

Women's Empowerment:

Strategic Impact Inquiry Research Summary

The Context: After 12 years of civil war engendered by discrimination, marginalization, the denial of rights and exclusion of pockets of the population, Burundi continues to struggle to recover. Following the war, sexual and domestic violence has been on the rise, and in the face of rape-related stigma, women rarely report abuse -- in spite of the rapid spread of AIDS.

The Journey: The journey commenced in February 2005 when CARE Burundi developed an objective for its Annual Operating Plan which started the organization on a path of exploration, thinking and learning. Its aim: to harness community expertise through appreciative inquiry and other methods so that CARE and its partners could better understand the disparities in Burundian society and maximize their impacts toward sustainable peace.

The approach of this journey worked primarily with participants from two projects: *Project Umwizero*, 2006 to 2008, and *Project Kirumara*, 2007 to 2009, which both aim to build solidarity and empowerment among women to enable women to exercise their rights and overcome political/cultural barriers.

CARE Burundi's Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII): For the SII, CARE Burundi examined its work through three studies:

- **Year 1:** Appreciative Inquiries with women and men from marginalized groups of society to define hypothesis and actions on women and decision-making.
- **Year 2:** Studies on local definitions of empowerment and how women perceive themselves in terms of empowerment.
- **Year 3:** CARE's impact on women's empowerment and HIV risk, and the relationship between empowerment and vulnerability to HIV.

The [Strategic Impact Inquiry](#) (SII) seeks to evaluate CARE's impact on women's empowerment. For more information on CARE Burundi's SII studies, please contact: pqlibrarian@care.org.

The Methods: CARE Burundi's SII used a mixed methods approach, engaging both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry:

YEAR 1

- Over 100 Respondents
- **Appreciative Inquiry:** Explore realities of communities' lives and highlight insights and trends based on their expertise
- **Hypotheses Formation:** Analyze inquiries, develop hypotheses and research methods, and implement action research to verify them

YEAR 2

- 454 Respondents, 5 Days
- **Focus Group Discussions** (21 groups of men, 18 groups of women): Identify eight domains of change for empowerment
- **Indicators Development:** Develop indicators from domains identified
- **Questionnaire** (389 women: married, widows, Batwa minorities): Levels of empowerment among future beneficiaries of Umwizero and Kirumara projects
- **Quantitative Analysis:** SPSS ANOVA

YEAR 3

- 110 Respondents (24 men, 86 women)
- **Closed Questionnaire** (110 respondents): Knowledge of HIV, sexual behavior, availability/utilization of services, collective agency, gender based violence, HIV/AIDS stigma, gender norms
- **Semi-structured Interview** (85 respondents): Gender, conflict resolution, decision-making, life changes, group dynamics/impact
- **Focus Group Discussions** (6 groups): Solidarity group functionality, concepts of inclusion, sustainability of groups
- **Reflective Analysis:** Team reflected on research approach, observations and initial analyses
- **Quantitative Analysis:** SPSS ANOVA

Limitations

- Time and resources limited scope and depth of Year 3 study.

BURUNDI

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Women's Own Views on Empowerment:

AGENCY

Decision-making (sex, resource management, child-rearing)
Free mobility and sexuality
Access to income, assets, fertile land and proper clothes
Leadership
Conflict resolution
Freedom from violence
Husband works
Can feed children
Financial autonomy

RELATIONS

Negotiating sexual relations
Problem solving
Shared responsibilities, respect, decision-making, trust and security with men
Respect for women in community meetings, committees, ceremonies, structures, extended family, work and church
Group solidarity helps community, and the vulnerable

STRUCTURE

Matrimonial stability through status
Status within judicial processes
End impunity, silence around gender-based violence

Implications on Program:

Adapt to Local Realities/Women's Strategies:

- Work to understand women's choices, relationships and strategies for self-efficacy around HIV and how to assure protection.
- Foster communication between couples, particularly on sexual relations.

Continue to:

- Harness community expertise/participation in all aspects of project.
- Question communities, break taboos, with a focus on gender equity.

Engaging Men and Local Power Holders, Continue to:

- Be aware of the political situation/changing context to leverage work.
- Work with men through trainings and develop male role models to support women's empowerment, fight violence.
- Ensure groups work with local authorities effectively in meetings.

Group Dynamics: Women in solidarity groups can exclude and exploit one another. Programs must:

- Develop a strategy to work with oralists and have meaningful impact on the poorest, widows and Batwa minority groups.

Continue to:

- Be aware of tensions arising from women's participation in groups and develop interventions for stronger relations within groups and others.
- Sequence challenges to increase as trust/mutual accountability increase to manage group in-fighting and ensure project sustainability.
- Recognize that targeting women to participate often excludes younger women, and explore how to reach them.

Commit to Gender Equity and Lasting Social Change, CARE must continue to:

- Improve knowledge sharing, both internally and externally.
- Initiate competency-based recruitment, decentralized decision-making and gender-sensitive policies to empower staff to question.
- Get deeper with analysis to be done internally, as a team by build staff capacity in analysis, critical reflection/learning and knowledge sharing.
- Use information and learning to inform strategic planning.

Impact on Empowerment

	Year 3: Umwizero, 2008	Year 2: Umwizero, Kirumara, 2007
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-esteem, confidence, usefulness, dignity (<i>especially among the Batwa</i>) • Mobility (except for young or richer women), use HIV services more • Conflict management, household decision-making, but <i>not</i> sexual choices • Belonging to a group and organizing together, though tensions among members • Communication skills, speaking out in public • Higher income, health/hygiene, better dress – knowledge of HIV, low condom use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-making in households (depends on women -- most with female headed households, income earning women) • Sense of freedom
Str	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence against women, polygamy common and normalized • Accountable local community structures 	
Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and negotiation with husband (communication, income – some do not) • Solidarity, mutual support in groups (tensions in trust, benefits, decisions) • Changing status of Batwa minority, poor relations with power/land holders. • Negotiation, voice and event-organizing in community • Advocacy against polygamy, limited effect and infidelity unchanged. • Tension between non-members and members (exclusion) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidarity and support from groups broaden social capital

* Impacts on women varied greatly according to their status in community (from age, ethnicity, poverty...). Furthermore, the specific changes that can be attributed to CARE's work are unclear.

For more information, please contact Domitile Ntacobakinvuna (dntacobakinvuna@care.org.bi) or Jane Iredale (janeired@yahoo.ca).