



ENDING POVERTY—Why Empower Women and Girls?

Women and girls suffer disproportionately from the burden of extreme poverty—they make up 70 percent of the 1 billion people living on less than a dollar a day. At CARE, we are committed to ending poverty—by attacking its root causes, not only its consequences.

In practice, this means that we can't just build a school—we must fight for the rights of girls to be educated. It means not only providing HIV and pregnancy prevention information, counseling and testing, but also fighting for every individual's right to be free from abuse or violence.

CARE is committed to uncovering and transforming the political, social and economic relationships at the heart of poverty—our work to improve the health and well-being of women and girls is critical to that fight.

POVERTY 101: WHAT DO WOMEN HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

Women work two-thirds of the world's working hours, produce half of the world's food, yet earn only 10 percent of the world's income and own less than 1 percent



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of the world's property. More than 850 million people—most of them women and children—suffer from chronic hunger or malnutrition.

Women in the developing world bear a heavy burden of preventable illness. Each year, more than half a million women die from the complications of pregnancy and childbirth. And despite steady growth in access to contraceptives globally, an estimated 80 million women have unintended pregnancies each year—half end in abortion. Women are increasingly at risk for HIV—60 percent of people with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women. In Kenya, for every 10 young men with HIV there are 45 infected young women.

Women play a crucial role in local economies and the health and well-being of their families. Women who are educated are more likely to have fewer and healthier children. In fact, mothers with some education immunize their children 50 percent more often than mothers who are not educated, while HIV/AIDS spreads twice as quickly among uneducated girls than among girls that have even some schooling. Poor maternal health reduces women's capacity to work and limits their ability to generate income and overcome poverty, often in communities where their contribution to household income and childcare is crucial.

Poor women are often extremely vulnerable to injury or death from violence. At least one in three of the world's women has been physically or sexually abused at some time in her life. Many, including pregnant women

Advocacy and Empowerment at Work

In 1998, CARE worked with 25 institutions in Peru to help pass a law that promoted universal basic education for girls. The law helped to address gender discrimination as well as ensuring that more resources for education reached rural areas of the country. By working with local civic groups, CARE helped to ignite a national movement to broaden girls' access to basic education.

In Niger, CARE works with women's savings groups that pool resources to finance individual small businesses. Together, the women act as venture capitalists and loan officers for one another. For many of the women, these savings groups represent the first economic freedom they've ever experienced. As a result, more women are speaking out openly about inheritance and land rights and women's participation in local elections is on the rise.

and young girls, are subject to severe, sustained or repeated attacks. In armed conflicts since 1945, 90 percent of casualties have been civilians and three in four war fatalities are women or children.

WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP?

The challenges facing poor women are tough, no doubt about it. But there are good solutions.

Based on 60 years of real-world experience, here's what CARE thinks will help:

The United States must be a leader in the fight to combat the underlying causes of poverty and poor health, especially among women and girls. In practical terms, this means:

Significantly increasing poverty-fighting aid.

The problems aren't just about money, but more funding is needed. And while we've made important strides, we have to do more to ensure that the poorest of the poor have a chance to live healthy, productive lives. CARE supports a significant increase in poverty-fighting aid—striving for an additional 1 percent of the U.S. budget by 2010. As a step toward that goal, CARE will push for strong increases in this year's foreign aid budget.

Improving global health. The importance of women's health should not be underestimated in the fight against poverty. When a mother is ill and cannot work or care for her children, the whole family suffers. Basic health issues, from the dangers of unassisted birth to preventable diseases such as malaria, TB and AIDS put women and their families at terrible risk. Together we have the ability to save millions of lives around the world. CARE urges policymakers to support evidence-based programs that put the realities of women's lives in poor countries at the center of their global health strategy. This means addressing the AIDS pandemic with science, not rhetoric. And it means better health systems and more intensive efforts to address maternal and child health, women's reproductive health and family planning, and the growing international fight to combat deadly but preventable infectious diseases like TB and malaria.

Addressing gender inequities. Women are more vulnerable to preventable illnesses and violence, and they have far fewer opportunities to become educated or to earn a living. This inequity not only disadvantages them, it adversely affects their families for generations—especially the health of their children. Addressing inequality, discrimination

Why Empowerment?

CARE believes that the status of women in the developing world is key to fighting and ending global poverty. They are the linchpins of their families, and therefore of their communities. They are powerful. With education, skills and basic resources, they can become catalysts for change. Women can help build a better world for all.



and gender vulnerability as an underlying cause of poverty will help women become healthier and more self-sufficient, which translates into lifelong gains for their families and communities.

Protecting vulnerable populations and finding peaceful solutions to civil conflicts.

Conflict dramatically increases women's vulnerability to violence and poverty and always leaves disease, death and displacement in its wake. CARE's work on behalf of vulnerable people living in conflict and post-conflict settings is grounded in the universal right to protection and humanitarian assistance without exception. CARE supports expanded international efforts to create lasting peace and stability worldwide. Poverty can only be effectively overcome in communities free from war and violence and in settings where individuals are free from the fear of death, injury or sexual or gender-based violence.