



CARE'S WORK WITH ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH:
Comprehensive, Integrated and Rights-Based

CAPACITY STATEMENT





OVERVIEW

Introduction

Challenges and Opportunities

There are over 1.8 billion young people in the world today, 90% of whom live in less developed countries¹. Adolescence is a significant transition period and a unique window of opportunity to shape the healthy and successful development of future generations. Yet, there are millions of young people around the world who remain vulnerable to threats such as HIV, unemployment, violence, and unintended pregnancy. With more young people on the planet today than ever before, the global community has recognized the critical importance of addressing their needs and aspirations as a key driver of our common future.

With more than five decades of experience working with adolescents and youth, CARE employs a comprehensive, rights-based approach that has proven effective in supporting young people during this critical period in their lives. CARE's work addresses the diverse needs of young people – from health care and education to job training and mentorship – and believes that working across sectors and at multiple levels is vital for ensuring

adolescents grow into healthy, educated and productive citizens. Investing in young people is central to achieving CARE's mission to end poverty, and promote social justice and equality. At present we have over 100 active projects reaching young people in more than 40 countries.

Why Invest in Adolescents & Youth?

Timely and Necessary

It is both timely and necessary² to focus on the rights, needs, and potential of adolescents and youth. The global development agenda highlights the importance of addressing adolescents' needs and aspirations as a key driver for building healthy, productive communities; as well as the need to engage young people in the forums and processes setting this global agenda. Most recently, the *Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent Health for 2016-2030*, makes it clear a focus on adolescents is key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2012, the UN Commission on Population and Development put forth a landmark resolution affirming, and calling upon member states to

guarantee, the rights of young people to education, work, and health as vital to the well-being and growth of future generations. USAID's Youth in Development Policy in 2012, reiterated the need for comprehensive, holistic, rights-based approaches with increased levels of youth participation within USAID programming.

Investing in adolescents and youth, particularly girls, is a vital economic and social building block in any society, but it is particularly crucial in the developing world where as much as 32% of the population is between the

- ⇒ 2.5 million or 14% of all unsafe abortions in developing countries are among women under the age of 20¹⁰.
- ⇒ 4 million young people (15-24) are living with HIV and young women account for more than 60% of all new HIV infections among young people¹¹.
- ⇒ Youth (15-24) make up 40% of the world's unemployed and even when employed they are



ages 10 – 24³. In the 48 least developed countries in the world, children (under age 18) or adolescents (10-19) are the majority⁴. Many of these young people are significantly and negatively impacted by the effects of poverty, resulting in serious marginalization. For example:

- ⇒ There are 124 million out-of-school children and adolescents (6-15), of which just over half are girls⁵. In the least developed countries one-third of young women (15-24) are illiterate⁶.
- ⇒ 60% of young people (15-24) in developing regions are not in education, employment, or training⁷.
- ⇒ Almost half of the girls in the least developed countries are married by the age of 18 – which puts these girls at a higher risk for early pregnancy and maternal disability and death, and limits their access to education and economic opportunities⁸.
- ⇒ Sixteen million girls (15-19) become mothers every year. For these girls, childbirth related complications are a leading cause of death⁹.

often underemployed - 200 million youth survive on less than \$2 a day¹².

Not only is there clearly a need, but investments in the needs of young people will produce significant benefits:

- ⇒ Investing in education: one extra year of schooling increases an individual's earnings by up to 10% and each extra year of a mother's schooling reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5%-10%¹³.
- ⇒ Investing in health: Fulfilling all unmet need for modern family planning would prevent 7.4 million adolescent unintended pregnancies, in turn greatly reducing unsafe abortions, maternal deaths and newborn deaths¹⁴.
- ⇒ Investing in economic empowerment: Eliminating barriers to employment for girls and women could raise labor productivity by up to 25% in some countries¹⁵; and closing the gender gap in agriculture could lift 100-150 million people out of hunger¹⁶.

“CARE believes that bringing about transformational and lasting change requires addressing underlying power imbalances”

Why CARE?

Experience and Impact

CARE’s programs focus on comprehensive approaches that ensure young people* have access to the information, resources and support they require to build their capacities and exercise their rights. We value young people’s participation and collaboration, and engage them in the design, implementation and monitoring of our programs. We work in close partnership with local and national governments, civil society organizations and international partners to address systemic challenges and identify innovative solutions to change.

Further, CARE’s experience has shown that simply providing young people with a few skills and then expecting them to conquer underlying socioeconomic, cultural and political barriers is not effective and does not lead to their empowerment. Rather, CARE believes that bringing about transformational and lasting change requires addressing the underlying power imbalances that result in the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities. By creating an enabling and equitable environment where young people can build and exercise their skills, knowledge, and leadership, they are empowered to step into new roles and lead change themselves.

CARE also works to generate and build evidence of impact, share learning globally, encourage scale-up and replication of successful approaches, and multiply global impact by advocating for stronger youth policies.



**CARE works with young people across the age ranges defined as adolescents (10-19) & youth (15-24) by the United Nations*



CARE'S APPROACH

Adolescent Empowerment

Comprehensive, Integrated and Rights-Based

The transition through adolescence is a critical developmental period that has the power to shape an individual's dreams and future life options. CARE's approach to adolescent empowerment centers on comprehensive, integrated and rights-based program designs that ensure: **Adolescents and youth, especially marginalized girls and young women, can build capabilities and pursue opportunities to realize their aspirations.**

This means designing and implementing projects that: address the needs of adolescents and youth inside and outside of classrooms; treat adolescents as adolescents--not as children or adults; and provide them with the knowledge and skills to navigate the changing world around them, as well as their changing relationships. We realize that young people don't exist in isolation; because their lives exist across multiple spheres, so must our activities. We design projects with the whole young person in mind.

In line with CARE's 2020 Impact Strategy, CARE works to bring about just and lasting change for young people by: strengthening gender equality and women's and girls' voice; promoting inclusive governance; and increasing

resilience and reducing risk. By doing so we aim to ensure that:

- Women and girls exercise their rights to sexual, reproductive and maternal health, and a life free from violence;
- Young people affected by humanitarian crises are better able to protect themselves and their families;
- Poor and vulnerable adolescents and youth increase their food and nutrition security; and
- Young people have greater access to and control over economic resources.

We believe that by addressing these pathways, we will empower millions of young people to transform their lives and the lives of those around them, and lift entire communities out of poverty.

Our adolescent and youth programs span technical sectors and age groups and our portfolio includes programs in young girls' education, adolescent sexual reproductive health and economic empowerment for young adults. Though CARE's adolescent and youth program portfolio is extensive, some key approaches, tools, and sectoral areas have emerged in which CARE has proven capacity, and which offer the greatest scope for scalability, sustainability and impact.

Strengthening Gender Equality and Women and Girls' Voices

Inequitable social and gender norms are particularly harmful to young people and can result in school drop-out, decreased economic opportunities, early marriage, sexual risk-taking behaviors, violence, and non-use of reproductive health services. Working with young people to address harmful beliefs and behaviors is critical to effecting lasting change in their own lives and in future generations. Equally important, adolescents and youth, especially girls, need the support and space to develop leadership skills, including: confidence, voice, vision, negotiation, decision-making, and critical thinking. These leadership characteristics provide adolescents with important skills that enable them to navigate the world around them, reach educational goals, and shape their futures.

Recognizing that promoting social norm change goes beyond changing individual attitudes, CARE prioritizes gender transformative approaches aimed at building a critical mass of individuals and groups who support gender equality and the empowerment of young people. **CARE's Gender Toolkit**¹⁷ provides a tailor-made source of approaches and tools to assess, design, and implement approaches that address the underlying gendered barriers and power imbalances that affect adolescents.

One approach CARE used to address inequitable norms that prevent youth from realizing their rights is **Social Analysis and Action (SAA)**¹⁸, a process for stimulating reflection and dialogue with communities on gender and

Project Example: In Ethiopia, the *Towards Improved Economic and Sexual Reproductive Health Outcomes (TESFA)* project improved the SRH and economic well-being of 5,000 ever-married adolescent girls, aged 14-19, by empowering them with SRH information, financial skills and a support network. The project used SAA to build girls' negotiation and communication skills and to challenge norms around early marriage at the community level. TESFA found that the approach increased the girls' decision making ability, communication skills with their husbands and negotiation ability to influence peers and relatives. Knowledge and use of SRH health services, including family planning increased, and findings showed increased investment in productive economic assets among the girls. In addition, the SAA community participants and leaders became more active on issues for adolescent girls, especially early marriage, and managed to stop over 150 arranged marriages in three years.

social norms that may positively or negatively impact the health and well-being of young people. SAA is intended to spark reflection and problem-solving and supports communities to create their own solutions for challenging rigid gender roles. SAA also equips CARE staff and their partners with skills and tools to initiate and sustain these critical dialogues and reflect on how our own perceptions and beliefs influence our work.

Importantly, CARE works with adolescent men and boys as partners and allies in strengthening gender equality and women and girls' voice. Global evidence suggests that families with more equality have higher household income, better health, and children who are more likely to survive and get an education. As women become more empowered their fathers, brothers, husbands and sons also benefit. Men experience higher household incomes, reduced stress, improved health, and stronger, happier relationships as a result of gender equality.

Recognizing the power of engaging adolescents as part of their own development, CARE involves adolescents in our program design, implementation, and measurement. By engaging with adolescents and youth, our programs not only better address their needs, but they also build a generation of engaged and active individuals who are in-tune with the needs on the ground while also initiating and owning activities to address them.

CARE has developed a **Gender Equitable Index**²¹ which allows for the longitudinal measurement of changes in aggregate perceptions of gender equity. To measure change related to leadership opportunities, CARE has developed a **Youth Leadership Index**²⁰ which enables longitudinal measurement of changes in self-perceptions of leadership among youth and adolescents. Both of these tools have provided immense insights into the spaces and relationships that young people navigate throughout their adolescence and youth.

Project Example: Through the **Young Men Initiative for Combating Gender based Violence in the Western Balkans**, CARE implemented a ground-breaking program that worked with young men aged 13-19 to deconstruct masculinity in their cultures and determine how gender norms and male socialization led to inequitable attitudes. Key interventions included the establishment of a Young Men Forum and Be a Man Club, educational workshops and a campaign - all aimed at engaging young men in critical dialogue and reflection on gender, masculinities, health, violence and the ways in which society influences their attitudes and behaviors. Evidence from the program evaluation indicates that young men who were exposed to the campaign generally showed more gender equitable attitudes and decreased use of violence. An unexpected result was the increased sense of civic engagement among many of the young men, several young men went on to volunteer with local partners to support other youth-focused efforts.

Promoting Inclusive Governance

CARE believes that creating inclusive spaces for meaningful adolescent participation and adolescent-led change is key to ensuring that structures and institutions are more responsive and accountable to their needs and priorities.

CARE uses its **Community Score Card (CSC)**²³, a citizen-driven accountability approach, to sustainably improve the performance and responsiveness of service delivery (health, education, financial, etc.). The approach brings together community members (including adolescents, marginalized groups, traditional and religious leaders), service providers and local government to identify barriers, including policy barriers, to effective, high-quality service delivery and develop a shared plan for their improvement. Through the CSC process,

adolescents are given a forum to voice their concerns and define the issues they encounter in accessing high-quality services in their communities. The CSC then allows for all sides to come together to define a joint plan for improvement and monitor progress together; empowering adolescents and other community members to hold programs, policies, and institutions accountable.

Community structures, like School Management Committees (SMCs) are established and/or trained to identify, address, and track the challenges facing children and adolescents in their villages. By engaging and empowering parents, students, and community leaders, their ownership and action can dramatically change the environment and accountability mechanisms by which these young people are supported. The transparent and participatory engagement of groups such as these enhance village-level accountability and governance mechanisms.

Project Example: In Ntcheu, Malawi, where adolescents acutely lack access to reproductive and maternal health services, CARE is using the **Community Score Card** to improve these services. During the Score Card process, youth identified that they needed safe spaces to talk about their health issues and needs. In response, the CARE worked with district government officials to establish youth clubs in several villages in the district. The clubs provide a forum for youth-led peer-to-peer support and for the adolescents to develop and implement solutions to overcome their unique barriers. For example, in Champiti and Nsiyaludzu, after teen mothers identified a lack of financial services as a barrier, CARE assisted the young women in establishing a village savings and loan group.



Increasing Resilience and Reducing Risk

Climate change, political upheaval, and evolving values related to gender and human rights are lived realities for young people in many of the countries in which CARE works. CARE strengthens young people's capacity to identify, absorb and adapt to these shocks, manage growing risks, and address underlying causes of vulnerability. CARE also works to strengthen the systems (health, livelihoods/market and education) with which young people interact to ensure they have access to quality, rights-based information and services that are responsive and acceptable in both humanitarian and development settings.

At the individual level, CARE builds young people's resilience by strengthening their knowledge and their capabilities so that they can make informed choices, live healthy and productive lives, and pursue opportunities to realize their aspirations. This may include ensuring provision of comprehensive and age-appropriate sexuality education, disaster risk reduction information, literacy and numeracy competencies, life and leadership skills, financial literacy, and/or career counseling. We deliver this needed information and skill building both through formal health, market and education systems as well as in non-school based youth spheres.

Increasing resilience and reducing risk also entails expanding the reach and quality of service provision and making sure actors within formal institutions and systems (e.g. health workers, career counselors, teachers, etc.) have the appropriate skills to deliver needed information and services to young people. Equally important is putting youth-friendly referral mechanisms in place to link young people to services.

We utilize **information and communications technology (ICT)** approaches to expand not only the resources and information available to adolescents and youth, but also to enhance communication, planning, technical/vocational training and job readiness. The more tools and competencies that adolescents are equipped with, the more resilient and ready they are to identify, avoid, and/or successfully respond to risks and ever changing environments.

Project Example: In Mali, the project *Education for Change*, is using a resilience approach to respond to the environmental and man-made challenges facing Mali which impede young people's education, health, and safety. Recognizing that young Malians, especially girls, live in an environment in which change and adaptation are crucial to survival, the project moves disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience training, SRH curriculum, financial literacy, and opportunities for economic empowerment into both the classroom and the lives of out-of-school youth.





TECHNICAL SECTORS

Examples of CARE's Work

Programming with Adolescents and Youth

As noted earlier, CARE's adolescent and youth programs span technical sectors and age groups and often are quite integrated, such as combining the delivery of sexual and reproductive health information with economic empowerment activities or incorporating financial literacy into the formal education curriculum. This section offers a few highlights of sectoral, yet integrated, programming.

Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health

Within and outside schools, CARE supports comprehensive sexuality education to equip adolescents and youth with accurate, complete and age-appropriate information. CARE uses a number of proven curriculum packages and tools that provide young people with basic sexual and reproductive health information while simultaneously addressing underlying gender norms and power imbalances. Our approaches also develop their life skills and provide support to discuss and deal with the emotions and thoughts that accompany puberty and young adulthood. Such tools can build adolescent and youth knowledge and confidence and ultimately increase

demand for sexual and reproductive health services. As such, connecting young people to quality, adolescent/youth-friendly health services is also critical. Where adolescent/youth-friendly services do not exist, CARE works with providers to improve the quality of services and ensure they meet the needs of young people in a respectful manner. CARE also works with mothers groups and school committees, providing these groups with the training, information and resources to counsel adolescents and refer them to services.

Project Example: The **Adolescent Reproductive and Sexual Health Initiative (ARSHI)** implemented in Sunamganj, Bangladesh, aimed to decrease maternal mortality, morbidity, and disability of adolescent girls. CARE established a number of youth centers, built the capacity of local health posts to provide youth-friendly services, developed a life skills curriculum for adolescents, and integrated the delivery of SRH information with confidence and leadership skills building. The project also worked with men and boys to end discriminatory, unfair, and abusive social norms that affect women and girls.

As a result of the program, boys and girls in participating schools reported higher positive attitudes towards equal rights for girls. Girls in participating cohorts reported being more confident to negotiate SRH issues such as early marriage and eve-teasing.

Quality and Equitable Education

Educational opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, greatly influence young people's abilities and opportunities for development. CARE's education effort pursues a world in which the most marginalized children and adolescents, especially girls, have expanded life choices through access to quality learning. CARE emphasizes the educational needs of all adolescents, including students who missed out on primary schooling, and addresses the question of "what comes after primary school" – whether it is secondary school, vocational training, or life skills training. Supporting the development of traditional educational skills, such as reading and numeracy, and complementing them with life skills, IT know-how, leadership skills, and supportive environments to learn and grow, CARE's focus is on the whole-individual, all year long.

CARE's **Girls' Leadership Framework**¹⁹, is a framework for designing programs that meet the needs and concerns of adolescent girls in their specific social and cultural environments. The framework focuses on three domains: ensuring girls' access to quality, equitable education, cultivating girls' leadership competencies through supportive leadership opportunities and fostering an enabling environment for girls' rights. Through application in over 28 countries, CARE has learned that given opportunity, support and resources, young people can challenge and overcome many of the

limitations that are imposed upon them. CARE's leadership projects and accompanying research demonstrate girls' and boys' keen ability to influence the people around them, to work with and be heard by those who uphold socio-cultural notions of appropriate behaviors and to engage with spheres of action for adolescents and youth.

CARE has invested significantly in the development and testing of specific tools that go beyond measuring parity in education. **CARE's Common Indicator Framework**²⁴ provides a holistic framework for the design and measurement of education and adolescent/youth-related programs that measures 12 indicators across 4 domains of change: educational quality, equality, empowerment, and attainment. This framework has led CARE to better research, understand, and respond to the barriers that girls and boys face related to education and empowerment.

Project Example: Udaan is a part of CARE India's Girls' Education Program. 'Udaan', which literally means 'flight', is a part of CARE India's efforts to ensure education for girls of marginalized groups. It provides learning opportunities to girls (11-14) who have either dropped out or never gone to school. With Udaan, they receive an opportunity to break the vicious cycle of illiteracy and acquire Class 5-level competencies in a period of 11 months – a successful example of an accelerated learning approach. Girls completing the course at Udaan go on to enroll themselves in Grade 6 in formal government schools, thereby joining the mainstream education process. Since 1999, when the first pilot began in the Hardoi district in Uttar Pradesh, it has expanded across four Indian states, reaching 2,700 girls who have graduated and gone on to join the formal school system. In the state of Uttar Pradesh, the state government has adapted the Udaan curriculum which has potential to reach around 100,000 children through government run special training centres and Kasturba Gandhi Ballika Vidyalayas. The approach has also spread to neighbouring Nepal, where it is being replicated.



Economic Empowerment Opportunities for Young People

Transitioning from adolescence to adulthood is a challenging time of life, when adolescents are learning how to navigate the world around them and preparing to be independent and productive members of their communities. CARE combines education and economic empowerment approaches to promote a culture of enterprise, market access and awareness, and financial literacy for young people within school and communities; and ensures young people are equipped with marketable skills and technical know-how relevant to their context. To do so, CARE introduces innovative, alternative educational approaches, such as vocational training, financial literacy and leadership and problem-solving skills into the formal school setting. Through a variety of participatory approaches, adolescents are introduced to actors in **market systems and value chains** with a high potential to include youth as entrepreneurs and/or employees, and to understand the opportunities and challenges within these systems.

We also strengthen non-formal technical and vocational programs to go beyond single-skill development (e.g. masonry, tailoring, etc.) to focus on multi-skill development that are adaptable and transferable. By strengthening these foundational skills, we build young people's resilience, enabling them to adapt, engage, and

Project Example: Originally designed for women, CARE adapted our Village Savings and Loan program to socially and economically empower 14 – 22 year-old girls and young women in Burundi. Known as **Ishaka**, the \$2.58 million, three-year project reached more than 12,000 girls. Girls were organized into savings groups and made regular deposits into a group fund - 80% is dedicated towards a savings and loan fund and 20% towards social causes, or a rainy-day fund. Members could then take loans to invest in income-generating activities – such as starting a small business. Mentors oversaw the groups and trained the girls in financial education, life skills, and sexual and reproductive health. Financial resources give girls the leverage they need to control what happens in their lives, while training and access to a mentor and social network gives them the information they need to safeguard their own well-being. CARE implemented this program with support from the government and local partners. After nearly 3 years of implementation, the project saw girls save more than \$38,000 USD. There were also cases of boys replicating the girls' savings groups. At the same time, the project saw a decrease in reported domestic violence.

redefine their future possibilities within a variety of market contexts. We use technology to ensure that young people can access information on markets and risk mitigation; learn about business and career opportunities; build financial and market literacy; and grow their social and professional networks.

CARE has adapted our **Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) model**, which is designed to provide economic empowerment and independence for millions of adults around the world, for the needs of adolescents and youth. VSLAs allow poor people a mechanism to safely build their savings while increasing their economic self-sufficiency and ability to resist shocks. Youth participation in VSLAs helps build financial literacy, confidence, and independence.

Through the **CARE Enterprises Initiative**, CARE incubates promising models that are emerging from our programs as enterprises in order to ensure long-term social and economic returns. CARE sees the development of social enterprises as a powerful approach in the fight against poverty and a natural evolution of some development programs. In particular, CARE develops and scales innovative platforms to efficiently distribute high quality products to people living at the base of the pyramid in the informal economy and to collect and aggregate products from small producers as a source of needed supply. CARE has begun to think about how to cultivate social enterprises that meet the needs of youth and adolescents, as we believe this is a critical investment in building the social enterprises of the future.



Project Example: The Government of Burundi is a signatory to the **Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) Commitment**, a joint initiative between national governments, the United Nations, Southern African Development Community (SADC), Eastern African Community (EAC) and civil society and development partners to reduce HIV infection and improve sexual health outcomes for young people in Eastern and Southern Africa. One of the targets is to **institutionalize and scale up a Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)**, as well as ensure CSE training for teachers, healthcare providers and social workers.

CARE Burundi leveraged this commitment to work with Burundi's Ministries of Health and Education to develop and introduce a new sexual, reproductive health and rights (SRHR) curriculum to be used at community, health and school levels. CARE Burundi, in coordination with UNFPA, advocated for support of the new curriculum by arranging an exchange visit to Kenya for Ministry officials to see a similar module in action. As a result of the communication and collaboration between CARE, the Ministries and other partners, today the SRHR curriculum has been adopted as a national module and is used with students in school clubs. CARE Burundi is continuing to work with the government and partners to develop a five year SRHR national program that includes implementation of the curriculum in schools along with related SRHR awareness raising activities.

Advocacy

Advocacy is integral to delivering CARE's vision for adolescents and youth. CARE's advocacy focuses on: promoting efforts to prioritize and invest in adolescent programs and policies, ensuring that the voices of the young people and communities we serve are heard in national and global debates, and catalyzing meaningful, youth-led collective action. Since national and international policies to protect poor and marginalized adolescents and youth are often absent, ineffective or not implemented, CARE strives to develop, shape, and influence policies in order to reduce poverty and achieve social justice. CARE works with decision-makers at all levels including at communal, regional, national, and international forums to raise the voices and needs of young people.

CARE also promotes youth/adolescent participation in advocacy efforts and works with them to tell their stories in new and compelling ways. CARE's strength in advocacy is built on our experience working with some of the most marginalized populations; strong relationships with communities, governments, donors and the private sector; experience influencing policy processes at the local, national and global levels and proven ability to scale-up evidence based programming. Changing the lives and opportunities for adolescents and youth around the world is a global effort and CARE aligns with and supports the global development agenda for young people.

Conclusion

CARE is working to ensure that all young people are able to fully realize their aspirations and rights.

We aim to empower young people to question existing gender norms and raise their voices, and in concert with supportive community members, to alleviate inequities. Our governance work gives young people the knowledge, skills and space to engage with power-holders, prioritize problems, identify solutions and hold systems accountable to their needs. We also work to build resilient systems and resilient young people that can adapt and respond to our changing world. Through a focus on these three approaches and through integrated programming, CARE envisions a world where young people have the knowledge, skills, capacity and opportunities they need to transition into a healthy and productive adulthood where they can pursue their ambitions.

To Learn More, visit:

- ⇒ **SRMH Wiki:** <http://familyplanning.care2share.wikispaces.net/>
- ⇒ **Girls Leadership Wiki:** <http://gender.care2share.wikispaces.net/Girls%27+Education+%26+Leadership>
- ⇒ **CARE Youth:** <http://www.care.org/work/education/youth>

“CARE envisions a world where young people have the knowledge, skills, capacity and opportunities they need to transition into a healthy and productive adulthood...”

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