

## CARE International Gender Network annual meeting - November 2012

### Summary of discussions

The CARE International Gender Network's 2012 meeting was pivotal as it brought together a number of National Directors, CI Humanitarian Director, CI Program Director and CI Head of Global Advocacy who agreed that the work around gender equality and women's empowerment needs to be centre stage. The majority of those present agreed that CIGN should develop a business plan for a 'line of expertise' on gender to be submitted to the Board in 2013 with a clear focus on deliverables.

**Background:** CARE International Gender Network (CIGN) has been mandated by the Board to support CARE members to implement the Gender Policy. Hosted by CARE Austria/Czech Republic in Prague in November 2012, the meeting aimed to:

- Understand the ways in which the current landscape offers multiple opportunities to deepen gender equality work and secure increased funding and visibility
- Establish who will contribute to moving forward the Policy in a consistent and interdependent way over the next year
- Explore whether the current CIGN is the best model to achieve the Gender Policy. And if not cost-effective and efficient, visionary alternatives
- Identify a gender equality initiative in our development and/or humanitarian programmatic work for CIGN to work on interdependently
- Provide the space to listen, learn and build solidarity (focused learning)
- Influence, advocate for and get support from the National Directors for the above.

Participating were National Directors (NDs) or their representatives from 7 members (noting

that one of the ND's is also a member of CIGN), CIGN reps from 9 members, 3 regional gender advisors and 2 country office reps. In addition, the CI Program Director and the CI Global Head of Advocacy (both of whom are members of CIGN), and the CI Humanitarian Director also attended. The participation by all was greatly appreciated and significantly contributed to the outcomes of the meeting.

**CIGN Vision:** We confirmed our vision, crafted in 2011: In 2016, CARE International will be clear about what it means by and how it operationalises gender equality. It will have increased capacity to implement transformational gender programming. It will be coherent in its practice and accountable for its commitments.

**Purpose:** In Prague we developed our purpose: To support leadership in organisational transformation for the implementation of the CI Gender Policy by facilitating increased commitment and accountability. This will include harnessing and building learning, knowledge, capacity and resources for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality through high quality programming and within CARE's own institutional practices.

**Principles:** We developed a set of principles to help guide the way we want to work. We want to incorporate trust (being open and honest, and working in solidarity), learning (being connected internally and externally, listening in ways that are respectful of others' realities and being self reflective and aware), being analytical and influencing, focused, engaged in positive, fun ways and be diverse (representative of the CARE family globally as well as diverse in function and level).

**Achievements:** We reviewed and celebrated the work CIGN and others have accomplished in the last 1-2 years. These include:

Explanatory Note on CARE's Gender Focus; Gender Toolkit and Good Practices Framework for gender analysis; Guidelines on Monitoring & Evaluation; cadre of 86 trainers to roll-out Gender Equity & Diversity trainings; Women's Leadership Program (Asia), increased commitment to gender as seen in the CI Humanitarian Strategy and CI Advocacy Strategy; and an elevated reputation of CARE as a credible authority on gender.

**Success factors:** We identified what contributed to these achievements:

- Solidarity within CIGN: trust, commitment and sense of purpose
- Accountability built into key processes (e.g. promoting women's leadership)
- High-level support (e.g. Deputy Secretary General, CI Program Director, members)
- Relevance & Access: building simple frameworks from various guidelines and making them accessible
- Promoting a learning culture
- Facilitating partnerships.

**Challenges:** We examined the challenges in achieving greater impact:

- Insufficient technical capacity to meet current needs in improving program quality and impact as well as institutional policy and practice changes
- Over-reliance on individual good will and initiative of CIGN reps
- Inconsistent leadership commitment across CI to authentically implement the Gender Policy
- Existing accountability mechanisms are weak in ensuring compliance
- CIGN effectiveness low without authority
- Gap between high expectations and need, and low resources. There is an over-reliance on voluntary time commitment, no dedicated capacity to coordinate internal functions of group or respond to growing needs of organisation, there are inefficiencies and duplication of effort, and lack of coherence e.g. different guidelines which compromises consistency of program approach.

**More to do:** There is so much more we want to achieve:

- Improve program quality and impact (improve gender analysis, program design, Design Monitoring & Evaluation guidance, impact measurement, links with women's movement/s)
- Connect our program to advocacy to remain credible and authentic and link gender issues from local to global scale
- Strengthen gender within our organisation (support CARE members to develop specific policies and strategies, improve talent management, create an enabling environment, preventing sexual exploitation and abuse).

**Time for new model:** We have had a high level of success given limited resources. The current structure worked to build momentum in the inception stage, however, CIGN strongly believes that CARE needs a different approach that will address increasing workload, issues of coordination, insufficient technical capacity and leadership, to maintain the momentum if we are to build on gains that have been made and not step backwards on our gender work. A different type of model is now required and demands investment to support greater interdependence and resilience. This comes at a time of huge change within CARE after the Thailand Resolution (November 2012). We must transform to remain relevant.

**Participation:** ND's spoke to the importance of CARE's focus on gender equality, appreciated the inclusion of gender & diversity training through a values clarification exercise and wanted to see a shared understanding and commitment of this work across CARE leadership and boards. The majority of ND's agreed that:

- CIGN's work is important and needs to be centre-stage if we are to remain relevant
- There should be a gender function (a line of expertise) that addresses program, organisational change and governance and accountability and must report at a

high level to ensure visibility and ownership from members

- We need a dedicated person(s)
- CIGN now needs to develop a business plan (including the rationale, strategic focus, reporting lines and representation)
- We should not assume that any funds will be approved from the CI Contribution Key<sup>1</sup> - we should also make recommendations on how members could support through current or future gender investments.

**Line of expertise:** In summary, CIGN presented preliminary thinking around a single gender model for feedback with participating ND's and CI colleagues. The majority of ND's present agreed that CIGN should develop a business plan for a gender Line of Expertise (LoE) within CARE to be submitted to the CI Board (via the Program and Operations Committee) in 2013. The business plan should firstly consider the strategic focus and tangible products that would be delivered, and then explore resourcing options, structural issues and reporting lines. It was agreed that a few options should be proposed with an analysis of the resource requirements and what is possible under each scenario. A wide stakeholder consultation across CARE will be required. A consultant will be hired to develop the business case and support the consultation phase.

**CARE members are being actively requested to invest in this short term 'stop gap' work to develop the business case (and support modest CIGN priorities for 2013).**

**During annual budget processes and in discussions with donors, CIGN also asks each member to consider how they can plan for and invest in CARE's longer-term gender Line of Expertise.**

To give a flavour of the conversation, CIGN proposed an LoE reporting to the CI Board and connecting through ExCom (Executive

<sup>1</sup> The formula by which CARE members' contributions are calculated for the shared CI budget.

Committee of the CI Board) to other working groups across CARE. We discussed the purpose, vision and strategic objectives of a gender model. CIGN estimated that an LoE would require 3 new full time positions (Director, Technical Specialist and Program Officer). NDs and CI participants pointed to the current financial realities in CARE and encouraged CIGN to explore a 'lighter' model than a formal Centre of Expertise and to identify how the gender resources currently available across CARE could be aligned to collective gender priorities. We also discussed practical ways that CARE members could work together to free up resources to support these positions. There is likely to be greater buy-in for a funding model whereby interested members take on a particular lead on behalf of the organisation (as being done under the Humanitarian Strategy) rather than including it into a separate budget and function to be supported by the CI Contribution Key. A view was also expressed to ensure the business plan focuses foremost on the gender work that needs to be done to support Vision 2020 and addresses identified gaps, rather than focusing on structure.



**Gender investments:** We were very pleased to be able to share information from gender resource mapping work, the first time this has been collated in CARE. We are currently investing over USD\$3 million annually on gender related expenditures across CARE (56% from unrestricted). However, it should be noted that CIGN itself has no budget (time contributions are made by some members and small funds are occasionally allocated to progress particular pieces of work). The mapping indicated there are opportunities within some donor framework agreements with CARE members to target investments to support interdependent ways of working on gender across CARE and reduce redundancies. CARE members also need to make resource decisions in order to ensure sustainable quality in our gender work. In the interim CIGN encourages all CARE members to dedicate 20% of a full time equivalent staff member's time to work on CIGN's priorities. This could be one or more people across HR, advocacy or program staff, for example, adding to a total of 20% full time equivalent.

**Expanding membership:** We agreed to expand CIGN in the coming year to include representation from regional and country offices as well as relevant working groups across CARE, as well as the CI Program Director and one National Director. At the same time, there was general agreement that CIGN should not expand too dramatically at this point in its history.

**Reporting:** We affirmed the need to continue with full member reporting on implementation of the Gender Policy every 2 years (next due 2013). However, given CIGN resource constraints and our priority to develop a business case for a LoE, we agreed to postpone detailed reporting until 2014. The Secretariat will continue to oversee brief annual reporting from members through CI Board reporting mechanisms.

**Leadership, priorities and work plans:** Co-chairs for 2012 were thanked for their contributions: Alka Pathak (Chief Advocacy & External Relations Officer, CARE India), Laura

Taylor (Gender Advisor, CARE Australia) and Helene Aall Henriksen (Program Manager, CARE Norge). New co-chairs for 2013 were selected: Jasveen Ahluwalia (Gender in Emergencies Advisor, CARE Emergencies Group) and Allison Burden (Senior Advisor GED & Talent Management, CARE USA) and Helene Aall Henriksen plans to continue in the co-chair role (to be confirmed).

We developed work plans for 2013 and affirmed CIGN's three strategic priorities:

- Increasing capacity and leadership commitment – focusing on strengthening guidance on CARE's gender programming, connecting with other CI groups including the CI HR Working Group and training leadership in GED.
- Enhancing accountability and strengthening governance – focusing on development and submission of a business plan for an LoE on gender.
- Improving program practice - focusing on contributing to the development of CARE's Global Impact Report on Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality. This will be a key global product available across the membership aligned with International Women's Day, with the first annual edition available in March 2014.

Detailed work plans and powerpoint presentation from the meeting available on request.

**Solidarity:** And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, we know we need to stay energised and support each other. For many CIGN reps who do this work on top of other responsibilities, and want to see change at a faster pace, we reflect on the last lines of Robert Frost's poem The Road Not Taken:

*Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*