

# ADVANCING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS FOR SMALL-SCALE PRODUCERS

## *How gender and social norms approaches are improving the lives of women and girl small-scale producers*

This document provides a comprehensive impact analysis of six development projects in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda, namely Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome (JANO), Water for Food Security, Women's Empowerment and Environmental Protection (SWEEP), Titukulane, Tizidalire, Food and Nutrition Security Project Phase IV (FSNP), and She Feeds the World (SFtW). Of the projects analyzed three of them are closed and three are still ongoing. This brief aims to analyze the outcomes and learning questions developed by each of the four mentioned CARE country offices 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

**Mitigating the burden of household chores and increased opportunities for women and girls.**

Engaging in couples- and community dialogues is effective in promoting collaborative gender roles in households and communities. Out of six projects, three employed this approach, leading to a direct increase in wives and husbands sharing household chores - previously the sole responsibility of women and girls. Ethiopia's SWEEP reported that over 90% of participating households credit the increase of social, economic, and leadership participation and assertiveness to the project's dialogue sessions on decision-making processes.

**Community awareness and group dynamics are key for women and girls' participation.**

Women's empowerment and gender dynamics were improved due to an increased number of women participating in the decision-making process and controlling resources within households. Tizidalire in Malawi provided seed capital from income generating approaches which supported women to apply their entrepreneurial skills in the marketplace and earn an income. SFtW in Uganda reported 64 women winning leadership roles after 96 women ran for public office in 2021.

### Methodology

CARE aims to lead the sector in delivering gender-equal impact across all programs. The GoDeeper Initiative was developed as a learning process to determine if there is evidence that CARE's projects include social norms change that leads to gender transformative impact. CARE developed the Learning Agenda Theory of Change with 3 goals. One of which is: to support 25M women small-scale producers in the Global South to have the power to grow adequate and nutritious food.

The collaboration between CARE and the Global Capstone program of George Washington University consisted of analyzing data from 6 programs. Country offices in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda expressed interest in the learning process and volunteered to participate in the research. The country offices selected programs that aligned with the Strategic Initiative and formulated key learning questions. The goal was to identify key findings and cross-cutting information across gender transformative and social norms approaches.

To achieve our objectives, a comprehensive process was designed and 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, theories of change, and gender marker evaluations. This allowed us to gather valuable 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 identified key information including impact statistics, social norms that hinder progress for women and girls, social norms approaches employed, and the resulting impacts. Additionally, the Miro boards included dedicated sections for each country and impact group, providing 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 presenting the results to each country office and the technical teams involved. For this purpose, a concise document and a presentation highlighting the key findings and recommendations were delivered. This final output effectively communicated the insights gained from the analysis, enabling stakeholders to understand the critical aspects and suggested actions for advancing gender transformative practices.

## Impact group snapshot

**Small-scale producers** are women and girls living in rural areas or 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. CARE aims to address the systematic exclusion of women in decision-making, leadership, and education— which includes increasing access and education of financial and entrepreneurial tools, nutrition, leadership, and farming practices.

<b>BANGLADESH</b>	<p><b>JANO (ongoing   2019 - present)</b></p> <p>JANO, or “Joint Action for Nutrition Outcome”, is focused on contributing to ending malnutrition in children under five-years of age, together with addressing the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women and adolescent girls.</p>
<b>ETHIOPIA</b>	<p><b>SWEEP (closed   2017 - 2021)</b></p> <p>SWEEP, or “Water for Food Security, Women’s Empowerment and Environmental Protection”, addresses the socio-economic and environmental problems causing food insecurity in East and West Belesa Woredas of Central Gondar Zone, Amhara Regional State.</p>

<b>MALAWI</b>	<p><b>TIZIDALIRE (closed   2019 - 2022)</b></p> <p>TIZIDALIRE focused on reducing poverty, improving livelihoods and enhancing resilience of rural households sustainably. Ultra-poor graduation and scaling are key components of Tizidalire. Under the graduation component, Tizidalire supported the graduation of the poor from poverty or helped reduce poverty for the ultra-poor households with improved resilience and livelihoods.</p>
	<p><b>TITUKULANE (ongoing   2019 - present)</b></p> <p>TITUKULANE aims to increase diversified, sustainable, and equitable incomes for ultra-poor, chronically vulnerable households, and women and youth. Additionally, the project focused on the improvement of nutritional status among children under 5, adolescent girls and women of reproductive age. Titukulane aims to increase institutional and local capacities to reduce risk and increase resilience among ultra-poor and chronically vulnerable households in alignment with the National Resilience Strategy.</p>
	<p><b>FSNP Phase IV (ongoing   2015 - 2024)</b></p> <p>FSNP Phase IV, or “Food and Nutrition Security Project”, focuses on resilience building, in line with the overall FNSP program— CARE’s strategic plan and the Government of Malawi (GoM)’s National Resilience Strategy. FNSP focused on the improvement of nutritional status and resilience to food crises of people living in Dedza and Salima districts who are vulnerable to nutrition insecurity, particularly women of reproductive age and young children. In Phase IV, the project focused on deepening and sustaining the impact achieved in the previous three phases while strengthening household resilience to shocks and stresses.</p>
<b>UGANDA</b>	<p><b>SFtW (closed   2018 - 2022)</b></p> <p>SFtW, or “She Feeds the World”, aims to increase food security, and build the resilience and incomes of vulnerable women and girls in two districts of Kyegegwa and Kyenjojo in Western Uganda.</p>

## What social norms are holding women and girls back?

Among the identified common social norms hindering the progress of women and girls, the most significant are inequitable incomes and the unequal distribution of household chores. In the reviewed projects, it was apparent that communities and families expect women to solely dedicate themselves to household work and childcare. This lack of shared household labor consumes a significant amount of women's energy and time. Men and boys are ridiculed for doing household tasks and/or engaging in childcare. **SWEEP** in Ethiopia indicated that women spend more than eight hours on household activities. Furthermore, men are generally expected to be the sole decision-makers and economic actors in the community. This results in women having a lack of access to financial resources and lower/limited participation in decision-making processes for and in the home. **SWEEP** reported that only 43.2% of women equally participate in the household’s financial decision-making.

Women and girls often find themselves being undernourished. **FSNP** in Malawi highlighted that women have less access to nutritious food and healthcare. This is so because socially women and girls are expected to eat last after everyone in the family. In situations and/or communities where food is scarcely available, women often delay when they eat meals, eat the least nutritious food, and/or do not eat at all— which is extremely dangerous for

pregnant and lactating women. Furthermore, women and girls have limited or lower decision-making power regarding agricultural production, and oftentimes have little to no access to agricultural resources to take control over their nutritional intake.

Gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful traditional practices (HTPs), such as female genital mutilation, child marriage, sexual harassment, and physical abuse, present significant barriers for women and girls' agency and empowerment. GBV can include "threats of such acts, coercion and arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether it occurs in public or private life." The program **SWEEP** in Ethiopia observed that 37.2% of partnered women and girls—ages 15 and older—reported being subjected to psychological, physical, and/or sexual violence by current or former intimate partners. However, women and girls are expected to keep such experiences within their homes and to themselves. They are also socially expected to submit and follow the desires of their husbands/intimate partners. Moreover, the stigma against unmarried women and girls (qomo-qar) often leads to forced child marriages, and unmarried girls being viewed as a curse to their family. This reinforces the perception that women and girls are inferior to men and boys, creating a significant disparity in the perceptions of their work and value.

Overall, these social norms continue to hold women and girls back, limiting their freedoms and economic and personal opportunities. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that tends to the root causes of these norms and involves all stakeholders in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. This includes increasing access to education and training, strengthening the participation of women in decision-making processes, and promoting the recognition and value of women's work.

### **What does this mean for gender equality?**

Unequal division of household chores is a significant factor that reinforces negative gender roles, allowing men and boys to continue holding the decision-making power while female household members are excluded. Women's labor, both paid and unpaid, is frequently undervalued, with their work in the home and agriculture being considered less important than men's work outside the home. This gender disparity has severe consequences for female small-scale producers, especially those who are of reproductive age. Women's limited assets, income and savings, small landholdings, and limited participation in agricultural activities and negotiations make them vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity. These social norms further marginalize and undervalue women, despite their substantial contributions to household and agricultural activities.

### **How is social norms programming addressing the root causes of gender inequality for small-scale producers?**

#### **Which gender and social norms approaches have proved effective for small-scale producers.**

The analyzed programs showed significant improvement against harmful gender and social norms. To provide a better overview of which methods led to the best results, social norms approaches used across all projects in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda were identified and grouped into three thematic categories.

**Dialogue and reflection:** Reflective gender, household, community, intergenerational, and male engagement dialogues were used across several projects. Social Analysis and Action, Community Support Groups (CSG), situation analysis, and Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) strategies also contributed to changes in behavior and communication between participating men and women. Projects that used these approaches observed partners shared the burden of domestic chores previously limited to women, as well as cooking and plowing. Reflective gender dialogues used in Malawi's **FSNP** helped 60% of 20,500 mothers and participating men become more knowledgeable about necessary nutrition and hygiene practices for women and girls.

**Titukulane** in Malawi conducted several types of dialogue and reflection sessions to discuss topics related to norms around decision-making and gender division in household labor, as well as how men can further support women in income-generating activities. Ethiopia's **SWEEP** saw the percentage of households believing that child marriage is a harmful practice and negatively affects the lives of girls increased from 92.5% to 96%.

**Empowerment, education, and leadership:** Teachers participating in Bangladesh's **JANO** were trained on topics related to gender equity. This project also implemented gender equity movements in schools, annual school days, and student clubs which educated male and female students on inequalities regarding hygiene and nutrition, sexual reproductive health, leadership, and division of labor inside the home. These interventions resulted in greater awareness amongst 287,420 adolescents (65% girls). Furthermore, formal structural change occurred by bridging the gap between women and the market by having three private sector partners ensure they provide better access to quality inputs and extension services. In **JANO**, women's agency increased due to the promotion of knowledge of climate-smart agricultural and dairy management practices, and engagement with other women entrepreneurs. **FSNP** in Malawi addressed GBV and other social protection vulnerabilities by enhancing women's economic empowerment and practice of recommended nutrition and health behaviors. This project saw 12,500 households in the district of Salima improve their access to food and 75% of 20,500 women received support and developed the ability to grow different crop varieties.

**SFtW** in Uganda conducted leadership training and psychosocial support, as well as awareness campaigns on gender issues via community referrals and talk shows. 503 women leaders were trained, 96 women ran for public office in 2021, and 64 out of the 94 women who ran for office won leadership positions at the village, parish, sub-country, and district levels. The project saw an almost 61% increase in women participating or solely leading household decision making regarding agricultural production. 158 men were trained and educated on gender equality. **Tizidalire** in Malawi used a poverty graduation model and EASPM which reduced poverty rates across 37.9% of female-headed households— with 42.9% of households on track to graduate. This project's approaches helped women gain access to seed capital and financial markets, invest in income-generating activities, increase their nutrition, keep children in school, and provide women with more independence and control over resources. **Titukulane** in Malawi conducted social norms interventions/activities that have improved results and impact in different outcome areas, including women's engagement in agronomic practices (5,482 female farmers) and applying management practices/technologies to post-harvesting handling (5,948 female farmers). Additional programming included vocational and entrepreneurship skills (608 girls) and VSLA groups, financial literacy, and EASPM (65,091 girls). 29,647 women were educated on WASH and nutrition and 5,983 PLWs were reached using nutrition-specific messaging/interventions. **Titukulane** collaborated with the Malawi Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services to provide access to climate information to 2,606 women. 13,846 women were encouraged to adapt to climate change and 3,302 women were trained in DRM.

**Social protection:** Projects used approaches such as...

- Increasing nutrition-sensitive social protection and diversity,
- Conducting situation analyses,
- Holding business meetings between women entrepreneurs and the private sector,
- Social Analysis and Action (SAA),
- Community women's leadership influence, and
- Building government capacity in GBV and gender mainstreaming.

In Ethiopia's **SWEEP**, SAA had a notable positive impact on the local community's gender equality and the prevention of GBV and HTP. This project led to significant changes



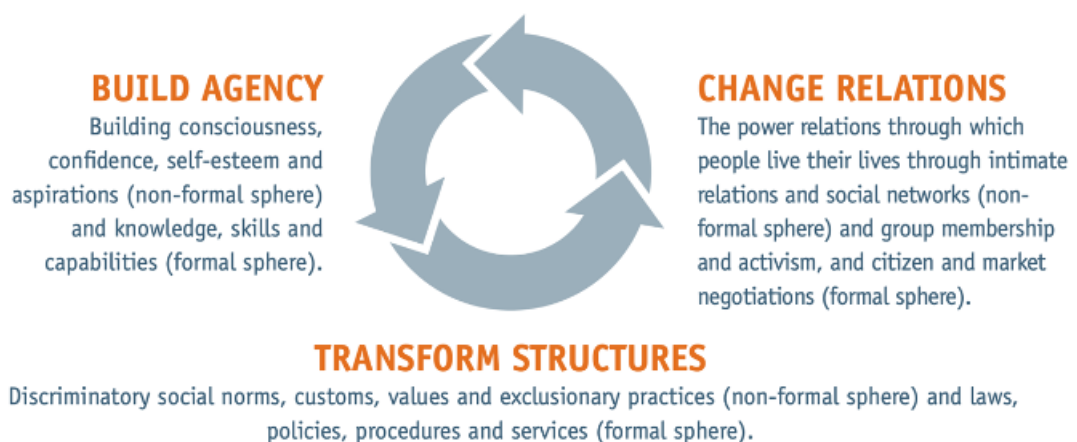
in behavior and communication. SWEEP saw 50% of leadership positions in the 30 operating SAA groups become occupied by women— where topics like gender equality, household chores, childcare and development, and prevention of GBVs and HTPs were discussed. They observed a decrease of 6.8% in reported incidents of sexual harassment and abuse. SWEEP played a crucial role in building women’s self-confidence, enabling them to speak up in public meetings and assert themselves in dialogues and decision-making processes. **JANO** in Bangladesh saw 16,595 farmers (70% women) be trained in climate-smart agricultural techniques. In addition, information and communication technology platforms were established at the local level to connect relevant government departments and increase awareness of community members on nutrition interventions. **SftW** in Uganda improved the capacity of the government to address GBV and implement gender mainstreaming via mentoring and coaching sessions directed toward women.

Out of the six programs analyzed, 100% of them used dialogue approaches that showed significant results in building trust, facilitating dialogues within households and the community, and reinforcing the importance of social engagement when building awareness and changing gender and social norms. Furthermore, four of the six projects reviewed used specific approaches for male engagement resulting in not only their active involvement in gender and social norms changes but contribution to community awareness. For example, in **SftW** in Uganda, “Role Model Men have transformed power dynamics within the household and community. As a result of this program, 62% of men began helping with unpaid work (up from 39% at baseline).”

## How social norms programming is addressing the root causes of gender inequality for small-scale producers?

### What's effective in Ethiopia.

CARE’s Gender Equality Framework Theory of Change, represented below, focused on three domains. Building the **agency** of people of all genders and life stages, **changing relations** between them, and **transforming structures** so that they realize their full potential in their public and private lives and can contribute equally to and benefit equally from social, political, and economic development. A wide range of interventions spanning agency, structure, and relations were implemented, with the most notable approaches and impact observed in the relations category.



Positive changes in **agency** signify an increase in self-efficacy, strengthened capacities, confidence, and negotiation skills among women and girls. The interventions yielded significant outcomes: Firstly, women gained access to seed capital, enabling them to invest in income-generating activities. This had a ripple effect on various aspects of their lives, including improved nutrition, increased school attendance among children, and enhanced independence and control over resources for women. Additionally, the graduation model played a vital role in facilitating women's access to financial markets, further empowering them economically.

Positive changes in **relations** were demonstrated by heightened community awareness, fostering more equal relationships, and positive shifts in gender norms. A notable transformation was observed within households, as previously gender-restricted domestic chores, such as cooking and plowing fields, became shared responsibilities. This not only fostered an increase in dialogue and awareness regarding GBV and other vulnerabilities but also contributed to more equitable household dynamics. Reflective gender dialogues played a crucial role in empowering mothers (alongside participating men) by enhancing their knowledge of crucial practices. This, in turn, led to improved self-confidence, enabling them to actively participate in public meetings, assert themselves in dialogues, and contribute to decision-making processes.

Positive changes in **structures** were evidenced by increased availability and access to quality services, along with improved policies supporting the rights and capabilities of underbanked women and girls. For instance, a significant number of farmers, with women comprising 70% of the participants, received training in climate-smart agricultural techniques. Similarly, teachers in primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh underwent training to impart knowledge on gender equity, health, hygiene, and nutrition.

These multifaceted interventions have brought about tangible improvements, empowering women, promoting gender equality, and strengthening communities by addressing key aspects of agency, relations, and structures.

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

**Community, gender, and household dialogues** have led to a significant shift in gender roles. Families have started sharing household chores previously considered to be the responsibility of women and girls. Due to this approach, women have taken up activities like plowing. Men were seen supporting their spouses by cooking, cleaning, and collecting firewood, therefore allowing women to access productive economic resources. Uganda's **SfTW** baseline, for example, stated that only 19% of women owned property. This figure increased to nearly 83%. The program also observed about 42% more women in managerial or senior decision-making leadership roles in their communities, and about 61% more women making decisions regarding agricultural production. Malawi's **Tizidalire** empowered women by providing them access to seed capital that was previously unavailable because of SN's and systemic barriers. The women utilized the capital to invest in income-generating activities, resulting in a steady income that made a positive impact on their families. The increased income has led to better nutrition and overall health, improved educational outcomes for children, and greater independence for women. Moreover, Tizidalire's graduation model enabled women to access financial markets and control resources.

**Leadership influences, youth and community discussions, and education models** empowered women to avoid over-saturated markets and focus on sustainable ventures. This was done through psychosocial support meant to increase their knowledge and investment in profitable businesses that are realistic for them. There has been continued success for women, allowing them to keep investing in livestock and/or infrastructure and further expanding their businesses.

**SAA members** in Ethiopia's **SWEEP** project achieved remarkable progress in enhancing awareness and mitigating detrimental gender-related traditional practices such as GBV, female genital mutilation, and early marriage. As a result, they effectively tackled challenges related to gender equality, leading to improved resource access for women and their equal involvement in decision-making within their families and communities.

## CASE STUDY - TIZIDALIRE

Project staff, government extension workers, and community volunteers conducted coaching and mentoring sessions in several districts in Malawi. The sessions covered the challenges of running a business and managing their daily lives and the information sought to provide them with a way to move away from the “ultra-poor” economic level. These interventions helped participants build the skills and knowledge needed to identify and address the challenges households face when running businesses. It also provides households with access to services in the event they need further assistance in areas outside the range of the project’s location.

The photograph shows Magret Sakala, Tizidalire participant, in TA Maganga, with her goat khola located in the backyard of her home. Magret received coaching and mentoring from Tizidalire staff in addition to monthly home visits– aimed at “reinforcing household behavior change on issues that [affect] household health, nutrition, and economic status.” Participants like Magret were encouraged to build backyard gardens and/or plant different tree varieties around their homes. In addition, participants were encouraged to raise small livestock (e.g., chickens, guinea fowl, ducks, and rabbits) as additional food sources. Magret stands as an example of the impact made by the coaching and mentoring sessions conducted by Tizidalire staff and volunteers.



## Recommendations

### Impact Group level

1. **Enhancing Access to Seed Capital for Poverty Alleviation.** To enable households to escape poverty, it is essential to increase their access to seed capital. As evident by CARE Malawi's Tizidalire program.
2. **Broaden the reach of digital/virtual access initiatives to include diverse regions.** In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Uganda's SFtW adopted digital platforms during the pandemic to expand its reach to diverse regions across the country. This ensured the continuation of extension services, which focused on promoting effective agricultural practices, training program participants, and facilitating information sharing between participants and program staff. By scaling up digital platforms, CARE can effectively support poverty alleviation efforts and empower communities. Additionally, digital presence and accessibility is a viable alternative to ensure the continuity and sustainability of projects; as well as, foster community awareness, enhance literacy on gender-related subjects, and facilitate meaningful connections and exchanges with various stakeholders.
3. **Commit to long-term and continuous engagement in household and community dialogues.** This impact group experienced the greatest changes because of gender dialogues. It not only helped achieve the project's objectives, but also enhanced participants' involvement, particularly regarding household duties— easing the burden on women and reducing their domestic workload. Effective dialogue sessions can create significant changes in social behaviors and norms that affect gender equality.
4. **Programs should work to reduce factors that can negatively impact the participation of men, extended family members (mother-in-laws, grandparents, etc.), and other influential community members.** Programs should be mindful of factors that can reduce attendance



at activities, such as peak growing seasons. Male stakeholders are highly influential and hold immense decision-making power so increasing incentives and attendance is essential for progress. For example, Bangladesh's **Tipping Point**— focused on unbanked and underbanked women and girls— saw success when multiple community stakeholders, such as religious leaders and politicians, participated in the program activities.

## **Organizational Level**

1. **To ensure the continuation of social norms changes, projects should include sustainability measures.** During the design and implementation of a program, programs should focus on the sustainability of social norms change. 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.
2. **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.

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