

Gender Tools in Practice

Gender Marker: Lessons from CARE’s Country Offices

CARE’s **Gender Marker** is an assessment tool used for learning, dialogue, and program quality. The Gender Marker was designed for easy and effective use by all program staff to assess and improve program quality throughout the project life cycle (e.g., design, implementation, and evaluation).

This brief reflects on the many ways this is used in practice to improve program quality for gender, sharing insights from teams in Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Malawi.



CARE’s **Go Deeper initiative** reflects our commitment to center gender in all we do. Through this initiative country teams work alongside CARE USA’s Gender Justice team to embed gender equality throughout their programs and operations, and to surface promising practices for how they achieve this. The insights shared below arose from a Go Deeper Learning Exchange on the use of the Gender Marker. CARE uses learning exchanges as a way for teams around the world to share intriguing findings, innovative approaches and lessons learned. Three Country Offices, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Malawi shared insights on their experiences working with the Gender Marker as a program quality improvement tool.

In Practice: CARE Ethiopia

Building collective support for the Gender Marker across the Country Office

From 2018 to 2023 CARE Ethiopia will have doubled the number of their projects reporting against the Gender Marker to 67 Projects. The CARE Ethiopia team achieved this by making staff training on the Gender Marker a priority. By hosting orientations, communities of practice and Gender/MEAL colleague groups they were able to continuously improve staff capacity to work with the Gender Marker. They also successfully identified challenges and learning barriers for program staff which are essential reflections to improve adoption.

In Practice: CARE Bangladesh

Using the Gender Marker for annual reflection

The CARE Bangladesh team has used the Gender Marker for early project decision-making phases to annual reporting. The annual reporting process is used to track their progress on gender outcomes. Identify increases in the proportion of gender transformative projects, and strategize for new project planning. After completing the annual PIIRS reporting process, where all CARE projects are required to submit project data into CARE's [global database](#), the team shared Gender Marker insights internally, hosted learning sessions, and use reflections to design new projects with gender in mind. The team has expressed that the language of the Gender Marker, alongside data, can be powerful for conveying CARE's gender focused approach to stakeholders and helping to create buy-in. In 2022 CARE Bangladesh managed 23 Gender Transformative projects, making up 33.82% of their portfolio.

By tracking Gender Marker scores across their five projects sectors, the CARE Bangladesh team has identified sector-specific challenges. Key findings that emerged from this review process included the importance of committed leadership and staff buy-in, project-specific interventions, including gender at early planning stages, and joint reviews with program and MEAL teams.

In Practice: CARE Malawi

Integrating use of the Gender Marker across the project cycles

CARE Malawi initially engaged with the Gender Marker by briefing all CARE Malawi staff on the annual PIIRS reporting process and conducting a gender debrief for all projects and programs with reference to gender program quality and impact. The team also participated in regular dialogues and spent time reviewing Gender Marker results thoroughly. Through this process they raised key issues, troubleshooted, and oriented new team members on the Gender Marker and other gender equality program quality metrics.

The CARE Malawi Team used the Gender Marker Miniguides, to support program staff to put the Gender Marker criteria into practice. By maintaining attention on the Gender Marker throughout all stages of the project process, CARE Malawi's teams have created more opportunities for training, learning and improvement. CARE Malawi has also identified great promise in undertaking Gender Marker assessments together with CARE project staff and partner organizations. This collaborative approach has surfaced reflection points for discussion on strengths of the project and opportunities for improvement. The CARE Malawi team has also focused on integrating the Gender Marker into new business development initiatives to create alignment between planning and implementation teams.

The Gender Marker is an important tool to use across the project cycle, particularly at project design stage when there is the greatest opportunity to embed program quality throughout the project.

Key Learnings

- Applying the Gender Marker at the design stage is useful to ensure strong design, but also to measure progress.
- Partner organizations are essential in the assessment process– engaging them in the process often surfaces more critical reflections on implementation and leads to program quality improvement.
- Continuous training and staff orientation on the Gender Marker is essential to strengthen understanding and meaningful use.
- The language around the Gender Marker can be useful for conveying outcomes to stakeholders in a qualitative way.
- Annual reporting on the Gender Marker can help bring to light other insights – such as technical sector challenges, staff understanding and project implementation improvements.

LEARN MORE

[Gender Marker Overview](#)

[CARE's Gender Equality Annual Report](#)

[Centering Gender in Country Offices](#)

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