

Women's Empowerment:

Strategic Impact Inquiry Research Summary

The Context: For over 20 years, residents have been displaced from their homes and forced into camps due to the war between the government and the Lord's Resistance Army. In congested living conditions without farming land, men are often idle and disempowered as households face food shortages and lack basic needs like access to clean water. Women often see to family needs and child-rearing. In the context of conflict, women often find themselves more vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation, but also find that they are breaking gender norms and that communities increasingly recognize the important role women must play in peace-building.

The Projects: For the SII, CARE Uganda focused on its past work in displacement camps of Gulu:

- **Emergency Water and Sanitation (WATSAN) Project**, 2003 to 2005, aimed to increase access to safe water and improve the health and well-being of internally displaced peoples (IDPs) through community maintenance of boreholes, and sanitation management/education;
- **Partnership for Community Sustenance Project**, 2003, worked with partners to enhance food security through building economic and livelihood opportunities and access to agricultural land for IDPs.
- **Economic Recovery for Population Affected by Conflict in Northern Uganda (ECORPAC) Project**, aimed to facilitate and strengthen the capacity of IDPs to form and manage small enterprises, savings and loans.

CARE Uganda's Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII):

For the SII, CARE Uganda focuses on its work with IDP camps in Gulu to explore:

- How community members and partner organizations view women's empowerment and understand how they would define indicators of progress;
- The factors that undermine/promote women's empowerment in these communities; and

- How CARE can improve women's empowerment work in the IDP camp setting.

The Methods: In the SII, CARE Uganda focused on multi-stakeholder participatory impact dialogues throughout the process:

RESEARCH DESIGN

- **Workshop:** CARE staff and partners discussed understanding of and work around women's empowerment and gender issues
- **Community Dialogue:** Baseline perception of community view of women's empowerment, its indicators and barriers/push factors
- **Teams:** CARE staff and partner organizations
- **Site Selection:** Partner presence, former CARE involvement and dispersion around Gulu

IN THE FIELD

- **Total Time in Field:** 8 days, 6 camps
- **Focus Group Discussions** (12 female/12 male/12 mixed-gender adult groups, 5 female/5 male adolescent groups, 5 children's groups, 3 camp leaders groups): Gender issues, definition of women's empowerment and its indicators, push/pull factors, progress and role of group membership/CARE

DATA ANALYSIS

- **Triangulation:** Data validation across methods, locations and researchers
- **Participatory Reflective Process:** Daily review and analysis of process, problems and concerns with entire research team

Limitations

- Initial focus groups too large to work with and camp leaders later arranged groups for CARE.

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

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UGANDA

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Women's Own Views on Empowerment:

Views of empowerment varied from camp to camp and group to group. Some significant overlaps included:

AGENCY

Educated, literate, skilled
Self-reliant and aware
Economic income and security
Decision-making in the family
Come together in groups to work together
Exercise rights, has voice

STRUCTURE

Equal opportunities
Improved status
Participation in politics
Access to training, education
Equal share of property and income in family

RELATIONS

Influence community
Share responsibilities with men

Implications:

In the context of the IDP camp setting, CARE programs have aimed to address more than basic needs with goals in gender equity, rights equality and ownership. To overcome barriers to its larger goals, CARE must:

- Involve men for women's empowerment in order to prevent backlash toward women for their participation and not over-burden women with more activities.
- Target groups to not only take into account gender ratios, but include the most vulnerable women (child mothers, widows).
- Ensure that CARE's interventions are accountable, transparent, concrete, sustainable and build foundations of trust for future work.
- Provide proper monitoring and continued support to camps regularly in order to ensure the sustainability of groups, even after the project's end.
- To understand the context, CARE should arrange for staff and partners to live in IDP camps to build program accountability, confidence and continuity.

CARE's work must take into account the multiple responsibilities, realities and needs that women and men face in IDP camps in order to work with them effectively:

- This means providing day-care, training (gender roles and rights, confidence, leadership, literacy, alcoholism awareness), income, access to education for child mothers and orphans, safe access to firewood and water.
- Given issues of sexual violence and the existence of transactional sex, CARE should also work to sensitize sex workers, soldiers and adolescents to HIV/AIDS, prevention techniques and sexual education.
- At community and regional levels, CARE must work to address broader issues concerning health and sanitation, food, security forces, safety risks, and seasonal climate changes and agriculture.

As a well-respected international NGO, CARE should also use its role to influence other key stakeholders in the region through advocacy.

- CARE should also use its experiences, observations and the feedback of IDPs in camps to work with district authorities, security forces and UN aid programs to strengthen food aid, education, health services and safety/security for IDPs.

Impact on Empowerment

Agency	Relations	Structure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective responsibility, information sharing, unity, respect • Training/skills in microfinance and financial management • Pool resources for financial support, savings/credit, better nutrition, though some men control earnings • Without tangible benefits, women leave groups • Reduce alcoholism among women (though some men may take women's earnings for alcohol) • Skills, management of business and home • Self-esteem, voice, community leadership • Knowledge on sanitation/hygiene • Control over resources, communicate freely with men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unity and mutual support among women and in households • Jealousy toward members by other women and men • Men may prevent women from joining group and increase violence against women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to counseling, support • Opening feeder roads provide employment opportunities and access to places • Camp cleanliness • Boreholes, access to safe water • Access to anti-malarial bed-nets • Health center provision of drugs (access to medicine) • Access to seeds and tools for food security, productivity