with power transferred from one to the other, CARE recognizes the importance of creating new structures and changing attitudes that foster interdependent, mutually supportive relationships. As a country office puts it *'this is not about demonizing men and putting women on a pedestal'* but it is about working on relationships between men and women within the context of household, community and society as a whole.

Men and boys have their own areas to challenge and change on the path towards gender equality. Social rules and configurations of masculinity often trap men within a rigid set of what is considered socially acceptable behavior that may be harmful to themselves and others. For example, men and boys are part of the reproductive process and instead of reinforcing stereotypes that exclude them by providing reproductive health services exclusively to women, we can provide more holistic services that include men in reproductive decisions. Engaging men and boys in gender equality programming ensures that everyone is making necessary changes and is involved in the process of creating new, more equitably beneficial social structures.

## Addressing gender equality in emergencies

CARE's humanitarian goal for 2020 is to be a leading agency having lasting impacts on the needs of poor women, men, boys and girls affected by humanitarian crisis and known for our particular ability to reach and empower women and girls in emergencies. Crisis situations, whether conflict or natural disaster, have very different impacts on women, girls, boys and men. People face different risks based on their age and sex (i.e. *in DRC, boys risk recruitment into armed groups and girls constitute the majority of victims of sexual violence*). They often highlight different concerns and bring different perspectives, experiences and solutions to the challenges faced (i.e. *to increase school attendance amongst refugee populations in Tanzania, distributing bars of soap to maintain hygiene was more important for young women who otherwise felt ashamed of going to school especially during their menstrual periods*). Their needs for assistance and protection will vary and particular attention to gender vulnerability in violent conflict, where protection challenges are generally greater, is required.

CARE's primary objective of humanitarian response is *to meet immediate needs of affected populations in the poorest communities in the world with a particular ability to reach and empower women and girls in emergencies*. Our humanitarian and emergency work also puts gender equality programming at the front and centre of everything we do. CARE brings a longer-term view to its humanitarian work, including supporting women, girls, men and boys to be more resilient in the face of disasters and conflict. Our programs make every effort to connect humanitarian preparedness and response work with recovery and longer term development. Therefore the approach that we take regarding gender equality programming in emergencies aligns both with the humanitarian principle of impartiality and imperative with our emphasis on women and girls in our long-term programming.

As in our development work, CARE strives to ensure that our humanitarian response is not a one-dimensional approach focusing only on the women and girls, but on the dynamics between men and women, boys and girls, at different societal, political and family levels in order to be effective and efficient.

This means ensuring for example that we:

- 1) Collect sex and age disaggregated data during assessments (by gender-balanced teams)
- 2) Use a gender analysis to fully understand the relationships between men and women, their different vulnerabilities and capacities
- 3) Include the outcomes of that analysis to guide our program design and humanitarian action plans
- 4) Translate gender-sensitive plans into requests for funding
- 5) Monitor the outcomes and measure the effects of our work on women, girls, boys and men.

### Internal policies and staff capacity building

CARE understands that its gender transformative work relies on male and female staff to be agents and models of social change and therefore promoting equality internally is essential. Acknowledging that we are all products of our cultures, CARE creates opportunities for staff to reflect on their diverse experiences of power, gender, sexuality, class, caste, and religion in their own lives and ensure that organization's policies respond to these differences. In order to be credible with others, we need to enact gender equality within the organization and implement the right policies and governance mechanisms to be held accountable to our gender commitments. There is also evidence showing that if CARE promotes gender equality internally, we will be more effective in programs and that diverse and inclusive organizations tend to have better retention and higher morale.

To enhance learning and knowledge sharing, CARE has also set up a CI Gender Network, a global Gender Working Group, as well as six thematic working groups on Gender Equity and Diversity, Gender-Based Violence, Male Engagement, Gender in Policy and Advocacy, Impact Measurement for Gender and Women's Empowerment and Gender in Emergencies.

