ADVANCING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA

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

This document provides a comprehensive impact analysis of three development projects in Ethiopia, namely SWEEP, BERHAN, and Advancing Women Enterprise. While SWEEP has already concluded, BERHAN and AWE are currently ongoing. These brief aims to analyze the outcomes and learning questions developed by CARE Ethiopia 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

AWEs' program enhances 3,000 women-led micro and small enterprises in Addis Ababa with skills and finance, and addresses harmful social norms.

SWEEP Project focused on joint coordination and efficient resource utilization, supported 152% more initial target VSLA beneficiaries, and raised 30% of water scheme resources from community contributions.

BERHAN project's success in preventing FGC and early marriage: 78% of SAA Groups developed an action plan, and 84.9% executed their plan. 89.2% of respondents report prevention or stopping of FGC es, 74.4% for EM. FGC practitioners participate in alternative income-generating training, 60% of respondents reported stopping this practice in project implementation areas.

Methodology

The collaboration between CARE and the Global Capstone program of George Washington University consisted of analyzing data from 3 of Ethiopia's. 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 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 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 highlighted key information including 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, 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 briefly presenting the results for each country office and the 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 Ethiopia?

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

SWEEP Project (closed):
The SWEEP project, which stands for Water for Food Security, Women's Empowerment and Environmental Protection tackles various issues leading to food insecurity in West Belesa, addressing inadequate water supply, low productivity, environmental degradation, social barriers, gender inequality, and livelihood opportunities.

BERHAN Project (ongoing):
The BERHAN project focuses on eliminating Early Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation in Ethiopia via social norm change approaches and increasing women's access to finance. This project is on-going.

AWE (ongoing):
The Advancing Women Enterprise (AWE) project focuses on increasing women's access to financial and entrepreneurial tools and opportunities. AWE also has a gender transformative aspect aiming to change negative social norms. This project is ongoing.

Small-scale producers
This project focused on small-scale producers defined as women and girls who are 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. 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 social norms in Ethiopia are holding women and girls back?

In Ethiopia, several social norms negatively impact unbanked and underbanked women and girls and small-scale producers. This includes the devaluation of women and girls that leads to harmful traditional practices such as early marriage of girls and the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). As girls age, they are valued as less eligible for marriage, and this can lead to early marriages where families can ask for higher bride prices.
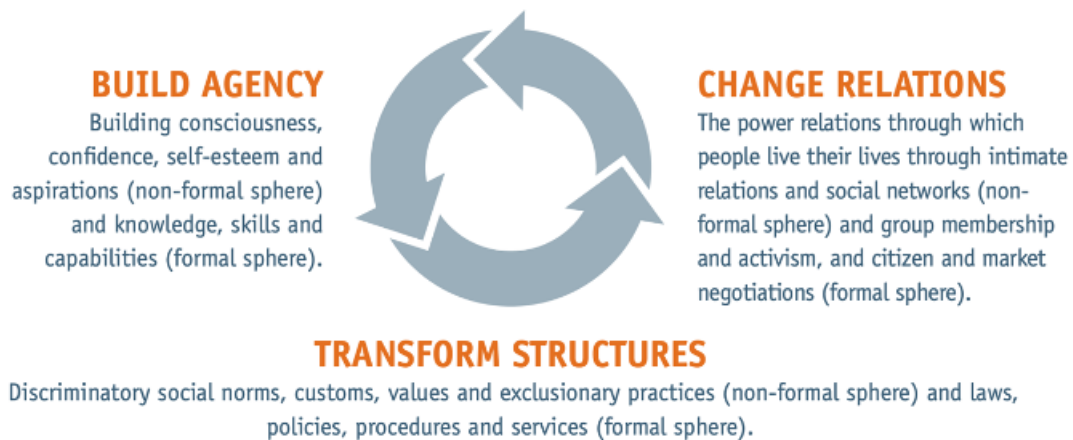
BERHAN's Proposal stated "Girls from poor households, diverse families, and widowed families are most vulnerable to EM, as marriage is seen as a means of increasing resources and strengthening family ties. Marriage requests from better-off families with land are welcomed as a means of alleviating poverty". For example, Amhara's median age of marriage is 14.7 years old—the lowest in the country—and the median age of first birth is 18.1 (compared to 23 for Addis Ababa). In addition, SWEEP's Baseline Report stated, "close to 77% and 62% of household respondents respectively reported that FGM and Child Marriage (CM) are harmful to young girls and women."

Because women and girls are perceived as lesser than men, this results in limitations on their financial and household decision-making power. Lastly, women are mostly limited to domestic unpaid labor, restricting them from pursuing entrepreneurial activities. Often, the sole burden of domestic unpaid labor does not allow time for work outside the home, resulting in financial dependence on men.

How social norms programming is addressing the root causes of gender inequality in ethiopia
What's effective in Ethiopia?

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.

BUILD AGENCY
Building consciousness, confidence, self-esteem and aspirations (non-formal sphere) and knowledge, skills and capabilities (formal sphere).

CHANGE RELATIONS
The power relations through which people live their lives through intimate relations and social networks (non-formal sphere) and group membership and activism, and citizen and market negotiations (formal sphere).

TRANSFORM STRUCTURES
Discriminatory social norms, customs, values and exclusionary practices (non-formal sphere) and laws, policies, procedures and services (formal sphere).

In light of this Framework, Ethiopia's projects showed a set of approaches involving gender transformation and creating space among men and women for dialogue and reflection on gender norms, roles, and relationships at the household and community levels. The projects reviewed used some form of facilitated dialogue space including Community Dialogues, Social Analysis and Action (SAA), Girl Groups, male engagement, and gender-based violence mitigation.

"SAA group discussions help women to express their views and share social, economic, and cultural issues. SAA discussions cover crime prevention, health, water scheme management, sanitation and hygiene, HTPs and GBVs, gender issues, children education, and other socio-economic and cultural issues. The local administration takes some of the problems we discussed in our group to act upon." *[FGD, in East Belesa 2020, SWEEP Project]*

		SWEEP	BERHAN	AWE
AGENCY	Sexual and Reproductive Education		X	
	VSLA (Village Savings and Loan Association)	X	X	X
	Income Generating Activity (IGA)	X		
	Business Training		X	X
STRUCTURE	Male Engagement	X		X
	Gender Equity and Diversity (GED)		X	
	Gender Mainstreaming in schools, healthcare, and financial institutions		X	
RELATIONS	Community & Gender Dialogues	X	X	
	Girl Groups		X	
	Social Analysis & Action (SAA	X	X	X

SWEEP

The SWEEP project employed a range of strategies aiming to empower marginalized groups and enhance community capacity, emphasizing community involvement and household dynamics. The final report revealed a significant improvement in communities' perception of women's leadership potential within the watershed, WASH and Irrigation Management Committees, as well as VSLAs. The evaluation highlighted a significant finding in which 93% of the beneficiary households acknowledged that women in the target group can engage in leadership roles. This is a notable increase compared to the baseline (56%) and the MTR (87%).

Additionally, the project effectively utilized the SAA approach as a powerful tool to challenge detrimental societal norms that negatively impact women's lives in various contexts. SWEEP's final report highlighted noteworthy achievements at both the household and community levels, demonstrating how the intervention encouraged women's active participation in meetings involving conflict resolution, resource utilization, and the eradication of harmful traditional practices like child marriage and female genital cutting.

BERHAN

The project aimed to increase the rejection of and improved response to FGC and EM by community members, service providers, and Government authorities in Amhara. The Mid-Term Evaluation of BERHAN showed that SAA and Behavioral Change Communication Efforts increased the confidence of adolescent girls under the age of 18 to refuse marriage. The baseline was 60% and this increased to 94% by the mid-term report. These approaches within communities also led to a 14.1 increase in men refraining from subjecting their children to FGC. Overall, 78% of participant respondents reported that their SAA group developed an action plan to prevent FGC and EM and 84.9% said that their groups executed their action plan.

AWE

Overall, the project aimed to enhance pre-existing women-owned enterprises and build an enabling environment for the creation of new women-owned enterprises. The Baseline reported that 80.5% of respondents agreed that they had a prevalence of harmful social norms that restrict women entrepreneurs among community members. Looking at the Year 1 Report, social norm change approaches such as SAA and male engagement are being implemented leading to 67% of respondents agreeing that spouses/male relatives and communities are open and supportive to women entrepreneurs.

While only one of the three projects has been closed, a limited comparison between them reveals that all three of them employed the VSLA approach alongside Social Analysis and Action (SAA). This combination aimed to promote not only women's economic participation but also their social empowerment. The final evaluation of the SWEEP project stated, "The implementation of SAA has improved the local community's understanding and action in gender equality and in preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful Traditional Practices (HTPs)."

"The attitude towards female genital mutilation (FGM) and abortion showed positive changes. In our kebele, due to the SAA discussions and action, out of the 9 child marriage propositions, we stopped 7 cases," said one of the BERHAN's focus group discussants.

Male Engagement in SAA was used in AWE and saw significant positive social norm changes among men. For example, 67% of respondents agreed that their male relatives and spouses were open to and supportive of women entrepreneurs. Specifically targeting men in social norm change initiatives has proven effective at social norm change at the family and community level.

How have impacts been better/more sustained because of SN approaches?
Specific examples of how projects have had more/better/longer-term impact because of incorporated SN approaches, for example:

After analyzing the three programs implemented in Ethiopia, it is evident that social norms approaches have had a positive impact on various aspects of women's lives. This includes their increased participation in household financial decision-making, income-generating activities, and enhanced ability to refuse unwanted sexual advances. Additionally, the use of social analysis and action (SAA) groups has led to changes in behavior and communication between men and women. Men have started to share household chores with their spouses, and women have started to take on tasks that were previously considered the sole responsibility of men, such as plowing.

Moreover, the SAA groups have been effective in raising awareness about gender inequality and the prevention of gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices. As a result, the BERHAN project showed the percentage of men refraining from subjecting their children to female genital cutting (FGC) has increased from 13.6% to 27.7%, and the number of FGC practitioners has decreased. The groups have also developed action plans to prevent FGC and early marriage, and the majority of respondents reported that FGC and early marriage cases were either prevented or stopped in their community through the project.

Furthermore, the project has contributed to the development of women's self-confidence, leadership, and assertiveness in decision-making processes. More women are legally registering their businesses, and spouses, male relatives, and community members are becoming more supportive of women entrepreneurs. However, there is still work to be done to address gender inequality in terms of equal sharing of household responsibilities and decision-making.

In summary, social norms approaches have had sustained impacts on various aspects of women's lives, including their participation in decision-making, their ability to say no to unwanted sexual advances, and the prevention of harmful traditional practices. The use of SAA groups has been particularly effective in promoting gender equality and raising awareness about gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices.

CASE STUDY
Advancing Women Enterprise

Ethiopia: Meskerem Nigussie is 29-year-old woman who, along with 4 other women, created an Enterprise called Meskerem Frehiwot. This school feeding program was made possible because CARE collaborated with the Ethiopian government to increase financial access and loans to women entrepreneurs without collateral. More specifically, the loans enabled these women to purchase a stove, and an oven, and covered various start-up costs that increased their chances of running a successful business.

Gaining access to loans without collateral was pivotal as it was uncommon for women to have access to such opportunities. Meskerem stated "Looking back on the past year and a half with CARE at our side, the most significant change in our lives as business owners is being able to access big loans without any collateral. We also took a series of training that has helped us in better managing our finances. Change to us is beyond the material or the amount of money that we made because of this program; it is rather the empowerment that we gained to become capable."

Recommendations
Organizational-level

- To ensure continuation of social norms changes, projects should include sustainability measures. During the design and implementation of a program, programs should aim to ensure the continuation and 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.
- 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 the participation of men and community members**. 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, men 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.
- **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. VSLAs, for example, work to provide households and women access to savings and loans. However, we recommend that programs go further and help women and girls be connected to formal financial institutions and policymakers to reduce structural barriers related to finance.

Small-Scale Producers
- **Expand the scope of projects for digital/virtual access across different regions.** Adopting the use of digital platforms extends the reach of program services, training, and information sharing between the participants and the program staff. The COVID-19 pandemic caused major program shortfalls, but investment in digital/virtual programming may aid in increasing participation.
- **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. Small-scale producers experienced the greatest changes as a result of gender dialogues, which involved open discussion, heightened awareness, and participation of women and members of their households. It not only helped achieve the project's objectives but also enhanced participants' involvement, particularly regarding household duties. This ultimately eased the burden on women and reduced their domestic workload.

Acknowledgements

A special thanks to the following individuals, CARE offices and teams, and those who provided their time and effort to support the Capstone team through this program with guidance and essential support.

Developed by: Global Capstone IDS, GWU & CARE - 2023

Mariana Franco (author) - marianafranco@gwu.edu
Nady Soe (author) - soenady99@gmail.com
Julianna Gil (co-author) - juliannagil011@gwu.edu
Jasmine Coombs (co-author) - 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