

Women's Empowerment:

Strategic Impact Inquiry Research Summary

The Context: Since the civil war and the collapse of the central government in 1991, women's roles have been changing in Somalia. Particularly in cities, women have gradually become more active in economic and social activities, and begun to wield influence beyond the household. In this shifting context, CARE engaged local women-operated NGOs in Northeast Somalia, to strengthen women's groups and their ability to advance economic and social rights.

The Project: CARE Somalia carried out the Strategic Impact Inquiry in three communities within Puntland. In particular, it examined the impact of its work through the Northern Somalia Partnership Programme (NSPP), which ran from 1996 to 2001. Although women's empowerment was not an explicit goal of the program, NSPP worked with local women's NGOs to advance gender and women's rights issues. NSPP aimed to:

- Enhance community institutional capacity and implement projects in water, health, primary education and agriculture;
- Improve women's ability to manage NGOs;
- Implement sustainable projects that meet the basic needs of communities.

CARE Somalia's Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII):

For the SII, CARE Somalia chose to study its work in Puntland in order to understand and address the root causes of poverty in Somalia. The main objectives of the SII included to:

- Reflect on internal CARE Somalia factors that facilitate/hinder its work to support Somali women's human rights;
- Identify and define impact indicators of women's empowerment in Somalia;
- Apply definition and impact indicators to the NSPP to gain a deeper understanding of its achievements and challenges in advancing women's empowerment; and
- Develop action plans to strengthen the impact of CARE Somalia's work on women's empowerment.

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

The Methods: In the SII, each phase of the study followed a similar process, rooted in qualitative and participatory research.

RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Research Team:** Partners, CARE Somalia staff and an external facilitator
- **Site Selection:** Identify weak partner site, strong partner site and control site
- **Nairobi Workshop:** Perceptions of gender; CARE dynamics - internal gender relations and empowerment issues; SII framework
- **Puntland Workshop:** Training on gender, women's empowerment indicators, tools, data collection, study logistics, project documentation

DATA COLLECTION

- **Total time in Field:** 10 days, 3 sites
- **Focus Group Discussions** (6 male/female mixed groups, 4 women's groups, 3 men's groups): Project impact, institutions and women's empowerment
- **Individual Interviews** (12 women): Understand perception of life changes

DATA ANALYSIS

- **Reflective Process :** Research team debriefed during data collection and initial analysis
- **Participatory Analysis:** Team analysis of findings, emerging conclusions and lessons

Limitations:

- Insufficient staff training or time to commit to study, given other responsibilities;
- Project time and funding underestimated.
- Did not sufficiently place changes into historical context.

SOMALIA

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Women's Own Views of Empowerment:

AGENCY

Self-confident, compete with men
Financial security: work, cover expenses, take care of family
Choose job, manage business
Patient, tolerant
Handles difficult situations
Control over children (education, marriage)

STRUCTURE

RELATIONS

Increased cooperation between men and women
Decide family affairs together

Implications:

The NSPP made important gains, limited by insufficient time and resources

- CARE has facilitated important trainings and networking among NGO partners and other organizations
- Short duration of project without follow-up communication can lead to the collapse of projects.
- NSPP planned for a number of ambitious initiatives without the funding to follow through on them effectively

CARE Somalia must align staff, program management, decision-making, compensation/benefits and other gender-related policies to its vision.

- Clarify a policy on gender in order to determine how to set indicators/goals for gender in programming.
- Apply women's empowerment indicators and gender equity into to all programs' design, monitoring, implementation and evaluation.
- Ensure monitoring, evaluation show impact on beneficiaries.

CARE Somalia decision-making and operations are male dominated

- Train staff on and develop a mechanism to hold staff accountable for acting in line with CARE's vision and promoting gender equity.
- Ensure involvement of diverse groups in CO decision-making.
- Move insensitive men from women-focused projects to other projects with a longer-term plan for gender sensitization, and start internships for young Somali women professionals.

Changes in Empowerment

	Program Participants	Non-Participants	Staff and Partners: from NSPP
Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy • Awareness/knowledge of health, female genital cutting (FGC) and service demands • Mobility • Earn income, take on new roles • Make most decisions (household, society), higher self-esteem, confidence • Sense of belonging to a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rights taught at Qu'ran school • Health awareness, knowledge • Demand for services • Mobility • Household decisions • Earn income, new roles • Self-esteem, confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence, leadership • Low self-esteem at low rank of Somali staff • Greater capacity through trainings, but insufficient
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to education, but boys' schooling preferred and girls withdrawn to work. • Changes in FGC practices from traditional birth attendant (TBA) trainings • Access to health care with trained TBAs • Decision-making in community education committees, indirect influence • Community generator raised standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No secular school, health services in village • Changes in FGC from traditional birth attendant (TBA) trainings, but FGC is still a problem • Some women's participation in village committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work is male dominated and among staff, male staffers make all the decisions • Partners wary of women's empowerment work • Staff take up CARE's values on gender within the office, but revert to local cultural views and practices outside of work
Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication, negotiation at home and community • Mediate conflict by negotiation with women in opposite faction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CARE partners gained respect • Integration with different partners and cooperation • Greater trust among staff