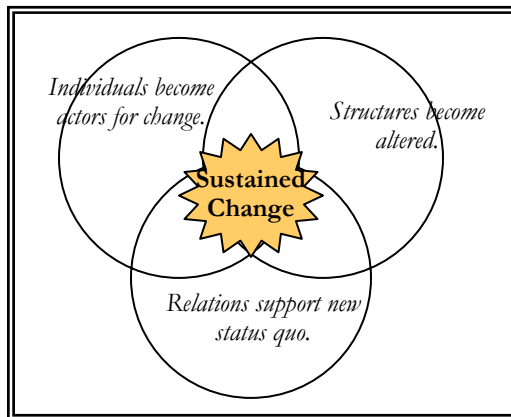




Women's Empowerment

What is women's empowerment?

In our decades of work to alleviate poverty around the world, CARE has consistently deepened our understanding of why entire groups of people live in chronic want and despair. As our understanding grows, our approach to fighting poverty becomes more effective. Today, at the onset of the 21st century, CARE is committed to uncovering and uprooting the *underlying causes* of poverty, including the human-made social, political and economic power structures that consistently exclude certain groups of people – and none more consistently and persistently than women in every society on the planet. Globally, poverty wears a woman's face.



CARE believes that if the lives of poor women (and other groups excluded because of race, caste or any other socially constructed division) are to improve in a *sustained* manner, change must occur in three realms, as shown at left: *Individuals* must gain power to change and effect change; *structures* that dictate social, economic and political power-holding must be altered; and human *relationships* must be created or modified to support change. CARE's view of women's empowerment serves as both a guide to designing our programs and a tool to help us measure the impact of our work upon the well-being of women and other excluded people. And it is useful in virtually all

types of programs that CARE manages: those that help communities improve the quality of and access to water, health services, education and microfinance services (to name but a few of our development sectors), and those in which we guide communities to confront specific social injustices such as violence against women.

Why does CARE centralize women's empowerment as a means to overcome poverty?

“We seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security.” Guided by our vision, CARE works with and on behalf of the men and boys, women and girls who live in poverty. But because 70 percent of the world's poorest people are female, we naturally focus on addressing the social injustices that relegate women and girls to lives of want and indignity. CARE works



with women and girls because, quite simply, they deserve to meet their most basic needs, claim their most basic rights and have the opportunity to live in dignity and pursue their dreams.

We also work with women because it makes good investment sense. Women, more than men, tend to parlay improvements in their own lives into the lives of their children and communities. Increases in income typically translate into greater investment in children's education and health care. Education for girls and women plays a strong role in the next generation's health and well being. And the entire world benefits from the creativity, intelligence and effort that flower when girls and women are freed from strictures that keep them uneducated, silenced and relegated to home and field.

How do CARE's programs help empower women?

CARE manages some 900 projects in some 70 of the world's poorest countries, and our work is as diverse as the people we serve. The highlights below offer just a taste of the types of projects we design and manage, and the benefits to those who participate.



- **Microfinance services:** In dozens of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America, CARE's method of forming village-based savings and loan groups has helped hundreds of thousands of women gain access to small credit to start or grow small businesses, and to increase income they can spend on their family's welfare.



- **Education:** From Afghanistan to Egypt, Guatemala to India, CARE works with communities to improve their schools and ensure that all children have access to a quality, basic education – especially girls, who are far more likely to be denied an education than their brothers.
- **Health services:** CARE strives to improve health knowledge and health services in many ways, but none more important than ensuring women's access to lifesaving education and care, including birth spacing, HIV prevention and maternal care.
- **Water and natural resources:** Women and girls are disproportionately responsible for growing food, hauling water and collecting firewood, and CARE makes certain they are at the center of our work to improve and protect natural resources, from project planning to managing new infrastructure.
- **Social justice:** CARE increasingly strives to guide women, men and entire communities to examine and discuss

their social status quo, their views of women's and men's roles, and how these are implicated in poverty, poor health and phenomena such as violence against women and the spread of HIV.