

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

*A Good Practice Guide to
Gender Mainstreaming*



care

CARE Bangladesh

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PREFACE

The last few years at CARE Bangladesh have seen significant success in gender mainstreaming. Establishing gender equality is one of the major commitments of CARE, and it has taken a number of steps towards fulfilling this commitment during the period under review. With senior management support, a host of innovative and pragmatic initiatives were undertaken. On the one hand, CARE has focused on building a common understanding amongst all staff regarding the concepts and policy commitments of gender mainstreaming in programming. On the other hand, it has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality at the organisational level, including the establishment of a strict "zero tolerance" policy towards sexual harassment. A focus on engaging men in the process has yielded good results, as has moving away from the stereotype of female-only participation in gender mainstreaming. In essence, recognising that men's voices are essential in any discussion on gender and women's active participation have hugely contributed to changes in our organisational culture.

In the implementation of its Gender Policy, CARE has been able to put in place a pragmatic operational framework, emphasising accountability for results at all levels. This has led to a cultural shift, whereby rhetoric on gender issues has been replaced by action that has yielded visible and demonstrable results. The Gender and Diversity Unit (GED) has received the financial, organisational and moral support necessary to enable it to get the job done. Support from senior management has also contributed to the creation of an enabling environment in CARE and brought about noticeable changes in staff behaviour, contributing to a more positive and gender sensitive workplace.

While these initiatives have yielded notable successes in CARE's efforts to promote greater equality, they have also provided some excellent opportunities for organisational learning. It is important that this learning should not be lost; rather, it should be used to further inform and enhance the process, because the journey is not yet over. We also believe that other development organisations can benefit from the lessons learned by CARE. It was therefore with the objective of documenting these experience that we carried out a study to capture the learning from these processes. This publication is the outcome of that study. This is not intended to be an exhaustive report of what CARE has achieved in terms of gender mainstreaming but a presentation of certain specific elements that contributed significantly to the successes achieved.

It is my pleasure to thank Ms. Farah Ghuznavi for her excellent work in producing an interesting and user-friendly document. I would also like to thank Anna Minj, GED Coordinator and Habibur Rahman, GED Advisor-OD, CARE for their support to Farah in conducting this study. Finally, I thank the Gender and Diversity Unit (GED) for leading this whole process across the organisation and its partners during the last few years.

Steve Wallace
Country Director

LIST OF ACRONYMES

CEPZ	-	Chittagong Export Processing Zone11
FOMT	-	Field Office management Team
GED	-	Gender Equity and Diversity
GFP	-	Gender Focal Person
GM	-	General Manager
GTP	-	Gender Technical Person
LCS	-	Labour Contracting Society
LIFT	-	Local Initiatives for Farmers Training
LRSP	-	Long Range Strategic Plan
MDP	-	Management Development Programme
RMP	-	Rural Maintenance Programme
SHOUHARDO	-	Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities
TSD	-	Transport Services Department

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INTRODUCTION

This good practice guide on gender mainstreaming was developed on the basis of CARE Bangladesh's recent experiences in promoting gender equality. The organisation has used a two-pronged approach to address gender issues, at both the organisational and the programmatic level.

In doing so, it has identified and attempted to address some of the key challenges that hinder effective gender mainstreaming. These include issues related to lack of capacity, building awareness, changing organisational culture, developing gender-sensitive programming and so on.

Socio-cultural realities on the ground often mean that women and men within an organisation, as well as at the societal level, are grappling with very different sets of problems. A clear understanding of what those problems are is required to devise workable solutions, and create a more even playing field for all concerned.

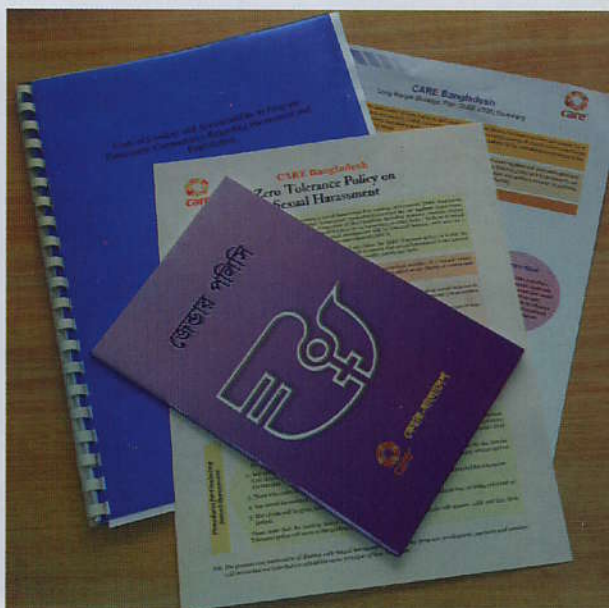
In attempting to initiate positive change on gender issues, it is also important to understand that such changes frequently meet with a range of reactions, including hostility. Such resistance may come from different quarters, but it must be anticipated - and appropriate responses identified - if such a backlash is to be minimised, and ultimately overcome.

The purpose behind the development of this document is to share with partners in development the lessons that have been learned through CARE Bangladesh own experiences. The focus has been to analyse and identify, in easily understandable terms, "what has worked". This will allow other individuals and

organisations engaged in promoting gender equality, to build on the work done by CARE Bangladesh and adapt some of the successful strategies used for their own purposes.

A striking element of the overall approach used by the organisation has been the focus on what is practical and yields demonstrable results. This has allowed for innovation, experimentation and learning from error. It has also shown how important factors such as political will and persistence can be in this process.

Finally, while CARE Bangladesh has made significant progress in a number of areas, it is well-recognised within the organisation that bringing about sustainable change in attitudes and behaviours that are so deeply-rooted takes time, and requires creativity and effort on an ongoing basis.





Gender Good Practice

A STRATEGIC APPROACH

CARE Bangladesh's approach to gender main-streaming has essentially been a practical and action-oriented one. The organisation has recognised that moving from policies and objectives on paper to achievements on the ground requires a degree of advance planning and a clear understanding about potential challenges. It requires a strategic analysis of the situation and a degree of experimentation in implementation—creative problem-solving, in effect also enables a change of tack, or modification as necessary, when things are not working out according to plan!

A critical element within the strategic approach adopted by CARE Bangladesh involves engaging staff members at different levels of the organisation. Only such a comprehensive effort can actually change organisational culture. Three of the key elements in the organizational gender strategy reflect precisely that understanding i.e. that gender specialists within the organisation need to reach out to other colleagues, that senior management must be seen to fully support gender initiatives, and that active efforts are necessary to build widespread ownership of gender policies and strategies across the organisation's workforce.

Above all, as CARE Bangladesh's experience shows, the process is facilitated by a down-to-earth approach to the issues that staff members, regardless of their seniority or area of specialization, can understand and relate to.



Leadership and support of senior management

It is evident that CARE Bangladesh management has taken the necessary steps to facilitate gender mainstreaming at the organizational level - not only in terms of ensuring a high profile for gender issues within the organisation, but also in being vocal about its support for these policies. In addition the Gender Equity and Diversity (GED) Unit has been provided with the required resources and support, as well as regular access to senior management, to enable them to do their job properly.

The effectiveness of the GED Unit has also been enhanced by the personal priority given to promoting gender equality by senior management, which is striking. In the words of one senior manager, his growing awareness about the "routine and institutionalised subjugation of women" led to his determination to take a tough stance on gender issues. The process of breaking down sexual hierarchies has been painful but positive. The commitment of senior management in promoting gender within the organisation has been noted by staff members and the resultant changes are reflected in the behavior and the attitudes of the majority of staff members.



Attitudinal change within the organisation has not come about easily, requiring tough decisions and appropriate follow up action. One senior manager mentioned his shock at attending a meeting, where there was not a single woman present. Management interventions have included devising a range of strategies to recruit, retain, and promote women within CARE-B, as well as to actively resist or turn down proposals which sought to circumvent these initiatives. The effects of these policies can clearly be seen in the administrative/support sector which was previously very male-dominated, as well as to some extent in senior management. While this approach has involved taking risks, it has paid off handsomely.

"Making progress towards greater equality is a continuous struggle one that will continue for at least 5-10 years. And if the momentum is lost, the situation will go backwards"
- Senior Manager

One policy that has informally been in effect for some time is the decision to actively seek out potential female talent, and to build capacity accordingly. As a result of this, promising women have been given on-the-job training to equip them for more senior positions. Initially these measures met with scepticism and resistance, but the women succeeded in proving themselves, thereby validating this management decision. That women are given a degree of preference within the organisation has now gained mainstream acceptance because, in the words of one senior manager, these initiatives have shown a "demonstrable impact".

An important factor behind the success of this approach was the long-term perspective taken. It is fully understood that addressing gender inequality and changing attitudes and behaviors takes time (even if the latter may be changed within a shorter timeframe with the right "incentive").



The role of the Gender and Diversity (GED) Unit

The GED Unit has worked actively to build bridges with other sections and projects. Given that the organisation was earlier considered to lack integration between different units, this reaching out on the part of unit members is particularly important.

The composition of the GED Unit has fluctuated over the years, and the current team has played an important role in contributing to the greater acceptability of gender issues within the organisation. In this, they have benefited from strong and consistent support from senior management.

But perhaps the biggest factor in the GED Unit's success has been what one senior manager describes as a "refreshingly practical" approach. The unit members have been motivated by a strong desire to identify "what works", and have proceeded accordingly. They have been



open to new ideas and suggestions from management and field staff. The decision to shift the unit out of the Human Resources section, where it was previously located was

"The right set of people in the right place at the right time" - A Senior Manager's description of the current GED Unit.



a positive one. This had earlier led to the perception that gender was a human resources issue, rather than one which cuts across both programme and organisation. Now, the GED Unit has an independent presence, but it covers both key areas of the organisation. Two Gender Advisors, who are responsible respectively for addressing gender issues in programming and organisational terms, support the Gender Coordinator.



Building ownership among staff members

To successfully implement a gender policy or strategy requires more than expertise on the part of gender specialists within an organisation, or commitment from senior management, although both of these things may be considered necessary pre-conditions. For such initiatives to be truly successful, it is essential to build ownership of such initiatives among a cross-section of staff members.

Within CARE Bangladesh, male staff members have been actively encouraged to participate in gender discussions, to avoid the common tendency to equate "gender issues" with "women's issues". Because gender relations involve women and men, and because progress towards greater equality cannot be made without involving both sexes, this strategy of engaging men in the process is critical to its success.

The GED Unit, supported by senior management, has made an active effort to de-mystify gender issues. It has done so by establishing regular mechanisms for the discussion of these issues - as well as any concerns or insecurities that staff members may have. Measures that have been particularly successful in this regard are the women's conferences (where

women's confidence building, their concerns/struggles and possible solutions are discussed, along with other relevant issues - on an "open agenda" basis - and the language used is

Bangla), and "masculinities work-shops", where upto fifty men take part, and the programme includes presentations, question and answer sessions and small group discussions.

"Female managers are open to others' opinions, which encourages staff members to take new initiatives. With a woman manager, as a woman supervisee I can raise my voice and share my opinions, and my supervisor gives value to it" - Female Staff Member

Interestingly, at a recent masculinities workshop attended by male staff members and men from partner organisations, a discussion of gender initiatives within CARE Bangladesh yielded certain common points. There was universal agreement that the organisation's "zero tolerance" policy on sexual harassment had greatly contributed to a better work environment.



Promptness in dealing with allegations of harassment was also viewed positively. The representation of women in decision-making positions, and seeing women holding non-traditional posts (e.g. female drivers) was felt to promote greater gender equality, and impressively, there was a general consensus that although the changes had directly benefited women, relationships between male and female staff members have significantly improved during recent years.

An organisational priority has been the creation of an enabling work environment for all staff, particularly women. To this end, there have been efforts to create a more even playing field for male and female staff e.g. for women to improve their career prospects through participation in the Management Development Programme (MDP).

"Male managers prefer to depend on male staff as they think that men have more information; even though sometimes women do those very same tasks!"

- Male Staff Member

The masculinities workshops also provide male staff members with a space to discuss their concerns and better understand the issues.

Addressing resistance is important, and such mechanisms provide an opportunity to identify potential sources of resistance, as well as an arena in which to address such issues.

While resistance among men is sometimes anticipated, there are also instances where women may display hostility towards gender-initiatives. In discussions, staff members stated that female managers sometimes had more to prove (i.e. that they were as good as male managers) and this meant that they could take a tougher stance than necessary towards female supervisees. But there was agreement that the situation would improve as women gained more managerial experience. And a number of respondents made it clear that there were definite advantages to working with female managers e.g. they were more sensitive to the constraints experienced by women employees.

"Women managers struggle most to get to a managerial level, so they also expect other women to do so"

- Female Manager



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY WITHIN WORKFORCE

There has been a conscious effort to move towards gender balance within CARE Bangladesh. This has resulted in a more even distribution of men and women in many parts of the organisation, including those sections that even a few years ago were dominated by men i.e. administration, transport etc.

This could not have happened without the willingness at the senior-most management level of CARE Bangladesh to "think outside the box" and explore a wide range of less traditional options i.e. giving priority to female candidates, advertising some jobs where applications were invited only from women etc. Such strategies have been used as required to redress the balance in some areas of the organisation.



Recruitment

Measures to ensure that more women are recruited into the organization have included a range of strategies to deal with different situations. In cases where

sufficient numbers of women were expected to apply (e.g. sub-grant manager position), the post was open to all candidates; but if strong female candidates emerged, an all-female short list would be adopted. This was particularly interesting in terms of avoiding the unnecessary exclusion of male candidates, where it could be ensured that a female candidate would be chosen. However, in situations with a paucity of suitable female candidates, vacancy announcements specified that only female candidates should apply. Thus more extreme measures designed to boost female numbers were limited to where required, avoiding unnecessary resentment.

Another successful strategy has been the decision to promote non-traditional careers for women within the organisation, a particular success being the recruitment of female drivers and technicians, where the number has gone from zero in 2001 to 13 and 5 respectively, in 2006! Special training programmes for female drivers and technicians are run by the Transport Support Department (TSD).

To date, CARE Bangladesh has retained all the female drivers who have completed their training course, and this has changed the face of the TSD. In general, after a project closes down, all staff members' contracts are terminated. Whereas previously, all drivers and technicians were male, the recruitment of drivers for new projects has seen the intake of exclusively female drivers.



The Internship Programme provides an illustration of CARE Bangladesh's wider commitment to promoting the cause of women in the field of development. The programme allows young women professionals, usually recent graduates, to apply for a year long internship that consists of a series of placements within the organisation, allowing the intern to gain wider experience, and identify particular areas of interest. This on-the-job training is complemented by a series of assignments that are evaluated, as well as participation in regular workshops. The aim of the programme is to identify and promote youthful "talent" and to encourage the next generation of development practitioners.

Candidates of the programme usually move on elsewhere after completion, but they can also compete for posts within CARE Bangladesh. The programme helps them to develop their skills and competence, and enhances their employment prospects. A similar internship programme has recently been introduced in the transport department.



Representation

Although moving towards gender balance is an organisational priority, CARE Bangladesh also recognises that gender equality is not merely an issue of numbers. To raise women's profile in terms of numbers and representation,

CARE Bangladesh has adopted some creative strategies. The aim has been to move from the "numbers game" to issues of quality rather than quantity, and to see greater representation of women in decision-making positions.

In considering promotions, managers have been encouraged to identify female candidates, even where there are qualified male candidates available. The strategy consists of grooming female candidates and providing the necessary support for them to do the job.

In some cases, where managers were reluctant to promote women, senior management had to make it clear that this issue was non-negotiable, e.g., this policy was enforced in order to ensure sufficient numbers of female office managers.

In one instance, management took a risk and decided to promote 5 women to higher positions. The decision was based on an assessment of their capacities, and demonstrated the willingness to take risks in order to achieve results. Many staff members were sceptical about the women managers' chances of success. But the decision has been validated because the women concerned have exceeded expectations.

This has led to a number of positive effects. Firstly, it has provided these

"The management took a risk when they decided to promote us, because it was not done through open competition. Many people criticized the decision. But all the women have performed well, so now they will not be able to say anything bad if it is done again. We are grateful to senior management for giving us that opportunity" - Female Manager

women with an incentive to remain with the organisation and work hard to prove themselves. Secondly, because of their numbers, they have been able to provide mutual support (operating as a "critical mass"), voicing their opinions with confidence. Finally, it has had a "demonstration affect", persuading

sceptics that women can successfully play management roles, as well as providing other female colleagues with positive role models.



Retention

While retention of existing female staff has not been a problem for the organisation, the issue of women's representation in senior management remains a challenge.

As mentioned earlier, one innovative strategy adopted by senior management was to identify women who were considered to have sufficient potential for more demanding jobs, and developing their capacities to meet the standards required. While there was inevitably some resistance to these efforts, as well as a few failures along the way, the approach yielded considerable success. And the extent to which the issue was taken seriously by senior management was evidenced by the fact that the Assistant Country Director's personal work plan included a target to get more women into mid-level positions!

While CARE Bangladesh provides the standard encouragement for female candidates to apply in all advertisements, additional affirmative action is sometimes taken. One example of this is the Management Development Programme (MDP), which seeks to promote internal candidates wherever possible, enabling talented female staff to improve their career prospects.

Currently, the MDP focuses on developing leadership qualities and professional skills, giving participants greater confidence. It also plans to teach participants about communications, interview and presentation skills, as well as management techniques. Recently the focus has shifted to practical assignments rather than text book learning. To date 81 participants have completed the MDP (in 5 batches), and 50% of them have already received

promotions, within CARE Bangladesh or elsewhere. Some have even received double promotions.

CARE Bangladesh also operates an internship programme for young female graduates, and a total of 29 interns have completed this process since 2002. Of them, 18 are already in full-time employment with CARE Bangladesh or other organisations. As the programme graduates have found employment relatively quickly, it seems clear that the internship programme has been of considerable benefit to participants.

In effect, both these programmes have been successful in boosting the skills of the organisation's workforce and potential workforce, and also in keeping a focus on the issue of gender balance in management. Other measures have also been adopted to reach these goals. Previously, when the organisation was cutting staff numbers, greater numbers of women were likely to face retrenchment. Now a conscious effort is made to maintain the existing ratio of women to men. In cases where women staff members are not performing well, there is also an effort made to build their capacities.

One measure that has received strong staff support, and directly addresses women's (and some men's) practical needs is the day-care centre at CARE Bangladesh headquarters, set up in 2001. This allows staff members to keep their children on the premises on a regular or temporary basis. On average, 6 or 7 children use this facility, and field staff can also access the daycare centre during work travel to Dhaka.

In conclusion, in order to increase the recruitment, representation and retention of women staff members at all levels of the organisation, CARE Bangladesh has found that a combination of strategies works best. Innovative thinking has been rewarded, and the fact that the measures were seen through to their natural conclusion has contributed in no small part to the success of the initiatives taken.



"My in-laws never encouraged me to work, but my husband shared my household responsibilities... The most difficult part was to prove that I was as good as a man, and male colleagues did not take my promotions well... I was encouraged to move forward by all the gender related discussions at work. The Management Development Programme also inspired me and showed me the way forward." - Sufia Khatun, female staff member/MDP participant

Sufia Akhter is one of CARE Bangladesh's success stories. Joining as a Field Supervisor in 1990 with only her HSC as a qualification, today she holds a managerial position in the organisation!

Sufia's own efforts were critical in making this happen, but the enabling environment provided by CARE Bangladesh also contributed to her success. Despite discouragement from others, Sufia was determined to continue with her education and eventually completed her Masters degree. From 1997, she took on the responsibilities of a Gender Focal Point, and attributes much of her success to that experience, as it made her more aware of certain issues and enabled her to become more vocal. She received a number of promotions, but initially applied too late to take part in the MDP. When Sufia found out that

management in her office had not been forthcoming about the MDP opportunity, she became even more determined to re-apply!

With her acceptance into the programme in 2003, Sufia began what was to be a revolutionary experience. Not only did her participation provide her with new skills, it also gave her the confidence to explore new possibilities. So when she saw the vacancy announcement for a managerial post in one of the CARE Bangladesh projects, she immediately applied. She was the only female candidate and after two rounds of interviews, she got the job. Although Sufia had her husband's support, she faced barriers at many levels, working hard to overcome them; in that process, however, she also became living proof of CARE Bangladesh's commitment to empowering its women staff.



Creating harassment-free zones

An important element in creating a gender-sensitive work place is addressing issues like sexual harassment and avoiding the unquestioning reproduction of existing social hierarchies. Examples of the latter can often be found in things that are considered "normal", such as situations where senior positions are held by men with subordinate positions being held by women e.g. male managers and female support staff. These situations

enhance norms of male dominance and female submissiveness. Such norms may also be observed in the reproduction of the traditional gender division of labour e.g. when men are served refreshments and women do the serving. The existence of harassing behavior, including sexual harassment, can serve to reinforce these traditional gender roles.



Through active effort, there has been a significant reduction in the incidence of sexual harassment within CARE-Bangladesh. The organisation has moved from a weary acceptance that "these things happen" to a much more dynamic position on the issue. The willingness of managers to take action has also made it possible for many men within the organisation to make clear their views about this despicable behavior. In turn, that has given the recipients of unwanted overtures the confidence to report incidents.

"TSD is the safest place for me - safer than my own home!"
- Female Technician

CARE Bangladesh has taken a very practical approach to the issue. While recognizing that attitude change and behavioral change can take time, its adoption of a zero tolerance policy on harassment makes it clear that some behaviours will not be accepted i.e. even if it takes time to change the way that people view certain issues, senior management and the prevailing organisational culture can require staff behaviour to conform to certain minimum standards of professionalism. Attitude change may well follow naturally as a result of setting those behavioural standards.

Within CARE Bangladesh, systems have been put into place, and staff members now have greater confidence that any incident will be reported, swiftly dealt with and strongly sanctioned. Where necessary, warnings and terminations have

"While some people may feel that attitude change must take place before behavioral change, in fact, it can also be the other way around; and perhaps it should be"
- Country Director

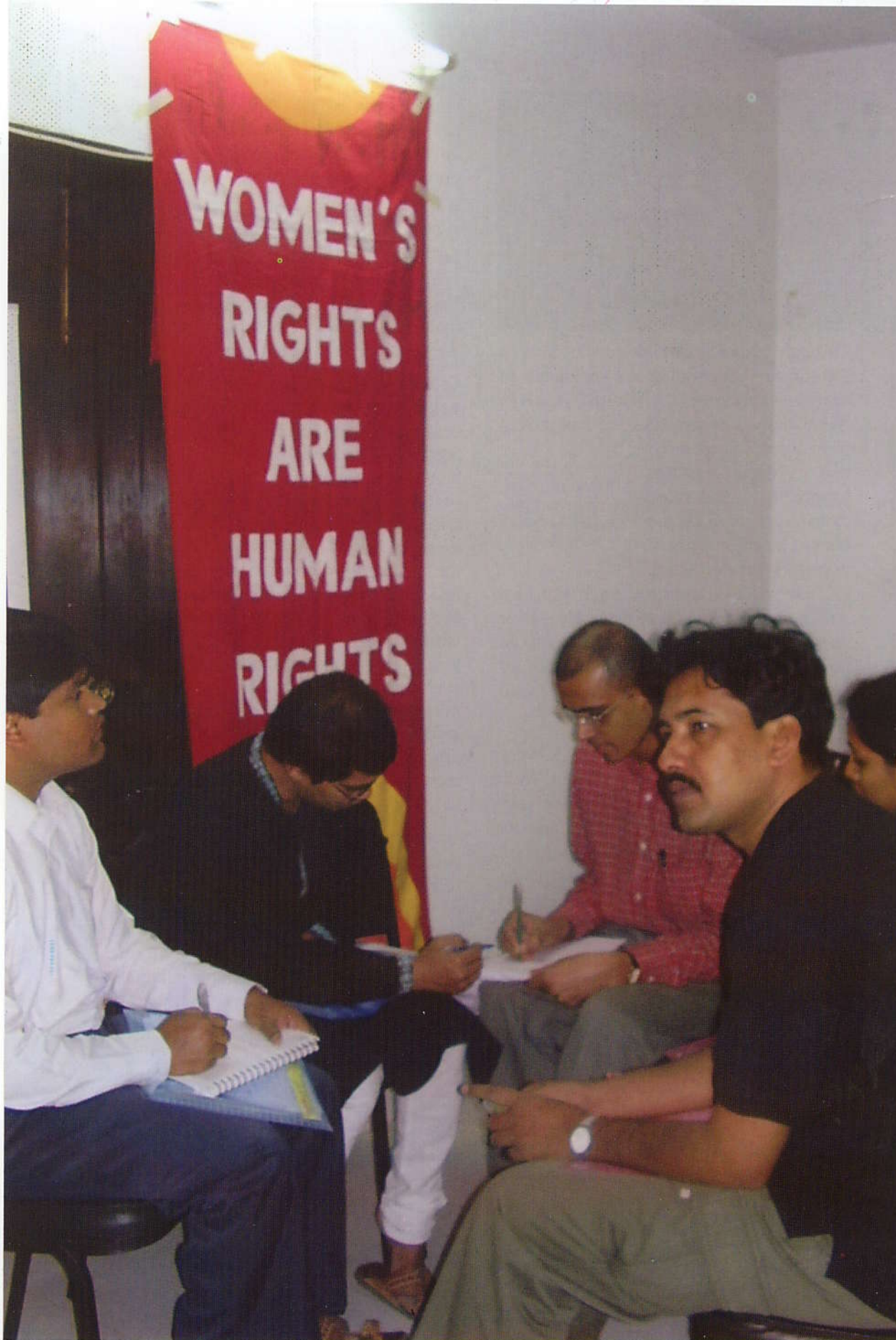
already been issued. The fact that action has been taken on complaints is likely to have had an exemplary effect, and prevented further incidents.

It is particularly praiseworthy that the CARE Bangladesh Code of Conduct aims to prevent sexual harassment of programme participants by staff. Essentially, the approach focuses on the incidence of sexual harassment rather than the identity of the harasser or the harassed.

CARE Bangladesh has shown itself to be willing to take action when male community members have harassed female workers, as well as over any incident of harassment involving someone from a partner organisation. In one instance, where a female project worker was harassed by a Union Parishad Chairman, the organisation verified the allegations, and provided legal support for the case brought against the man by the project worker. Furthermore, because the accused was highly influential, the staff member was transferred to another district for the duration of the case in order to ensure her safety. She was highly appreciative of the moral, financial and legal support she received from CARE Bangladesh.

The organisation is also undertaking active advocacy around harassment issues e.g. all partnership agreements include the zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment. Simplified Bangla translations and context-specific examples of sexual harassment have been provided in the policy document, thereby contributing to greater clarity on these issues.





CAPACITY BUILDING AND AWARENESS RAISING AMONG STAFF

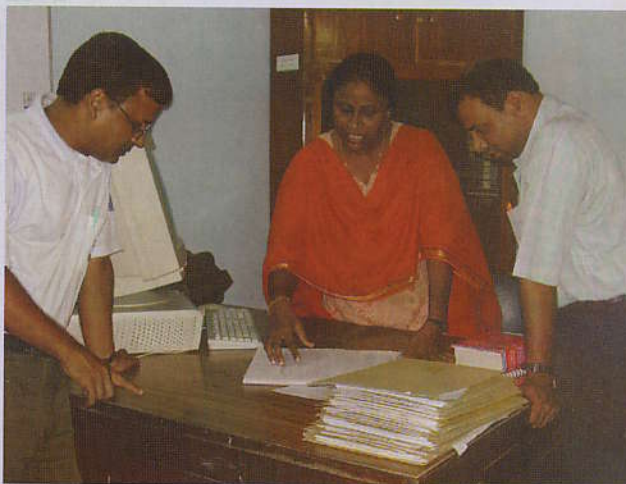
There is a general consensus within CARE-B that a few years ago there was a lack of clarity around gender issues that adversely affected staff members' understanding of gender policies and strategies. This was partly an issue of capacity, which could be addressed through proper training, workshops etc.

However, an additional dimension to the problem related to a sense of unease, in some cases outright fear of the implications of such policies and strategies. Different measures were required to address these issues.



Reaching a common understanding on the issues

A necessary condition of making effective headway with gender initiatives within any organisation is reaching a degree of consensus on what is to be achieved. In CARE Bangladesh, one good initiative was the move from a situation where there were too many documents to read (many of them hard to understand) to one where the contents of these documents were made more accessible to staff members through simplification and translation into Bangla e.g., after the Sexual Harassment Grievance Handling



Policy was introduced, the organization took the decision to develop a simple one-page version of the Zero Tolerance Policy on Sexual Harassment, which was widely circulated among staff members.

Another interesting aspect of this approach was the set of contextualized examples provided within the Code of Conduct relating to sexual harassment of programme participants by CARE Bangladesh staff. These consisted of situations or phrases that could constitute harassment. This meant that staff members could no longer claim ignorance, and continue such behavior. It also helped to avoid genuine mistakes, where unintentional offence might have been given.

"Earlier people were not sure what sexual harassment was; now you cannot have any doubts or misunderstandings about it" - Male Staff Member



This approach has contributed to improving the situation, but another important factor has been the management decision to move from lip-service to action on gender issues. In many cases, this has required direct

intervention from the senior-most elements within CARE Bangladesh e.g. in its determination to promote and enable female staff members to do their jobs within the organisation while helping others to understand and accept why these changes were necessary. As a result, the organisational culture has gradually changed but only over time, and as the result of taking some tough decisions.



Building capacity for gender mainstreaming

While gender specialists can provide technical support, effective gender mainstreaming takes place only when gender skills are distributed more evenly within the work force. A handful of staff members cannot do everything required to address gender concerns in an organisation the size of CARE Bangladesh. So building capacity and monitoring progress are essential to the process.

CARE Bangladesh has invested in gender training/workshops/ discussions and briefings for various categories of staff members, including senior managers, recognising that their needs are not uniform. There have been specific interventions aimed at reaching out to men, while others have focused on supporting women. Finally, types of training to build capacity have included not only gender analysis and frameworks, but also trainings on issues such as diversity, masculinities, preventing violence against women, counselling and addressing sexual harassment. It is significant that these capacity building interventions have been provided on a repeat basis so that staff members can internalise the information provided.

While building capacity is an ongoing process, a number of staff members, including managers, have commented on the transformative effect of the training



that they have received. The General Manager of the transport department commented particularly on the effectiveness of the diversity training, which convinced him of the need for greater gender balance and the representation of minorities in the transport department.

In the case of senior management, even those who considered themselves "enlightened" found that they benefited from the training provided by an external gender consultant, despite their initial reluctance to participate. This contributed to greater ownership of gender policies, largely because participants were able to apply the knowledge gained. Once again, it was the practical element of this approach that proved most fruitful.

"The training was critical in identifying gaps, and in making what had been invisible, visible even to those who thought they knew about the issues"
- Senior Manager

CARE Bangladesh has developed a number of tools for use in gender mainstreaming, including the Gender Analysis Framework (GAF). Such tools have been modified as necessary and the current GAF (2004 version) differs considerably from the initial version introduced in 2001. The GAF has played an important part in shifting the focus of gender issues from quantitative

preoccupations with numbers to examining qualitative factors such as women's decision-making power, control over resources, mobility etc. At a recent masculinities workshop, attended by 50 participants, the GAF was cited as an important tool in facilitating programmatic gender mainstreaming. Another important step in institutionalising gender perspectives is the inclusion of gender equity objectives within the LogFrame of projects. When the LogFrame includes gender objectives and indicators, it makes gender dimensions more visible, making it difficult to avoid addressing these concerns.



Institutional mechanisms

The Gender and Diversity Unit has successfully instituted a two-tier system to promote gender mainstreaming within the organisation. This consists of a field level gender focal point (GFP), who is part of the Field Office Management Team (FOMT), and plays a catalytic role in ensuring that gender issues are addressed at the field office level. This role is complemented by the work of the Gender Technical Person (GTP), who works with gender issues at the project level. Hence, GED Unit members provide technical support at the policy level, and also support GFPs and GTPs.

The GFPs at the field level and GTPs at project level are viewed positively by their colleagues. They are seen not as gender experts, but point persons, who can provide additional support through linking up with the GED Unit. The GFPs and GTPs play an important part in building ownership of gender issues among CARE Bangladesh staff, particularly at project level. Because they have an existing role at field and project level, their efforts on gender are perceived as internal initiatives, in a different way than if the same efforts were made by the GED Unit.

The support provided by the GED Unit has contributed to this positive perception,

which also reflects a change in attitude from the way that the unit itself was perceived some years ago. Currently, there is no lack of staff members willing to act as GFPs and GTPs, partly because their role is recognised in the individual performance plans. A challenge remains however in ensuring that managers allow them to adjust their existing work-loads in a way that frees up 15% of their time to work on gender.

The management decision to develop an Operationalisation Guideline Matrix has been an important step in facilitating implementation. The matrix identifies the tasks to be completed under each policy area by each level of staff, which then allows staff members to monitor their progress against the identified activities. It brings down matters from the abstract level of policy to the more immediate question of what needs to be done. This is all part of the highly practical approach taken within CARE Bangladesh, which has contributed significantly to its success in mainstreaming gender issues.

Another useful measure has been the decision to include gender as an element of performance evaluation. Whereas previously staff members were evaluated exclusively on the basis of their thematic technical skills, more recently there has been a criterion of evaluating how the staff member has contributed to engendering his/her workload and delivered on those commitments.





This inclusion of gender attitudes as a dimension of wider performance is also reflected in the approach CARE Bangladesh takes to interviews. Whereas, previously questions concerned only the technical requirements for an advertised post, it is now felt that working effectively in any sector of development requires an understanding of structural inequalities. Hence an effort is made to ensure that questions are asked to ascertain candidates' gender attitudes. A process is underway to formalise this, with a checklist under finalisation. The management of CARE Bangladesh is also aware that candidates' answers, however good, may not reflect their actual attitudes. The assessment of gender-sensitivity is therefore approached from a relatively critical perspective.

Finally, having gender monitoring indicators allows for the tracking of progress in the implementation of gender policies. The Gender Monitoring Report, produced annually, allows GED to monitor trends and define the best course of action. In effect, it also recognises the efforts of units/projects which have progressed towards gender equality, and puts pressure on those which have not.



Keeping the issue on the agenda

The GED Unit has actively displayed its willingness to support other staff members, both at head quarters and field office level, to engender their work. It has backed up this approach with frequent

field travel and active involvement in the planning/implementation exercises of other units, projects and field offices. In order to promote greater participation and ownership of gender initiatives within the organisation, the GED Unit has taken steps to ensure that field offices identify gender objectives and activities as part of their Annual Operating Plan and individual level planning processes. These plans are shared with the GED Unit members, but formulated and implemented by the field staff concerned. This has proved to be a highly effective measure.

The unit has utilised various mechanisms to facilitate gender mainstreaming. One of these is the use of discussion meetings to address understanding and communication gaps around gender issues that were earlier identified as being problematic for some staff.

The meetings are open forums, with no specific agenda, and are conducted in Bangla, with the aim of creating an enabling

environment for staff to discuss their concerns. It has allowed for the identification of problems that were not previously discussed, and led to a better understanding of the issues through the translation of key documents into Bangla, and the use of techniques such as story telling, to make the issues more accessible to a non-specialist audience.

This has all been part of a strategy to move from a reactive to a pro-active approach by the GED Unit. It has also led to the development of considerable

"Gender work cannot be done properly without having male colleagues working alongside you"
- Female Manager

Progress has been impressive. CARE has experienced deep cultural shifts, The changes in gender far exceeded anyone's expectations. CARE's culture is now more gender sensitive and people feel empowered by the change" - Key findings of External Review on 2002-2006 LRSP

goodwill and a high degree of acceptance from other staff towards this unit. That is clearly reflected in the external review of the LRSP, which revealed that performance on gender had exceeded all expectations.



Engaging men

Recognizing that male staff members sometimes feel threatened by affirmative action policies, CARE Bangladesh has worked to engage men in the promotion of gender equality. It has taken particular pains to discourage hierarchical behavior, which often

"You only talk about gender equality issues and women's rights with women. Why don't you talk with men as well? That would make our lives easier!" - A Village Woman

has a gendered element to it, and has also taken a strong stance on addressing sexual harassment.

Specific mechanisms designed to identify and address resistance from both male and female staff members - who may be influenced by prevailing social mores - include open discussions of staff members' concerns and lack of clarity around gender issues. The introduction of workshops on the discussion of masculinities and the role of such concepts in understanding gender issues has been important in promoting men's participation in such discussions.

"As a man I have to accept blame on behalf of all men which is very painful for me, since I know that I am not like that" - Masculinities Workshop Participant



"Gender work cannot be done properly without having male colleagues working alongside you"-Female Manager



MOVING FROM RHETORIC TO ACTION

This is a problem for many organisations, with good intentions - or even good policies! - rarely being sufficient to produce good results. As a result of inadequate implementation, even the most progressive or well-designed policy may be rendered redundant.

Effective implementation of any gender strategy usually requires a clear signal of management support to the initiative, as well as the allocation of sufficient resources to support that strategy. These may be considered necessary but not sufficient conditions for successful implementation.

The shift from ideas on paper to realities on the ground presents a further challenge in very many ways. It requires not only creative thinking, but a willingness to follow things through. It also requires a degree of risk-taking and making tough (sometimes unpopular) decisions. And perhaps most importantly, it requires an acceptance of the fact that sustainable change takes time and continuous effort.



Creative thinking and risk-taking

Within CARE Bangladesh, there are a number of instances which illustrate how the organisation has succeeded in translating policy objectives into changes on the ground.

One example of this can be seen in the way that the management has approached the question of promoting gender balance. As discussed earlier, a mix of strategies was used to increase numbers of women at all levels of the organization

including building capacities of promising female staff members and advertising woman-only posts.

Another excellent example of creative thinking can be seen from the transformation that has taken place in the Transport Services Department (TSD). When the current General Manager (GM) joined in 2003, only 2 out of the 65-strong workforce of TSD were women, and they held

"Now I feel part of GED... You could say that we are one unit" - General Manager, TSD

administrative posts. After the gender diversity trainings organized by CARE Bangladesh, an active campaign was undertaken to boost the number of women staff in this male bastion.

Doing so involved a number of challenges. The clearest of these was how to increase the number of female drivers upwards from zero. Firstly, it was difficult to identify sufficient numbers of women. Secondly, many staff members, found the





idea of women in such a non-traditional profession difficult to deal with. Thirdly, female drivers often required additional support from the organisation e.g. the General Manager had to invest considerable effort in meeting the girls' families and reassuring them that they would be safe in Dhaka. He has also had to make himself available on virtually a 24 hour basis to deal with problems that have occurred outside of office hours - for example, when female drivers have experienced problems in the course of field travel and night halts.

In order to address these multi-faceted problems, the TSD management adopted a number of complementary measures. In addition to seeking out potential female drivers, and providing them with the necessary training to manage those jobs, they also provided counselling and support to build their confidence. A key element of the TSD strategy has been to create an enabling environment for women. In the words of the GM, "they must see this place as an extension of their home, giving them all the support that they need". This objective appears to have been achieved, judging by what some of the women have to say.

In addition to all of these issues, a further problem remained. Despite the GED Unit holding regular sessions, there was a general lack of clarity - and in some cases, downright fear - about gender issues. Because these ideas were so alien to mainstream perspectives on gender roles, and the recruitment of women as drivers and technicians was threatening

for some people, TSD management took pains to explain their approach to existing staff. Furthermore, to minimise backlash they modernised and regularised the male apprenticeship programme.

Building an acceptance of women drivers within TSD has taken considerable effort. Key elements in the success of this endeavour have been meticulous planning - anticipating difficulties and special needs - and making it clear to all concerned (including field offices) that these initiatives have the full support of CARE Bangladesh management. To avoid any doubts about their capacities, all drivers and technicians must complete a training course, receiving a certificate upon graduation. Again, it is the practical nature of this approach that has

"TSD is the place where I get respected as an individual in my own right" - Female Technician

yielded such positive results, and these efforts have succeeded in making the presence of women within TSD a mainstream reality, rather than a pilot initiative.

In all of these activities, the TSD has continuously been supported by the GED Unit. So much so, that the GM does not hesitate to say that he would do anything that the GED Unit members asked of him, such is the relationship!



Demonstration effect

Experience has shown that no matter how well-drafted gender policies and strategies are, they cannot be effective unless properly implemented. An important aspect of this, that can also facilitate the implementation process, is any form of specific and demonstrable success. This "demonstration effect" has a number of benefits, including (a) promoting positive change, (b) disproving sceptics and (c) inspiring others to move forward.

To that end, it is also important to encourage initiatives which stand a higher chance of delivering such demonstrable successes. Identifying such initiatives often involves "thinking outside the box", hence many of these issues are related, and indeed, mutually reinforcing.

The numbers of women holding non-traditional posts within CARE Bangladesh has increased dramatically as a result of a proactive approach aimed at recruiting more women in such jobs e.g. as guards, technicians and drivers. In promoting these opportunities for women, CARE Bangladesh provides support to female staff interested in becoming drivers or technicians e.g., one female guard has retrained as a driver, a job that gives her higher status and a far better salary.

"TSD has given me more than I have received even from my parents" - Female Driver

Those who receive training but do not find jobs with the organisation can put their skills to use in a commercial setting, or set up their own small businesses. Some of the trainees have expressed an interest in doing so, and in training other women to do similar work. It is hoped that over time, this will create a small-scale multiplier effect of sorts.

Training women to do these jobs has had an important impact on people's attitudes, by demonstrating that women can do what are traditionally considered "men's jobs". The fact that female drivers have already proven themselves to be skillful, polite, and more inclined to follow road rules has done more to promote their cause than any amount of advocacy on paper.



"Since hiring more women in the administration section, we have found that they are better at financial management; they have more integrity and discipline. Often women are more sincere. Like our women drivers; they are very careful and polite" - Senior Manager

ঝড় তুফান
মানবো না
নারীর
অধিকার
ছাড়বো না।



RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING RESISTANCE

One of the reasons that it is sometimes difficult to implement gender policies and strategies relates to the problem of resistance. Whether such resistance is openly expressed by those who feel it, or it remains hidden, it must be addressed strategically in order to make progress. Hidden resentment usually takes the form of obstructionism, but it can prove a major hindrance. Some strategies to address resistance include engaging those who may indicate negative views in initial discussions, and adopting measures that challenge gender stereotyping and minimise potential backlash against gender policies.



Preventive policy of including and engaging male staff members

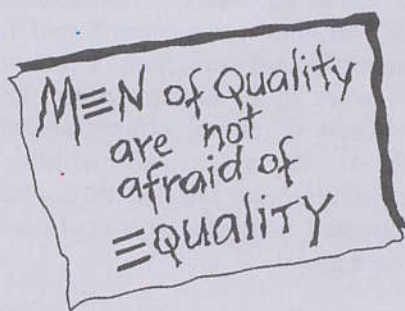
According to one manager, within CARE Bangladesh resistance came in the form of "grumbling, but not a major obstacle". There is a general perception that men have "got over it"; a consensus that the majority of male staff increasingly value the idea of gender equality, and feel pride in working for an organisation that is working towards it.

"Seeing other women drivers, I became inspired, and began to believe that I could also learn to drive. Other women drivers encouraged me to try...Working in an organisation like CARE Bangladesh is a privilege; moreover, this profession has given me a newfound respect for myself, and it has also brought me respect from others." - Female Driver

male trainers. As Habib's example shows,



a sincere and committed man can be a powerful weapon in the arsenal of any gender unit.



Addressing stereotypes

Relationships between women and men are sometimes negatively affected by existing social stereotypes that portray both sexes in simplistic and often misleading terms. Such stereotypes can also contribute to negative behavior such as sexual harassment, because perpetrators like to visualise themselves as macho sexual predators, and the recipients of their unwanted attention as weak and passive "victims". Hence it is important to identify this kind of chauvinistic or domineering behavior at an early stage, and take appropriate action.

As a result of ongoing efforts, field offices are finally beginning to understand that addressing sexual harassment requires timely disclosure and prompt follow up action. Such incidents should not be "swept under the rug" at headquarters or field level. Hence, while existing social and cultural hierarchies have in the past contributed to sexual harassment, the feeling at CARE-B is that while such incidents do still occur, the frequency has reduced. While there were a dozen reported incidents in 2001, there have been four reported so far in 2006. The fall is unlikely to be due to under-reporting, since the organisation has taken a pro-active role in dealing with such complaints.

Detailed investigation of complaints has shown that the majority of complaints are well-founded, and action has been taken accordingly e.g. issuing of warning letters and where necessary, terminations. In 2006, all four cases were found to be genuine complaints, and terminations took place in all four instances. This is the result of strong policy support to address these issues within the organisation, and has led to a situation where staff members have confidence in the system.

Over the longer-term period, active efforts need to be made on an ongoing basis in order to challenge negative gender stereotyping. That is essential if the attitudes that underpin such stereotypes are to be challenged, and changed. With persistence and political will, this is very much possible!



As mentioned earlier a particularly strong example of such attitude changes can be seen in the case of the transport department, which today has 13 women drivers and 5 women technicians, dispelling existing myths about what women can and cannot do. At the field level, this has been particularly effective in providing alternative role models for women who may not previously have considered such options.



Measures to address backlash

The GED Unit has taken a proactive role in recognizing the possibility of backlash among staff members who may be more conservative or resistant to change. It was found that the organisation's focus on empowering women made some male staff feel excluded, and led to feelings of antagonism. The training provided by a well known external gender specialist highlighted the fact that men also pay a price for inequality e.g. they feel the burden of being primary providers, and are often unable to express their emotions in a healthy way.

As a result of engaging men in discussions around gender equality, including the rationale behind certain organisational policies (e.g. MDP), many were able to see the bigger picture and the need for such measures. In some cases, they were also able to see things from women's perspective, and display a greater degree of empathy for the constraints that women experience on a day-to-day basis.

One method of avoiding unnecessary backlash is evident in CARE-Bangladesh's recruitment and promotion strategies, where measures such as women-only shortlists have been adopted in preference to women-only vacancy announcements, the latter used as a last resort.



In the transport department, because many people found the idea of women in non-traditional jobs unfamiliar or even threatening, TSD management took pains to explain their approach to existing staff. Furthermore, to minimise backlash they modernised and regularised the male apprenticeship programme (allocating 3 cars for this purpose and running the course twice a year) to ensure that men would not feel excluded.

In addressing backlash, it is important to keep a longer time frame in mind. Sustainable change within an organisation requires that changes become embedded in mainstream culture. After all, staff members' attitudes are also influenced by external factors such as national perspectives, tradition and culture. To bring about lasting change requires leadership at the highest level, but also buy-in from managers, and recognition of resistance as well as a willingness to address it.

While the individual response to change varies hugely, momentum needs to be kept up over a period of time to ensure wider staff buy-in. Needless to say, that process is also facilitated when managers practice what they preach!





BUILDING BRIDGES

There is currently a high level of receptivity within CARE Bangladesh to addressing gender issues in programme as well as at the organisational level. This is largely as a result of an understanding that greater developmental effectiveness requires gender sensitivity on the part of staff that are planning and implementing these programmes. This in turn has partly come about from a better understanding of the gender dimensions of poverty i.e. that women are differently, and sometimes disproportionately, affected by poverty. As a result, the last five years have seen a change in attitude among CARE Bangladesh staff and a greater willingness to take the necessary steps in this regard. This commitment is clearly evident in some of the quantifiable project indicators e.g. the LIFT project, which is a women-focused community-based intervention, with a membership of 98% women.

But apart from its focus on women as beneficiaries, CARE has sought to challenge some elements of the existing socioeconomic structures that perpetuate gender inequality, and reinforce the oppression of women. While efforts have been underway to ensure that gender issues are considered at all the different phases of the project cycle, particular attention has been given to building linkages in a way that benefits poor men and women, and enables the organisation to reach out to the most disadvantaged

segments of Bangladeshi society. As seen in other instances, developing a strategic approach that focuses on practical methods and clear logic has yielded some excellent results.



Strategies to improve access to disadvantaged groups

In order to reach poor and marginalised sections of society - particularly women - CARE Bangladesh has built strategic alliances with other key players in the community, such as local NGOs, that have a direct presence on the ground. One element of this strategy has also been to reach out to influential men at the community level. For example, the LIFT project began working with religious leaders in July 2004. Most of these men, who are Imams, were initially highly resistant to the overtures of the project staff. But with persistence and greater contact, the Imams gradually became more responsive, resulting in the formation of 11 groups of 20-25 members each.

The project organises one monthly meeting and one workshop in each semester, and the Imams have received training and are now disseminating important messages through the Friday prayer sessions they lead - on a range of issues including marriage registration, maternal health, nutrition, sanitation etc. While reaching agreement on some issues undoubtedly remains a challenge, the project has now found that Imams are increasingly willing to receive training on other issues e.g. first aid, technology etc.

CARE Bangladesh has been using a combination of strategies to reach out to those most disadvantaged within society.



For example, in dealing with hard-to-reach groups such as sex workers, it has successfully created an outreach system of peer workers who function as catalysts for change. These change agents receive "peer training" from the organisation that enables them to assist and empower those who live on the margins of society. In a situation where sex workers face daily harassment from thugs, police, and the so-called "decent" elements of society, CARE-B has helped sex workers to set up their own organisation, "Durjoy Nari Shangha", in order to fight for their rights.

"Local thugs used to beat us up, snatch our money, and force us to have sex with them without paying us. The police often did the same... CARE helped us to set up our own organisation "Durjoy" in 1988. Now we can speak up on different issues, and negotiate with the police and social leaders about our problems... I feel privileged to have the opportunity to serve the sex workers. I will never forget what CARE has done for us! I can disclose my identity in front of society, and take pride in my work. What more can I ask for? I think that the condition of sex workers in Bangladesh would be very different if more organisations like CARE worked to help sex workers" - Shahnaz, Sex Worker



Assisting in setting up community based organisations (CBOs)

CARE-B has taken the initiative to work with informal women and men's groups to help them establish more formal associations i.e. Community Based Organisations (CBOs). As part of this process the organisation has made the discovery that while both women and men's groups have shown interest in engaging in various income-generating activities, women's groups are often more willing to engage in social as well as financial initiatives. Unlike men, women were also more willing to address wider social issues i.e. those which concerned non-members. These women's groups therefore have the potential to act as change agents in a wider sense.



Empowering women

CARE Bangladesh programmes have begun to recognise specific constraints that women in particular face, and to strategise in ways that address the issues, rather than either overlooking the problem, or accepting "the way things are". One strategy used has been for the organisation to play a catalytic role in creating the necessary linkages to provide women with access to key services.

The LIFT project, which was set up to provide assistance through horticultural initiatives such as homestead gardening found that many programme participants were held back by other problems e.g. lack of health services, livestock illnesses etc. After these needs emerged CARE-B began to link up rural people with the local government service providers who were responsible for assisting them on these matters.

A key issue had been women's lack of mobility, which prevented them from traveling to nearby town centres to access such services. As a result of the CARE-B intervention, a "service centre" was set up within the village on a monthly basis,

consisting of a predetermined location where villagers, especially women, could go to have their needs met. While it remains to be seen whether this will become institutionalised over the long-term, it is an important first step in making local government more responsive to the people, related to one of CARE Bangladesh's wider objectives.

Another important element of the CARE Bangladesh approach, mentioned earlier, is working with women to help them establish their rights. For example, it has enabled sex workers to set up their own organisation, in order to establish some of their basic rights.

Suicide was all I could think of when my husband left me for another woman's dowry, eight years ago...With the RMP income, I send my children to school - whereas I was not able to finish, I want my dreams to come true through them...The time came to leave RMP and I was ready for the transition. With the money I saved all these years, I bought a sewing machine, a rickshaw and a cow...Economic prosperity brought me social recognition... I am ready to run in the UP elections. People want educated and honest leadership" - Renuara, RMP Member

Empowering women is a key objective of all CARE Bangladesh projects. Development interventions supported often focus on capacity building and enabling women to achieve greater decision-making power. This has also been done through improving their access to resources and non-traditional income generating activities. For example, the Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) has helped tens of thousands of destitute women throughout Bangladesh, by providing them with an immediate means of survival as well as ways to plan a better future for themselves. RMP currently covers 90% of rural Bangladesh, providing women participants with training on roads maintenance, human rights, gender equality, primary health and nutrition, numeracy and income generating

activities. The women save nearly a quarter of their income during four years of employment on the programme, and 80% of graduates are now small traders and entrepreneurs. The success of this model has led to the government taking over the programme after twenty years of concrete results.

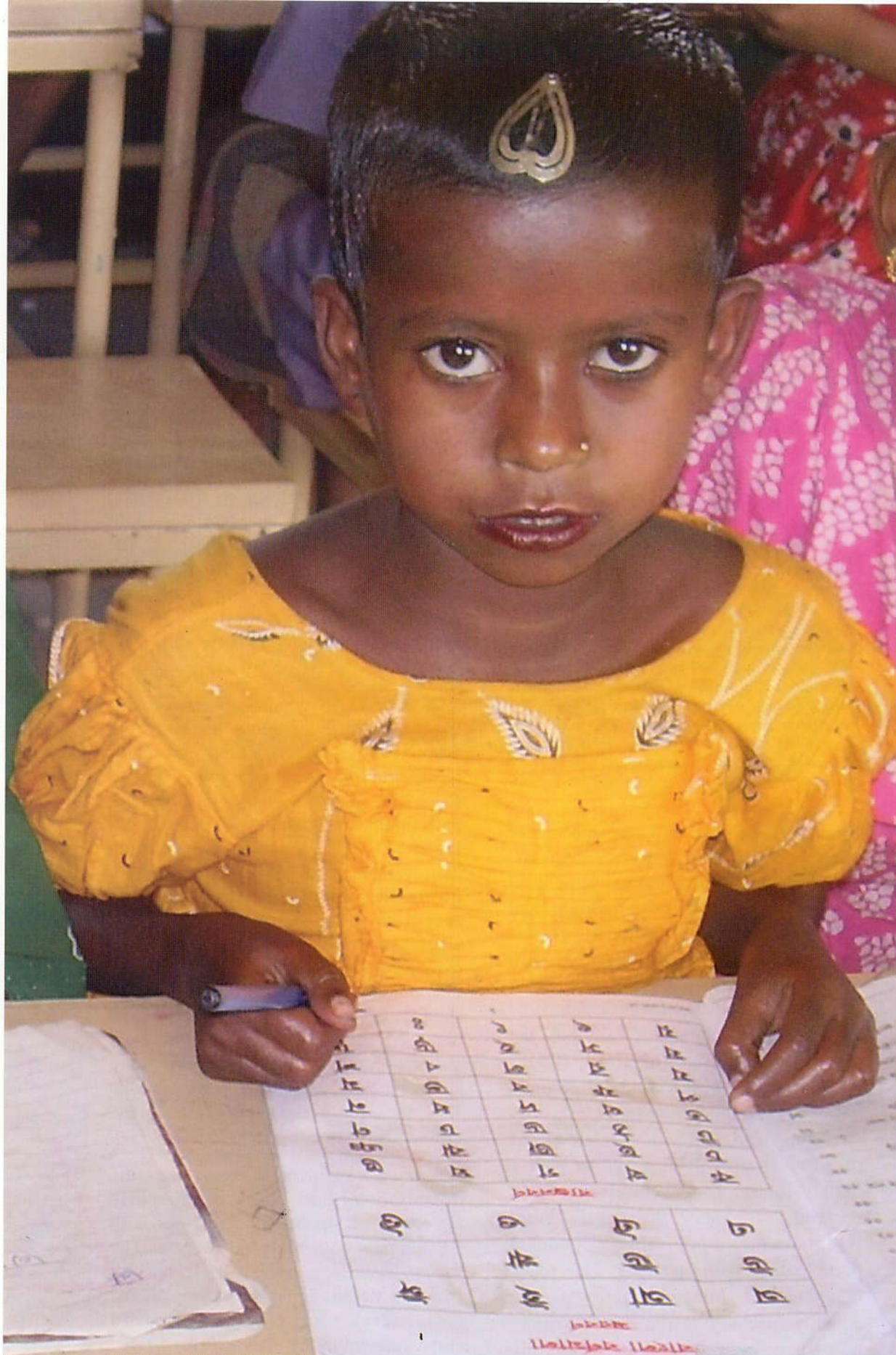


Promoting responsive local governance

Through its programmes, the organisation has been seeking to bring local government closer to the people, particularly the poor and marginalised. In supporting governance initiatives, the organisation has placed particular emphasis on working with local level duty-bearers to make local government systems more gender sensitive and pro-poor.

With respect to gender-sensitivity, this has involved considering not only the issue of numbers i.e. women's representation at the Union Parishad level, but also the quality of women's participation. Because women Union Parishad (UP) members are often marginalized, and actively sidelined by their male peers, CARE Bangladesh has supported initiatives to build women's capacities through training, networking, exposure visits and other such interventions. Over time, these measures should also assist in bringing female UP members into the heart of local government systems, as they gain confidence and assert themselves; in this way, they can make their presence felt more effectively.

As a complementary strategy, the organisation has also continuously advocated action on gender issues with UP officials both male and female. The focus has thus been on increasing women's decision-making power at the local level, to promote women's empowerment in the truest sense.



CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO

Because gender inequality is deeply-rooted in the customs and structures of society, bringing about positive change is inevitably a time-consuming exercise. It requires the allocation of sufficient resources, strategic thinking about how best to initiate these changes and above all, commitment and persistence!

Key aspects of any long-term strategy will involve ongoing advocacy efforts - as well as the identification and promotion of alternative role models for both men and women.



Non-traditional income generation activities (IGA) for women

An important programmatic intervention supported by CARE Bangladesh has been a strong focus on identifying and creating opportunities for women in non-traditional roles. This has multiple effects, not least in demonstrating that women can do a variety of different tasks, many of which are considered the province of men. And in doing so, such women act as important role models. Such interventions effectively challenge the gender division of labor at the grassroots level.

An excellent example of this is provided by CARE Bangladesh's initiative to ensure women's access to markets, which have traditionally been considered a male preserve. The "Women's Access to Markets" project has succeeded in creating a legitimate space for over 2500

poor and vulnerable women to carry out commercial transactions in 146 rural markets, where they occupy around 20% of the total space. To create an enabling environment for the women entrepreneurs, the project has taken strengthening

and support measures through the provision of facilities such as separate stalls and toilets, childcare, and a policy of sanctioning men who are disrespectful to women, as well as setting up support groups within the market and communities to which these women belong.

A related and equally interesting initiative concerns the SHOUHARDO project,

"When I first started selling shoes, I was insulted by many villagers. They thought it was improper for a woman to go from house to house to sell shoes, but I was not deterred. Now people accept my visits as a normal part of village life. Whenever they need a pair of shoes, they contact me and waited impatiently for my arrival" - Zulekha, Bata Rural Sales Agent

which has supported the creation of Labour Contracting Societies (LCS) to build rural markets; in 11 cases, women were in the majority of the LCS members. This was linked to the plan to prioritise allocation of shops to women LCS members, a strategic approach, since the women LCS members already had a substantial amount of capital (ranging from 7000-48,000 Tk) as a result of completing the construction work.

Another initiative under the pilot Rural Sales Programme provides new employment opportunities for women who have graduated from the Rural Maintenance Program (RMP). These women are employed by the multinational shoe company Bata, and provided training on how to sell their product effectively to potential customers. Each woman is assigned a specific geographical area to undertake door-two-door sales, as well as to sell in local markets. It creates a "win-win" situation, whereby Bata gains access to previously untapped markets, while the

saleswomen earn sizeable commissions for their efforts.

The Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) Corporate Pilot Project, funded by the Timberland Company, is another interesting initiative, and focuses on

"At present, I feel happier, because I am more independent now...I can sit in my shop and run it, I can talk with all kinds of people...Altogether, I am much better off than I was before...I've purchased land, a van, and have saved all my money in my own name, so that in the future I do not have to depend on any of my children" - Woman entrepreneur, Dharaile Market, Natore

23,000 garment workers, mostly women. The project provides them with information and services on reproductive health, HIV/ AIDS prevention, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, legal rights and micro savings and credit, using a peer approach. A spillover of project benefits has been noted to the poor

neighbourhoods where garment workers live, and local groups have been formed in these areas to advocate for improved lighting, security and garbage collection.

All these initiatives help women to establish their presence in the public sphere, where traditionally they have been largely absent. In doing so, the interventions also help to equip women with the necessary skills and confidence

"Before, I was incapable of buying anything, but now I can buy things for my children. Earlier, I did not know my way around, but now I can go everywhere without help. Everyone considers me to be a good person, and shows me respect" - Woman member of Labour Contracting Society, Pabna

they need to survive and thrive in this new environment.

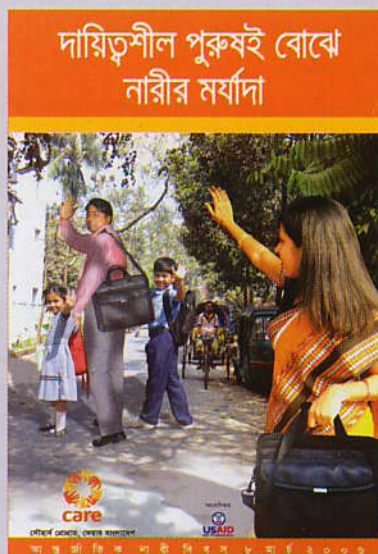


Advocacy initiatives

CARE Bangladesh has invested considerable time and effort in developing a range of

advocacy initiatives to promote gender equality. This has included attempts to address negative gender stereotypes and identify positive role models for women and men, as well as a pro-active approach to raising these issues with partner organisations. In collaboration with a number of other organisations, CARE Bangladesh launched the White ribbon campaign aimed at men and young boys, pledging an end to violence against women and girls.

Different projects have developed a range of communication materials that portray both women and men in non-traditional gender roles. For example, a flyer produced by the Shouhardo programme shows women and men working together in commercial enterprises, and men engaging in childcare; the accompanying text emphasises the need to question the prevalence of practices such as dowry and domestic violence. The deprivation experienced by the girl child is also highlighted, asking how men, as fathers, can contribute to improving the situation. A poster brought out for International Women's Day 2006 also challenges existing gender stereotypes, showing a father leaving for work, and taking his two children to school, while his wife - clearly a working woman herself - also sets out for work.



Another intervention utilising a number of the characteristic elements of the CARE Bangladesh approach is the Violence Against Women (VAW) initiative. This project does advocacy work through establishing rapport with local communities to build a resistance against behaviour contributing to domestic violence. Village Forums are established to bring together committed men and women in the project areas, while a combination of drama and music is used to raise general public awareness about these issues, and providing training and legal services to strengthen resistance to violence.

This is also related to the strategy earlier mentioned, which consists of identifying and promoting positive role models for women and men. While this has been done at the organisational level by the transport department initiative to train women drivers and technicians, it has also been done at the programme level by identifying peer workers who can work with stigmatised or hard-to-reach communities (e.g. sex workers, drug users), as well as working with community members who are willing to be change agents on issues such as violence against women.





CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from an assessment of CARE-B's work in the last few years that there have been a number of dramatic shifts in how the organisation views and addresses issues related to gender equality.

Considerable progress has been made in enhancing the profile of women within the organisation. This has been done through a combination of strategies including promoting gender balance though increasing recruitment of women, using innovative strategies to enhance the presence of women in management positions, and ensuring greater representation and retention of female workers within CARE Bangladesh. All this has been done in a way that recognises the need to avoid backlash from staff members, while at the same time accepting that sometimes tough decisions need to be taken. As importantly, it has been recognized that such decisions must be followed through to their logical conclusions.

Another striking achievement has been the creation of an enabling environment for all staff members, particularly women. This has been facilitated by steps such as persuading male staff to discuss concerns, thereby dispelling some of their misapprehensions about what gender-

sensitivity involves; through holding regular discussions on gender issues and organizing "masculinities workshops"; by adopting a zero tolerance approach towards sexual harassment; by explaining what constitutes such harassment and taking immediate follow-up action to deal with such incidents; by acting to dispel gender stereotypes and challenging repressive practices through promoting non-traditional income generating activities for women, and by identifying alternative role models for both women and men as part of ongoing advocacy efforts.

However, there are challenges ahead as CARE Bangladesh continues its work for gender equality. One aspect of this will involve finding the balance between the promotion of social and economic development as a means to promoting equality. Because the two are intrinsically linked, sustainable progress must involve some combination of social and economic empowerment. This is not an "either/or" issue, and it is important to find the right balance for the interventions that CARE Bangladesh wishes to support.



Another important aspect of gender mainstreaming will involve strengthening gender elements within programme. While some progress has been made in this regard, further effort is needed to integrate gender issues into all stages of the project cycle - on a uniform basis - for projects and programmes across CARE Bangladesh. Priorities should include strong monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes, the development of SMART (Simple, Measurable, Available, Reliable, Time bound) indicators, building greater in-house capacity for gender analysis, and the use (as well as gathering) of gender-disaggregated data. In short, the analytical, pro-active and problem-solving approach - highly practical in nature - that the organisation has already demonstrated so effectively with respect to gender mainstreaming in organisational terms, must be strengthened and replicated within its programme.

CARE Bangladesh has come a very long way, within a relatively short time, as far as gender mainstreaming is concerned. The success of its approach is amply demonstrated in initiatives such as the transformation of the transport department (TSD), and the promotion of non-traditional roles for women, programmatically and organisationally.

These achievements are a testament to what can be achieved by combining strong leadership, adequate resources, and a strategic approach that promotes a wide spread sense of ownership and a greater understanding of gender policies and objectives within an organisation. Above all, it demonstrates what **can** be done when an organisation has the political will to see an often difficult process through to its conclusion.



*We seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice,
where poverty has been overcome and
people live in dignity and security*



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