



TECHNICAL BRIEF

FOSTERING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR ADOLESCENTS

Background

CARE's education programming pursues a world in which the most marginalized children and adolescents, especially girls, have expanded life choices through access to quality educational opportunities, both inside and outside of classrooms. CARE's focus is on the whole individual and we recognize that providing opportunities to develop transferable skillsⁱ, including leadership skills, complements and enhances the indispensable traditional areas of schooling of literacy, numeracy, and scientific knowledge.

While underscoring the vital importance of classroom learning, globally there is a growing body of knowledge that speaks to the importance of transferable skillsⁱ. Researchers are recognizing how leadership opportunities and extracurricular activities offered at an early age are essential for creating pathways that foster leadership later in life, particularly for girls.ⁱⁱ A recent cross-country study concluded that social and emotional skills such as perseverance, sociability and self-confidence drive numerous measures of social outcomes including cognitive skills, health and well-being.ⁱⁱⁱ

CARE's Approach to Pioneering Efforts in Leadership Development/Programming

As a leading humanitarian organization, CARE has been fighting global poverty since 1945. CARE's work puts women and girls at the heart because our experience has shown that, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift their families and communities out of poverty. CARE defines women's empowerment as the sum total of changes needed for a woman to realize her full human rights. These changes occur in three domains: her own aspirations and capabilities (agency¹); the power relations through which she negotiates her path (relations); and the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices (structures).

Building on our experience of what works to empower women, we have applied this knowledge to the particular and unique needs of adolescent girls (ages 10-19). CARE's **Leadership Development Model**^{iv} provides a framework for designing programs that meet the needs and concerns of adolescent girls in their particular 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.

Acknowledging that adolescents are traversing a stage of life where they are developing and discovering options for their futures, CARE chose to define “leadership” not as a role, but as the development and utilization of a specific set of personal competencies which can be exercised in a variety of settings and circumstances. CARE identified five fundamental competencies, based on research and our own experience, that allow individuals to lead or collaborate with others to take action to bring about positive change. These are: voice, decision-making, self-confidence, organization, and vision. None of these competencies are developed by individuals in isolation, thus positive role models and supportive opportunities and spaces to try out and enhance these skills are crucial.

While CARE continues to give special focus to girls, the importance of boys, both in terms of their own developmental needs, and also the roles they potentially play either as barriers or supporters and collaborators, is recognized. Engaging in joint activities with girls, such as sports, academic or civic clubs, and community service projects, enables boys to experience firsthand the capabilities of their female peers, and positively impact their perceptions of each other.

Through application of the Leadership Model 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 research² demonstrate girls’ and boys’ keen ability to influence the people around them, and to work with and be heard by those who uphold restrictive notions of acceptable behaviors and spheres of action for adolescents and youth, particularly girls.

In the nearly a decade since CARE began including leadership development in its programs, our experience has



contributed greatly to broader learning in the field. A recent publication from the Brookings Institution on girls’ education underscores the need for a special emphasis and focus on empowering girls to overcome barriers of discrimination and to lead change for women, and cites CARE’s work in girls’ leadership as an example.^v According to the report, “education is empowering, but it will be more so if we start focusing on teaching empowerment and leadership to girls.”

Another recent review of leadership programs concluded that education is critical for girls’ leadership potential and that support to girls’ leadership development is essential to fostering effective women leaders, referencing CARE’s leadership model and effective work. The authors conclude that evidence points to a strong relationship between girls’ experience and opportunities in childhood and adolescence and their development of leadership capabilities that they can employ throughout their lives.^{vi}





Results

Measuring the impact of leadership development programs is essential to continually improving their efficacy. CARE's model was initially tested in 8 countries with generous support from USAID. Findings from evaluations of those^{vii} and subsequent projects in a variety of contexts have shown that girls who participated in leadership activities stayed in school and improved their academic performance. In Egypt, for example, girls in CARE's leadership program outperformed their peers in 30 of 32 skills tested in mathematics, language, and creative thinking and problem solving.

In Timor Leste, CARE's leadership activities led to a marked increase in girls' retention in grades five and six - a period when many rural Timorese girls drop out of school. After 26 months of a leadership project that engaged girls to design and participate in an array of academic, artistic and athletic activities, dropout rates for girls in participating schools decreased dramatically—up to 100 percent—while dropout rates for girls in comparison schools increased or showed only modest decrease. Participating schools also saw far fewer dropouts among boys in both grades.

Another impact of leadership development is increased visibility and participation of adolescents in their

communities. As they become engaged in community service projects and raise their voices in a variety of fora, perceptions of adults about the capacities of adolescents have been altered. In a number of places, including Bangladesh, India and Tanzania, adolescent representatives are now included in local decision-making bodies such as school advisory committees or community councils, fostering more inclusive and responsive governance.

Honduras

In Honduras, 42% of the population is under 18 years old. When access to educational opportunities was identified as a serious concern during a youth-led survey of community needs, CARE collaborated with youth to launch the RENACER (Rebirth) project in 46 communities in both urban and rural settings. RENACER provided an alternative education program, using a government approved accelerated curriculum *Educatodos* (Educate Everyone), but with the addition of leadership, vocational and life skills. Classes were located in homes, churches, community centers and school buildings after hours with trained youth serving as facilitators for their peers and those younger who are out of school. CARE's *Educatodos* classes were scheduled to accommodate the needs of participants and often served as a safety net for those excluded from the formal education system due to pregnancy, the need to work, or various other forms of social marginalization.

While the program was initially designed primarily to address the needs of adolescent girls, it was acknowledged that young males in Honduras often face social exclusion and, particularly due to the inordinately high crime rate, are assumed to be criminals if they aren't working or studying. The inclusion of boys in RENACER activities allowed girls and boys to learn together about the socially imposed challenges that each gender faces and challenge stereotypical roles for both.

As their confidence increased, youth soon identified other areas of needed social change, and with assistance from CARE, created Committees for the Rights and Defense of Youth (CDD³) to engage in advocacy activities for youth issues specific to their own community. CDD members received additional training in leadership, administration, and management skills so that they could design and implement interventions in their own communities. Efforts focused largely on safety and security and economic empowerment. In the rural area of Guajiquiro, the CDD was eventually included in an inter-governmental meeting where they voiced the importance and potential contributions of youth in the municipality. Other mayors in attendance became interested in replicating the CDD model as a means for involving youth meaningfully in promoting community well-being in other regions of Honduras.

An evaluation of RENACER found this combination of access to education coupled with the creation of formal, community-based structures for youth involvement to be particularly effective.

LEARNING FROM RENACER

While many communities in Honduras have access to education through Educatodos, the value added of CARE in the RENACER communities is apparent not just through dramatically smaller dropout rates, but also through its creation of organized structures for youth to become agents of change in their communities. CARE support allows youth to tap the transformative potential of their education. Again, as one youth explained, "Education is the best guide to develop ourselves and our community, and that is how the change began." By linking efforts to expand access to education with mechanisms for youth to become engaged in and leaders of their communities, CARE has created a model strategy for youth empowerment...In Honduras CARE has facilitated meaningful youth participation that not only is sustainable over time but also is a powerful approach that is being expanded through national discussion, dialogue, and government structures. ^{viii}

Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, CARE and its partners are working to increase enrolment and attendance and address social barriers affecting education through an innovative combination of approaches, impacting more than 45,000 marginalized



³ Comité para la Defensoría de los Derechos de la Niñez



primary and secondary school girls. Community members are being mobilized through school development committees, mothers' groups, identification and engagement of male champions, and dialogues with religious leaders; savings groups for parents are bolstering household finances and supporting school related costs; teachers are being trained in methods to improve basic literacy skills and encouraging reading; and girls are building leadership competencies through participation in school based clubs.

The girls' clubs, known as Power Within (PW) clubs, are designed to foster girls' participation in school, develop their leadership skills, and increase their knowledge and understanding of girls' rights. Club members participate in a variety of activities including sports and arts activities that build their self-confidence and readiness to speak up and ask questions at school and at home. A highly valued aspect of the club is the opportunity to have deep discussions in a supportive space on issues of vital importance such as gender based violence (GBV), menstrual hygiene, the rights of the girl child, and preventing and/or responding to abuse.

An initial study^{ix} highlighted the importance of strengthening positive networking among students, and the need to equip students with the skills to support vulnerable peers. Not surprisingly, the study found that 67% of girls who have good friends at school were present for 80-99% of the time, compared to 55% of those who do not.

Through the platform of the Mothers Groups, women in the community are trained on the importance of girls' education and how they can mentor, guide, and counsel girls and other parents on education, the importance of regular attendance, gender-based violence (GBV), and hygiene and menstruation. Influential men (traditional and religious leaders) also take part in Mothers Groups. Mothers Group members work together with the matrons who supervise Power Within clubs.

In a recent mid-term evaluation^x, PW club members reported that the PW club makes them want to go to school, thus having an impact not only on their attendance, but also on retention and enrolment. Girls also noted that through their participation in the PW clubs they have learned to value education, talk to their mothers, and counsel their peers on delaying marriage and staying in school.

Burundi

In Burundi, CARE worked with local partners through the ISHAKA project to empower vulnerable adolescent girls, with a particular focus on those highly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse in urban settlements, including young mothers and girls involved in transactional sex and begging. Girls were organized into savings groups and made regular deposits into a group 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, small business management training, life skills, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Cultural and sports-based activities helped girls to build self-confidence and social connections. Financial resources gave girls the leverage they needed to control what happens in their lives, while training and access to a mentor and social networks gave them the information they needed to safeguard their own well-being. 12,290 girls formed 616 savings groups (“Solidarity Groups”) each with its own management committee chosen by the girls themselves. Management committee members received additional training to ensure group functionality and cohesiveness. In addition, 19% of the girls participating in the initiative received advanced training on financial literacy, SRH and life skills in order to act as multipliers or Community Agents and ensure sustainability.

The combination of direct financial education and other transferable skills, particularly leadership skills, enabled girls to develop the individual agency – self-confidence, assertiveness, communication, negotiation and decision-making skills – needed for engagement in business and formal jobs. Access to information on SRH and rights enabled girls to not only to identify the need to seek support services, particularly for those in a situation of high vulnerability to HIV/STDs, but to take action to do so.

The reliance on prostitution and begging for survival declined from 17% at baseline to 7% at the end of the project. Girls were able to meet basic needs, support their education (in the case of dropouts, return to school/university), and provide for their families. Their newly developed skills and the support network built through the Solidarity Groups enabled girls to feel safer, more confident about themselves and able to refuse transactional sex. The restoration of dignity and respect as a result of their improved financial position and increased awareness and solidarity are perhaps the most significant impacts of the project.^{xi}

References

- ⁱ UNESCO. 2012. *Youth and Skills: Putting education to work*. Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- ⁱⁱ O’Neil, Tam, Georgia Plank & Pilar Domingo. 2015. *Support to Women and Girls’ Leadership: A Rapid Review of the Evidence*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- ⁱⁱⁱ OECD. 2015. *Skills for Social Progress: The Power of Social and Emotional Skills*. OECD Skills Studies. Paris: OECD Publishing
- ^{iv} CARE USA. 2012. *Girls’ Leadership Development in Action: CARE’s Experience from the Field*.
<http://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/EDU-GE-2012-Girls-Leadership-Development-in-Action.pdf>
- ^v Sperling, Gene & Rebecca Winthrop. 2016. *What Works in Girls’ Education*. Washington: The Brookings Institution.
- ^{vi} O’Neil, Tam, Georgia Plank & Pilar Domingo. 2015. *Support to Women and Girls’ Leadership: A Rapid Review of the Evidence*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- ^{vii} Miske Witt & Associates. 2011. *The Power to Lead Alliance (PTLA): Empowering Girls to Learn and Lead: Final Evaluation Report for CARE USA*. St. Paul, MN: Miske Witt; Miske Witt & Associates. 2012. *Innovation through Sport: Promoting Leaders, Empowering Youth (ITSPLEY): Final Evaluation Report for CARE USA*. St. Paul, MN: Miske Witt
- ^{viii} Murphy-Graham, Erin, Chantal Figueroa & Brooke Krause. 2015. *CARE Honduras: Patsy Collins Trust Fund Initiative Final Evaluation Report*. St. Paul, MN: Miske Witt
- ^{ix} Jama, Mbuso & Lotte Renault. 2015. *A Non-Traditional Randomised Controlled Trial – The IGATE Baseline in Zimbabwe*. Paper presented at UKFIET Education and Development Forum
- ^x Miske, Witt and Associates, Inc. 2016. *IGATE Midline Evaluation Report*. St. Paul, MN: Miske Witt
- ^{xi} Rushdy, Sherif. 2012. *An Analysis of the ISHAKA Experience. Evaluation report prepared by PriAct for CARE*.

CARE USA

151 Ellis St, NE
Atlanta, GA 30303
USA
education@care.org

