

# ADVANCING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS IN UGANDA

## *How gender and social norms approaches are improving the lives of women and girls*

This document provides a comprehensive impact analysis of seven development projects in Uganda, namely Digital Sub-Wallets (DSW); Inclusive Market-based Development for Smallholder Farmers in Northern Uganda (DINU); Lifesaving GBV, Women's Leadership and SRMH Support for Refugees (GAC); National Policy, Regulatory and Program Support (NPRP); She Feeds the World; Women Adolescent and Youth Rights and Empowerment (WAY); and Women and Youth Resilience Project (WAYREP). Of the projects analyzed, four of them are closed and three are still ongoing. This brief aims to analyze the outcomes and learning questions developed by the CARE Uganda office while evaluating social norms and gender transformative impacts.

**Social norms are the perceived informal, mostly unwritten, rules that are made and shared by a given group or community and define acceptable, appropriate, and obligatory actions within the group.**

### **Headline stats**

SFtW: Women's access to production input resources increased from 25% to 38% with the promotion of producer marketing groups (PMGs), fostering food security, and good nutrition in households.

GAC: 75% of participants showed positive attitudes towards ending sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) compared to 63% at the baseline.

WAY: Young people aged 10-24 years are the biggest users of these SRHR services, contributing a 61.6% increment, which could be attributed to the effectiveness of mobilization activities at the community level carried out by the different platforms and structures of the program.

## Methodology

The collaboration between CARE and the Global Capstone program of George Washington University consisted of analyzing data from 7 of Uganda's programs. The country office volunteered to participate in the research and selected programs that aligned with the Strategic Initiative. The goal was to identify key findings and cross-cutting information across gender transformative and gender and social norms approaches.

To achieve our objectives, it was designed a comprehensive process that was divided into three distinct parts:

- 1. Harvesting Gender Transformative Evidence:** The initial focus was on conducting an extensive desk review of various project documents, reports, evaluations, theory of change, and gender markers. This allowed us to gather valuable gender transformative evidence that would serve as a foundation for our analysis and recommendations.
- 2. Sense-Making Process:** Following the evidence-gathering phase, a sense-making process was employed utilizing the Miro board. This visual platform facilitated the identification of similarities and differences between projects and countries. Projects were categorized based on their impact groups while retaining their country labels. For each project, the team extracted key information encompassing impact statistics, social norms that hinder progress for women and girls, the social norms approach employed, and the resulting impacts. Additionally, the Miro board included dedicated sections for each country and impact group, which provided a space for evaluators to document observed gaps, challenges, opportunities, and recommendations. The goal was to swiftly synthesize information within each grouping.
- 3. Briefing with Key Findings and Recommendations:** Having completed the sense-making process, the final step of the methodology consisted of briefly presenting the results for each country office and technical team involved. For this purpose, a concise document and a presentation were created highlighting the key findings and recommendations. This final output will effectively communicate the insights gained from the analysis, enabling stakeholders to understand the critical aspects and suggested actions for advancing gender transformative practices.

## Country Snapshots

### Who are we working with in Uganda?

The briefs were developed in two distinct analytical perspectives: country-focused and impact group focused.

## COUNTRY-FOCUSED

### **DSW Project (closed):**

The project tests innovative mobile financial technology to empower women in household financial decisions, generating evidence of its impacts on women's empowerment, education, food security, and health.

### **DINU Project (ongoing):**

The program aims to enhance food security, maternal and child nutrition, and household income in Karamoja Sub-region, Kitgum, and Katakwi District. The main goal is to support diversified food production, commercial agriculture, household resilience, and women's empowerment.

### **GAC Project (ongoing):**

The project proposes crucial protections, SRMH, and WLiE support to vulnerable refugee and host women and girls in Rhino and Imvepi refugee settlements, reaching them with life-saving interventions in GBV, SRMH, ASRH, and women's leadership in emergencies.

### **NPRP Project (closed):**

NPRP aimed to support women's access to savings and credit resources and increase women's financial autonomy. In addition, the project facilitated various skills training and financially supported female entrepreneurs via interest-free loans.

### **SftW Project (closed):**

The program aimed to improve food and nutrition security among vulnerable women and girls in Western Uganda. A large aspect of this program included increasing women's access to and control of financial and agricultural resources.

### **WAY Project (ongoing):**

The program aims to empower women and young people in northern Uganda, including refugees, through an integrated approach to gender equality, SRHR, GBV services, and socio-economic empowerment.

### **WAYREP Project (ongoing):**

The project aims to enhance the resilience of refugees and Ugandan women, girls, and youth by addressing pressing challenges such as urbanization, displacement, and youth unemployment.

## IMPACT GROUPS

### **Small-scale producers**

Women and girls who are living in rural areas in households where agriculture is a core source of income. This impact group typically does not have the power to grow adequate and nutritious sources of food. For small-scale producers, CARE aims to address the systematic exclusion of women in decision-making, leadership, and education. This includes increasing access and education on financial and entrepreneurial tools, nutrition, leadership, and farming practices.

### **Unbanked and Underbanked women and girls**

Lack of equitable access, control, and agency over economic resources and income-generating opportunities. CARE aims to address discriminatory legal and political structures, entrenched social norms, and exclusionary market systems. CARE's focus on women's economic justice includes promoting women's agency, supporting women's voice and leadership, supporting women's collectives and movements, male engagement, and social norm transformation.

## **What gender and social norms in Uganda are holding women and girls back?**

Uganda has several common gender and social norms that impact women and girls, rendering them particularly vulnerable within their community. They endure coercion, gender-based violence, and various forms of emotional victimization. Moreover, women bear the burden of domestic and unpaid labor, consuming a substantial amount of their time and effort. Furthermore, they encounter discrimination when it comes to accessing economic opportunities and owning assets. According to the observations made through the WAY's project, women and girls not only encounter daily challenges but struggle to access services and opportunities that would enable them to actively engage in social and economic development.

**“Adolescent pregnancy is not just a health issue, it is a development issue. When girls marry young, they drop out of school. The result is poor health, lost potential, lack of opportunities, constrained life options and poverty. Investing in adolescent girls, therefore, helps break this cycle of poverty.” (WAY project, MTR report)**

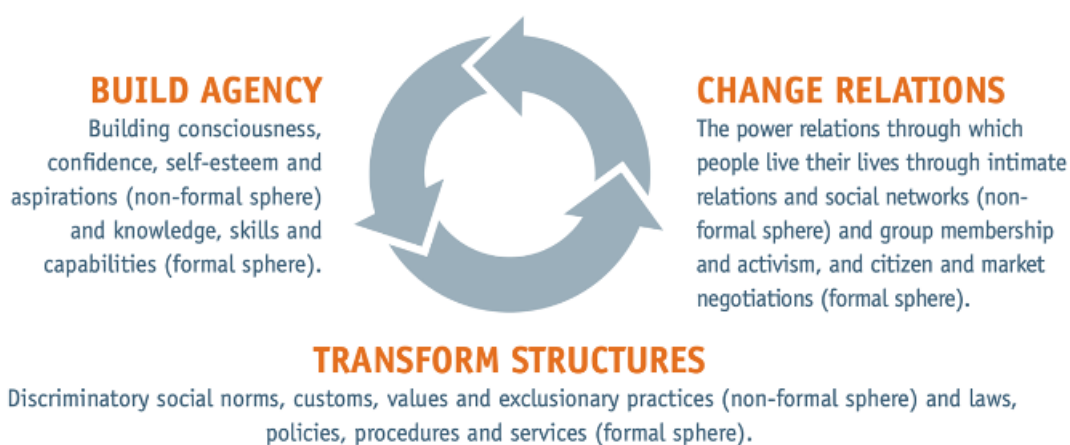
Across various projects, it has been revealed that women and girls in Uganda often rely on men for financial support, as gender and social norms hinder their involvement in entrepreneurship and education. Within communities, men and older married women typically hold greater decision-making power concerning finances, nutrition, reproductive health, and business. Projects like NPRP combat this by increasing women's agency and financial independence.

Harmful gender and social norms surrounding gender-based violence exacerbate violence against women and girls, creating obstacles to vital services like psychosocial support. Adolescent girls and young women face ongoing challenges related to sexual reproductive health, including sexually transmitted infections. Adolescent pregnancy extends beyond health concerns; it is a developmental issue resulting in educational dropout, compromised health, limited opportunities, constrained life choices, and poverty. Investing in adolescent girls offers a pathway to break the cycle of poverty. The GAC project aimed to combat these norms by promoting positive attitudes towards ending GBV.

## How social norms programming is addressing the root causes of gender inequality in Uganda

### What's effective in Uganda?

CARE's Gender Equality Framework (GEF) Theory of Change, represented below, aims to **build agency** of people of all genders and life stages, **change relations** between them, and **transform structures** so that they realize their full potential in their public and private lives and can contribute equally to and benefit.



With this framework in mind, Uganda's projects showed a set of approaches involving creating space for dialogue and reflection on gender norms, roles, and relationships at the household and community levels. The projects reviewed used facilitated dialogue interventions including Generation to Generation, Household Dialogues, SAA, and SASA. In the Development Initiative of Northern Uganda (DINU), the baseline reported 37.2% of women and girls experienced physical and mental abuse, the midterm evaluation indicated this reduced to 27.3%.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the effective approaches utilized in Uganda, this brief focuses on three projects that have demonstrated significant results.

## **She Feeds the World**

Though SFtW's main objective was to increase food and nutrition security, the program incorporated Role Model Men that successfully transformed power dynamics within households and communities. For example, 62% of male participants reported contributing to unpaid housework whereas previously, the baseline reported only 39% of men contributed to housework. This approach also led to positive shifts in perceptions of GBV, joint decision-making, and women's ownership of assets. The final evaluation revealed there was a 64% increase in female participants who had ownership of property such as houses, land, or livestock. Through coaching and mentoring, 503 women leaders participated in leadership training resulting in 94 of those women running for public office. In addition, 64 women took on new decision-making roles in their communities.

## **GAC**

Despite the challenging context of the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced food rations, and an increase in the influx of refugees, the GAC program not only achieved but surpassed most of its intended outcomes. One notable achievement was the significant increase in women's participation in formal and informal humanitarian decision-making spaces, with 82% of women participants reporting feeling able to meaningfully contribute, compared to a baseline of 14%.

The report highlighted the impact of interventions addressing GBV, Women's Leadership in Emergencies (WLiE), and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), demonstrating positive changes in behavior, attitudes, and practices that create a safer environment for women and girls. An impressive 91% of respondents indicated feeling safe and dignified at both the community and household levels. Additionally, the final report revealed a significant improvement in participants' positive attitudes towards ending sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), with 75% demonstrating support compared to 63% at the baseline.

CARE reached 34,350 individuals (13,934 women, 9,682 men, 7,301 girls, and 3,433 boys) through various GBV awareness sessions, male engagement initiatives, and other related outreach activities. Role Model Men and Boys (RMMB) played a vital role in challenging negative gender norms and practices contributing to GBV. The report indicated that 56% of men reported increased support for women's participation in leadership spaces, compared to 45% at the baseline. Some men exhibited positive changes, such as sharing household responsibilities and rejecting physical violence.

At the project's endline, 89% of surveyed women expressed confidence in negotiation and communication skills, surpassing the target of 75%. Mentorship and leadership trainings enhanced confidence, relationship building, leadership abilities, and public speaking, aiming to increase women's voice and meaningful participation. A total of 187 participants (150 women, 31 girls, 6 men) from 155 self-selected spaces and 32 communities benefitted from seven training sessions.

At the endline, 73% of women aged 15-49 reported confidence in decision-making regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use, and reproductive health care. This marked a significant increase from the baseline figure of 44% and came close to achieving the project target of 75%. CARE successfully met the project targets for women's confidence in decision-making related to sexual relations (76%) and reproductive healthcare (82%), though contraceptive decision-making reached 62% of women.

## **WAY**

Despite the ongoing nature of the project, WAY has demonstrated significant results, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic impacts. The project has witnessed a remarkable increase in the utilization of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) services across all intervention districts, as compared to the baseline report of 2016. Additionally, there has been notable improvement in the utilization of maternal health services, with an increase from 46.4% in 2016 to 57.5% in 2020.

WAY program, designed to empower women and young people in northern Uganda through integrated approaches encompassing gender equality, SRHR, GBV services, and socio-economic empowerment, is yielding significant outcomes. Notably, the program has witnessed a rise in referrals and reporting of GBV cases, thereby enhancing the GBV response. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) report highlights that a cumulative total of 17,117 individuals have been reached with multi-sectoral GBV services, with 11.4% of them being refugees.

The project also presents positive achievements on the outcome "Enhanced utilization of SRHR and GBV services among young people and women in Northern Uganda, including refugees, for healthy and productive lives." The MTR shows an achievement of 88% rate of beneficiaries receiving multi-sectoral GBV response services in the targeted districts. Additionally, the project has made significant strides in reducing the teenage pregnancy rate, with a decrease from 28.9% in 2014/15 to 22.3% in Acholi/Mid north and from 27.8% to 24.1% in West Nile. Among refugees, the teenage pregnancy rate stands at 19.7%.

**“Female refugee adolescents are especially vulnerable due to high risk of sexual violence, exploitation, and abuse, and early or forced marriage<sup>13</sup>. In addition, the efforts to strengthen the development of humanitarian nexus require a multi-sectoral approach in a region that hosts a significant number of players across sectors.” (WAY project, MTR report)**

Although only one of the three projects analyzed in this brief is still ongoing, a comparative analysis highlights significant achievements in their respective outcomes. Through a thorough examination of the reports and the formulation of future recommendations, these projects have demonstrated strong impacts. One particularly impactful aspect has been the emphasis on male engagement, which has played a crucial role in driving social and behavioral changes. By promoting constructive dialogues and fostering trust within the community and household settings, male engagement has yielded positive results and contributed to the overall success of the projects.

		WAY	SfTW	WAYREP	DINU	NPRP	DSW	GAC
AGENCY	Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Education	x			X			
	VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Association), YSLA (Youth Savings and Loans Association), or Savings and Credit Groups	x		X		X	x	x
	Income Generating Activity (IGA)	x	x					x
	Young People's Club	x						
	Women Lead in Emergencies (WLIE )							x
	Business Interventions*	x			X	X		
STRUCTURE (formal & informal)	Collaboration/Engagement with Government		x					
	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)	x						x
	Community Safety Action Group (CSAG)							
	Community Score Card (CSC)						x	x
	SAA			X				
RELATIONS	Community & Gender Dialogues	x						x
	Mentorship	x	x					x
	SASA	X		x				x
	Engaging Men and Boys*	x	x		X			x

\* Social business; business management; skills training

\* MAG (Male Action Group); RMMB (Role Model Men and Boys).



## How have impacts been better/more sustained because of SN approaches?

*Specific examples of how projects have had more/better/longer-term impact because they incorporated SN approaches, for example:*

- The Women Adolescents and Youth Rights and Empowerment (WAY) project provided critical access to credit through a revolving fund to more than 10,000 women's groups, benefiting almost 170,000 women entrepreneurs. A considerable proportion of women in Savings and Credit Cooperatives (SACCOS) and Common Interest Groups (CSCGs) reported the ability to borrow from formal financial institutions. Additionally, 60% of women who cultivated household land had sole decision-making power over what to plant. The Digital Sub Wallet (DSW) project found that financial counseling led to improved financial management within households, with women reporting increased participation and knowledge in decision-making. As a result, women gained more voice and financial autonomy, leading to increased social and economic empowerment. In the Development Initiative of Northern Uganda (DINU) project, an impressive 98.6% of smallholder farmers accessing financial products from Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) were women, indicating a significant improvement from the baseline of 54%.
- The Women, Adolescents, and Youth Rights and Empowerment (WAY) project has had a significant impact on reducing gender-based violence (GBV) in the community. In addition to empowering victims, reports indicate that there has been a positive change among perpetrators of GBV, with fewer incidents reported. The project has also addressed the issue of teenage pregnancy by providing guidance and counseling, resulting in fewer teen moms dropping out of school. Furthermore, the project has increased the utilization of maternal and family planning services. The Development Initiative of Northern Uganda (DINU) project has also contributed to reducing intimate partner violence, with 80.7% of the sampled population rejecting it.
- SFtW project trained 503 women leaders in leadership and psychosocial support, resulting in 96 women running for public office in 2021, with 64 winning positions at various levels. The project also led to a significant increase in women's property ownership, from 19% at baseline to nearly 83% at end-line, and a rise in the number of women in leadership roles, from 11% to 53.3%. Furthermore, the proportion of women making decisions regarding agricultural production increased from 34.3% to 95.9%.
- SFtW - Trained 158 Role Model Men. 2.4% of the sampled men compared to the baseline of 34.5% are involved in unpaid domestic care work.

**“Culturally, men are seen as powerful. The idea of male dominance is very high, when they support their women they are seen as weak people, bewitched by the women and collapse out of the approach (RMM) to identify with their peers. Some fall back from being role model men because of the challenge and mockery from fellow men.” (GAC project, key informant declaration)**

## CASE STUDY

### **Obj** Excerpt from the Story of Mr. Ategeka Benon

“We used to think that if a man goes to the kitchen and cooks he would be disrespected by his wife but right now, we know that even if a man cooks, he remains a man and you being the household head does not depart from you. In addition, if we both come from the garden, as the woman prepares food, as the man I can fetch water and bring it home, I can go and collect firewood because if we help each other, the food gets ready very fast. So engaging men in the kitchens helps us to overcome our fears and shyness about performing household chores.”

“Through the kitchen campaigns, we also learnt how to eat a balanced diet and we can cook delicious meals without frying it. We cooked both peeled and unpeeled plantain (matooke) and after cooking, we discovered the unpeeled ‘matooke’ has food nutrients unlike the peeled one because the matooke peels which are given to cows carry the nutrients so it’s the cows which get the nutrients. We learnt that if we serve unpeeled matooke with ‘dodo’ (greens) from the kitchen garden, one has eaten a balanced diet and hence the family members become healthier thus reducing sicknesses in the home.”

## Recommendations

### Organizational-level

- **To ensure the continuation of social norms changes, projects should include sustainability measures.** For example, the last year of a program could be used to transition to a local peer-led model to facilitate the sustainability of activities once a program is completed.
- **All projects across CARE should collect data that corresponds to the GEF indicators.** Requiring all CARE projects to collect data that corresponds to the GEF Indicators allows CARE to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches in a standardized assessment.

## Country-level

### Underbanked and Unbanked Women and Girls

- **Programs should work to reduce factors that can negatively impact participation of men.** In order to incentivize the participation of men and community members in program activities, programs should be mindful of factors that could affect attendance. For example, during peak harvest and growing seasons, families may be unable to allocate additional time to program activities.
- **Further research into integrating gender transformative approaches in schools could be beneficial for instilling positive norms during formative ages.** Integration of gender transformative approaches in schools could be beneficial for sustainable positive social norm change among primary and secondary students. The WAY project found that teachers were not identified as trusted people among reporters of GBV. There is room for exploring how to strengthen this relationship.
- **There needs to be a bigger effort made to partner with formal financial institutions and policymakers to reduce structural barriers.** Programs are currently helping this impact group to connect to informal financial institutions. However, we recommend that programs go further and help women and girls be connected to formal financial institutions and markets reduce structural barriers related to finance.

### Underbanked and Unbanked Women and Girls

- **Expand the scope of projects for digital/virtual access across different regions.** The SFtW project saw success when they adopted the use of digital platforms during COVID-19 lockdowns to continue activities. This also ensured the delivery of extension services on good agricultural practices, training of program participants, and information sharing between the participants and the program staff.
- **Commit to long-term and continuous engagement in household and community dialogues.** Long-term and continuous engagement in household and community gender dialogues is crucial for achieving lasting change. In WAY, dialogues greatly impacted how men and women viewed GBV and SRH. It not only helped achieve the project's objectives but also enhanced participants' involvement, particularly in regard to household duties. This ultimately eased the burden on women and reduced their domestic workload.

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- **Esther Watts**, Senior Director Gender Justice

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Mariana Franco (author) - [marianafranco@gwu.edu](mailto:marianafranco@gwu.edu)

Nady Soe (author) - [soenady99@gmail.com](mailto:soenady99@gmail.com)

Julianna Gil (co-author) - [juliannagil011@gwu.edu](mailto:juliannagil011@gwu.edu)

Jasmine Coombs (co-author) - [jasmine.coombs@gmail.com](mailto:jasmine.coombs@gmail.com)

Sarah Eckhoff (CARE supervisor)

Hilawit Gebrehanna (CARE supervisor)

Dr. Maryam Deloffre (GWU supervisor)



**Elliott School of  
International Affairs**

**THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY**