



Power Shift Dialogues at CARE
May 2022 – April 2023

Reflections & Recommendations



INTRODUCTION

Between February 2022 and April 2023, a series of Power Shift Dialogues have been held, led by staff from across the CARE confederation, to explore a range of themes and issues related to decolonising aid, anti-racism, anti-oppression, and being more locally-led.

This report documents some of the insights and learning from that process so far and sets out some next steps for us to consider as we move forward to realise our Vision 2030 goals of becoming an anti-racist organisation and contributing to shifting power in the aid sector. It is drawn from the inputs during the dialogues – from external experts and staff – including jamboards used to document anonymized staff inputs.

“Let’s get real and vulnerable – otherwise culture change will be out of grasp.”

Power Shift Dialogue Participant

We hope that CARE colleagues will continue to hold dialogue sessions, including amongst senior leaders, as an essential prerequisite to shifting power and privilege inside and outside CARE.

Ebony Riddell Bamber
Head of Global Advocacy
(Report Author)

Kassie McIlvaine
Head of Gender Equality & Inclusion

Summary Recommendations

The following is a brief summary of some of the rich recommendations and reflections woven throughout the learning report.

- **Engage with the discomfort of talking about decolonisation, anti-racism, power, and privilege** – which may be triggering or uncomfortable but is a reflection of reality for many people. It is important to embrace these conversations as an opportunity for positive change not only on a personal level, but also collectively at organizational level.
- **Acknowledge and take action to tackle unequal Global North/South power dynamics including within CARE.** Concerted action is needed to unpack how Global North/South hierarchies of knowledge, assumptions of superiority and dominance of the English language are manifested at CARE, and how to move towards repair. This includes engagement with how these issues affect staff – ensuring that their experiences are heard, with appropriate support provided and proactive systems in place to deal with any reports of differential treatment, harassment, or discrimination.
- **Words matter, so it is important to be sensitive and “decolonial” in the language we use** – We should stop using terms like “beneficiary”, “field” or even “capacity-building” – which suggests communities and organizations lack skills. For many, “local” can be a degrading term. Alternative terms suggested include: “people we work in solidarity with”, “national” organisations or partners, “decentralised” approaches, and referring to “decolonising” our work not “localising” it. CARE has [Global Communications Commitments](#) which are an important initiative to be expanded and built upon, alongside the Pledge for Change.
- **Enact a paradigm shift in how we view, think about and communicate our relationships with partners and the communities we stand in solidarity with** – it is our partners, e.g., women and girls and their organisations - that have the contextual understanding, commitment, long-term presence, legitimacy, and vision to change their own context in life. The priorities of communities and partner organisations have often been overruled by an aid system that often imposes itself and works to erode the capacity, leadership, and agendas of movements and organisations in the Global South.
- **Start tracking the groups and consultants we procure services from and set targets to ensure equal opportunities for national and women-owned enterprises.** The aim should be to ensure a broader supplier diversity policy, tracking the progress and setting targets towards such policy on a country-by-country basis. Establish some targets such as 50% of vendors must be women-owned or ensure vendor lists have at least 70% national businesses not global corporates (i.e hold workshops and meetings only in locally/socially owned hotels rather than international chains).
- **Recognise the limits of Diversity, Equality, Inclusion (DEI) approaches by being actively anti-racist and decolonial** – taking a DEI approach has value but can just diversify the face of power whilst doing nothing about its effects. DEI is not a synonym for decolonisation, it can be a measure – an indicator that something is wrong – but it won’t solve the deeper structural problem. CARE should clearly articulate its own action plan for becoming an anti-racist organisation alongside its existing mandatory REDI training programme for staff.

Introduction

Vision 2030

CARE has made a number of commitments to becoming an organisation that not only recognizes but actually works to dismantle the continued legacies of colonialism in the international development sector, and the deeply entrenched hierarchies of power, resources and knowledge systems which privilege the Global North in relation to the Global South.

We commit to doing the work of antiracism. We know that to be anti-poverty is necessarily to be anti-racist. We will take on critical listening and learning and do more to make clear that fighting racial injustice is part of our commitment to social justice. Placing these principles at the heart of our work, from how we hire and promote, govern and lead, mobilize resources and partner, will enable us to be more innovative and deliver faithfully on our mission.

This intention, which sits at the centre of [Vision 2030](#), is replicated across our Impact Area Strategies, [roadmaps](#) and other key position papers as we seek to coordinate efforts at transforming ourselves into an anti-racist organisation. CARE is not unique in engaging in this process, and indeed peer organisations have set up specific structures or staff roles to reflect on decolonising their work.¹ We have also partnered with some of those peer organisations, Adeso and a number of civil society organisations from Global South countries in developing a [Pledge for Change](#) in November 2022.

Why Power Shift Dialogues?

As a large, confederated entity that enjoys access to power and resources due to our status and significant positionality in the Global North, it is incumbent on CARE to engage with and respond to the need for the international aid sector to face up to its alignment with colonial divisions of power, knowledge, and privilege. Given our focus on gender equality, applying an intersectional lens to this work – and the relationship between gender and race/ethnicity/global positionality – will be critical.

A starting point for action needs to be reflection - building knowledge and understanding and creating space for us to explore some of the issues, experiences, expertise within CARE but crucially from the perspective of external partners and contacts.

The Power Shift Dialogue session was a response to this need which has been coordinated by the CARE International Head of Gender & Inclusion, and Head of Global Advocacy. We wanted to create shared spaces for us to explore, learn and discuss some of these issues in a non-judgemental, open way and make some recommendations for action.

How do they work?

The Power Shift Dialogues are held in an online Zoom space - with the format being open for the staff member leading the dialogue to shape according to their preference. The only obligation is for them to be an inclusive space for sharing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives.

So far, they have taken the form of a conversation between staff members, or a presentation and Q&A with an external speaker, or a panel conversation involving staff, peers, and partner

¹ For example, Plan International have set up an Anti-Racism Commission, and until early 2023, Christian Aid had a Racism and Diversity Advisor with a brief to conduct research and report to their board of trustees. Save the Children Canada announced in November 2022 that they intended to appoint a Senior Director for Anti-Racism, Anti-Oppression and Decolonisation reporting to CEO.

organisations. Sessions are recorded, translations provided into core languages and a few attendees are asked in advance to compile some reflections with the organisers to aid documentation.

What will they achieve?

We want to enable non-judgemental open dialogue, and knowledge sharing on critical issues for CARE as an organisation. We don't have any preconceived ideas or unrealistic expectations about finding all the answers. But we do believe that by working together and engaging many of our partners – particularly women from the Global South – that we can make some constructive progress in shedding light on what CARE needs to do to become a more anti-racist and decolonial organisation.

Through the dialogues we hope to:

- Feed into existing initiatives and programmes of work within CARE on decolonisation or related issues, such as the [Pledge for Change](#), Social Movements and [Equitable Partnerships](#) work.
- Start uncovering some of the ways in which CARE is manifesting colonial behaviours, practices, attitudes – from the perspective of staff and partners – and document proposals for change.
- Identify other activities, programmes of work, data needed to compliment or build on the dialogues and set us on a pathway to becoming a more anti-racist, anti-oppressive organisation.
- Share information and, where needed, make proposals to leadership teams across the confederation for action on CARE's contribution to shifting power in the sector.
- Stimulate further dialogue, knowledge acquisition and knowledge sharing amongst CARE staff, partners, peers and key stakeholders.

Dialogues held so far

DATE	TITLE	SPEAKER
21 February 2022	Anti-racism, decolonisation and INGOs – Perspectives from a Young African Feminist	Bénédicte Joan
9 May 2022	Who Benefits from INGO Money: Using Feminist Principles in Procurement	Mishy Mwanahamsi Singano
2 June 2022	Is Decolonisation Possible – An Academic View	Dr Mai Abu Moghli
6 September 2022	What might a "decolonial approach" to aid look like?	Dr Foluke Adebisi
9 March 2023		Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro

Other inputs

CARE staff have also submitted information gathered from other interactions or discussions with partners on the theme of shifting power, which we have included in this learning report. These are:

- Focus Group Discussion with five grassroots women's organisations in Indonesia
- Open Meeting with partner organisations in Niger
- Perspectives from a grassroots feminist from India

Dialogue 1: Anti-racism, decolonisation and INGOs – Perspectives from a Young African Feminist

Bénédicte Joan

Summary reflections

- **Privilege in the sector comes in many forms**, it is important to be aware of their existence and to ensure that actions are taken to correct or prevent the inequalities that may result:
 - o Skin colour
 - o Education levels of some of the development actors
 - o Power relationships between local and international organizations
 - o Power relationships between staff within the same organisations
- **“Western” education and knowledge is perceived superior** - which means people (including in the aid sector) don't listen to or acknowledge local knowledge or local voices. This also clouds recruitment processes etc, where graduates from local universities are underestimated. This places **limits on young people** who would like a career in development but are not able to access education abroad. There is a whole conversation around **elitism in the NGO sector** more generally (e.g., sometimes unnecessary requirements for masters-level education), but this is made all starker when put in the context of the value placed on Northern / Southern education institutions.
- **“The power of whiteness”** – If whiteness is equated with either higher levels of education or the power which comes with holding the purse strings of a project then there is an absolute power imbalance in contexts where northern NGO workers are operating “on the ground”. This reinforces the need to shift power to Southern partners.
- **Need for sensitivity when working in contexts where issues are either taboo** or not openly discussed (such as relating to abortion / LGBTQ+). These aren't issues which can be shoe-horned into society and more top-level advocacy targeted at governments could be a more effective mechanism for change. There is a need of safe spaces to talk to allow staff or partner CSOs to share experiences to reduce harmful practices.
- **Disproportionate risk burden put on local partners.** Local organizations are often under pressure to take more risks than INGOs.
- **INGOs need to listen and learn from local partners** – More time needs to be taken to create real exchange with local partners, to provide space for discussions and reflection, especially when projects are being designed.
- **Patterns of discrimination repeating themselves** – local organizations can be victims of racism from INGOs, while sometimes grassroots women's groups are also discriminated against by local NGOs, as well as international NGOs
- **More voices need to be heard across regions:** Important to hear more from CARE colleagues in other countries and regions – what they experience (or not) and what can be done. Discussions may vary in Latin America, Asia, and Africa – which must be taken into account.

Dialogue 2: Who Benefits from INGO Money: Using Feminist Principles in Procurement

Mishy Mwanahamsi Singano

“There are two viewpoints on this topic. First that if you are working in the sector, you can’t criticize it because this is seen as a betrayal. Then, there are those like us that believe that since we are in this sector, we are well-positioned to critique and analyse the system - as it is the only way to progress and better our work.”

Mishy Mwanahamsi Singano

Summary Reflections

- **Financial/procurement policies are unfortunately still based on protecting the status quo.** We have been told we have to follow the rules and policies that have been passed on to us. The systems have been designed to serve a certain, class, race, and gender – rich white men.
- **We don’t question our own policies.** The irony is that we are constantly working towards improving and developing other policies around the world, but not those within our own system.
- **Who are our main suppliers?** Our main suppliers are well-established stores, consultants, printing companies and landlords, which more than often end up being less diverse and gender balanced. Suppliers should also be less-established such as women-run small businesses, e.g. in catering.
- **Donor and INGO rules on procurement create barriers to small business and fuel inequality.** Stringent procurement policies such as registration documents, bank account and other official documentation that may not be easily accessible to these groups are a barrier to contracting. Examples include:
 - o Capture by established suppliers and prominent business groups (Import-Exports), politicians, international firms.
 - o Bulk of expenditures on mostly male consultants, established landlords, service sector companies (Hotels, Printing, catering)
- **This is going to require a different way of working.** Active engagement needed to make procurement policies are feminist, inclusive and attractive to female consultants.
- **Different metrics needed other than price and convenience to ensure equality of opportunity.** Does CARE track the age, gender, and race of - it is not impossible. Unfortunately, the priority seems to be who can offer the service in the best rate at the right time and place.

What should CARE do?

- **Move away from regarding women-led businesses and organisations as ‘beneficiaries’.** We must change our mindset and commit ourselves at global, national, program and support staff levels.
- **Encourage an internal organizational culture of openness to critique,** and ensure that this is cognisant of gender, age and any other factors that might impact someone’s willingness to critique.

- **Paradigm shift in how we view, think about and communicate our relationships with partners** e.g. changing language from ‘beneficiaries’ to ‘local partners/actors’ and avoiding phrases like ‘capacity building’ as they suggests that local communities and organizations lack skills – Change our language from “risk aversion” to “prospects and opportunities”.
- **Prepare partners for integration in society**, to work at the level of competitors, e.g. documentation and registration processes. Trainings shouldn’t only focus on how to do the businesses but how to work around this system that has so many barriers and eventually prepare and enable them to work with organizations such as CARE and others.
- **Replicate positive discrimination methods** we have in place for the female staff within our organization to also apply for leadership positions.
- **Be deliberate in streamlining supplier/vendor policies**, balancing accountability and compliance but also trying to engage more our target group as suppliers/vendors i.e. women. We must deliberately attract and recruit female consultants and suppliers where possible.
- **Start tracking the groups and consultants we engage with to ensure equal opportunities** with an aim to ensuring a broader supplier diversity policy, tracking the progress and setting targets towards such policy on a country-by-country basis.
- **Take a strong stance and challenge donors with rigid policies.** Start conversations with funders on risk sharing and shifting power so that these reflect in funding agreements.

CARE should look at this conversation from 4 main perspectives:

1. **Ideological standpoint:** What does CARE stand for? If it is to focus on the interest of women and youth, then we should consider the procurement policies that impact their inclusion.
2. **Programming:** How should we design and redesign programs that practically allow us to take these resources to the marginalized groups and distribute the resources equally.
3. **Advocacy:** How can we improve/influence policies and government rules on equal procurement opportunities in the development sector beyond CARE.
4. **Regaining power:** As an organization we must dare to imagine a new world and make changes.

Dialogue 3: Is Decolonisation Possible – An Academic View

Dr Mai Abu Moghli

"I think having these open, safe and critical spaces for dialogue and discussion are a vital step forward towards more equitable and just practices especially when we talk about research, academia or the work in development and humanitarian fields which are all becoming more interrelated and interdependent in recent years."

Dr Mai Abu Moghli

Summary reflections

- **Engage with the discomfort** – Talking about decolonisation and associated ideas and examples may be triggering or uncomfortable but they are a reflection of what actually happens in reality. Important to embrace this as an opportunity for positive change not only on a personal level, but also collectively on the level of our institutions as that is where change happens in long run.
- **Risk of turning decolonisation into a buzz term** – reaction to a “trend”, rather than engaging at a structural level. Turning it into an empty term diluted and depoliticised, allowing for superficial representation that fails to address racial, political and socio-economic intersectionalities.
- **Danger of “soft reforms” such as partnership.** Partnership is one of these “soft reforms”, shaped by vast funds e.g. within the UK university sector there is a Global Challenges Research Fund, conditional to have partner in global south. In reality these partnerships are dangerous as they repackage governments’ agendas, political agendas, that not very favourable to people of colour, refugees or migrants. Frame these political agendas in language of equal partnerships to make them appeal to current decolonisation trends.
- **Unequal power dynamics between Global North and South researchers** – fishing for information on “what to do”, in relation to situation in Lebanon with Syrian refugees. “What is my cause is their career” – Need to deconstruct and problematise these positionalities in term of equitable partnerships.
- **Knowledge production and hierarchies of knowledge** – knowledge or theory produced by Global North researchers considered universal, or more broadly globally applicable, but that produced by Global South researchers is particular or local. Global South researchers brought into research projects as “tokens” – representatives of local populations. Even though many researchers involved in such projects from the Global South are themselves from elite backgrounds, and may have been educated in global North.
- **Missing foundation of trust.** Partnerships should be built on equality but often not. Due diligence – much more stringent on Global South institutions.
- **Saviourism** – hierarchy of knowledge, assumption of superiority and mission of “civilising”. These are part of colonial structural and should be challenged as they manifest within development research or programming. Need to “reverse the gaze”, ask our governments how the problems have occurred in first place, e.g. refugee crisis. Hold them to account. Example of refugees dying off the shores of the UK or France.

- **Resilience as a dehumanising term** – “resilience is keeping people on the edge of survival”. People should have opportunity to thrive, not only survive.

What should CARE do?

- **Include budgets for translation** – lack of respect for communicating outside dominant cultures.
- **Awareness that “local” can be a degrading term** – use with care and contextual knowledge.
- **Enforce ethical storytelling** – particularly when it comes to children or in schools. Images can be used and stigmatise them for life as a refugee, or aid recipient. Manipulation and exploitation of our bodies. Would not happen in global North.
- **Be conscious of and challenge politicised nature of visa regimes** – Global North countries denying visas to Global South researchers so different or priority access for Global North researchers. In the end – whose knowledge is represented? Not mine.
- **Be politically reflexive, aware of positionality and privilege.** We don’t have control over where we are born, or our privilege, but we can be open to question it.
- **Transparency about resources from start of process.**
- **Trust partners in Global South** – engage in relations with mutual respect that all bring something to the table.
- **Ensure there is political will** – Soft reforms are fine but not the end game. If not supported at top, it won’t progress.
- **Don’t claim to be neutral as everything we do is highly political.** Neutrality and impartiality – Humanitarian INGOs assume that because they are following humanitarian principles, they are impartial. This is a fallacy. If you work with governments, on issues of poverty, VAWG – these are all political issues. We need to deconstruct these fallacies and work accordingly as a helpful first step.
- **Social movements** – INGOs can work with them as long as INGOs accept that the social movements lead and support in line with the social movement’s guidance. Embrace humility and understand where we fit in the ecosystem, if at all.

Dialogue 4: What might a "decolonial approach" to aid look like?

Dr Foluke Adebisi

"Decolonisation is..the continuous and evolving refusal of colonial conditions of life which were introduced and globalised through the capitalist, colonial enslavement project."

Dr Foluke Adebisi

Summary Reflections

Defining decolonization

- **Origins of colonial project can be located in 15th century voyages of discovery** – Note that people talk about Christopher Columbus “discovering” America, however the entire continent was not missing. In saying “discovery” we introduce a power imbalance – one person or structure or people discover another and therefore place themselves, their epistemologies, ways of thinking, being and doing, over the other who is “discovered”. These are lands and peoples that were not missing, but because of that discovery they become subjugated into Europe’s way of thinking, being and doing.
- **The immediate refusal of this “capitalist, colonial enslavement project” is decolonisation.** It is context dependent, rejects the meanings and uses made by colonial knowledges of human bodies, creating different races in hierarchies, and making one peoples space be property of another. Or considering one peoples times “primitive” or primordial.
- **Decolonisation manifests differently across contexts:**
 - Post-colonial states – e.g. requests for independence and beyond, reparations, repatriation of looted artefacts, economic equality, environmental sovereignties.
 - Settler colonies – indigenous peoples asking for land back in Australia, New Zealand, Americas.
 - Colonising States – racial minoritized peoples in e.g. UK demands for equality, reparation and racial justice.
- **What decolonisation is not:**
 - Diversity, Equality, Inclusion (and Representation) – taking an DEI approach may be commendable but it just diversifies the face of power whilst doing nothing about its effects. DEI changes the players but not the game – the constant dispossession and dehumanisation of planetary and human survival continues, but with different faces at the helm.
 - DEI is not a synonym for decolonisation, it invites POC into institutions that have been complicit in these oppressions expecting them to change these institutions, but instead those people are changed and sometimes harmed by the institutions.
 - We need to redefine our work so it redesigns the world.
 - DEI can be a measure – an indicator that something is wrong. It won’t solve the deeper structural problem – i.e. the colonial, capitalist enslavement project which began in the 15th century and hierarchies of ways of thinking, being and doing, that it imposed.

Other terms

- **Colonisation** – physical occupation of land which requires legal and administrative control.
- **Coloniality** – mainly comes from thinkers from the Americas (e.g Anibal Quijano, Nelson Maldonado Torres). This word describes the domination of ideas, thought, praxis, ideologies that instigated the colonisation of land. One would only think it was acceptable to impose culture, religion, language, laws, thinking over another people – if there was an ideology of domination. This is coloniality. Even after colonisation has gone away, coloniality persists. Social category of race is a key element of this, a form of domination. This represents a social classification of colonised and colonisers. Coloniality relates to long-standing patterns of power. Inaugurated since 1492. Emerged as a result of colonialism. We breath coloniality all the time and every day.

One approach to thinking about decolonisation and embedding it in aid work

- Consider the following questions, based on “trptych” approach of [Dr Olivia Rutazibwa](#)
 - **Ontology** – What is international development? What is the aid sector? What are its origins, what is it connected to? How does it work?
 - **Epistemology** – How do we know about international development and aid? How is knowledge produced in the sector? Whose voices and knowledges are heard, or unheard? How are knowledges that don’t fit dominant paradigms regarded?
 - **Normativity** – Who is international development or aid serving? What are we trying to achieve?
 - Questioning the history and structure of international aid
 - Look at the language “aid” “Development” “Global South”, “poor countries”
 - Refusing to reinforce power dynamics produced by [supra]colonial processes e.g. capital, patriarchal, racial
 - Going beyond EDIR, but still engaging
 - Who leads, who partners who decides?
- **Think of decolonisation as “an endless fracturing of the world colonialism created”** (Joel Modiri). The quest to be free, to build a newer world has always endured and will always endure.
- **This is a life’s work.** We are trying to turn back a machine that has been feeding on us for 600 years, since 1492. We have to start but it is hard work, and we might not see it in our lifetime.
- **Shifting headquarters to Global South but not shifting power.** Localisation is a yardstick and definition still defined in North
- **Inequality – ability to change and evolve in line with capitalism.** This is a moving target.

What we can do

- **Ceding of power** – how can you do this and what are the practical difficulties of this?
- **Being connector and broker, and influencer for local organisations** in global structures.
- **More Global South conversations and linkages** – not just Global North-South. Maybe don’t need to be in conversation with Global North if they just “want to destroy you”.
- **Outline the changes, or shifts in power we want to see** rather than using the “buzzwords” we adopt in certain circles. Use simple language. A way to strategically address these issues with audiences that are closed or hostile to such issues.
- **Recognise we are interconnected (Global South and North)** – and seek to have a conversation with those that want to, and that can engage with coloniality, to make a better world.

Dialogue 5: Reflections from CI Secretary General on Decolonisation & Pledge for Change

Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro

“We at CARE are just facilitors. We should recognise that we hold power – real and perceived – and should be aware of it in every interaction. We are more aware of it now than when I started in the sector, which is a good thing. Governments and donors are making commitments and now we must be more vigorous and determined to put them into practice.”

Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro

- **Words matter and they shape worlds – the importance of language.** Joined CARE 29 years ago and was struck by terms such as “field” – which position the Global South as the periphery. Deliberately inverted these terms – spoke of going on a “field visit” to Berlin, or “overseas” to London. It was evident that the language we hear and are exposed to every day shapes who we are, whose ideas matter more. There is also a lot of military language used in the sector – e.g. “frontline health workers”, “boots on ground” etc. Need to remove it when we can.
- **Pledge for Change** – is a promise we have been working on for 18 months with peer organisations: Oxfam, Plan, Save the Children, Action Aid, Christian Aid. Subsequently others have joined: Mercy Corps, Action Aid, IRC and many others. Launched in October 2022 so relatively recent but some modest progress to speak of across the three parts:
 1. **Equitable partnerships** – We are more systematically ceding space in our advocacy to partners e.g. Committee on the Status of Women just this month (March 2023) and later this year we have similar plans for Women Deliver. Greater commitment and going to measure systematically the funding we provide CSOs that represent and serve women.
 2. **Authentic Storytelling** – Commitment that stories we tell authentically represent the people with whom we work in solidarity. Should be easy to make progress here if we are committed. For example, our images audit showed that nearly 70% were taken by men from Global North – and there is a lot of power in whose perspective counts in portraying a reality. This baseline was something we could turn around quickly. No reason why the stories we tell should not be told by women from the Global South so that they can portray the reality of their lives. We have already examples – such as powerful exhibitions of photos of women from the Global South we have hired.
 3. **Influencing the wider sector** – Trying to influence more INGOs to sign up the pledge has been the main progress so far. Can’t attribute to the pledge the changes that donors are already introducing but it is encouraging that USAID has pledged that 25% of funding will go to Global South organisations by 2025, and that by 2030 that percentage will be 50%. Many European donors making similar commitments. There is a greater realisation from these governments that upholding the values of self-determination, people’s voice, participation are just not optional any more.

Nothing about us without us! – this feminist slogan has been a constant accompaniment. Cannot separate this from decolonisation as that is what it is about. More people around the world are demanding that people determine their own futures. We at CARE are just facilitors. We should recognise that we hold power – real and perceived – and should be aware of it in every interaction. We are more aware of it now than when I started in the sector, which is a

good thing. Governments and donors are making commitments and now we must be more vigorous and determined to put them into practice.

- **“Colonial pages” – reflections on Global North/South power dynamics** - When I joined CARE in 1994 in Cambodia, I was locally hired and was kind of inbetween worlds – not from Cambodia but one of only staff from Global South. Started my “colonial pages” and noted down what I observed as colonial behaviours or elements of conversations. There were around 20 expatriate staff, but it also came from Cambodian colleagues who felt in a position of inferiority, didn’t trust their own ideas when they put them forward in meetings. Because I didn’t belong to either of those worlds I could observe that and it became evident that the power imbalance was part of every single interaction. Have acute antennae to these colonial behaviours. We must be aware of issues which affect us – so my Global North/Global South antennae is always switched on. Sometimes it is exhausting to observe as it is everywhere.
- **Privileging of the English language** – Even when in a most diverse setting, even if have greater participation from Global South, the idea that is expressed in short soundbites in clear and perfect English, ideally with a UK accent – that is the one everyone listens to, latches on to. That is the comment that makes it onto the flipchart, that everyone wants to comment on. In other cultures, we may want to tell it via a story, in a more poetic way. But that doesn’t make it onto the flipchart. Interpretation is important, but countless examples that when something is interpreted people are on their cellphones, not listening as attentively. We are all at fault. We need to think about how we show up, how we listen, who we listen to, which ideas we privilege and it starts with ourselves.
- **Leadership of Women in Global South** – I think the Pledge spells out more clearly that we won’t do anything without involving the people we stand in solidarity with. This matters from a values perspective, but it is the women and girls and their organisations that have the contextual understanding, commitment, long-term presence, legitimacy, vision, dreams to change their own context in life. This is the case in humanitarian response as well as development work. Not only a principled perspective but also more effective in driving impact as they know better. Their dreams, their visions have often been overruled by an aid system that often imposes, which erodes capacity, leadership, agenda of movements and organisations in the Global South. After COVID there has been more delegation of authority to women-led organisations. Need to hold on to this space and further nourish it.
- **Being anti-racist, less colonial is a lifetime’s work** – In last two years, since the murder of George Floyd, there has been a stronger push for decolonising the sector. Before we weren’t even talking about it. Now there are great resources – books, guidelines – how to be anti-racist, decolonise, with concrete ways forward. It starts with an open and sincere conversation where power lies, what more inclusive actions and responses look like. We need deep conversations about our role as an INGO and how we may sustain marginalisation of local actors, maintenance of racist, sexist or ableist tendencies in our sector. Not something you can shake off – need to work on it for a lifetime.
- **Allowing ourselves to be challenged by our partners is an important aspect.** Pledge for Change process chaired by Degan Ali of Adeso and she was challenging us. Would not have landed where we did without this. We had a meeting with 30 Global South NGOs and they threw out the first draft of Pledge for Change. Technology should make it easier for us to be get this feedback from Global South partners and people we seek to stand in solidarity with.
- **South-South dialogues and partnership** – Has improved but not happening enough. I am excited about CARE International members from the Global South - when I started it was 10 members from the Global North. Now CARE Egypt is leading on GBV in Emergencies; CARE India leading on technology and innovation and inspiring the rest of us; Chrysalis, the affiliate from Sri Lanka has led on life free from violence/GBV for the confederation for a few years. This is inspiring and growing this must be purposeful.

Other Consultations

Focus Group Discussion with five grassroots women's organisations in Indonesia

Summary Reflections

- **Lack of engagement with local needs and expertise** – Experience of local orgs is that programmes of international organisations rarely synchronise with local needs. Local organisations are only treated as implementers, and are rarely engaged in the early stages to shape programme design or strategy.
- **Local partners not treated as equals** – International organisations view themselves as “donating”, and do not provide opportunities for local partner to innovate, adapt programs to the local context, or listen or accept the suggestions from local organization.
- **Importance of trust and joint analysis of lessons learnt** – The value of local organisations tends to be judged in relation to the success of a particular programme, without starting from a relationship of trust in the work of the local organisation. At the close of a project, there should be an open dialogue about lessons learnt, successes and failures from the perspective of equal partners – not unilateral decisions from the international organisation.
- **Lack of investment in local staff** – For programmes focused on women, girls, children and young people, investment may be needed to provide technical support or training to programme staff, but this is rarely included in budgets, which purely focus on implementation costs.
- **Negligible donor interest in enabling women's influence in decision-making** – Insufficient focus from donors on supporting women-led advocacy and political participation – this is critical to advancing women's rights. Need to move beyond just having some “inherited” leadership roles at village level.

Open Meeting with partner organisations in Niger

Partners see progress in:

- Sharing information on procedures
- Regular planning meetings and communications
- Bringing together various partners on joint projects – building synergies
- Helping partners build their capacity e.g. gender training
- Contextual adaptation of themes CARE works on

Areas of concern:

- **Some staff treat partners like subordinates** – A change in attitude is needed for some staff that are are not acting in line with the principles of the organization. When partners give feedback, which they have a right to do, some CARE staff do not listen. They have serious “complex issues”. Lack of respect for structure within partner organisations. CARE also pushes its leadership too much in communications.

- **Delay in releasing funds has a significant impact** – may be due to delays in signing contracts, provision of paperwork, reviewing expense reports. Partners may need support with this or have to delay implementation. Contracting and planning can start in advance of implementation.
- **More strategic engagement needed between CARE and senior leaders of partners** – going beyond project implementation and including strategic issues. Establish institutional relationships and relations between equals.
- **Administrative fees and per diem rates are insufficient to cover actual costs** – such as energy costs, audits, salaries etc. Suggestion for partners to charge a management fee.
- **Partner budgets are not co-designed, are comparatively low and subject to change** – Need for joint design and costing of budgets, and more transparency, to ensure real costs can be covered. Under-budgeting makes it difficult to implement certain activities, or purchase essential equipment such as computers. If operational costs are insufficient, this can contribute to fraud.
- **Lack of evaluation of partners and by partners** – there should be an annual, participatory evaluation process where the strengths and weaknesses are shared to ensure improvements. Partners should have the chance to evaluate CARE.
- **CARE needs to recognize power imbalances between grassroots women and NGOs run by wives of prominent men** – Role for CARE in ensuring inclusion of all voices.

Perspectives from a grassroots feminist from India

Summary Reflections

- **CARE has a role in building institutional capacity and financial management** to sustain the grassroots organisations and movements.
- **Critical to engage with grassroots women directly** – visit them where they reside, listen deeply to what they have to say.
- **Recognise importance of intersections of gender and class/caste** – affects how women access and experience services and their ability to engage in power structures.
- **Critical to support bringing women together to challenge patriarchy** – having a collective voice has shifted the power from a patriarchal mindset to women having their voices.
- **Grassroots women’s organisations may feel ill-equipped to deal with INGOs like CARE.** How can we transform ourselves to bridge this gap?
- **Strengthen grassroots organisations so that their experience can influence policies affecting women’s rights and wellbeing:**
 - o Involve grassroots organisations in program design
 - o Support them to document women’s experiences
 - o Provide technical support e.g., proposal writing
 - o Ending VAWG an important entry point for work with grassroots women

Where do we go from here?

Through the dialogues, it has become apparent that CARE staff:

- Are passionate about this issue and want to engage in discussions. Continued engagement is contingent, however, on concerted action.
- Recognise that we need to have a learning mindset, and commit ourselves – at personal, organisational and sector level – to fulfil our anti-racist agenda.
- May feel triggered by discussions involving discrimination or racism, due to personal experiences.
- In some cases, some may feel they have experienced differential treatment at CARE based on their identity (race, nationality, ethnicity, LGBTIQ+ status, age, disability) or positionality (e.g. in Global North or South, CARE member or County Office)

Critically, the process of the dialogues has helped identify that we need to support staff wishing to participate in these conversations, making it clear what disclosure options and counselling services are available to staff that may have experienced incidents of harassment or discrimination, or been triggered by some of the discussions. Information about support options available is going to be shared with staff, across CARE languages, at subsequent dialogues.

In order to develop this agenda further, it is recommended that CARE:

1. Continues to hold Power Shift Dialogues on themes and issues identified by CARE staff from across the confederation.
2. Shares the learnings from the Power Shift Dialogues held so far with National Directors and the Supervisory Board to ensure driving CARE's anti-racist agenda is owned at a senior level within the confederation.
3. Takes appropriate steps to ensure the summary recommendations are actioned as we continue on our journey to achieve Vision 2030.

Thoughts and Recommendations from Participants

During each dialogue, participants were provided with links to jamboards to record their thoughts, feelings and questions. These have been grouped thematically below and provide key insights to support this learning report.

Individual self-reflection and staff experiences at CARE

We need to ensure as an organization we practice what we are preaching.

Self-reflection is key for individuals to uphold equity and practice antiracism - can't we make it mandatory for all CARE offices to hold sessions that support self-reflection?

We must start with a good sense of self-criticism about racism and institutional discrimination and from there honestly define what we want and can change.

Often when I speak as a woman from the south... people smile and say "thank you" and tick the box - rather than listen to what I am saying and if I disagree with a senior staff....

Some folks at CUSA went through the book "Me and White Supremacy" as an exercise; it was extremely helpful in breaking down white privilege and white supremacy.

I suggest that the discussions be broken down into small groups all in respect of the diversity for a larger participation and a better appropriation.

Seems that the colonialist culture of CARE is often brainwashing people from the global south ... losing their sensitivity for colonialist behaviours and attitudes. Scary ...

It is important to understand how other non-hegemonic epistemologies work and to promote honest (self)reflection in all levels, but it is necessary to pause and listen (us) and

Can someone have colonialist attitudes and working even if they are from the global south? I see 'dictator' styles even from those that were colonised - male and female

We need to talk about white supremacy and racism in our workplace and our sector without shying away and/or "reading between the lines" in conversations.

Ask for feedback and replication of discussions at CO level.

and reflect, as well as having the confidence to question and say when we feel colonialist behaviors or language in order to change it.

At the beginning of the session, invite participants to adopt a critical view of their privileges, positions, statuses, identities to avoid cognitive biases

Body language can show a "message" of privilege and making other refrain from expressing themselves/ideas

Interesting reflections about replacing Europeans peoples with brown skills peoples to continue doing the same thing. The agenda has been hijacked and we need to reflect.

Organisational & structural change for decolonisation 1/2

Let's get real and vulnerable-- otherwise, culture change will be out of grasp.

What is according to you the most significant challenge on an organizational level for CARE to make a real contribution to the pledge for change?

As an INGO, we are speaking of gender equality and antiracism; but sometimes we are also contributing to this unconsciously

I am glad CARE recognises the lack of anti-racism work and actions undertaken and is willing to open a conversation about it and take actions.

I'd be keen to take part in this group to ensure that CARE looks inward and commits to decolonising our approach, processes, and systems

What are the most important things that CARE staff can do to implement the pledge starting today?

How is the pledge being centred across the Confederation? Is this really being deepened as part of the non-negotiables. How is this enforced?

Simply put we need to walk the talk.

What will CARE look like in 2040?

How do we hold people accountable?

How big do you see the influence of the institution CARE with a colonialist history over the people from colonized countries working for the organisation?

Words of wisdom: I believe the more diverse the group is the better for the outcomes, in terms of cultural background, age, race, sex etc and CARE has resources and the platforms.

Why is the "global north" not discussing more about how to redefine its role in development cooperation? To make real power shift possible, changes also must happen there.

If Coloniality is long standing patterns of power - what are patriarchal indigenous systems of Chiefdom? That are long standing power systems with long term impact on cultur

'Being African and black, there is a lot of tick box efforts, but the minimizing of this issue definitely exists. What has it meant for CARE internally?'

Let us get it going!

The reason why we are having conversations about racism is because of its international relevance to others.

Maybe more south-south dialogue could create another space for more empowerment and opportunities

Organisational & structural change for decolonisation 2/2

What link to you see between creating spaces for colleagues in "global south" to disagree/have different ideas to the power holders in CARE? or we are expected to all agree?

What is progressive about 'a pledge'? The 3 areas are simply non-negotiable versus changing the pathways of control which development is central to?

From a Southern feminist perspective, the pledge is focused on the continued role of INGOs rather than disrupting the role of development in capitalist control. Is this what they should

Localization means that CARE should be comfortable with more of the resources (which are limited) going directly to local organizations. But are we? In many countries we rather compete.

The funding issued support colonialist behaviours- we in the global south need to align with what colleagues in the global north want otherwise, to be favoured.

What role can INGOs play in the broader political economy that development is a key pillar of? Essentially INGOs should be working themselves out of the role that they play.

Beneficiaries usually request humanitarian projects instead of development projects since they are not aware of the importance of the second. We can't let them decide on this

be doing or shifting to disrupt and remove the idea of D itself because it is key in keeping Southern countries in colonial systems of oppression?

Colonialism is internalized in both the global North and South and asymmetrical power relations manifest in all spaces, not just North-South.

I really think we need to be more careful and at same time courageous in our approaches with donors!

To achieve decolonization in the development sector, we need to change ourselves, our donors, our governments. That is complicated enough.

How do you ensure true participation, without falling into the trap of "tokenism"? The end goal should be full control for the people we stand in solidarity for.

There is an assumption that people from the global north are not corrupt like those in global south but as we saw with the UNOPS case, this is a fallacy

Is it possible to decolonise without fairer pay between regions?

How do we shift power when the money is in the Global North? How do we move beyond the money?

What does a truly intersectional and feminist approach look like in the movements towards localization and localization of aid?

The problem I have is that we talk as if development is the key to freedom and liberation. It is not and the centring of it as if it is, is very concerning.

Procurement

Why do we only work with well-established suppliers?

Can we have a Feminist Procurement Policy?

We need to be deliberate in the fact that we want to support women owned business.

It is also necessary to ensure the management of revenues when working with small local and women's businesses, is it an equitable sharing or only representative

if we can say we will not allow "xyz" organisations to be our vendors... why can we not add to that... or say what sort of suppliers we want to work with

colonial power structures have influenced these established ways of working

We need to improve our procurement processes to allow the use of local suppliers in order to emphasize female expertise, economic justice, as well as in the selection of partners

Often the big companies in the countries we work in are owned by politicians (or former) - usually men.

How can CARE program and procurement/operations teams work together across the organization to ensure procurement activities benefit communities?

Sometimes money ends up going to suppliers than intended community

we, ourselves are the barrier

There is an assumption that the bulk money goes to the community but the money goes to ICR and major contracts go to men (often foreign and/or influential)

lets imagine a different world - we have inherited things... we need to claim our power and define a new world

We need to start rethinking on our policy first, let's include our beneficiaries to the supplier list.

How are we framing out procurement processes to ensure women can successfully apply and deliver?

In some of our big USG contracts the ICR then % costs of HQ staff then our CO shared costs, then procurement. A small proportion goes to women.

one aspect of the issue is who owns the business - the other is the origin of the products we are purchasing: are these products made in the country or the region, in an ethical way, with

sharing the risks (or prospects and opportunities) with non-traditional suppliers lets propose this to donors - new ways of working - we can lead the shift

can we have a 40% procurement must go to women rule? Like Tanzania as a country has?

Language: Words Matter

In CARE - we talk about not using the word "field", but we now use "local" and we still say "country office" and "member" with the same connotations of colonial power

One of the problems within CARE is that often we have programmes/ advocacy teams that are trying internally to advocate for language to be decolonised, "bottom up", but a

Language is considered a measure of intelligence instead of being a medium of communication

Practical Suggestion: Changing the terminology and how we refer to things and places in the development sector and ask the why/understanding.

What suggestions do you have for creating an environment where colleagues are comfortable with highlighting when colonial language or behaviours are being used?

blockage is there at Directors' level. This is similar with gender-sensitive/more feminist language for example. How can we deal with that effectively?

It is about recognising the uniqueness of each person who can contribute to solving the problem that affects us all.

It is about the human connection from heart to heart. It is about acknowledging the uniqueness of each person which we need to solve the problems that affect us all.

How can CARE support marginalized actors to win grants? How do we do this before the application process, so they are not disadvantaged compared to more established ones?

I love the point about the world we seek - it is easier to define what we are against with others - but so much harder to define what we seek - any pointers on how to do that collectively?

I believe you will be surprised by how much you can learn from participant's experiences when they are given the opportunity to share!

Senior Leadership

I am aware of being white and in a senior position I don't want that to block discussion

What are the characteristics of a non-colonial leader? Often even feminists expect us all to agree with the boss.

Balance the dialogue with action - especially at executive levels.

How can we create spaces for new leaders in CARE - so many senior staff in countries and regions have been in CARE for 20+ years - how do we get new ideas?

In CARE we have a definition of what is good and right - with jargon to go with it. How do we learn new ways if our senior staff are all CARE moulded - where do we get new ideas from?

Encourage the diversity of participants, especially in facilitation and leadership roles

Please reach out also to our safety and security colleagues to be able to reflect this in their policies and practices.