



POWER WITHIN: Helping Girls to Learn and Lead Program Update – May 2011



Executive Summary

Around the world, 72 million children are out of school, the majority of them girls. Lack of education limits the ability of girls and women to control their own lives and make positive contributions to the lives of others.

CARE seeks to address those challenges through the global POWER WITHIN program, which works to improve learning and leadership opportunities, both within and outside schools, in 25 countries.¹ In the past year, the program reached 1,200,755 children – both girls and boys – with initiatives aimed at improving access to and quality of education. A subset of activities is aimed specifically at girls, fostering leadership skills and advocating for their rights at local, national and international levels.

Ongoing activities through POWER WITHIN focus on the following objectives:

¹ Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Benin, Bolivia, Burundi, Cambodia, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, Serbia, South Africa – Lesotho, Tanzania and Yemen.

- **Strengthen girls' leadership competencies:** CARE seeks to cultivate a new generation of female leaders by promoting a variety of activities, such as assertiveness training, academic camps during school holidays, clubs and sports activities for boys and girls. These take varying forms in different countries according to the local culture and context.
- **Improve education quality:** CARE provides support aimed at improving education quality, including ongoing and refresher training for teachers.
- **Advocate for girls' rights:** CARE aims to influence policy in favor of measures that protect the rights of children. We work individually and in coalitions to influence an improved policy environment for girls on issues such as child labor, gender-based violence in schools, and girl-friendly schools.

Program Progress and Highlights

1. Strengthen girls' leadership competencies

CARE is helping girls find their strength and voice, developing life-long skills and aspiring to take part in shaping the future of their communities and countries. Examples of CARE's approach in some of the countries where POWER WITHIN is active include:

India: CARE helps girls enhance their confidence, self-esteem and voice. In addition to our work in regular schools, we partner with special residential programs for girls who have dropped out or never enrolled. Overall, in India, CARE conducted leadership activities for 13,038 girls over the past year. Many of these activities are accomplished through girls' collectives that organize leadership-building events such as co-ed sporting matches and discussions of issues such as college, leadership skills and delaying marriage in favor of education. Working in tandem with CARE-organized boys' groups at 60 schools, girls are interacting as equals to their male peers for the first time. At residential schools, CARE organizes girls' science fairs and leadership events including activities such as games, role play, discussion of women leaders and educational films. Girls gain skills to participate in community life by taking leadership roles in school-based committees and morning assemblies. CARE supplies educational material on topics such as communication, family relations, news media, organization and rules, travel, institutions and democracy.



In India, even the youngest members of girls' collectives take the lead in events and discussions involving both sexes.

Mali: CARE works to build life skills and increase community involvement for children, particularly girls. In the past year we reached 4,500 children in Mali, 70 percent of them girls. We help girls organize leadership clubs; involve them in more active civic and volunteer roles in their communities; arrange adult role models and mentors; and organize camps that bring children together to address topics such as leadership, child rights, reproductive health and hygiene. CARE supports the creation of student-led girls' clubs for extracurricular activities at schools. Members take charge of functions such as hygiene, school cleanliness and monitoring class attendance, and have made a number of positive contributions to the school atmosphere. In many schools where CARE is implementing POWER WITHIN activities, communication between teachers and students has improved, girls are less shy, cohesion among schoolchildren of different backgrounds has grown and girls who had abandoned school are beginning to return.

2. Improve education quality

Around the world, CARE is giving both girls and boys access to new textbooks and learning materials, rehabilitated classrooms and libraries, and new spaces and equipment for sports and extracurricular activities. Even more importantly, we are equipping teachers with fresh skills, more inclusive techniques, and a determination to keep girls from dropping out. We are enlisting parents and community leaders, school administrators – and significantly, fellow male students – as advocates for gender equality in education.

Benin: CARE works to improve teachers' classroom techniques and helps communities develop school curricula that are up-to-date and locally appropriate, so that parents see the value of education. We build parent-teacher associations, mothers' groups and women's income-generation activities that raise money for educational activities, and fight teen pregnancy, sexual violence, and social attitudes that too frequently put an early end to girls' educational careers. In Benin over the past year, CARE improved access to and quality of primary education for 2,552 children (1,470 girls and 1,082 boys) through a more relevant curriculum, improved teachers' skills, community and civil society participation and a strengthened capacity of the Ministry of Education, including in HIV/AIDS education. We trained adults to serve as community volunteers who promote the value of education, provided interactive teacher training in improved classroom practices, and organized workshops on community school management. To build public support for girls' rights and education, we sponsored a series of radio spots and messages nationwide.



In Benin, girls from CARE-supported schools joined family members in a 16-day campaign to fight violence against girls.

Peru: In Peru, which joined the POWER WITHIN program last year, CARE places a special emphasis on indigenous communities in the rural regions of Ancash, Ayacucho and Puno, where children who are non-native speakers of Spanish are often at a disadvantage in school. Over the past year CARE improved the quality of and access to bilingual, intercultural education for 12,604 children at formal pre-schools, elementary and secondary schools. For an additional 1,663 pre-school children, we facilitated learning opportunities at community-based early education centers. CARE works closely with education authorities in the regions and at the national level in Peru, advocating for the broad-based improvement of educational policies, including bilingual, intercultural approaches.



Girls in Ecuador who might have faced a life of domestic servitude are instead staying in school.

3. Advocate for girls' rights

CARE takes action on multiple fronts against factors that keep girls and women from realizing their place as full citizens of their countries. We sponsor public outreach campaigns and work with government

officials to put a spotlight on the prevention of violence. Across several countries, teacher trainings on gender sensitivity and leadership issues have supported a more conducive learning environments and have led to boys getting involved as champions of social change. We have also placed a direct focus on issues of child labor and domestic servitude, resulting in working children in countries like Ecuador and Nicaragua have gained access to education and in some cases, left harmful situations as domestic servants.

El Salvador: In recent months, CARE formed networks of teachers, students and advisors and improved awareness of gender-based violence in 115 schools, while developing leadership skills for 1,890 girls and 590 boys, aged 10 to 14. Activities targeted directly at students included plays and workshops for girls to raise awareness of sexual abuse and harassment, as well as issues related to sexuality. We organized numerous activities with school officials, parents' committees and government education authorities to address issues such as sexual and reproductive health, violence, sexual abuse and harassment, and to identify girls abused in schools. During events and in published materials promoting girls' leadership skills, we place a special emphasis on encouraging leadership among girls affected by gender-based violence.

Conclusion

A rising generation of educated girls is bringing energy and enthusiasm to their communities across the globe. Through POWER WITHIN, CARE is empowering not only girls, but parents, teachers and government leaders – and, significantly, male classmates and supporters. Together, they are bringing about lasting change in the educational sphere and in the realization of girls' and women's rights. As CARE has learned from decades of experience, educating girls provides a multiplier effect, helping lift not only individuals, but also entire communities and countries out of poverty. It is with that hopeful future in mind that we offer our sincere thanks to the generous donors who make this work possible.

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