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CENTERING GENDER IN COUNTRY OFFICES

CARE’s focus on gender transformation across programs and operations at country office level

CARE believes that achieving gender equality requires transformative change—in our programming, but also within ourselves as an organization. To achieve our goal of 50 million people of all genders experiencing greater gender equality in their lives, it is crucial we place gender at the center of all we do.

Working closely with teams at country level through our Go Deeper initiative, CARE is exploring what it takes to achieve gender transformation at Country Office level. Building on learning from the practical experiences of teams, we aim to scale this up to continuously improve gender program quality across the organization.

A key part of this is shifting our focus beyond project level engagement to encompass all aspects of a Country Office, embedding gender equality not just in our programs and operations but as a shared commitment across the whole team within each country.

What does it take to place gender at the center of Country Offices?



Strong foundations

Centering gender in CARE’s programming requires **leadership commitment** — not only from Country Office senior leadership, but also regional and global level. This ensures adequate dedication of resources and that staff at all levels are held accountable. The Country Office’s overall efforts should be guided by a robust gender analysis, and in some cases this will lead to a country-wide **gender strategy**. This will support an **organizational culture** which consistently prioritizes and reflects on how each project and team member is contributing to the goal of gender equality.

Gender integration

Gender integration goes beyond programming—centering gender requires engagement across all areas of operation within the Country Office. The best program design in the world will not reach its full potential if it is not supported by a balanced team with strong technical capacity, underpinned by processes, structures and approaches which promote gender equality. There are four main areas to focus on:



People: Ensuring the Country Office has the right balance of demographics, skills and experience to adequately address the needs of the women and girls we serve. This includes ensuring HR policies and practices do not create barriers to diverse recruitment and investing in REDI training for all staff.



Technical capacity on gender: As well as prioritizing Gender Advisor positions within the Country Office and budget for gender technical assistance for specific projects, this also involves building internal learning structures and staff capacity on gender.



Program quality for gender: All projects should consistently and meaningfully use CARE's Gender Marker to track, improve on and support more effective, gender integrated programming which aligns with CARE's Gender Equality Framework. Projects should aim to incorporate gender transformative MEAL approaches and monitor impact against CI Gender Equality Impact Indicators.



Approaches & methodologies: Projects should aim to apply proven CARE approaches including GBV integration, engaging men and boys and use of social norms approaches.

Elevating impact

Gender integration is an ongoing process and as teams take action on this they will continue to **deepen their engagement**. This means, for example, that efforts to transform staff structures and build capacity will be ongoing, and that efforts to apply key approaches will be refined and scaled as teams continue along their journey. Moving programs along the gender continuum from sensitive to responsive to transformative also requires teams to think strategically about the structural barriers to gender equality and how they can achieve **systems-level impact**. This may include further focus on social norms approaches, partnership, advocacy, gender transformative market-based approaches, engagement with private sector and research institutions, digital inclusion and other key pathways to impact at scale.

Why is gender transformation at Country office level so important?

Without gender at the center of a Country Office, there is a risk that programming currently assessed as gender neutral or unaware will remain so. This limits CARE's ability to meet our goals. Striving for institutional transformation is key to ensuring CARE achieves our program goals of gender equality for millions around the globe.

Shifting organizational culture and embedding commitment to gender transformation across the whole organization, beyond programs and operations, is a sustained commitment and vision which we are striving for across CARE.

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