



# CARE'S MARKET ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

## TO SCALE DEVELOPMENT OF ENTERPRISES AND VALUE CHAINS TO EMPOWER 10 MILLION VULNERABLE WOMEN & GIRLS 2008-2015

Una Brosnan/CARE

### GOAL AND FOCUS

**CARE's Market Engagement Strategy will scale up our work in value chains with the goal of empowering 10 million women and girls and their families to lift themselves out of poverty by promoting dignified employment and sustainable incomes by 2015 through the development of agriculture and other high potential value chains.**

The strategy's focus on value chains (see box at right) reflects CARE's experience that lack of access to credit and other financial services, while a constraint to growth of the poor's enterprises and employment, is not the only and often not the primary challenge they face.

To fuel inclusive growth that pulls people above the poverty line, a number of other critical constraints need to be addressed, including access to market information and technologies that spur the addition of value via processing and storage, as well as a positive business environment, financial and market literacy, the ability to manage risk, and the means to overcome structural barriers and exclusionary socio-economic norms and practices.

Our strategy builds upon CARE's experience in financial services around the world and the recent spin off of CARE's efforts with village savings and loan associations (VSLA) as a Signature Program. Over the next ten years, the Access Africa Signature Program will seek to provide access to a suite of financial services to 30 million people in 39 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Together, these two efforts will provide a comprehensive

approach, whereby CARE will facilitate the development of strategically selected value chains that offer decent incomes and employment to millions of poor women and girls in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

### WHY WOMEN AND GIRLS?

CARE's emphasis on women and girls as agents of their own change in eradicating poverty is based on consistent findings that when economic opportunities for women increase, visible improvements result in the health, education and general welfare of their families, given the smart investments that women make. CARE believes that promoting gender equity in agricultural and other sectors will also drive economic growth, pulling millions of people out of poverty. Research spanning four decades in the agriculture sector indicates that when women have access to similar resources and inputs as men, they tend to achieve equal or higher yields.<sup>1</sup> This focus, however, does not preclude working with men and boys as entrepreneurs and agents of change. Our emphasis on women and girls, who represent 60% of the world's poor, as our impact population—as well as the recognition that value chain initiatives often fail to reach the very poor due to a lack of strategic focus—will differentiate our efforts from others working in the sector.

We will seek to develop innovative and effective approaches that enable scale in reaching women, girls and the very poor and that promote gender equity along the value chain and at the household level.

A **value chain** is the full range of activities that are required to bring a product from its conception to its end use. It includes activities such as production, marketing, distribution, and support to the final consumer.

CARE's Market Engagement Strategy seeks to **promote changes in value chains that generate positive, sustained impacts for large numbers of marginalized households in terms of income, employment, power relations, and access to products and services** that empower the poor to better their lives.

CARE, in promoting market engagement, works with stakeholders—both private and public—across the targeted value chain to build relationships that **enhance the chain's competitiveness, while enabling the poor to enhance their contributions and therefore benefits gained.** This promotes continuous improvements in productivity, resulting in sustained economic and social gains.

Sam Penninger/CARE

<sup>1</sup> Mehra, Rekha & Hill-Rojas, Mary. *Women, Food Security and Agriculture in a Global Marketplace.* International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). 2008.



Nicky Lewin/CARE

**KEY SECTORAL FOCUS:**

Our initial efforts will focus on agriculture and livestock value chains, given the importance of agriculture to the poor in terms of economic opportunities and food security. Of the world's poor, 75% are rural, and 86% of them depend upon agriculture for their livelihood. Historically, CARE has always had a significant portfolio of agriculture programs, and from 2007 through 2009 CARE undertook over 380 agriculture projects in 50 countries. Once we establish a strong basis and demonstrate successful results in agriculture and livestock value chains, we will target other sectors that provide growth opportunities for our impact population and the poor more broadly, including renewable energy, recycling, handicrafts, manufacturing, and services.

**OUR THEORY OF CHANGE:**

Through partnerships with the private sector, government and others, CARE will seek to:

- 1) build the knowledge and skills of very poor women and girls and their ability to challenge social norms;**
- 2) strengthen the markets they link into and their contributions to those markets; and**
- 3) decrease structural barriers and promote policies and regulations to support broadly the ability of the poor and the very poor<sup>2</sup> to engage in markets.**

**OUR MEASURES OF SUCCESS:**

We will initially measure our success by tracking the total and percentage increase in annual income (assets and cash), disaggregated by

gender and benchmarked per national poverty lines.

Over time, acknowledging the complexity of poverty and given our initial focus on agriculture value chains, we will add other indicators that track impacts on the underlying causes of poverty to determine whether we are effecting long-term change. Metrics to be tracked may include, but are not limited to: impacts on gender equality and women's empowerment both at the household and market levels; increase in productivity, changes in nutrition status and household well-being and relationships; vulnerability and innovation in the contexts of engagement with markets; and influence on market governance, competitiveness and the greater business environment.

We will also benchmark program designs in terms of breadth of scale and cost-effectiveness.

**KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

To achieve the strategy, CARE will focus on: improving program quality and scalability; positioning ourselves as a leader in value chain programming targeting very poor women and girls; enhancing organizational learning; making CARE a partner of choice for the private sector; and mobilizing significant additional resources for value chain programming.

**CARE is thrilled to launch this new strategy, and we are looking forward to its successful implementation in partnership with other key stakeholders.**

*For more info, please contact Laté Lawson, Director, Economic Development Unit, llawson@care.org*

Una Brosnan/CARE



**Defending dignity.  
Fighting poverty.**

**CARE  
151 Ellis Street  
Atlanta, GA 30303**

**www.care.org**

<sup>2</sup> CARE will work with both the poor and the very poor, defined as living on less than \$2-3 dollars a day and \$1 a day respectively