

Lessons on Supporting Gender Change

*Gender equality assessment across the CIDA Program Agreement
(2007-2012)*

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Executive Summary

CARE Canada's Program Agreement – spanning five years (2007-2012) and 26 projects – offers rich insights on CARE's evolving understanding and engagement with gender equality work. Over the course of the PA, CARE has undergone a number of important transitions that shape its understanding and commitments toward gender equality and social change processes. In this context, this assessment aims to understand how PA projects have approached gender equality over the span of this program agreement, and what have been the overall contributions of this work toward gender equality.

Broadly, the review found that the PA made strides to accommodate women into service delivery systems, community networks and development processes. These areas aligned with the result areas of the PA. However, few projects took a systematic approach toward gender equality, reinforced through analysis, monitoring and a clear guiding strategy. While COs highlighted how PA projects offered important opportunities for innovation in developing programming models, these efforts often remained gender blind.

Through an evaluation review, surveys and field visits, the assessment found gender change often lied squarely within the spaces that the PA created for women's engagement with little to no changes beyond these boundaries. Women and girls involved in CARE Zambia's SCOPE project appreciated the committees and school spaces the project created for them to raise voices and influence decisions. However, this space was not maintained within their own households or the broader community. In CARE Zimbabwe's AGENT project, women in Business Management Organizations highly appreciated their participation and decision-making power within these spaces. However, women's roles and decision-making did not change in their households and men often continued to control and monitor women's investments and profit. Without any changes in gender roles, women also reported over-work as a problem resulting from increased participation in projects while maintaining traditional duties at home.

In this work, there lies great potential to leverage the relationships and spaces forged for women to promote gender equality. However, few examples existed within the PA that aimed toward shifting unequal gender/power relations or transforming structures (traditions, policy) toward gender equality. However, innovations are emerging in this area as well. In Ethiopia, the PA project engaged couples to reflect upon and discuss gender roles and relationships in the context of division of labor, decision-making and sexual and reproductive health rights. In Rwanda, these approaches have been integrated into the CO's VSLA model. In Nepal, the PA engaged women's groups from grassroots to national levels, in order to build a network of women human rights defenders to promote policy change for gender equality.

Overall, the limited change and efforts toward gender equality signal the need for CARE, in general, to raise the bar of its efforts to engage work that truly promotes gender equality. The implications for CARE in promoting gender have often been misunderstood to entail integration of women and gender balance into project interventions. However, gender equality programming requires a much more strategic effort toward the transformation of gendered power relations.

Gender assessments of PA exercises highlight this gap and pointed out gender harms and tensions resulting from PA projects. These reviews helped COs to adjust programming to respond to harms. However, only a handful of projects monitored or assessed gender change, raising questions about possible gender harms within the portfolio.

Working toward gender equality requires targeted commitment around gender across CARE and partners. In review of organizational systems, CARE offices often voice commitments for gender equality, but actions behind these claims are uneven. A number of PA COs reported that they did not feel they had access to sufficient technical support, capacities or accountability for effective gender programming. While many CARE offices have policies promoting gender equality, this is often misaligned in procedures, representation, accountability mechanisms and climate of the organization.

To contribute toward gender equality requires robust commitment toward accompanying complex social change. Key recommendations include:

- **Investing in gender analysis, capacity:** Aligning with CARE's commitments toward gender equality through programming budgets, staff profile/capacities, gender analysis, technical support and longer-term strategies to advance gender equality.
- **Ensuring accountability for gender programming:** Holding staff, partners and organizations accountable for the quality of their work in relation to gender, and accompanying social change processes to ensure "Do No Harm".
- **Reflective Practice through a program approach:** Only with a stronger foundation in gender commitment and reflective practice were PA projects able to identify and adapt around gender harms and changing context. As Country Offices shift toward long-term program approaches, the role of reflective practice becomes central to programming. There is also an important role for CARE Canada to support this shift through coordinated support with CARE International Members, and funding that supports programs, gender expertise and learning at the country level.
- **Incubators for Learning and Innovation:** Space for innovation and adaptation characterized PA projects. However, across this work, it is important to ensure that gender equality goals are integrated across models, and that lessons learnt are capitalized in future programming.
- **Partnership Models for Broader Long-lasting Impact:** While CARE offices broadly accept that they must engage with a broader range of actors,

many still struggle with how to do this. This requires deeper reflection on what types of organizations CARE must engage in order to leverage impact toward gender equality. The approach also requires reflection on how to manage accountabilities between diverse organizations, and how to structure these relationships effectively.

- **CARE Canada's Role in Supporting Gender Equality Efforts:** To support program recommendations, CARE Canada can also deepen gender support through more focused learning efforts in relation to gender equality and continued technical advice through the Gender Advisor.

These recommendations aim to capitalize on the great potential for gender equality that the PA has begun to foster through its work. Already, the review has found examples of emerging models and great potential across CARE's work to contribute to gender equality.

As CARE transitions toward a program approach and the organization has strengthened its commitment toward gender equality, key opportunities are emerging for CARE to enter this new level of engagement for gender equality. This has been supported through the increasing acknowledgement that programs must operate in wider society and partnerships, with a long-term vision for social change. With the majority of long-term programming focused on women and girls' empowerment, strengthening gender capacities and accountabilities across the organization are requisite for attaining the organization's vision and promise.

I. Introduction

1.1 Background

Spanning from 2007-2012, the CIDA and CARE Canada Program Agreement, aimed to foster learning and innovation for deeper impact through 26 projects in CARE Country Offices around the world. The activities within the Program Agreement projects contribute to four outcome areas:

Outcome Area 1.	Marginalized and vulnerable men and women are aware of, have access to and use high quality social services, resources and information related to health, education, natural resource management and economic development.
Outcome Area 2.	Civil Society has improved its capacity to influence decision-makers in being more accountable and responsive to marginalized communities and groups.
Outcome Area 3.	CARE and its partners demonstrate greater knowledge sharing and learning practices to better respond to local / global social, environmental and economic priorities.
Outcome Area 4.	Women, girls and women's organizations are more able to participate meaningfully in the development process, realize their rights and satisfy their practical needs and strategic interests.

Table 1. PA Outcome Areas

In it, gender equality has been viewed as both an explicit (Outcome 4) and crosscutting goal.

This assessment reflects on how Program Agreement projects approached gender equality work in implementation since inception and the extent to which projects realized their gender equality goals. The aim is to both provide a summative lens on how projects performed in terms of gender relations, as well as a formative discussion on how country offices approached gender and lessons for future programming.

1.2 Research Framework, Approaches and Limitations

To explore these questions, this study used a mix of qualitative approaches, organized around a common gender analysis framework:

1. Gendered/Sexual Division of Labor – what are the different roles that men and women play within, outside of the household and in the broader community? How have they changed? How are these roles viewed or valued?
2. Participation and Decision Making – What decisions are traditionally made by men? And by women? What are decision-making patterns now? In particular around strategic household issues (e.g. family planning and SRHR, marriage, children's education, management of household expenses)?
3. Access and control over productive resources and opportunities – Do women and men have equal access to resources and their benefits? How has this been changing?

4. Mobility and participation in public sphere – Do women and men have equal access to information, public spaces? What are women's access to public spaces and social networks? Do they face different risks or challenges in the public sphere? How has this been changing over time?
5. Access to public services – What are key services that women and men prioritize for themselves? Do women and men have access to these services? How do policies for access to services, and service operations (location, hours, practices) affect women and men's access to services and public resources? How has this been changing?
6. Violence and Restorative Justice – What are key issues related to violence within the community? And attitudes toward it? How do communities and local authorities respond to gender-based violence? Why? Has this been changing?
7. Group/Organizational Systems and Structures – what are women and men's roles within organizations to shape development? And do women's rights organizations also play a role in shaping the development context? How are decisions made and with whom? Who are the key stakeholders that they wish to influence? What have been successes and struggles in this engagement? How has their relationships evolved over time?
8. Women and men's aspirations for oneself – what is the vision to which men and women hope for themselves? What else would need to change to enable this to happen? What key priorities or challenges do they see for themselves now?

Organizationally, the review also explored how gender is reflected in relation to:

- Organizational identity and culture – How do organizational policies and strategies shape the project? And what is the core history and mission of the organization? How does the project fit into this bigger history and identity?
- Organizational capacities and performance – How does the project relate in terms of the organizational strategic priorities? How does the organization ensure that the project continues to pay attention to gender equality issues? How is the organization and project structured, managed and resourced to ensure that gender has been integrated across the project?
- Programmatic capacities and performance – What were the project's priorities in relation to gender equality? How was this developed and then implemented? What were the strengths, challenges or risks in this approach? How did the project monitor changes taking place in relation to gender relations? How did the project support or promote learning around gender programming, within CARE and with partners? What were the key results of this work in relation to gender equality?

Working through these analytical frames, the methodology was developed across four phases:

PHASE I

<i>Initial survey</i> Basic project information from COs on gender – programmatically and organizationally.	CO Staff (directly involved, manager, oversight, indirect involvement)	17 projects, 14 countries: Bolivia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Cuba, Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Lesotho, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
PHASE II		
<i>Comprehensive survey</i> Selected CO information on intent/design, results and	CO Staff (directly involved, manager, oversight, indirect involvement)	11 projects, 10 countries: Bolivia, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Nepal,

learning in relation to gender.		Rwanda, Zambia, Ghana, Zimbabwe
<i>Meta-analysis</i> CARE Canada and consultant review of CO evaluations and final reports on how projects accounted for gender. PHASE III	Consultant team with CC Staff reviewers of individual evaluations.	8 projects, 8 countries: Cambodia, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe
<i>Field visits</i> Deeper look at how projects promoted gender equality in program, management and partnership.	CARE Canada Gender Advisor and Consultant, with FGDs (gendered norms/trends, appreciative inquiry) and key informant interviews with: CO project and program staff, partners, impact/target group members, key informants.	4 projects, 4 countries: Ethiopia, Nepal, Zambia, Zimbabwe
<i>CO Field work</i> Understanding key changes and pathways of change.	FGDs with impact groups on most significant change, key informant sessions with stakeholders and partners on outcome mapping.	5 projects, 5 countries: Cambodia, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia
PHASE IV		
<i>Analysis workshop</i> CO and CARE Canada perspectives on design, approaches and scale/sustainability of PA projects. Planning and ways forward.	Group and plenary discussions on key findings, patterns, and initial lessons learnt.	8 countries, 8 projects: Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho/SA, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe. CARE Canada colleagues.

Table 2. Gender Equality Assessment Methods

Through this process, it is important to note a number of limitations that shaped this study:

1. Timing issues and logistics affected sequencing of activities from one phase to the next:
 - a. Selection of country offices for field visits, and development of analysis preceded the submission of survey results. Originally, survey results were meant to inform country office selection for field visits. Unfortunately, this was not possible due to logistical and practical realities.
 - b. In regard to the projects themselves, selection was limited by CO interest and capabilities to host, as well.

In light of these limitations, projects were selected purposely to include projects that integrated gender at different degrees in their design through implementation.
2. Due to limited budget, the consultant was only able to visit two country offices through one-week field visits. This helped to gain staff and participant views on changes, benefits, challenges and lessons learnt. However, it did not allow for a deeper mapping of the scope or depth of change.
3. Finally, this study was also affected by limited availability of data. For the meta-analysis, only a fraction of CARE Canada PA projects undertook a formal evaluation. Further, data from surveys also relied on CO staff time and participation to take part in this series of exercises. This limited responses to a

handful of country offices with the staff, capacity and organization memory to take part.

1.3 Gender Equality, CARE and the Program Agreement

Within its vision and mission, CARE's commitment to promote gender equality is reflected through its focus on "social justice, human dignity, and addressing discrimination in all its forms." Since the establishment of CARE International's Vision 2020, gender equality has become more central to the organization.

Situating this work in CARE's own organizational evolution, this review is timely in that PA projects were implemented alongside the analysis and lessons from CARE's 3-year Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII) on women's empowerment (2005-2008) and the consequent shift across CARE country offices toward a more programmatic approach (launching in 2008).

In light of these commitments, a gender review of the PA portfolio is important to pull out key achievements and lessons learnt from projects. This review can also guide ways forward toward realizing CARE's goals as a more programmatic gender equality organization.

1.4 Gender Equality Learning

Reflecting on changes toward gender equality also get to the heart of CARE's commitment to social justice. From the SII, CARE acknowledged that supporting gender equality and women's empowerment means commitment toward transforming gendered power relations across the domains of agency, structures and relations. Supporting societal change requires long-term commitment, work across multiple levels, strong partnerships and the ability to adapt in complex and changing contexts.¹

The Gender Equality Assessment aims to understand how far have the PA projects in country offices progressed toward internalizing these lessons, and supporting more equitable gender relations. Lessons can inform the development of new programming and determine where gender equality fits within program priorities.

¹ Wu, D (2009). Women's Empowerment Overview Brief. CARE International-USA. Available at: <http://pqdl.care.org/sii>.

II. Gender Relations and the Program Agreement: Design

2.1 Gender in Project Planning and Performance

Looking across PA projects, the survey data, meta-analysis and field visits found nearly all projects have either a gender equality outcome or a focus on women or girls as a priority impact group. In the initial survey, COs noted women's empowerment to be the most reported issue addressed, and the source of the greatest learning and institutionalization.

Rating PA projects in relation to engaging gender, 1/3 of COs felt their work was gender transformative, with over 1/5 reporting gender responsive work and 28% claiming to be sensitive to differential needs and constraints of participants based on gender and sexuality.²

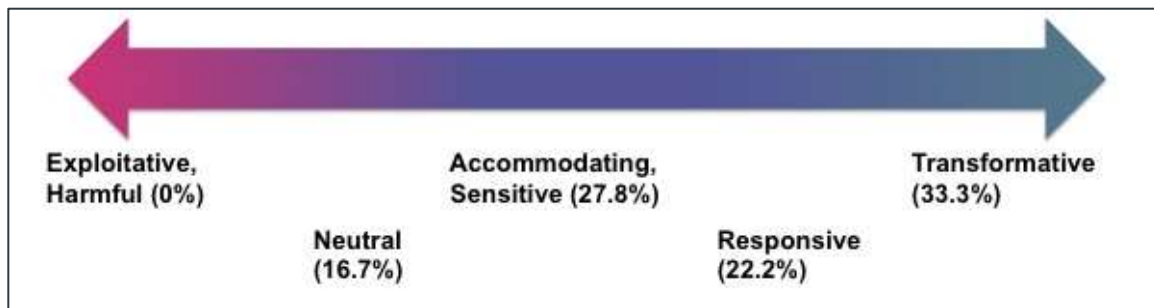


Table 3. Gender Continuum

While responses remained relatively high in terms of how COs rated the position of gender work within the portfolio, this level of commitment was not reflected in review of PA portfolio analysis and actions in relation to gender:

2.1.1 Women's Empowerment within the Portfolio

Though most projects reported work in women's empowerment, definitions of empowerment were rarely discussed.

² Definitions for how projects relate to gender aligned with CARE's gender continuum include: Harmful: approaches reinforce inequitable gender stereotypes, or dis-empower certain people in the process of achieving program goals; Neutral: activities do not actively address gender stereotypes and discrimination, but do not harm; Sensitive: activities recognize and respond to the different needs and constraints of individuals based on their gender and sexuality, but do not respond to root causes of gender inequality; Responsive: activities help men and women examine societal gender expectations, stereotypes, and discrimination, and their impact on gender relations; and Transformative: activities actively seek to build equitable social norms and structures in addition to individual gender-equitable behavior (CARE and ICRW, 2006 – Inner Spaces, Outer Faces Initiative)

Longwe Women's Empowerment Framework

In the PA, CARE Canada recommends the use of Sara Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework, which articulates empowerment through a progression across multiple levels of equality, to include:

- **Welfare** – the basic or practical needs to improve material welfare;
- **Access** – Women and men's equal opportunity to access productive assets and services.
- **Conscientization** – sensitizing men and women to engender a belief in the equality of their human rights;
- **Participation** – increased representation of women at all levels, through participating in various phases of a project;
- **Control and ownership** – addressing unequal power relations

CARE's Women's Empowerment Framework

Developed through CARE's Strategic Impact Inquiry, CARE organized its women's empowerment around how women relate within broader complex social systems and relationships. Through this framework, women's empowerment is much more than women doing more or knowing more, but comprises the interplay of changes in **agency** (her own aspirations and capabilities), **structures** (the environment that surrounds and conditions her choices) and **relations** (the power relations through which she negotiates her path).³

PA Engagement on Women's Empowerment

In survey responses and meta-analysis, few country offices referenced frameworks in relation to their work on women's empowerment within the PA. The meta-analysis reports that only Nepal (out of 8 projects under review) mentioned using CARE's and Longwe's women's empowerment framework to inform programming. Similarly, across the eleven projects that participated in the comprehensive survey, 4 COs (Ethiopia, Malawi, Nepal and Zambia-COMACO) out of 12 referenced using a women's empowerment framework to guide some aspect of design, measurement or implementation.

With limited engagement of empowerment frameworks, definitions of empowerment varied. Examples from the meta-analysis of what it means to work on women's empowerment include:

The Rwandan population is 53% of women and SAFI contributed to women empowerment by reaching more than 80% of project beneficiaries.

– CARE Rwanda

*The project made contributions in ensuring that learners, esp. girls were aware and **empowered enough to claim their education right**. Girls will break the "culture of silence" and take part in making decisions affecting their lives.*

– CARE Malawi

³ Women's Empowerment Framework. SII Library. Available at: <http://pqdl.care.org/sii>

Targeting **women's empowerment especially in health and economic empowerment**.
...[The project] will continue to strengthen how CARE Kenya works in communities and contributes to dignifying women and communities in Kenya and globally.

– CARE Kenya

The evaluation defines **citizen empowerment** as increasing the ability of project participants to systematically, reliably and objectively identify and articulate issues of concern to them.

– CARE Tanzania

These responses offer a broad range of definitions for empowerment, from the inclusion of women in project benefits to claiming equal rights between genders. Without an overarching framework to guide women's empowerment work, all projects likely addressed some aspects of women's empowerment, but how comprehensive or systematic remains a critical issue.

2.1.2 Areas of Inquiry in Design and Implementation

Nearly all COs who took part in the comprehensive survey agreed that PA projects applied gender strategies to some degree, with one country (Rwanda) strongly disagreeing. In contrast, the meta-analysis highlighted the absence of a gender strategy across PA projects reviewed. In the meta-analysis, there was almost no correlation between gender or power analysis, interventions and approaches, and impacts across countries and across areas of inquiry. The contradiction between the meta-analysis and self-reported work highlights needs to strengthen the capacities for designing as well as following through on gender analysis and design across the project.

In terms of areas of inquiry, both the meta-analysis and survey responses highlight **Access to Services** as a main project focus. This is not surprising as access to quality services responds directly to Objective 2 of the PA design. Other key areas supported included **group membership** and **participation in public spaces/mobility**. The meta-analysis also highlighted work toward more **equitable decision-making** in areas formerly dominated by men.

Not captured through these methods, however, is how the composition of approaches complements one another toward gender equality goals. Looking across CO responses in the initial survey, Nepal and Ethiopia reported engaging almost all areas of inquiry in some way (7-8). On the opposite end of the spectrum, Kenya and Indonesia only reported engaging one (Access/Control over productive assets and Access to services, respectively). Results do not communicate how gender work fit alongside other crosscutting themes within the PA, such as climate change and natural resources, governance or civil society strengthening.

Gender Areas Addressed	Meta-Analysis (n=8)	Survey (n=18)
Division of Labor	2	6
Strategic Decision-making	5	7
Access, Control: Prod. Assets	2	10
Mobility, Participation in Public Spaces	1	14
Access to Services	4	12
Violence, Justice	3	4
Group membership, mobilization	2 yes, 2 not sure	12
Aspirations	2	11



Table 4. Gender Strategies - areas addressed

2.1.3 Gender Analysis

The meta-analysis reported that three of eight COs (Nepal, Zimbabwe and Rwanda) undertook gender analysis.

Just over half (7) of COs participating in the comprehensive survey reported that gender or power analysis informed project design. However, two among these responses could not cite the source of analysis (Ghana, Lesotho), and one simply noted that development statistics highlighted gender imbalances (Zambia). Across these responses, it is worth noting that meta-analysis responses draw from a more detailed description of projects through evaluation reports. This limited the sample to those projects that chose to undertake an evaluation exercise. In contrast, those who took part in the comprehensive survey included projects that did not undergo an evaluation, making responses much more rooted in staff perceptions.

Country Project	Office,	Description (Comprehensive Survey)
CARE Cambodia		<i>The were sections [in the baseline and Social Analysis and Action] to address the issue of "gender division of roles and attitudes toward gender"</i>
CARE Ghana		<i>The PA project has taken into consideration Gender roles and power relations and ensuring issues of gender integration into programmes to give equal opportunity to women's and men's participation, leadership, access to benefits and control over decision making. The team however is not sure of the type of analysis that went into highlighting the above key gender issues.</i>
CARE Lesotho,		<i>The project design, recommended that 70% of members be women members</i>
CARE PAGE	Malawi,	<i>Socialization and power relations within households</i>
CARE Sahabhagita	Nepal,	<i>The analysis was done using Unifying Framework, which identified women's condition, their position in the family & society, and the</i>

		<i>environment they live in. It also looked at existing power sharing between men and women, poor and rich and excluded ethnic groups and dalits.</i>
CARE SCOPE	Zambia,	<i>Through other sources, e.g. government of Zambia data and other CARE Zambia projects there was evidence of gender and power imbalance</i>
CARE AGENT	Zimbabwe,	<i>The 2008 and 2012 gender analyses.</i>

Responses in general, raise questions about the scope and depth of analysis that took place around gender across the PA, limiting awareness of gender dynamics across the project cycle. There are, however, a few notable examples of how gender analysis shaped programming:

CARE Zimbabwe-AGENT agreed that it had been informed by gender analysis, but this only took place mid-project. Conversely, CARE Rwanda disagreed with this statement, but noted that a gender assessment had taken place during project implementation. Though analyses took place mid-project, CARE Rwanda reported that findings spurred the CO to revisit its approaches in relation to village savings and loans. Though CARE Zimbabwe's mid-term gender assessment of AGENT proposed an overall gender strategy for the project, the strategy produced was never adopted.

CARE Cambodia's gender analysis was motivated by its involvement with Social Analysis and Action work on reproductive health. However, this analysis or its role was not in the project evaluation or meta-analysis.

Both CAREs Nepal and Malawi tied their analysis of gender with a long-term program design process. While not reflected in the survey, the gender field visit also found that CARE Ethiopia's underlying causes of poverty exercise for long-term program development also influenced PA project approaches.

2.1.4 Approaches

How projects tried to promote gender equality was frequently reported to derive from previous project experiences and CO strategic directions (e.g. LRSP, Program Approach).

To probe into recognized approaches for promoting gender equality, both the survey and meta-analysis asked if PA projects engaged any of the following:

1. Mobilization of women into groups or associations;
2. Involvement in women's networks or forums for gender equality;
3. Engagement of men or boys as allies in promoting gender equality;
4. Coordination with governments, funders and civil society organizations to promote gender equality; and
5. Efforts to affect policy change favorable to gender equality;

Meta-analysis and survey responses are as follows:

	Women's groups	Networks for GE	Men boys and	Engaging stake-holders	Policy change
META-ANALYSIS CASES					
Tanzania				✓	
Kenya	◆			◆	✓
META-ANALYSIS, SURVEY, OVERLAID					
Cambodia					
Malawi			✓	✓	✓
Nepal	✓	✓		✓	✓
Rwanda	✓				
Zam – SCOPE				◆	
Zim – AGENT	◆		◆	◆	◆
SURVEY RESPONSES					
Ethiopia					
Bolivia					
Ghana					
Lesotho					
Zam – COMACO					
Zim – Urban Entrepreneurs					
KEY: * Survey: Shaded boxes represent "yes" ** The ◆ is a "not sure" answer and the ✓ is a "yes."					

Table 5. Gender Approaches

Across the six projects represented in both the survey and meta-analysis, self-reported survey responses claimed engagement in more areas of inquiry compared to the meta-analysis. In particular, while Cambodia reported work with women's associations, engaging other stakeholders and policy change, none of these approaches were reflected in the evaluation report.

Across both meta-analysis and survey responses, the most common approach was engagement of a broader range of stakeholders (government, CSO, donor). The nature of this engagement has not always been transformative, however. Many COs described work with other stakeholders in terms of coordination (Lesotho, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Zambia-SCOPE, Zimbabwe-Urban Entrepreneurs and AGENT); other projects focused more on integrating women into community-based groups (Cambodia, Bolivia, Ghana, Malawi, Zambia-COMACO). Only Nepal focused on broader engagement to reinforce government responsiveness and responsibility to promote women's rights through women's networks at grassroots, village, district and national levels.

The use of village savings as a women's empowerment approach has been a common approach adopted across CARE, and the PA is no exception. However, while COs felt VSLA offers important entry points for raising gender issues, the final analysis workshop also highlighted its limitations. As noted by

experiences in CARE Rwanda, VSLA in itself is not gender transformative and may even reinforce gender inequalities in the management and decision-making of funds.

2.1.5 Monitoring Gender Change

In terms of monitoring, all but two Country Office survey responses agreed that the PA project design included indicators for gender equality and relations. Of these, many spoke to disaggregation of indicators by gender (Bolivia, Zimbabwe-AGENT, Zambia-COMACO, Zambia-SCOPE), and two discussed numbers of women in leadership positions or ability to increase access/control over resources (Ghana, Lesotho). Only two included shifts in structures, norms and relationships related to gender:

- Malawi: policies and community attitudes/actions related to GBV,
- Nepal: the strength of women's networks and gender responsive policies, practices and socio-political environments from local to national levels.

All others reported no indicators for gender equality or relations (Zimbabwe-UEP, Cambodia).

Beyond integrating indicators at project design, monitoring change requires tracking these indicators and other shifts in gender relations. A significant gap highlighted in the meta-analysis was that projects did not necessarily report against gender outcomes through all phases of the project. In evaluations reviewed, monitoring, collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated outcomes were "consistently inconsistent".

The meta-analysis found no reports disaggregated client groups with the sole exception of CARE Nepal, and none disaggregated the category of women. Comparing against project log-frames, only two projects reported on gender outcome indicators within their evaluations (Zambia-SCOPE, Zimbabwe-AGENT).

2.2 Back to the Continuum: Situating the PA's Commitment to Gender Equality

In consideration of gender's position in design, analysis, strategy, approaches and monitoring, it is worth revisiting the gender continuum.

While aspects of project goals or design across PA projects sometimes aimed toward more gender transformative and responsive intentions, few demonstrated commitment toward gender equality across the project cycle. This highlights the importance of a coherent gender strategy to guide programming.

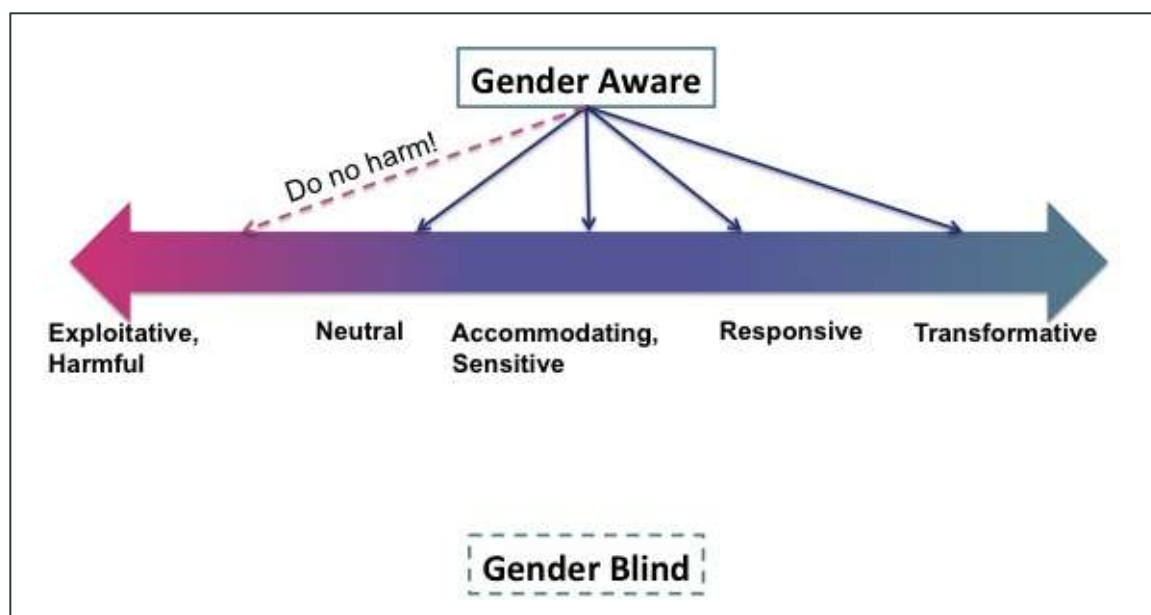


Table 6. Gender Sensitivity and Awareness Continuum

In addition, findings also highlight the role of analysis to ensure gender aware practices and do no harm across each phase of the project cycle. When asked about potential harms or risks in gender relations as a result of PA projects, the meta-analysis found that only countries that conducted a mid-term gender assessment (Zimbabwe, Rwanda) unveiled risks in relation to changing gender relations ([see Section IV, Contributions to Gender Change, p. 25](#)). Even within these reviews, harms identified covered a narrow set of areas of inquiry. In both Rwanda and Zimbabwe, these inquiry areas focused on women's engagement in the productive sphere alongside their other roles. Reviews did not discuss violence, women's control over one's body and aspirations.

2.3 Zooming in: a collection of cases from across the PA

Dissecting a handful of specific project cases, we gain a clearer sense of gender approaches and outcomes. For this reason, the gender assessment reviewed four cases at depth. Projects visited were chosen to represent diversity in technical sector and gender commitment. These included:

Project, CO	Technical Sectors	Description	Areas of Inquiry
Sahabhagita, CARE Nepal	Conflict resolution, women's rights advocacy	Sahabhagita worked with and networked women leaders from local to district and national levels for women's rights advocacy. Drawing from the REFLECT method, Sahabhagita facilitated women's groups across 10 districts to discuss a range of issues from sanitation to savings, gender-based violence and rights advocacy. The project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and control over productive assets, • Mobility/Participation in public spaces, • Access to services, • Violence and Justice, • Group membership and mobilization, • Aspirations

Project, CO	Technical Sectors	Description	Areas of Inquiry
		also aimed to promote peace-building and conflict resolution, though this shifted toward domestic violence work over the course of the project.	
Springboard, CARE Ethiopia	HIV and AIDS, health service delivery, livelihoods and governance	Springboard supported HIV and AIDS prevention, testing, care and treatment in the city of Bahir Dar. This intervention worked with local government authorities, NGOs, <i>Iddirs</i> , savings groups and youth to promote awareness, behavior change and service delivery (quality and governance) in relation to HIV and AIDS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Labor • Household decision-making • Access and control over productive assets, • Mobility/Participation in public spaces, • Access to services • Violence and Justice • Group members and mobilization
SCOPE, CARE Zambia	Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Education	SCOPE targeted orphans and vulnerable children and education. Across the life of the project, SCOPE took a strong focus on infrastructure development, with awareness raising efforts to promote responsiveness to child rights within education, with a focus on girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Labor • Mobility/Participation in public spaces, • Access to services • Violence and Justice
AGENT III, CARE Zimbabwe	Agriculture, value chains	AGENT focused on economic development, linking farmers and agro-dealers to marketing opportunities through business management organizations (BMOs), access to credit and adoption of drought-resistant crops.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Division of Labor • Access and control over productive assets, • Access to services • Group members and mobilization

Despite the diversity of each project and country context, a number of common patterns emerged at the PA level. (See *Annex 3 for a detailed account of each assessment*).

2.3.1 Building an Understanding on Gender

Analysis determined how projects conceptualized and approached gender. Across the four projects visited, only **Nepal's** initial design was informed by a holistic gender analysis, though both **Zimbabwe** and **Ethiopia** undertook analyses once the project was in implementation. There were no resources or analysis dedicated toward building an understanding of gender in **Zambia**.

In large part, **CARE Nepal's** analysis of gender and power emerged from CO commitment toward transforming underlying causes of poverty and its shift to long-term programs. Similarly, **CARE Ethiopia's** underlying causes of poverty analysis for its Urban Female Youth long-term program involved PA staff.

Though the analysis took place mid-project, it shaped project adaptations during the no-cost extension.

Where a number of initiatives in **Springboard** were implemented class- and gender-blind, the analysis triggered a series of modifications. The underlying causes of poverty analysis highlighted the particular vulnerabilities facing domestic workers and commercial sex workers. As a result, Springboard's extension period targeted these groups more carefully for savings groups. Also, Springboard also adapted its Community Scorecard approach to facilitate dialogue across health providers, commercial sex workers and domestic workers. Over the extension, the project also began to develop programming to engage couples in discussions of gender relations, and also launched research on rural-urban migration. Over this time, CARE Ethiopia faced challenges reaching its impact group, given their invisibility and transience within communities. However, since the program-level underlying causes of poverty analysis, Springboard progressed from being largely gender blind in certain initiatives toward greater gender awareness and responsiveness.

2.3.2 Evolving Designs Incorporating Gender into Programming

The evolution of Springboard mirrored the evolving nature of the project over the course of the PA. This capacity to adapt reflects another pattern across PA projects.

Shifting Political Environment

Operating in complex environments, situations can (and often do) shift over the course of a project cycle. More important, however, is how well do projects adapt to their changing contexts?

Both CAREs Ethiopia and Nepal faced shifting political environments that affected project capacities to operate. In response, both projects adapted strategies and renegotiated the intervention with the donor.

In **Ethiopia**, the trigger involved the introduction of the Civil Society Law barring foreign-funded NGOs from engaging human rights work. Under this regulation, a key project partner, the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), lost its ability to support staff altogether. For **Nepal**, a government mandate for local peace promotion committees was never effectively put in place at the local level. These structures represented a key stakeholder for Sahabagita, as the project initially focused on peace-building and aimed to link women's rights forums with these committees.

For both projects, these shifts brought them back to the drawing board. **CARE Nepal** adjusted toward greater focus on domestic violence. While unable to find another partner to take up EWLA's roles, **CARE Ethiopia**

established a legal aid office within a partner health clinic, hiring a former EWLA staff to provide services.

Donor relations and influence

In Zimbabwe and Zambia, donors influenced PA project development. In **Zambia**, donor priorities on infrastructure development reinforced CARE's focus on establishing community school structures.

In the case of **Zimbabwe**, the project initially did not take a gender focus, and the design was biased toward men, who traditionally control the production and marketing of crops. In measurement and design, the project did not disaggregate by gender but discussed clients only in terms of "farmers" and "agro-dealers". Over the course of the project, however, a donor requirement for 40% women's participation spurred teams to accommodate women into the project. In turn, AGENT adapted interventions to be more 'friendly' to women –rescheduling trainings, redesigning its beehive livelihoods initiative, conducting trainings on gender awareness in processing and marketing, including women and men in learning cross-visits and setting a quota for women's participation in business management organizations (BMOs).

Across projects visited, and through the workshop, the PA review highlighted how projects demonstrated the flexibility to adapt. From a gender perspective, however, while this flexibility existed, the extent to which shifts engaged strategic gender issues still relied on the competencies and experiences among PA project staff and COs.

2.3.3 Engagement on Gender and Rights – on whose terms?

So, in what ways did projects engage gender and rights? Gender assessment visits found that each CO took a unique approach toward gender within the PA:

2.3.3.1 AGENT: Accommodating women's participation in agricultural value chains, but at a cost

Through AGENT, CARE Zimbabwe blindly responded to women farmers' needs by pooling products for marketing and helping participants access loans through co-guarantees. In this context, women generally have smaller volumes of crops under their control for sale, and do not have claims to key productive assets for collateral in comparison to men. This benefit, however, was largely unintentional.

Without a strong gender focus while AGENT worked to accommodate women into value chains, it never went further to influence structures like financial services, value chains and market processes to become more gender equal and inclusive. Rather than challenge male privilege in

economic structures, AGENT held up stereotypes of the “good and responsible woman” to forge women's access to financial services. This approach reinforced unequal divisions of labor that perpetuate economic inequality between women and men. For example, calling on women's virtuousness as reason for accessing credit means business decisions that fail lead to a deeper and harder fall for women. This assertion creates a situation where women rely on positive gender assumptions to justify access to credit. For men, failures in business do not bear the same level of risk in social standing, and lending institutions continue to grant higher loans to men alongside the acceptance of higher risk. In a number of cases, men's failed businesses are signed over to their wives, absolving men of responsibilities while placing further burden upon women. Throughout this process, however, men often retain control over business profits.

Another limitation in this approach has been that AGENT worked to incorporate women into value chains, but it did not seek changes in other spheres of life. With the additional demands from the project, women were put in a position where they faced greater workloads and less time to benefit from initiatives. Rather than aiming to shift gender norms, AGENT accommodated traditional gender divisions by supporting agro dealers to work within rural communities and sell groceries alongside agricultural inputs. While this innovation helped to increase women's direct access to inputs, it also accommodated existing restrictions in women's mobility and social expectations to manage household food.

2.3.3.2 SCOPE: Building safer schools for girls and boys, but not addressing their root causes of vulnerability

Though it did not undertake analysis on gender, SCOPE incorporated gender into its work with child rights and school management committees. In this effort, SCOPE adapted its outcome areas to include one with a focus on girls:

“Nazibula and Simakakata community schools have quality management and children's rights, especially those of the girl child, are realized”

In the objective and implementation, however, SCOPE's engagement on girls' rights remained narrow. The project focused specifically on ensuring a safe environment for girls and boys in school.

With this focus, SCOPE ensured women and girls' participation in school management committees, and promoted female teachers as role models. SCOPE also had limited engagement with the Ministry of Education policies on girls' enrolment, retention and re-entry. Much of the project efforts focused on developing school infrastructure.

Overall, however, the project did not address power relations underlying girls' and boys' vulnerabilities. Working with vulnerable communities with poor access to education, project staff could identify a number of gender issues at the local level. In the visit, staff and community members discussed HIV and AIDS, early/unwanted pregnancy and poor access to education for teen mothers. Underlying these problems, the visit cited the lower status of women and girls who often cannot negotiate sexual relations, as seen through cases of sexual assault, teen pregnancy and polygamy. Additionally, rural-urban migration heightens risk of HIV and AIDS in this context. Though CARE Zambia's portfolio includes ample experience in HIV programming, SCOPE never confronted these larger issues undermining women and girls' rights.

2.3.3.3 Springboard: Renegotiating relationships at the local level

Springboard's objectives on HIV and AIDS tried to engage a broad range of social players across the private and public, formal and non-formal spheres. Springboard undertook a basket of activities with various stakeholders. During the main project implementation phase, Springboard undertook:

- Working with local *Iddir* networks to mobilize participants, provide livelihoods support and coordinate with local government,
- Supporting HIV and AIDS services and legal aid among local health providers,
- Mobilizing women and men into savings groups,
- Engaging in awareness raising on HIV and AIDS among youth and
- Facilitated accountability meetings between service providers and users through the community scorecard.
 - methodology.

In many ways, engaging power relations was at the heart of Springboard's design. The project aimed to negotiate relationships between service providers and service users to be more transparent, accountable and respectful. In engaging with women and youth on HIV and AIDS, Springboard surfaced a number of issues in relation to sexual health and rights. Springboard also aimed to strengthen local safety nets for households affected by HIV and AIDS, violence and poverty by working with traditional *Iddir* as well as mobilizing savings groups.

In implementation, however, these initial aims were not always met. While some initiatives focused on gender relations (e.g. discussing sexual health and rights among women and youth), in other areas the project was gender blind (e.g. work with local government and health services). In taking a gender-blind approach to community scorecards, Springboard was not initially sensitive to gender and power relations affecting what issues and actions were prioritized through this exercise.

In addition, while the project aimed to reach the poorest in a community for its savings groups, there was no protocol for identifying them. Rather, the project relied on mobilization through *Iddir* who essentially controlled access to project benefits.

These gaps represented an issue in understanding of the broader social environment. While the project was built around a model for supporting HIV and AIDS prevention and care, these initiatives did not come together coherently in implementation. While a number of important innovations were developed through the work of Springboard, they did not necessarily build from one another, let alone in alliance with other NGOs operating within the area.

Since the extension period and situational analysis study, however, the project made strides in becoming more sensitive to social realities and more responsive to gender.

Over this time, the project added activities on:

- Small grants to local associations – to promote community development and opportunities for women;
- Couples training sessions – to discuss intimate relations and gender;
- Research on rural-urban migration – to better understand vulnerability among rural-urban migrants, particularly domestic workers and sex workers; and
- Facilitation of community scorecard between service providers and domestic workers and sex workers – to place explicit focus on the priority issues facing marginalized women (the impact group population for CARE Ethiopia's Urban Female Youth program).

2.3.3.4 Sahabhogita: Linking Women Activists from Local to National Level to Influence Structures for Women's Rights

In CARE Nepal, Sahabhogita focused on engaging the political structures underlying unequal gender relations. The project worked across 10 villages in each of the 10 districts where it had presence. Within each village, the project mobilized 9 groups – each in a different ward. These groups and networks were facilitated to promote women's rights from local to national level.

Building from previous initiatives that supported women activists, Sahabhogita worked through women leaders to mobilize Peace Promotion Committees (PPCs) comprised of women at the grassroots level. Upward, Sahabhogita also federated activists in networks at village, district and national levels. At the grassroots level, women leaders facilitated training sessions in social analysis and action, and also savings groups among local PPCs. Topics ranged from campaigning to end *Chhaupadi*, raising awareness on uterine prolapse and cooperating to

develop community infrastructure. From these discussions, women developed actions among themselves. Groups from grassroots to village levels also set up shelters, conflict mediation and support systems for victims of violence.

Where much of the work at village and grassroots levels centered upon social protection and development, the networks established at district and national levels focused on policy influencing. Through Sahabhagita and coordination across other women's empowerment projects, the networks advocated on policies affecting women, and the constitution drafting process. Advocacy and activism at district levels often sought to involve women's groups at the grassroots levels, as well. There are fewer examples of issues at the grassroots level trickling up to identify advocacy priorities.

Focused on women's rights and activism, Sahabhagita did not work with men but coordinated through women leaders to promote development and equal rights.

III. Contributions to Gender Change

From these cases and other methods, what can we say about the PA's overall contributions toward change in gender relations and equality?

Across each of the four countries (and beyond them) the PA comprised a diverse set of focus areas, varying responsiveness to gender and country contexts that contrasted one another.

Before discussing impact, it is worth highlighting first that change is complex. Looking at gender change across the PA, it is important to situate what has happened within a broader lens. Respondents across Ethiopia, Nepal, Zambia and Zimbabwe all highlighted how promotion of women's rights was not only supported through CARE's engagement, but also in the messages coming from diverse stakeholders including government, media and civil society. Other influences included:

- In **Nepal**, the overthrow of the monarchy and coming to power of a Maoist government has embedded political consciousness and promotion of marginalized groups across the country. Economically, male economic migration to India and other areas have also been shifting gender relations.
- In **Ethiopia**, while a Civil Society Law has limited the space for NGOs to engage rights issues like women's equality, the government has also emphasized "unleashing the potential of women" for economic development. Working in urban areas, gender norms change quickly through media influence and NGO initiatives.
- In **Zambia**, participants highlighted that gender equality messages from SCOPE complemented the messages from other development and religious organizations. In communities, educated women have also gained recognition for their resilience and adaptive capacities. In addition, participants noted that the toll of HIV and AIDS on the community have also raised demand for greater knowledge and awareness for both women and men.
- In **Zimbabwe**, there is a supportive policy and civil society environment that advocates for women's rights. Though AGENT's links with these organizations was not robust, the country hosts a number of strong women's rights organizations active at a national scale.

Each other country involved in the review process has faced its own unique context that has shaped gender change. That is not to say we cannot discuss how PA projects have influenced change. However, it is important to acknowledge the broader context of actors and factors influencing outcomes.

3.1 Areas of Inquiry

Analysis of CO achievements toward gender equality goals offer glimpses of strengths and gaps in gender change, reported across surveys, the meta analysis and field visits:

3.1.1 Area of Inquiry: Gendered Division of Labor

Surveys and Meta-analysis

Across survey responses, only one CO (Malawi) reported achieving significant and very positive impact on gendered divisions of labor. Of the other project respondents in the initial survey, 9 reported slightly positive impact, and 7 reported neutral impact. In more comprehensive responses on impact, CARE Zimbabwe also noted that women's reproductive roles restrained their ability to capitalize on project services. It also noted that women's burden of work increased as a result of the project.

Table 7. Survey Responses: Changes in Division of Labor

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact	Zambia-COMACO	Indonesia-HIV Kenya Mali Tanzania		
2..		Cambodia Cuba	Ethiopia Rwanda Zimbabwe-UEP	
3.		Indonesia-MIAT	Nepal SA/Lesotho	
4.			Bolivia Ghana Zambia-SCOPE	
5. Significant Impact			Zimbabwe-AGENT	Malawi

The meta-analysis also highlighted that Sahabhagita (CARE Nepal) realized little success in achieving equal pay for equal work between women and men agricultural laborers. One woman participant also reported that she herself continues to pay women and men different wages for the same labor.

Gender Assessment Visits

Across sites visited, **Springboard (Ethiopia)** was the only PA project to specifically target discussions on divisions of labor in its work. In Springboard, participants emphasized changes in gendered division of labor as one of the most significant among couples. Men discussed taking on more household tasks and granting permission to their wives to join savings groups. These shifts were attributed to CARE's trainings on gender relations with couples, alongside similar messages in media and household poverty. While both men and women acknowledged these changes, they were most highlighted in men's experiences of change. Linked to taking up behaviors that cross gender roles, men also reported that making these changes has not been easy (though is sometimes a necessity of poverty). Men and women

mentioned that those who cross gender norms face community discrimination and personal shame. Men reported that neighbors would taunt them for lowering their status in households by acting like the 'wife' and that sometimes their own spouses were ashamed to have them seen taking on 'women's work'.

In the other projects where there was less focus on gender relations, changes in division of labor were limited. In **Nepal**, respondents noted that husbands took on more household work to accommodate their roles in the community. At the same time, support was limited and some women felt their participation put a strain on household relationships. This particularly affected those who took greater responsibility within groups (e.g. group and network-level leaders). As a result, a number of village and district level network chairpersons have been unable to pass on their responsibility to other members in spite of bylaws that call for a change in leadership. Of all network members interviewed, all had maintained their position since the groups' founding five years ago.

In **Zambia** and **Zimbabwe**, changes in division of labor were narrowly limited within the spaces carved out by PA projects. Speaking with boys and girls, both were able to give examples on how gender divisions of work were crossed within the classroom, however, this did not transcend into changes in the home or community. While AGENT in Zimbabwe created spaces for women in agricultural value chains, the gender assessment found that many patterns in what men and women do remained the same. Even within value chains (e.g. honey, peanut), men generally engaged more heavy work and women contributed most to processing. In these groups, men controlled key processes in relation to profit and management. Within households, gender divisions remained intact. Men continued to control key cash crops and women contributed labor to these crops in addition to farming other food and cash crops. With women taking up the same household responsibilities, a number of women reported over-work as project activities only contributed to their already large workloads without a shift in gendered responsibilities.

3.1.2 Area of Inquiry: Household Decision-making

Surveys and Meta-analysis

Only one CO reported significant and very positive influence on decision-making, and most felt that gender impact has been slightly to very positive (14 responses). CARE Zambia-COMACO also noted that equitable household decision-making over income remained a problem in relation to the intervention.

Table 8. Survey Responses: Changes in household decision-making

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact		Indonesia-HIV	Tanzania	

2..	Zambia-COMACO	Cambodia Cuba	Rwanda	Zimbabwe-UEP
3.		Malawi Mali	Bolivia Kenya	
4.			Indonesia-MIAT Nepal SA/Lesotho Zambia-SCOPE	Ethiopia
5. Significant Impact			Ghana	Zimbabwe-AGENT

Within the meta-analysis, two countries reported important changes in strategic decision-making (Malawi, Zimbabwe-AGENT).

Gender Assessment Visits

Across field visits, changes in decision-making varied by project, as well as by type of decision. In Nepal, participants felt they gained greater decision-making power through knowledge gained in trainings. In addition, women linked this shift with greater respect in the household.

In **Ethiopia**, women who had undergone couples sessions (though very recently) reported better ability to negotiate sexual relations and condom use with their partners. In other sites, however, women felt they could not negotiate family planning with partners. Women also reported that they are consulted more on household productive assets, but major decisions remain under the domain of men.

Similarly, **Zimbabwe** (AGENT) found that while women could now purchase agricultural inputs on their own, husbands continued to oversee their accounts and demanded reporting on profits and expenditures. Similarly, the gender assessment in **Zambia** also reported that men dominated decisions across household, school and community levels. This pattern was reflected both within and outside of project groups.

3.3.3 Area of Inquiry: Access to Productive Resources and Benefits

Surveys and Meta-analysis

A striking set of contradictory responses across methods arose in relation to access/control of productive resources and benefits. Across survey responses, over 2/3 of COs felt that there had been positive changes in access to productive resources. However, the degree of impact varied widely, with only two reporting significant impact. In comprehensive survey responses, both CAREs Ethiopia and Zimbabwe-AGENT highlighted positive change in access and control over productive resources. In AGENT, this shift was explicitly linked of the handing over of failed businesses from husbands to their wives.

Table 9. Survey Responses: Changes in access/control of resources and benefits

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact		Indonesia-HIV	Indonesia-MIAT	
2..		Bolivia Cambodia Tanzania	Zambia-COMACO Rwanda	Zimbabwe-UEP
3.		Malawi	Cuba Mali Nepal Zambia-SCOPE	Kenya
4.			Ethiopia	SA/Lesotho
5. Significant Impact			Ghana Zimbabwe-AGENT	

The meta-analysis however found no evidence of change in Access/Control of productive resources across project evaluations under review.

Gender Assessment Visits

In field visits, PA projects in **Ethiopia**, **Nepal** and **Zimbabwe** increased women's access to productive resources by accommodating access to loans through savings groups and co-guarantees with microfinance lenders.

In both Nepal and Ethiopia, participants also noted that they would also access credit through other savings groups run by the government or other organizations. In **Nepal**, women felt they could control how money was spent, but for many, this was also accommodated through their status as female household heads, many of whose husbands migrated for work. In **Ethiopia**, men could also represent their wives within groups and access loans on their behalf. Groups reported, however, that women's access to funds have sometimes raised tensions in relationships with husbands. At times, women reported that husbands would demand money or accuse them of hiding funds. Also, some groups have refused the participation of husbands with a reputation for drinking, aggravating tensions between husbands and groups.

In **Zimbabwe**, the assessment also found that while women experienced increased access to agricultural inputs and credit, men continue to use more inputs and access more credit despite representing more risk to lenders. In the experiences of AGENT, women invested the majority of their profit back into households, with only a fraction (30%) reserved for reinvestment into their businesses. Men, in contrast reinvested 70% of profit back into their businesses. The project also reported that in-laws would sometimes attempt to take over women's businesses.

3.3.4 Area of Inquiry: Mobility and Participation in the Public Sphere

Surveys and Meta-analysis

Survey respondents were overwhelmingly positive about more equal participation between women and men in the public sphere, including VSLA groups, school governing boards, business management organizations, etc. In many ways, this was a direct output from project efforts. CAREs Ghana, Nepal, Cambodia, Zambia-SCOPE, Zimbabwe (AGENT and UEP) and Malawi (6 of 12 responses) also highlighted women's participation in community fora as an important achievement in project gender equality goals (comprehensive survey). Of responses, Ghana specifically noted the role of women in leadership.

Table 10. Survey Responses: Changes in mobility and participation in the public sphere

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact			Indonesia	
2..			Kenya Nepal	Zimbabwe-UEP Rwanda
3.			Bolivia Mali Zimbabwe	
4.			Cuba Zambia (2)	SA/Lesotho Tanzania
5. Significant Impact			Indonesia-HIV Zimbabwe-AGENT	Cambodia Ethiopia Ghana Indonesia-MIAT Malawi

In the meta-analysis, participation in the public sphere was among the highest-frequency changes from across evaluation reports. CAREs Nepal and Malawi's evaluation reports highlighted the participation of women in decision-making. In Malawi, the project strategy called for Children's Councils to ensure 60% girls' representation in leadership, as well as work with the Ministry of Education to promote women and girls in leadership. In CARE Cambodia, while the project encouraged adolescent/youth representation within Commune Councils, the approach remained gender blind.

Gender Assessment Visits

For **Sahabhagita (Nepal)**, women were specifically mobilized to promote equal rights and development. From it, women gained knowledge on policies affecting their lives and tried to raise awareness and action over key issues they faced. While grassroots groups organized based on issues from the REFLECT sessions, their work and identity varied. A number of groups visited saw themselves more as vehicles for group savings and loans, or for community development rather than political entities for supporting equal rights. In failing to extend their mobilization efforts and leadership to men, however, some groups were viewed as instruments for community

development without extending broader responsibility or ownership for development with men.

At higher levels, the women's advocacy forums took on another identity. While some of their work was to follow-up on cases of domestic violence raised from the village level, district-level forums had a strong political identity. Advocating with the Constituent Assembly, these women were able to see their influence on national policy and the drafting of the constitution. A number of members were also elected as political party representatives.

Springboard (Ethiopia) participants also felt they were able to gain more information through participation in groups. Some women also noted that this forum helped them to learn about public meetings and take part in community discussions. While a few women had already been active in the community, many noted they had not known about meetings previously. Within Springboard, both women and (male and female) youth felt they gained confidence to speak and ask questions in public meetings.

In **Zimbabwe** and **Zambia**, respondents felt that the PA projects forged a space for women and girls to participate effectively within business management organizations and school committees. Within these groups, girls and women felt they could influence decision-making, however, changes have been limited. In **Zimbabwe**, the gender assessment highlighted how mobility restrictions remained an issue for women. Within certain groups, men also continue to control key processes. In **Zambia**, while girls reported participating in Children's Clubs and women took part in school management committees, changes have been limited to the school environment without effects in broader community fora.

3.3.5 Area of Inquiry: Access to Public Services

Surveys and Meta-analysis

Access to public services was the most prominent area of change reported across both the survey responses and meta-analysis. Access to services also represents a key outcome area of the PA portfolio. Among survey responses, 16 of 17 PA projects reported positive (with 11 very positive) change brought about by projects in this area of inquiry.

This sentiment alone, however, does not offer much descriptive information to describe this change. Degree of reported impact ranged from little/none to significant. In comprehensive survey responses, two COs also highlighted increased access to services as a key component of meeting PA gender equality goals (Ethiopia, Zambia-COMACO).

Table 11. Survey Responses: Changes in access to public services

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact		Zambia-COMACO	Bolivia	
2..			Kenya Rwanda Zimbabwe-UEP	
3.			SA/Lesotho	Nepal
4.			Zambia-SCOPE	Cambodia Ghana Mali Tanzania
5. Significant Impact				Cuba Ethiopia Indonesia (2) Malawi Zimbabwe-AGENT

The meta-analysis highlighted expanding access to services in 4 of 8 project reports reviewed. Within this area, project reports discussed access to education for boys and girls (Malawi and Zambia), providing shelters for survivors of violence (Nepal) and general service delivery for women and girls (Tanzania). In the case of Tanzania, the review did not detail different impacts on girls and women in accessing social services, though this relates directly to a project goal and community scorecard approach. The meta-analysis notes that much evidence across evaluation reports remain anecdotal.

Gender Assessment Visits

Accessing key services was also a component in each of the PA projects visited.

In **Ethiopia**, Springboard focused on access to health services, which was the most important change ranked by staff and partners. Women and men participants also acknowledged this change. To promote accessible and responsive service provision, the project linked with health centers and facilitated the Community Scorecard methodology. However, for much of the project, these approaches were largely gender blind, though the project initiated changes to become more gender responsive over its final year.

In **Nepal**, women groups demanded funds from local government to access funds earmarked for women and children's development. The project also worked to provide protection and response in domestic violence.

Both SCOPE and AGENT enabled access to services for women and girls, but did not overcome underlying causes of their vulnerability and exclusion. Through **AGENT (Zimbabwe)**, participants accessed financial services (loans) co-guaranteed by the project. This opened opportunities for women, who

generally do not have the productive assets to serve as collateral. While AGENT helped women gain access to credit, however, this work did not challenge some of the underlying issues limiting women's access or control to credit. The gender assessment found that women continue to access smaller loans from financial institutions. Part of this has been propped up through stereotypes about women and men in business. Similarly, **SCOPE's (Zambia)** construction of classroom and latrine infrastructure served as an important security measure to protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation in school. However, this initiative neither affected the status nor the power relations facing children (especially girls) to ensure sustainable social shifts that reduce their vulnerability in the long run.

3.3.6 Area of Inquiry: Violence and Restorative Justice

Surveys and Meta-analysis

Responses on change in violence and justice varied within the survey as well as the meta-analysis. In responses on gender equality, no CO made reference to violence. Within the survey, Zambia-COMACO reported slightly negative change in relation to violence but did not explain this response.. Malawi alone felt the PA project made significant and very positive gains in relation to violence.

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact	Zambia-COMACO	Bolivia Cuba Indonesia-MIAT Kenya Mali Tanzania	Zimbabwe-UEP	
2..		Rwanda	Zimbabwe-AGENT	
3.			Cambodia Nepal SA/Lesotho	
4.		Cuba Mali Tanzania	Zambia-SCOPE	Ethiopia Indonesia-HIV
5. Significant Impact			Ghana	Malawi

The meta-analysis highlighted the broad range of interpretations that projects took in response to this area of inquiry. The analysis also found that impact here to be diverse and non-comparable. Focus areas included government institutional response to violence, raising women's voices and reporting violence, and raising awareness of gender-based violence among students. Both Zimbabwe and Rwanda's gender assessments also highlighted potential harm and risks of domestic violence and gendered conflict in relation to PA interventions.

Gender Assessment Visits

PA projects in Ethiopia, Nepal and Zambia approached the issue of violence and harmful traditional practices in diverse ways, as well.

While **SCOPE** conducted awareness-raising efforts to promote children's rights, the gender assessment found that school construction proved to be a key factor in promoting girls' access to education. With schools formerly in ill repair or conducted in an open-air environment, respondents noted that girls were at high risk of sexual assault by (male) teachers. With formal classroom structures (classrooms and lavatories), respondent teachers, boys and girls noted declines in unwanted sexual advances and abuse.

In **Nepal**, the development of reporting and protection structures that provided safe places for victims of violence and legal aid created systems to respond to violence. Subsequently, women felt that declines in violence were triggered by men's fear of being reported. None made mention of any shift in attitudes around violence.

In **Ethiopia**, respondents had a general perception of declining violence but felt domestic violence remains a problem. FGDs also reported that general insecurity and violence was on the rise due to economic stagnancy and unemployment. *Iddirs* working with the project felt that they have been able to respond to cases of child marriage in collaboration with local schools in collaboration with Springboard.

The **AGENT** assessment made no mention of violence.

3.3.7 Area of Inquiry: Group Membership and Mobilization

Surveys and Meta-analysis

In terms of group membership and mobilization, 4 projects reported changes as neither positive nor negative, with all others seeing positive change. Level of impact ranged across little/none to significant. In the comprehensive surveys, over half of project respondents discussed inclusion of women in membership of various committees as a key contribution toward gender equality (Ghana, Cambodia, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi). However, only Nepal focused on groups mobilized specifically around the promotion of women's rights and solidarity.

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact		Bolivia Indonesia-MIAT Zambia-SCOPE		
2..		Zambia-COMACO	Rwanda	
3.			Kenya	
4.			Ghana	Cuba

			Mali SA/Lesotho	Ethiopia Nepal Tanzania
5. Significant Impact				Cambodia Indonesia-HIV Malawi Zimbabwe (2)

Gender Assessment Visits

Working through groups and training, each project visited reported greater cohesiveness among members that helped women gain confidence and voice. This was strongly reflected in **SCOPE**, where women were able to use their membership in committees to express their priorities. In **Zimbabwe**, women also felt that their participation in Business Management Organizations (BMOs) helped them to work together and gain equal standing with men. Part of this was linked to the fact that women were more likely to attend BMO trainings, and valued their skills and space gained to articulate needs and demonstrate their competency. This led to more equal decision-making within the mixed-gender groups.

In both Ethiopia and Nepal, group members also discussed gaining cohesiveness and trust to help one another. However, the degree to which members developed a common identity or solidarity varied greatly. In **Ethiopia**, women provided examples of how they were able to support one another in terms of livelihoods (e.g. providing emergency loans, buying bulk products together), but could not offer examples beyond this.

In **Nepal**, how groups developed and their identities varied across different levels of organization. At grassroots level, some groups see themselves more as a vehicle for savings and credit to advance livelihoods and community development. Members coordinate with one another for these purposes but the sense of cohesion among remains weak, without a vision of what groups may achieve together. Other groups, however, voiced stronger levels of solidarity – particularly among network members at district levels who have developed a stronger sense of collective identity and voice to promote women's rights at policy levels. These women had clear goals for themselves as a group and ambitious aspirations to develop as strong people's organizations. Looking across the structures developed through Sahabaghita, there was a strong sense that much leadership and direction came from district levels. While comprised of representatives from different villages, grassroots groups often saw the district as higher-level support to solve problems and direct advocacy. At the grassroots level, members did not feel they effectively informed or shaped the agenda prioritized at district or national levels. Rather, they viewed their role as mobilizing campaigns prioritized from above. Cohesion among members across ward, village and district levels remained weak.

3.3.8 Area of Inquiry: Aspirations

Surveys and Meta-analysis

While survey responses were generally positive on gender change in relation to aspirations, this was not communicated in written responses or the meta-analysis of evaluations.

Depth/Type of impact	Slightly Neg.	Neutral	Slightly Pos.	Very Pos.
1. No impact		Kenya	Tanzania Zambia COMACO	
2..			Indonesia-MIAT Zambia - SCOPE Zimbabwe-UEP	Rwanda
3.			Bolivia Cuba	
4.			Ethiopia Malawi Nepal	Mali SA/Lesotho
5. Significant Impact				Cambodia Ghana Indonesia-HIV Zimbabwe-AGENT

Gender Assessment Visits

Across field visits, discussion of aspirations varied.

For **Sahabhagita**, various group identities placed strong emphasis on women's aspirations for themselves. Among district women's networks, members articulated a vision for their achievements and reputation in advancing the rights of poor and vulnerable women. This group, in particular, stood out in its aspirations for seeing changes not only in their personal lives, but for their aspirations as a group. A number of district network members shared aspirations to develop collectively as a people's organization, and changing the policy environment to be more responsive to the rights of poor women.

Among grassroots level groups in Nepal as well as participants in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, participants' visions for themselves were grounded in household livelihoods and their ability to increase income and assets.

In **Springboard (Ethiopia)**, women repeated their aspiration to send children to school, while men's aspirations aimed to build household structures and assets. Men also aspired to marry and support families financially. These aspirations reflect traditional gender obligations and expectations for each gender. A number of respondents in Ethiopia also articulated aspirations in relation to family relationships – for greater mutual respect and cooperation in the household.

In **Zambia**, girls and boys also expressed aspirations in line with traditional gender divisions, in terms of profession and home roles. Girls expressed aspirations to use education to improve caretaking capabilities and work as nurses and teachers. Boys hoped to become soldiers, police and mechanics. Across discussions, one or two girls articulated an alternative future for themselves – as independent and living in town.

In the comprehensive survey responses, it is also important to note that some respondents could not comment on gender change. Two of the 12 respondents felt the PA projects did not have a gendered lens and could not articulate any changes in gender relations (Zimbabwe-Urban Entrepreneurs and Rwanda-SAFI). While failing to discuss any particular changes, CARE Bolivia only noted that the PA project benefited from the support of an advisor responsible for gender integration. In these responses, CARE Lesotho felt the project contributed toward women's empowerment but did not articulate specific changes to substantiate this assertion.

3.2 Emerging Patterns

3.2.1 Scope of project intentions and change

Taking a step back, the surveys and meta-analysis reported similar areas of change with the country office visits.

Areas of Inquiry

In these reviews, PA projects reported the most significant changes in relation to **public participation** and **access to services**. Increased group **membership and mobilization** was also highlighted across responses. Each of these areas reflects intervention aims and approaches, as well as CARE's deep experience facilitating groups as a vehicle for development programming. Across meta-analysis and field visits, PA projects have often tried to accommodate women into programming at this level – to ensure certain numbers of participants take part in community structures and can access services. Many projects work with women toward livelihoods goals – in savings and loans, sanitation and hygiene, etc.

Over field visits, experiences highlighted how changes in meaningful **participation** and **decision-making power** took place in some areas of life, but not in others. In engaging to bring women more visibly into specific groups and committees without confronting unequal gender relations and norms, the extent of changes remained narrow. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, the visits noted that levels of participation were more equitable within the groups mobilized by PA projects, but not beyond them. Without confronting unequal gender relations and norms more broadly, household and community norms continue to silence women's

voices and influence. In Ethiopia, women noted that while they were able to raise voices in some areas of life and consult more with husbands, negotiating sensitive issues like family planning remained a challenge in some areas.

Across livelihoods interventions, reviews in Zimbabwe and Rwanda highlighted that while **access to productive resources** like credit and inputs make credit more accessible to men and women, **control over such resources** remain dominated by men. In the case of Zimbabwe, AGENT only aimed to accommodate women and girls into existing preconditions to access loans. As a result, financial service systems and household relationships did not shift to be more responsive to the particular situation and status of women. Few shifts were reported in women's control or benefits from credit. Across the PA projects reviewed in the meta-analysis, there was no evidence of change in access and control over productive resources.

In terms of the result areas, where gains were made – in improving access to services, promoting equitable decision-making and bringing women into development processes – align with the result areas for the PA. Thinking more broadly across the analysis framework, markedly fewer examples of gender change in:

- Gendered divisions of labor,
- Access and control over productive assets,
- Violence and restorative justice, or
- Personal aspirations.

These gaps highlight potential blind spots in focusing gender change efforts in narrow spheres of life. Further, looking beyond “practical needs and strategic interests” articulated in the PA global outcome areas, the review found gaps in shifting gender relations and power.

Situating Change in the Women's Empowerment Framework

These patterns highlight how projects generally go as far as accommodation of women on the gender continuum. There remains very little evidence of work aimed toward gender transformation. Namely, the work in Nepal was the only example of more transformative approaches to shift structures affecting the status and rights of women across local to national levels. Shifting of gender relations – and the power dynamics at play between women and men – was mostly highlighted among projects that worked with men and couples for gender change (Ethiopia, Rwanda).

In relation to the Longwe Framework for women's empowerment, the majority of projects focused on access, with few truly investing in conscientization or beyond. While respondents discussed participation of women across different fora, the absence of robust efforts in

conscientization raise questions to how the degree of meaningful or effective participation achieved.

This represented a missed opportunity for CARE interventions to promote gender change for the sustainability of results and the promotion of equality. But also, may highlight a missed opportunity in articulating a more transformative agenda toward promoting gender equality within the PA design itself.

3.2.2 Gender Blind Approaches and Do No Harm

In many cases, extent to which change has been happening and its scale cannot be discussed. This is largely due to the absence of monitoring, evidence or discussion on gender change across the PA portfolio.

Measurement of change in gender relations has not been systematic. The meta-analysis highlighted that across project reviewed, monitoring, collection and reporting of gender-disaggregated outcomes remained inconsistent. In other cases, discussions of change remained largely anecdotal with out available discussion on impact.

Survey respondents also felt a disconnect between gender approaches and indicators. A number of COs reported lack of monitoring in gender change. In particular, CARE Zambia felt the PA's monitoring form did not go far enough to understand changing gender relations. This was augmented by the fact that project staff did not feel they had the capacity to monitor or engage gender programming. This sentiment was emphasized by CAREs Lesotho, Zambia, Cambodia and Rwanda in survey responses and over the course of the PA assessment synthesis workshop.

As mentioned, few Country Offices were able to articulate areas of negative or unintended change. Those that did comprised country offices that had invested in gender assessments and social analysis over the course of the project. It is not surprising that only those who monitored shifts in gender norms and relations over the course of the project reported harmful changes in relation to gender. While pursuing gender equality will undoubtedly raise tensions in relations, it is critical that staff and partners manage this process toward the positive.

This speaks to the need for all projects to ensure gender awareness and higher skills sets across staff and partners to do no harm.

3.2.3 Seedlings in a Long and Complex Processes of Social Change

Taking a Wide-screen Approach

In review of changes taking place in gender relations, PA projects reported important shifts starting to take place. To effectively capitalize on them and

ensure sustainability of gender changes requires longer-term commitment toward gender justice.

In CARE Zimbabwe's AGENT project, this would involve work toward promoting equal status among women and men and shared responsibilities. Rather than help women members to conform to financial system regulations, AGENT has scope to work with financial systems to be more responsive to women. While critics may argue that such shifts would exacerbate gender stereotypes through reverse discrimination, one could argue that the system itself is already discriminatory in favor of men. To enable women to pursue their business aspirations also requires a shift in household dynamics to ensure equitable division of labor, trust and support to enable women to balance responsibilities equitably within the household.

In Ethiopia, supporting men to face social pressures against equitable division of labor is also an important avenue to ensure sustainability of programmatic approaches. To ensure these changes are supported effectively, there is an opportunity to network male change agents to provide social support in promotion of more gender-equal relationships. This stream of work can be framed not only in liberating women, but also liberating men from oppressive burdens as household heads and providers.

Supporting Spread

To promote wider change, Nepal's experience also highlighted the strength in networking across individuals to promote a collective voice to influence broader political structures. In linking women from local to district and national levels, Sahabhagita helped facilitate the true representation of poor women in influencing policy decisions at a national level.

Whereas Nepal did take the wider-lens approach, the limitation was not in their intent but rather in details of their design. While the project organization helped women from across ten districts raise voices together, the strength of these networks did not gain the same levels of influence across the local level. At the local level, groups remained guided by the curriculum, and no respondents could give an example of initiating analysis and action beyond the scope of pre-defined project topics. Further, the influence of groups at the local level remained limited. In retrospect, staff felt the project may have been able to develop as a stronger force had it concentrated its efforts more within local levels so that groups could support one another. This would also help develop stronger solidarity and voice at the local level to truly influence agendas at broader levels for advocacy.

IV. The Bigger Picture – Where is Gender Situated in Programming?

Both strengths and missed opportunities to promote gender equality through the PA are grounded in Country Office identity and the position of gender within it.

Over the analysis workshop, many staff felt that CARE has not yet performed as a gender equality organization. Staff felt that while gender policies may be in place within some COs, concrete practices aligned to policy are not. Further, the concept of women's empowerment remains unevenly understood across CARE, and the practice demonstrates this starkly.

While CARE may innovate practices to promote gender equality, lessons are often poorly documented, and harnessed to guide practice.

Among project sites visited, **CAREs Nepal** and **Ethiopia** presented a stronger organizational commitment toward gender equality work. In both, COs have aligned their organizational identity in promoting gender equality and have taken steps toward this – in terms of human resource policies, advocacy and communications, organizational gender policy, staffing and long-term program focus. In contrast, **CARE Zimbabwe** viewed gender considerations more in light of donor requirements with little organizational measures to ensure gender equitable representation or accountabilities among staff. **CARE Zambia** noted lack of resources and attention to gender as a key weakness in relation to its gender work.

As CARE is shifting from a focus on gender “integration” to gender relations, power relations become central to its work. To act as an organization in line with its ideals, requires stronger organizational commitment (in policy and practice), and deeper gender capacities across staff to effectively pursue gender equality results.

4.1 Resourcing Commitment toward Gender Equality

From visits and the analysis workshop, country office representatives drew a clear line between organizational identity in relation to gender equality and PA responsiveness to gender. CARE Ethiopia's Country Director noted, recognition does not necessarily mean staff are equipped to work in a gender responsive manner. At the same time, explicit commitment toward gender equality does provide broad-based recognition that gender is a priority. In some COs, this commitment has also brought positions for gender advisors and gender training for staff.

For **CARE Nepal**, while the gender coordinator did not have a formal position within the PA project, the CO was able to link to her through the long-term program for Women's Empowerment. Through this connection, Sahabhagita

worked with the Gender Coordinator to establish a national network for women's rights advocacy, which continues to be supported through subsequent initiatives.

However, no COs directly budgeted for technical assistance from gender advisors or capacity-building around gender. Without writing gender support into project budgets, PA projects lacked sufficient gender technical assistance. In Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, gender advisors sometimes provided feedback or guidance in relation to gender but their engagement was neither consistent nor strategic. Rather, support relied on advisor time and attention. In Ethiopia, the CO faced an added challenge of rapid turnover within this position, making it difficult to secure support across the life of the project.

Among Country Offices participating in the synthesis workshop, challenges in gender capabilities included varying levels of understanding on gender equality, prevailing social norms, taking too narrow a focus and geographic scope, and limited partnerships. PA teams reported responding to gender issues with the capabilities available to them. For those with less gender focus and support, this comprised counting the participation rates of women vs. men. A number of COs felt PA projects met short-term practical needs, but fell short of transforming gender relations. Across survey responses, PA teams felt that nearly half of project staff capacities ranged between average to very little/none.

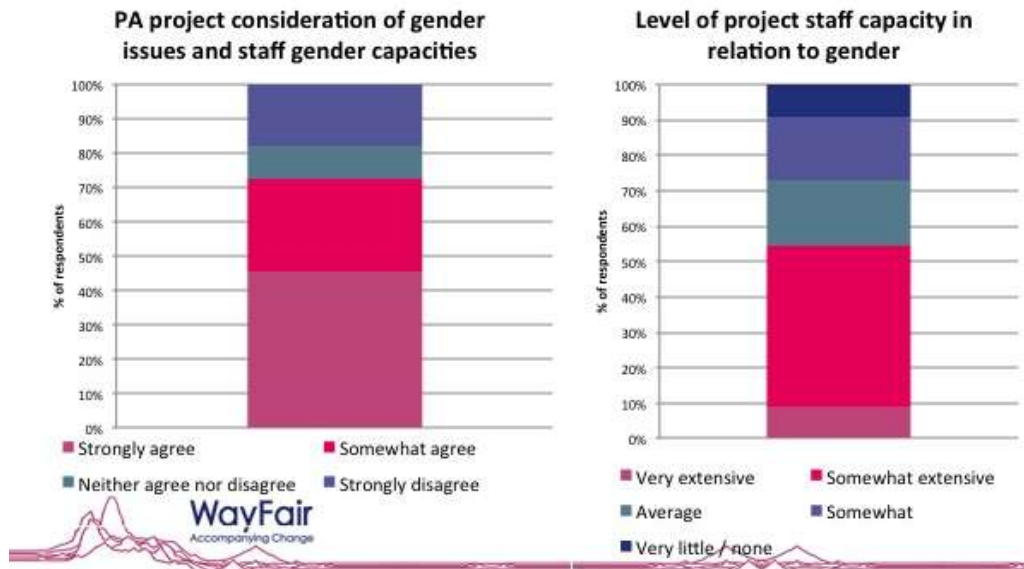
Two turning points brought about shifts toward greater gender sensitivity within PA projects. One, as discussed, was assessment of gender and power, which took place in a handful of projects. This was described by CARE Rwanda as an "A-ha" moment that alerted staff to the centrality of gender sensitivity and responsiveness in programming. The other turning point was the recruitment of a gender advisor within CARE Canada.

Within CARE Canada, a Gender Advisor was only recruited over the final year of the PA. Only after this point, PA staff reported a spike in gender support and learning:

"Individual Learning has been observed. But if it was one year ago, I would have said no. It could be due to this project or others."

"[The gender advisor's] bringing in the issue of gender gap and how gender is not a cross cutting, but rather a core issue brought attention to the matter"

"There used to be perception that gender was just numbers. Now, there is understanding that it is about impact, outcome, and change"



4.2 Program Approach

During the analysis workshop, participants also highlighted the program approach as a key influence that has shaped programming and gender responsiveness. Part of this is the acknowledgement that gender change and women's empowerment is a long-term process that can only be supported through complex social change processes and a "wide-screen" perspective.

That a large majority of Country Offices have at least one long-term program with a women's empowerment focus also makes stronger gender capacities and programming imperative. Both CARE Malawi and **Nepal** (participants since the early stages of the Program Approach work) have taken a focus on women or girls' empowerment. Across the meta-analysis, these were the only two COs to have a clear gender strategy in place, and an analysis framework for gender (building from CARE's women's empowerment framework).

The program approach has also been important across COs to institutionalize learning from the PA in areas like women's empowerment and gender relations. Based on learning and innovations developed through the PA, Malawi reported that it could expand its work for greater impact through subsequent initiatives. CARE Rwanda also reported that it has been able to apply learning from the PA to inform its model development of VSLA as a key program model. **CARE Ethiopia** felt the work of Springboard both informed the CO decision to focus on urban female youth as an impact group and has been influenced by program-level learning. In **Nepal**, the program framework for women's empowerment influenced the project design and direction. Since Sahabagita's close in the fall of 2010, subsequent projects have continued to work through the women's forums it established at district and national levels.

COs reported that the PA offered an opportunity to innovate new approaches to contribute toward model development along their programmatic theories of change. Over the synthesis workshop, however, these spaces for innovation often focused on technical sectors in ways that were gender blind. To ensure that innovations work to advance rather than undermine gender equality, intersections of development, gender and social justice should remain at the center of learning and action. With so many COs focusing on women and girls as impact group members, serious considerations are required on how to focus learning and innovations in ways that are truly responsive to marginalized women and girls. This has been a challenge articulated by CARE Rwanda in its approach to VSLA, **CARE Zimbabwe's** work with agro-dealers and BMOs, as well as by **CARE Ethiopia's** development of community score-cards.

While COs recognized great promise in the program approach for developing innovating program models and advancing gender equality, the shift toward a programmatic approach remains nascent. Many country offices are still undergoing organizational review to align systems with programmatic ways of working. Given the project-driven nature of funding and restrictive compliance regulations, this process has been slow and difficult. With funding and staffing still project-centered, for example, **CARE Ethiopia** and **Nepal** have undergone immense staff turnover, which remains a drain on organizational knowledge and experience. Over the course of two years, CARE Ethiopia has seen four gender advisors rotate through the position.

4.3 Partnerships

In the analysis workshop, staff highlighted that partnerships are key to promote PA goals and coherence and essential for the program approach. However, partnerships are not always structured in a strategic manner. COs are currently exploring how to engage different types of partnerships – for implementation, strategic development, coalition-building and sustainability efforts. Typically, COs reported subcontracting partners for implementation of initiative activities. To transition toward more strategic ways of working COs felt constrained by compliance regulations that inhibit contracting relationships beyond implementation sub-contracting.

Beyond these challenges, a polarizing question in CARE remains: To effectively promote gender equality, with what types of organizations/networks should CARE partner? While staff generally recognize the political nature of gender equality, they remain divided on how or if CARE should engage feminist movements to pursue its vision. Social movements have a stronger and wider membership base that aims specifically to influence political structures. As such, they can be powerful vehicles for change, but can also involve looser popular networks that may also be controversial. Discussing CARE's roles with these networks, a number of staff voiced concerns over excluding men, putting CARE's public perception at risk and polarizing communities through such alliances. In contrast, others felt that alignment with movements is essential for greater impact on underlying causes of inequality. In terms of legitimacy, one staff also

questioned if CARE's claims as a women's empowerment organization may be disingenuous without stronger alliances with feminist movements and women's rights organizations.

In field visits, similar questions were raised on PA project partnerships and gender. In **Zimbabwe**, though there are strong national women's rights agencies, male senior staff in CARE expressed deep resistance against partnership with them. While the project consulted the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development, it did not have a clear strategy on engaging these agencies. The assessment reported a key missed opportunity in failing to develop a clear strategy to promote gender sensitivity among line ministries. In its engagement with community-based organizations and local partners, AGENT partners did not participate in gender equality design or review processes, and received no training or capacity-building in relation to gender. Overall, the visit found partners to be weak in gender equality awareness, affecting project implementation and results.

For **CARE Ethiopia**, partners were not assessed in relation to gender equality commitment and capacities. However, Springboard's focus on HIV and AIDS enabled collaboration with partners experienced in facilitating discussion on gender in relation to HIV vulnerability. Additionally, partners underwent gender training within the PA project. Springboard initially selected the Ethiopia Women Lawyers Association to bring gender capacities and GBV advocacy into the project. With the loss of this partner following the Civil Society legislation, Springboard lost key gender capabilities, particularly in relation to policy advocacy.

Of all countries reviewed, only **CARE Nepal** has a partnership strategy in place that outlines a set of principles to guide engagement with other organizations. In selection, the CO reviews partner capacities in relation to gender. Additionally, the strategy calls for:

- Shared vision
- Mutual trust
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Partners that reflect the diversity of groups with whom it serves
- Interdependent competencies with CARE
- Shared human and financial resources
- Respect and understanding
- Time and space for mutual learning

Reviewing the experiences of Sahabhagita, the strength of partners at district and national levels has been key to the sustainability of women's rights networks and advocacy. However, the strength of their continued support varied from district to district. Many of these partnerships have continued through subsequent projects in the long-term Women's Empowerment Program.

V. Advancing gender equality

Across the analysis, the PA highlighted some improvements in bringing women into development efforts, but often fell short of truly aligning toward gender equality.

In the analysis workshop, teams felt PA projects still focused on shifting behaviors, but not necessarily the structures underlying them or power relations. The meta-analysis highlighted that only two COs reported strategies for gender equality that aimed to engage broader stakeholders and affect policy. Only one reported engaging gender equality networks. Most projects remained focused at the local level without achieving broader reach.

Over the course of the PA, projects experimented with new models. Some aimed to promote gender equality. While none have necessarily been refined to the point of being considered a 'best practice' within the CO, let alone across broader contexts, a few notable models show potential to support gender equality efforts.

5.1 Promising Practices

5.1.1 The REFLECT Model

To get beyond the functional benefits of VSLA and build greater coherence among groups, **CARE Nepal** facilitated joint analysis and action work with women's groups. In addition to a space for savings and credit, groups discussed rights, development and policies affecting their lives. Analyzing the local context, they drew up plans for action – whether in relation to campaigning or mobilizing themselves to develop community infrastructure. Through this work, women gained recognition for their contributions to the community and some were also recognized as leaders at the local level.

Working from a set curriculum, however, women did not mobilize analysis and action beyond the scope of facilitated discussions, and further learning is required on how to foster deeper group ownership over analysis and action. From the gender visit, another key area for further work is how to mobilize beyond the group, including men and others. During the site visit, while men appreciated women's roles in community-level development, few contributed toward these efforts. In some ways, this placed burden for local development efforts upon women's groups without broader support or sense of responsibility among others.

5.1.2 Working with Men

Both CAREs Rwanda and **Ethiopia** have begun to work with men at a later stage of the project. In both cases, this work focused on working with couples

to discuss issues affecting them, particularly in relation to sexual and reproductive health rights. In Rwanda, this work linked with the Results Initiative and the *Social Analysis and Action* guidelines on sexuality and rights. In Ethiopia, the project began to convene married women and their husbands to discuss a range of topics from household divisions of labor, to sexual health and HIV, and family planning.

Participants were very positive about the influence of this work. However, without a broader strategy to network across men to support the sphere of influence, the sustainability or reach of change remains uncertain. In Ethiopia, men engagement efforts focused exclusively on married couples, ignoring a significant number of unmarried partners within the city for whom the topics remain pertinent.

Also, as noted earlier, while men were positive about their experiences from the training, few could articulate how the topics have fulfilled their own lives and aspirations. Further room for exploration may also include how to network men more strategically to promote broader and sustained change.

5.1.3 Linking to Other Stakeholders across Different Levels

Across methodologies, a few COs also reported strengths in linking to other stakeholders.

CARE Malawi's linkages and influence in relation to local chiefs and the Ministry of Education expanded its ability to respond to emerging gender issues. Through these relationships, PAGE reported its coordination with government helped to establish teacher housing in project areas and align the project with national strategies.

Both CAREs Tanzania and **Ethiopia** reported using the Community Scorecard as a key tool to renegotiate relationships with service providers. Both COs saw this tool as a way to highlight the responsibilities and duties of service users and providers. In Tanzania, while the project focused on meeting needs of poor and vulnerable women, their role in the community scorecard process and monitoring was not evident. In Ethiopia, the initial implementation of the Community Scorecard was also gender blind. However, the method was adapted over the extension period to focus more on marginalized women. Learning from this experience has yet to be consolidated.

5.1.4 Networking Groups for Broader Impact

Looking across the PA portfolio, only **CARE Nepal** put explicit emphasis on linking hamlet level women's groups to networks at village, district and national levels. This approach has continued to be a cornerstone of the Country Office's ways of working. From it, networks have reported influencing

political party statements on key issues affecting women, and the constitution drafting process itself. In addition, network members report their influence on the national policy around violence and single women.

The PA project and network experiences following it continue to raise questions on how best to support women's movements. At the district level, women's networks still debate whether or not to register as independent organizations, with many continuing to be supported by district NGO partners. While their informal status frees them from government reporting and audit requirements, it also leaves them dependent upon other NGOs.

In Sahabhagita, other questions remained in terms of how to support women's networks. Network leadership roles have yet to rotate, raising questions around management accountability. Further, strengthening links across local to national level women's forum members could consolidate solidarity and support greater collective action.

Across these innovations, COs see great value and potential. However, these models remain in development, and require further support and adaptation to develop into promising practices promoting gender equality.

VI. What does it mean for CARE Country Offices and CARE Canada

The long-term nature of supporting gender equality has important implications on CARE's roles and responsibilities at Country Office and donor levels.

6.1 For Country Offices

PA projects – as all interventions – operate in larger society with a network of other actors and changing realities. To contribute toward gender equality and requires robust commitment and accountability toward accompanying complex social change:

- **Investing in Gender Capacities and Analysis:** With small project budgets, no PA initiative budgeted for gender expertise or analysis. This requires deeper gender analysis, investing in staff capabilities and developing longer-term strategies to advance gender equality.
- **Ensuring Accountability for Gender Programming:** Stronger efforts are required to ensure offices, staff and partners become accountable for gender across their work. To be able to substantiate CARE's vision as an organization that truly promotes gender equality, the PA review found that organizations must go beyond voicing a commitment toward women's empowerment and gender equality.
- **Program Approach and Reflective Practice:** Only with a stronger foundation in gender commitment and reflective practice were PA projects able to identify and adapt around gender harms and changing context. Projects viewed the shift to a Program Approach as a key influence toward more strategic ways of working. In developing long-term visions and theories of change, the program approach offered a long-term perspective that framed CO work around key impact groups and long-term social change. However, closer ties need to be established between projects within the CIDA Program Agreement and CO long-term programs to ensure alignment within CO portfolios and programs.
- **Incubators for Learning and Innovation:** In many ways, PA projects represented incubators for new approaches and innovation to take place. This space was critical to ensure the relevancy and coherency of projects, and promote innovations. However, across this work, it is important to ensure that gender equality goals are integrated across models. Another missed opportunity has been the extent to which innovations have been documented and capitalized within the COs. While a few COs in the analysis workshop noted how PA project innovations have informed CO program development, many felt lessons learnt have not been effectively used to inform CO programming.
- **Partnership Models for Broader Long-lasting Impact:** As discussed, CARE will need to be more systematic in reflecting on new types of partnership to realize impact in its work. While CARE offices broadly accept that they

must engage with a broader range of actors, many still struggle with how to do this. This requires deeper reflection on what types of organizations CARE must engage in order to leverage impact toward gender equality. The approach also requires reflection on how to manage accountabilities between diverse organizations, and how to structure these relationships effectively. The latter point was raised as a serious concern in light of current compliance regulations that limit the nature of relationships CARE offices engage.

6.2 For CARE Canada

PA teams appreciated CARE Canada's flexibility and responsiveness to support projects. Though the PA offered only small funding to COS, many felt this allowed greater space for innovation and learning. This also helped COs harness PA projects to inform CO program development and visa-versa.

However, in relation to gender equality work, CARE Canada can play an important role to deepen its support to CO teams. This has already begun with the recruitment of a Gender Advisor, but can be deepened through more focused learning efforts in relation to gender. While PA staff appreciated the space and emphasis the PA placed on learning events and learning exercises, it never placed emphasis on gender learning. In PA monitoring and support, consideration of gender remained superficial.

As Country Offices shift toward long-term program approaches, there is also an important role for CARE Canada to support this shift. During the gender assessment visits, one staff in CARE Nepal recommended the PA support efforts to work more programmatically. In particular, the team hoped for more flexible funding to enable Country Offices to engage advocacy and take advantage of emergent opportunities. In Ethiopia, another key issue the CO has faced is that while the organization shifts to focus on long-term programming, staffing structures have not. Thus, there needs to be more strategic funding of key program quality positions at a programmatic level to curb rapid staff turn-over and ensure that positions like the gender advisor are both in place and supported to provide strategic support to projects.

Both issues beg the question what models of CI member support would be most appropriate and strategic for Country Offices? In particular, as CARE offices transition toward a program approach, how CI members respond to enable programmatic thinking and acting becomes increasingly important. Already, CARE Canada has demonstrated a responsiveness and commitment toward learning goals. However, further investment and attention toward gender equality and how to support COs strategically remain an area for further reflection and innovation.

VII. Conclusion

As CARE Canada's Gender Advisor noted, gender is not a cross-cutting issue for the organization, but a central one. At the same time, this commitment requires reflective learning and innovation to support long-term social change processes and shifting realities in our world. It also requires deeper reflection on how organizational programming, budgets, human resources and other operational processes/systems are developed in line with gender equality goals and values.

CARE's work represents both missed opportunities and great potential in achieving gender equality goals within the PA.

Across the portfolio, projects ranged drastically in their awareness and ambition in engaging gender. Some only went so far as to count numbers of male and female beneficiaries. Others engaged key relationships and structures in order to shift systems of gender inequality. While only a fraction of projects under-took a formal gender analysis at some point across the project cycle, many more projects consistently described how they adapted programming to respond to emerging gender needs. In some cases, project adjustments for gender inclusive programming presented new challenges for staff with neither the experience nor technical support to engage gender.

The CARE Canada Program Agreement has proven strengths in its flexibility for small initiatives across country offices. While project budgets were small, teams exhibited the capability and space to innovate for learning and model development. Looking across interventions, promising models are emerging from PA work fostering women's advocacy networks across local to national levels (Nepal), engaging couples and men toward gender equality (e.g. Rwanda, Ethiopia), networking across government and community institutions (e.g. Ethiopia, Malawi, Zambia) and community scorecard approaches (e.g. Tanzania and Ethiopia). Experiences with the PA have also triggered COs to revisit approaches to Village Savings and Loans to make them more gender transformative and empowering (e.g. Rwanda, Lesotho). However, these approaches remain in development and their learning still needs to be distilled.

Through the PA, the gender equality assessment observed clear contributions toward increasing equal access to services, public participation and group membership. In limited ways, the portfolio also found more equal key decision-making in certain areas. However, impact has often been limited in one area of one's life and not in others, raising questions around sustainability and potential harms. Though women are increasingly taking part in project activities, they continue to shoulder traditional responsibilities increasing their burden of work. While women gained voice and decision-making power in CARE-facilitated groups, this shift often did not take place beyond these groups. In terms of areas of inquiry, the assessment also disclosed striking absence of change in women's access and control over resources, and limited discussion on violence.

Ensuring projects remain responsive to gender dynamics, the gender assessment observed the fundamental role of program approach, gender analysis and strategies to guide programming. These measures are essential for gender inclusive development and do no harm. However, the review found varying CO commitment and competencies to gender equality goals within the PA. Despite the prominence of gender goals in PA objectives, in practice the PA did not operate with strong awareness of or responsiveness to gender.

Moving forward, it will be important that gender is considered across programmatic design, implementation, monitoring and learning. To strengthen gender responsive work, CARE must ensure consistent technical support and staff capacities to manage social change processes responsibly and effectively for gender equality. This requires strong organizational commitment and political will to ensure project staff and strategies have the budget, time, partnerships and capabilities to promote gender equality. These take-aways have strong implications for CARE Canada, which has an important role to support this transition – through targeted engagement at program levels, a focus on experimentation/innovation, and stronger support/emphasis toward the advancement of gender equality.

Appendices

See Attachments:

A. Research Framework and Phases

B. Tools

- 1) **Meta-analysis**
- 2) **Initial Survey**
- 3) **Comprehensive Survey**
- 4) **Field Exercises**
- 5) **Workshop Agenda**

C. Meta-analysis Report

D. Country Office Assessment Reports

- 1) **Ethiopia**
- 2) **Nepal**
- 3) **Zambia**
- 4) **Zimbabwe**