care® TIPPING POINT

IMPACT BRIEF

Risk mitigation and management for girl led programming

A girl-led programming approach emphasizes two aspects: **including girls in design and project-level decision-making so that knowledge transfer and training are more effective**, and **ensuring that girls have the confidence in managing and leading interventions and occupying public spaces**. Girls have demonstrated their ability to lead activities, including social norms-shifting events in public forums, through projects such as the Tipping Point initiative. However, when girls lead change in their communities, their visibility increases in public spaces. This comes with risks of backlash, more restrictions, and the potential for increased gender-based violence (GBV) including emotional, physical, and sexual violence.

> **Risk management and mitigation considers the additional risks girls may face and takes action to address these.**

Girls have 'lived experience' in their community, and thus they understand the social dynamics and power structures and are more conscious of any potential risks. This awareness and knowledge of their context can help girls systematically assess risks and plan mitigation in advance. This brief outlines the need for girl-led risk management and mitigation, allies'

support to girls, Do No Harm principles, and role of program staff in supporting girl-led risk management, all drawn from experiences of girls in development and conflict settings.

Do No Harm

The principle of "do no harm" means that those working with girls on research, projects, or providing health, education, or other services, should not cause harm – intentionally or unintentionally. "Harm" can mean a range of things, including physical, emotional, or sexual violence, denial of basic human rights (i.e. access to education, political participation), social exclusion or stigmatization, damaging local resources, and the silencing of voices. Within girl-led programming, harmful effects are often unforeseen and unintended, which means individuals or organizations can easily make unintentional mistakes. As partner or CARE staff engage with girls, they might not be aware of the context or situations girls face at home and in the community when planning activities, potentially putting the girls in harm. This can be avoided through careful consideration of the complexity and sensitivities around gender, social, and power norms through Gender Analysis, Rapid Gender Analysis, or more thorough formative research and norms exploration.

CARE's Safeguarding Policy

CARE has a duty of care to ensure that we are doing all that is reasonably possible-- and within our control-- to ensure that program participants and those in the wider community are not harmed as a consequence of their engagement in our programs. This includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse as well as negligence and exploitation.

Girl-led GBV Risk Mitigation and Management

While working with girls, projects should develop project-specific gender-based violence (GBV) risk mitigation plans that support Do No Harm principles. GBV risk mitigation makes all development and humanitarian programming safer and more inclusive, accessible, and effective, thus transforming the typical program structures that often do not consider the safety and needs of girls. GBV risk mitigation means:

- Understanding what risks are present in the context for girls and if the activities implemented by program can have implication for girls' safety,
- Taking actions to avoid causing or increasing the risk of GBV associated for girls in development and humanitarian contexts,
- Facilitating and monitoring girls' safe access to and use of services,
- Addressing the risks of GBV in the immediate programming environment.

CARE's GBV Guidance for Development Programs highlights the importance of integrating GBV considerations at all stages of a project to ensure the design and interventions reduce the risk of GBV exposure to women and girls. Mitigating GBV is an ethical responsibility to the girls and communities CARE partners with. For adolescent programming, it means making sure that staff engage adolescents to understand their needs, challenges, concerns, and perceptions of safety. They engage with adolescents meaningfully and identify critical entry points to systematically design programs that respond to concerns and ensure programmers do no harm.

Risk Mitigation Led by Girls

Girl-led programming is informed by girls' needs and interventions planned by them. Models like CARE's Learning Communities on the Move (LCOM) for girl-led activism and norms-shifting help girls identify issues in the community that concern them and plan activities to address the issues. In Bangladesh and Nepal during the Tipping Point (TP) implementation, girl activists were trained to use a risk mitigation and management format to identify risks and plan mitigation strategies before each activity took place in their villages. The risk mitigation plan (page 20) identifies types of risk, consequences of each risk, who to reach out to for support, who should be responsible for following up on the risk mitigation actions, what the timeline would be for follow-up, etc.

EXAMPLE

Girls Managing Risks in Development Settings

The girls in Bangladesh had planned to stage a popular theatre and identified a risk that certain boys from the community would disturb the event, pass comments, harass, and whistle as they do when in a group. The girls planned the event in the centre of the village and invited the parents of the identified boys. They also invited the other opinion leaders, allies, and community leaders who could manage backlash if any. Different girls were given responsibility to invite different people and follow up with them before the event so that attendance and support could be ensured. The identified boys were at the event, yet it was done peacefully and that enhanced the girls' motivation.

a. Building Staffs' Understanding of Risks: Any person working for adolescent empowerment programming is motivated to reduce risk and empower girls, but defining roles and responsibilities alongside our ability to respond is essential to doing good else we do harm. While adolescents are capable of identifying and mitigating risks, it is unfair to put the burden entirely on them. Staff need to undergo transformational training on gender and power with a focus on Do No Harm principles as well as risk mitigation and management as a first step in any programming. If the processes or implementation mechanisms are not very well thought through and if a proper risk assessment is not done to identify factors, they may cause harm. Adolescents need an environment supporting their efforts-- staff should prepare to undergo Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (PSHEA) and Safeguarding training, identify potential risks of project activities, and make a conscious effort to prepare themselves and girls to face these realities. The [Inter-Agency Minimum Standards](#) for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming recognizes that in the context of an emergency, there is inadvertently increased risks of sexual harassment. Staff must understand the risks adolescent girls could face, so having staff from similar context is helpful. At a minimum, staff need to be trained to understand a survivor-centered approach and their responsibility to report incidents using a secure data management system.

b. Recruiting and Training a Gender-balanced Team of Frontline Workers: This helps ensure the program can access and engage equally with women and girls. Another requirement when working with adolescent girls is to have female staff supporting girls and mentoring them.

c. Ensuring That Safeguarding and PSHEA are Included in Program Risk Assessments: It is crucial to recognize some aid interventions may inadvertently increase the risk of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Girls should also know about the red flags related to the risk of SEA and what actions to take if they observe something that compromises safeguarding. Hence there should be a corresponding orientation of the girls on PSHEA for them to be aware.

EXAMPLE

Risk Mitigation and Management in Conflict Settings

Tipping Point girls in Northwest Syria were engaged in a survey to collect data about issues the adolescents face under the LCOM model, but girls are not allowed to go out alone and hence they collected data in groups. They also had a member from a mothers' group accompany them when they did the survey. They also modified the survey tool from individual interview tool to a focus group discussion so that they could do the survey collectively and ensure safety of all girls involved in data collection.

d. Training on Risk Mitigation Formats That Girls Would Use: The staff are trained on the risk mitigation format for a public-facing event planned by girls, and the girls should then be asked to fill in a plan. In the Tipping Point experience from Nepal and Bangladesh, the risks that the staff assumed were different from those of the girls and the mitigation plan by girls was more practical. The staff realized the importance of girls leading the mitigation plan as it was based on their everyday understanding of the context.

e. Building Allies With Girls: Reflections with staff as adults to express their own ideas and learn to facilitate discussions for seeking ideas from adolescents can also help mitigate risks. Causing harm extends beyond physical harm; neglecting to include girls' voices touching on key areas of their lives also causes harm. The voices of girls are to be taken seriously, not as tokens, with their voices and choices informing the program, engaging them on critical issues, and enabling them to advocate for their issues at key government platforms. This would allow staff to be allies to girls, taking a step back while seeking adolescents' ideas and voices.

f. Contextualizing Language: If staff do not understand the language the girls use, it could also cause harm. Programmers need to make sure that the language of the programs adapt to the community's needs. Staff must create spaces for dialogue with girls to reflect and must ensure an environment where girls can question programming aspects. If dialogue happens in a safe space, even when there is unintentional harm done, there is a scope to rectify or minimize its impact.

Building Allies for Managing Risks

Being an ally and not a protector is the core to girl-led programming. Many efforts of supporters can become patronising and guiding girls' efforts especially when it comes to managing risks. These are conscious behaviours from allies to promote as they support girls leading interventions:

a. **Staff as Allies**: A strong commitment of staff plus their understanding of risks and their belief in girls' potential to lead can help staff to be allies. The staff undergoes training as mentors where they practice stepping back and letting girls lead the planning and implementation.

b. **Working With Parents and Other Family Members Through** Structured Allyship: Tipping Point worked with parents and boys as allies to girls. They were trained on an allyship module to be able to reflect on their ways of working with girls so that they do not act as guides. The parents and other family members were also informed about the Safeguarding policy, zero tolerance incidents such as child abuse or other misconduct, and reporting processes.

Steps of Girls Planning for Risk Identification Mitigation and Management

The girls should be engaged in participatory risk assessment in the beginning of interventions and inform the programming based on their ideas and experience throughout the program cycle. This may require creating start-up activities using participatory tools for data collection in the beginning. The intervention design should be informed by their needs, challenges, concerns, and perceptions of safety.

c. **Girls' Collectivization**: The first step towards mitigating risk is to strengthen the bond amongst girls. They need to come together towards sisterhood and support each other in their journey of activism against inequality around them.

d. **Risk Assessment Before Each Intervention Led by Girls**: As the girls lead the programs and interventions, they conduct a risk assessment for each activity they plan with other girls in their community.

e. **Referrals**: Referral/service mapping done by CARE and partner staff should be available to girls.

Monitoring and Evaluation Related to Risks and Risk Management

Community-based risk mitigation and management can be supported by a robust Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system. At the community level, girls fill out the risk mitigation template, reviewing if the risks were minimized in the given timeframe. During TP implementation, in every quarterly review and reflection agenda, the MEAL team presented data from the previous quarter on the number of cases reported and number of referrals made, having staff themselves reflect on this data to note any concerns or trends. The program staff need to follow CARE's Monitoring and Evaluation standards.

Resources

[Learning Communities on the Move](): This is an overview document to a girl-led activism model that includes robust risk mitigation and management led by girls.

[Girl led activism and structured allyship](): This brief describes girl-led activities with support from allies such as boys and parents in their community. The activism included risk mitigation and management as many of the activities planned were public facing.

[Tipping Point manuals](): These manuals are complementary to the girl-led programming. The manuals have reflective tools to be used with girls for empowerment, knowledge and skills building, reflections with boys and parents on similar issues to ensure girls have support, and intergenerational dialogue tools on selected social norms identified by girls and community members. After being trained on different topics, girls decided to act, completing risk mitigation planning before implementing their action in the community. The manuals also include inter-group dialogues on different norms. If the girls plan to use any of the tools of inter-group dialogues, they also use the risk mitigation and management tool (page 20) before conducting any public facing dialogue in the community.

[CARE Safer programming](): Safer Programming ensures that all of CARE's programs are safe for everyone to participate in. It refers to the preventative, practical actions that we take within our programs to identify and mitigate risks and prevent potential harm, that our programs could cause to program participants, either by our own staff, related personnel, partners or by the program activities.

[CI Safeguarding Policy (sharepoint.com)](): CARE has zero tolerance for sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse, and child abuse, and takes all allegations of sexual misconduct seriously. CARE responds diligently to incidents, providing support to survivors, rigorous investigations, and appropriate disciplinary action. CARE-wide Safeguarding Policy on Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse and Child Abuse Protection is based on international standards.

[Community Participatory Analysis tools](): These tools are used for starting up activities engaging girls and other community members before starting a program. The design can be informed by the ideas and needs of the girls.

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