

# Making It Real: Gender Equity and Diversity Newsletter



## Welcome...

to the latest edition of CARE USA's Gender Equity and Diversity Newsletter! This newsletter focuses on **gender equity and the workload**.

The theme of our next issue will focus on **the secret to change - working across agency, relations, and structure for gender equality**. Please send your ideas by November 2013 to Doris Bartel, Senior Director of the Gender and Empowerment Team in the Program Partnerships Learning and Advocacy (PPLA) division at [dbartel@care.org](mailto:dbartel@care.org) or Allison Burden, Acting Director for Talent Development & Gender Equity and Diversity in the Global Support Services division at [aburden@care.org](mailto:aburden@care.org).

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## Anzu Mia Becomes a Role Model for His Community

By Abu Sufian and Richard Sloman, Food Security for Ultra Poor Project (FSUP), CARE Bangladesh

Salma says she has seen a "radical change" in her husband Anzu Mia in the past year; he has become committed to supporting the most vulnerable families in his community. In 2009, Anzu contracted tuberculosis and was taken to the hospital. "Many people died in hospital from TB," he explains, "I thought I would die too". But Anzu did not die and after this experience, he began to change his behaviour with his wife and in the community. He appreciated and supported his wife more. "In the past we quarrelled a lot," Salma explained, "But now our relationship has improved. Before he was violent to me most of the time, but now he never beats me." Anzu also became more vocal in the community and started speaking out about the negative ways some men treat women.



Young men in the community observed the positive way he behaved towards his wife and other women and began to discuss this with him. Slowly he began to be seen as a role model for young men in the community. Last year the Food Security for Ultra Poor project formally identified him as a positive example for others in his community and now he speaks regularly with adolescent men about the way men treat women. He also helped to establish an Ending Violence through Engaging Men forum, which is a space facilitated by the project where young men and adolescent boys meet twice monthly and discuss issues like gender socialization, masculinity, power dynamics, sexuality and reproductive health, and gender-based violence. To date, the project has 645 Ending Violence through Engaging Men forums in 600 villages and now 200 male role models have been identified by the community; Anzu is the best of them.

Anzu also attends the project's couples' workshop sessions with his wife. Here they discuss issues of sharing household chores, women's rights, and sexual and reproductive health. Since attending these sessions Salma says Anzu takes more of a share in household activities such as cooking. Anzu explains "I feel no shame in taking on these roles" which are traditionally associated with women. When neighbours see him carrying out this work, he explains he is supporting his wife. The project has also facilitated couple's workshops in 116 communities where 10 couples attend monthly. The project sets up women's groups and young men's groups; the couple's workshops bring them together to achieve greater synergy and results. Anzu and Salma are examples of this; life has improved for them because violence in their home has reduced. Salma is also now able to attend social events and visit friends, her mobility and leisure time have increased, household income has gone up because Salma has a small business, and she is now saving money for her daughter's marriage. For Anzu, he has more time for the family and he finds he discusses more with his wife. They are a happy couple and this is recognized in their community.

## Flexible Work Load

by *Munmun S. Chowdhury, Regional HR Business Partner, Asia*

*".....I have no other choice but to quit my job. I agree with what you are saying, that if I continue with this job for two more years there will be scope for promotion, but my present situation compels me to join my husband in a different province. I manage my two young children with help of a nanny. Most days I return home after 6:00 pm and feel too tired to play with them or help with their homework. I frequently miss my daughter's school events and parents' meetings, and I feel guilty. When I have to travel for field work, my husband takes leave to be with the children. Life has become stressful and I cannot keep this up. I love my job, I have learned so much here, it is a hard decision for me but it is best for me to move with my husband so that we can stay together as a family....."*

This is part of an exit interview with Samia, a national staff member of a Country Office in Asia. Samia's case is not rare for working women in Asia; it is not uncommon to see women quitting after marriage, child-birth, illness of family members, or following their husbands to a new location.

In Asian Country Offices, we have seen that women stay with CARE for four to five years less than men (at senior management level). The Asia Women Leadership Program (that aims to increase women in leadership positions) set out to identify supportive practices to attract and retain women in the organization. They found that with demands at work and home, it helps to have flexibility at work. Though this is true for both women and men, women are more affected. Country Offices have introduced several policies that allow work flexibility including: flexible office hours, alternative work location, compensatory time-off for extra hours at work, dependent's sick leave, travel with children, breastfeeding time for lactating mothers, etc.

Research shows that flexible work conditions enable employees to manage life better, they experience less stress and are more engaged in work, resulting in increased productivity and improved retention. Senior Management at CARE USA has agreed to a proposal to introduce consistent practices for flexible work conditions. A small group is currently working to develop a set of Standards and Guidelines on flexible work conditions. Upon approval from the Executive Management Team, the Standard and Guidelines will be widely circulated for implementation, after all, the guidelines will bring the desired results only if they are practiced by both managers and employees.



## 'I can do women's work': reflections on engaging men as allies in women's economic empowerment in Rwanda

*The article below is an adaptation of a research report by Henny Sleggh, Gary Barker, Augustin Kimonyo, Prudence Ndolimana, and Matt Bannerman published in Gender and Development March 2013*

CARE Rwanda works to promote vulnerable women's access to the financial services and products they need, to build their skills in enterprise development, and to link women entrepreneurs to functioning markets and value-chains. While awareness of the benefits that women's economic empowerment may bring to families and wider society has led policymakers and practitioners to target women widely, few efforts have been made to engage men as allies in women's economic empowerment, to explore and promote cooperation between couples - and even fewer of these efforts have been evaluated.

CARE Rwanda partnered with Promundo and Rwandan Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC), to explore ways to engage men in the hope of enhancing the benefits of VSL to empower women, reduce poverty and achieve gender equality at the household level. This article presents findings from a pilot intervention with couples and men in Rwanda, including baseline research and an evaluation, in the context of CARE Rwanda's Village Savings and Loan (VSL) program. The research's key findings include:

- Women participants in micro-credit programs need support from programming which engages with men in deliberate and structured ways, including promoting greater male involvement in care work,
- In some settings, solely focusing on women may lead to negative effects for women, both in the short and long term.

The research shows that while changing gender norms can be challenging, it is possible. As one man in the program put it:

*"It was like a war. When I started with women's activities the neighbors were laughing and joking. I kept on doing it, and now the neighbors don't joke anymore. They start to implement the changes in their own houses because they see we are doing well now."*

**Full article available at:**

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2013.767495>

Photo to the left:

CARE Rwanda's work engaging men

## Confessions of a CARE Dad

by Balla Sidibé, Country Director, CARE Côte d'Ivoire

Balla Sidibé, Country Director for CARE Côte d'Ivoire, weighs in on his personal experiences managing workload and fatherhood.



*Balla Sidibé dons stitches and a band aid; a souvenir acquired after he fell playing with his daughter*

**How have you been able to balance your roles as father and Country Director?** They are complementary. It's challenging to be a new CD. When I leave the office and go home, I can play with my children and do simple things outside of my normal work day. I also have a nanny and when I travel, my mother or my mother-in-law comes to visit so that someone is with the children.

**You and your wife made the decision together for your children to join you here while she remained in Mali for her job. In many contexts, the wife is expected to follow her husband? Have you experienced any negative reactions from your family and/or friends?** There was no problem from my family because my mother and father did the same. My mother was a lawyer and my father let her continue her career. My wife's family told her that she had to follow me and forget about her career; I told them she has a good career that cannot just be ended. Of course, I have friends who tell me that my wife should join me — but my wife and I agreed. It was a decision and a commitment that we both made.

**How do you think your experience as a working father differs or is the same as the experiences of working mothers at CARE?** I have come to appreciate my wife's ability to balance her job and her role as a mother. I value her efforts more now that I understand what they require. As a man, it is easy because society expects me to make decisions; so I can decide whether or not to respect social norms. It's not necessarily easy for a woman. There are similarities between my experience and women at CARE; like them, I have to adjust my agenda so I am able to attend school meetings and take my children to the doctor; all of this requires day-to-day planning.

**As an 'African' man, how do you think, or hope, that your involvement in your children's lives influences their understanding of gender roles?** I have 2 daughters and a boy. I am sure that it empowers them mentally so that they don't feel that they are not equal. When I was growing up, my sister was the one given the most consideration during family decisions because she was the eldest. To this day, she is the one who has all of my father's documentation and land titles. Because of this, my sister has always been empowered. Maybe my father promoted this because his own mother worked as a nurse and because his father was educated. I think my involvement in my children's lives will empower them. I hope that my son will be more egalitarian and able to accept diversity.

## Sharing the household work: a story from Mali

by Boniface Diallo, Pathways Program Manager, CARE Mali

My name is Mr. Ousmane Goulaka. I am a farmer in Mandoli in the commune of Bara Sara in Bandiagara, Mali.

I participated in the gender and social transformation program in my capacity as a village agent organized by the Nyeleni/Pathways project team with their local partner. During this training a number of topics were covered, but I was really struck by the issue of sharing the workload in the household. As I left the training, many ideas were going around in my head about which task I should take on to help my wife.

Just after the training in the village, I immediately committed to personally take care of providing household water. Since then I have taken on the task with my barrel, my jerry cans, and my cart. I am the only man in my village who does this and I have no problem doing it.

I am proud of the help that I give my family and I have noticed that my wife is really happy because in our area, water sources are few and far between and you have to climb or walk some distance to get the water, transport it on your head, and do many trips. Since I have saved my wife from doing this, she doesn't have injuries because she no longer falls on rocks. She now uses the time she used to spend getting water for her own interests. My wife has become more coquettish, more charming, and happier. I have become the pride of the family. Other men have become curious and are beginning to understand me. I am sure that some will soon imitate me, because their wives and children are now talking about me with envy and above all about the positive effect on mum. These men are no better than me, and they see that I like what I do and that I haven't stopped doing it.



## On the Clock: An Interview with Helene Gayle, President and CEO, CARE USA

**From your experience both in the US and in working on development issues, how does the challenge of “triple burden” (work, work at home, and child care) of women’s workload affect the emergence of women leaders in work, politics, and development?**

I have seen how this has played out for women. Sometimes it is more than a “triple burden” because women play so many roles. There are a whole range of responsibilities that societies expect of women and they vary from culture to culture. The challenge is in how you balance the responsibilities. Priorities will change over one’s life span. At CARE, it is important that we do our part to acknowledge the multiple roles that women play and find better ways to provide and meet the needs of our staff who are women.

**What thoughts do you have about what needs to change in order for more women to emerge as leaders?**

For more women to emerge as leaders, a woman herself must understand her own reality, her responsibilities and her priorities and how those change over time. Then we as an organization must be prepared to make changes and adapt to the needs of women employees. Are we supporting women who want to develop leadership roles? I remember a discussion with a male colleague (not at CARE) on workload balance. He expressed to me the difficulties of travel and how sometimes he traveled so frequently that his wife did not even have the time to clean and repack his things before he left out again. Okay, not everyone has that, but it’s an example of how some people, often men, do not realize the privileges they have. Many women speak of the almost universal ex-

perience of saying something and having it re-stated by male colleagues and everyone acknowledging it when said by the male. So we need to examine the things in our culture that are disempowering to women. Acknowledgements of differences women face need to be made so that we can look for creative solutions, such as flexible work hours, mentorships, support groups, etc.

**What of CARE’s work has most inspired you about how we address this issue?**

One of the things that has inspired me most at CARE is seeing women within the organization start to talk about issues related to these issues. Often during my travels women are very outspoken about these issues and are eager to bring about change. Another inspiring element of CARE’s work are the efforts of the male colleagues at CARE. They are extremely involved in asking what roles *they* can play to encourage gender-sensitive programming and support to their female colleagues.

**Looking at the differing messages of Sheryl Sandberg and Anne-Marie Slaughter, what advice would you give to youth, particularly young women, who are trying to understand this balance and wanting to explore leadership opportunities?**

Both Sheryl Sandberg and Anne-Marie Slaughter offer useful commentary. For Sandberg, “leaning in” will lead to women being more comfortable taking on greater roles; and for Slaughter, that our work places are not yet accommodating for women to succeed. Both authors have something valuable to share. I think it does mean that young women need to begin planning early and think about the trade-offs that they may need to make along the path. It is also critically important for them to look at their opportunities from the perspective of their life-long journey, rather than simply one point in time.



Dr. Helene Gayle

*We’d like to extend our thanks to the authors for their insightful submissions. Please send ideas or reflections for the next issue of the Gender Equity and Diversity Newsletter, focusing on the secret to change - working across agency, relations, and structure for gender equality, by November 2013 to Doris Bartel at [dbartel@care.org](mailto:dbartel@care.org) or Allison Burden at [aburden@care.org](mailto:aburden@care.org).*