

IMPACT

REPORT



Stories & Statistics from the CARE Learning Tour to Rwanda, April 28-May 4, 2018

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OVERVIEW

In May, a bipartisan group of senior, all-female House Congressional chiefs of staff and committee directors, technical experts and a media representative traveled to Rwanda with CARE to see how U.S. investments and partnerships are saving lives and promoting women's and girls' empowerment. Rwanda is a small, landlocked country in East-Central Africa that is considered a beacon of gender equality, where women hold 64 percent of the parliamentary seats – the highest percentage in the world. However, this level of gender equity often fails to trickle down to vulnerable women and girls at the household and community levels. Women and girls still face many challenges, including a lack of decision-making power and control over their financial resources, high risk of gender-based violence and restricted opportunities in accessing education, skills and health services. While Rwanda has made great strides toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in recent years, persistent gender inequities continue to hinder the country's ability to reach middle-income status.

Throughout this five-day trip, the delegation followed CARE on a journey to explore the life of a woman in Rwanda, starting from childhood and continuing through to adolescence, to adulthood, to motherhood and beyond in order to understand the challenges present and opportunities available at each step of the way.

→ DAY 1

Why Rwanda? Setting the Scene

The Learning Tour began in Kigali, the capital city of Rwanda, with an introductory briefing on the state of gender, health and nutrition in Rwanda. The group was briefed by representatives from CARE, Catholic Relief Services and UNFPA about the history and impact of U.S. investments, such as the Feed the Future program. The delegation also heard about the progress being made through U.S. foreign assistance, implemented in collaboration with the Rwandan government and local partners, to respond to the urgent health needs of mothers, children and families.

→ DAY 2

Empowering the Girl Child

The delegation began their second day in-country with a discussion featuring representatives from USAID and the U.S. State Department in Rwanda to learn about how the U.S.' leadership and investments around maternal and child health and education in Rwanda have resulted in healthier and more economically empowered families and communities.

This discussion was further contextualized as the group had their first look at programming on the ground. The delegation visited an early childhood education program in Kigali to learn how U.S. investments are helping to improve literacy and educational attainment of Rwanda's youth. The group later visited a program implemented by CARE, which focuses on empowering girls to stay in school and provides health and financial literacy education to youth participants at the secondary school level. After spending the morning examining interventions to empower youth and adolescents, the delegation traveled to a clinic and on home visits to learn about interventions to promote better maternal and child health outcomes through community-based interventions and training health staff to respond to emergency obstetric needs of mothers and newborns.

"Things are a bit better in Rwanda. Now how far can we go?"

—LISA GODWIN,
HEALTH OFFICE DIRECTOR, USAID RWANDA

Save the Children Mureke Dusome Program

LOCATION: Kigali, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: Mureke Dusome is a nationwide program in Rwanda that began in January 2016 and will continue through January 2020. The program began in Gicumbi and Burera districts, before it was scaled up in 10 other districts in 2017. The program will be scaled up to include the final 18 districts in 2018. The program goals are three-fold: 1) Strengthen the capacity of school leadership to promote school-community partnerships and improve student literacy; 2) Increase effective community and parental involvement to improve literacy skills through community engagement and behavior change communication; 3) Foster a culture of reading through civil society platforms and strengthening the supply and demand of the children's book industry.

IMPACT: The Mureke Dusome program aims to have coverage in 30 districts in 416 sectors across Rwanda by 2030. In addition, the program aims to reach upwards of 1,402,000 parents and 701,000 children through gender-sensitive and inclusive activities and educational materials.

DONORS: U.S. Agency for International Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: Save the Children; Umuhuza and Urunana Development Communications (local partners)

"I like this club because

I come here to read and I become brilliant!"

—STUDENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANT, MUREKE DUSOME PROGRAM

CARE Safe School for Girls (SS4G) Program

LOCATION: Kamonyi, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: CARE's Safe Schools for Girls (SS4G) program was designed to support girls' education in lower secondary school to be able to transition to higher secondary grade levels by addressing the social, emotional and economic challenges that would otherwise lead them to drop out of schools or to poor academic performance. In addition, mentors support adolescents through regular one-on-one or collective sessions with girls and boys during which mentorship is provided to clubs and individual girls based on needs. Girls are also trained on life skills, particularly on reproductive health, prevention of gender-based violence, leadership and child rights.

IMPACT: The project is currently supporting more than 47,000 adolescents in 174 schools in four districts across the Southern province of Rwanda. Students are mobilized in clubs at schools have been trained mentors. In total 712 out of 732 (451 female and 281 male) teacher mentors have been trained and are fully supporting adolescents in their respective clubs and school.

DONORS: The Patsy Collins Trust Fund

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: CARE

A Story from the field

Nadine is a sixteen-year-old girl in secondary school who participates in CARE's Safe School for Girls Program. Nadine used to look to others, particularly older boys and men, to give her money and material items that she could not afford on her own. For example, before joining the program she spoke of how she really wanted a watch, which an older boy offered to buy her. However, shortly after becoming a member of the SS4G program, a mentor from the girls' club advised her not to accept the gift, advising that young men often end up pressuring girls to engage in sexual acts in exchange for these gifts. In the end, she decided not to accept the gift. As a new program participant, Nadine started saving her money in the girls' club Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) program. With her savings, she was able to purchase her own watch and was proud when the day came for her to tell her male friend and other male and female peers that she was a member of the program – and that she can afford to buy her own watch with her own savings.



Jhpiego Maternal Child Survival Program (MCSP)

LOCATION: Kamonyi, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: From 2009 to 2012, the Jhpiego-led, USAID-funded Maternal and Child Health Integrated Program (MCHIP) supported the Rwandan Ministry of Health (MOH) to apply high-impact interventions to reduce maternal, newborn and child morbidity and mortality. Building on the successes of MCHIP in Rwanda, Jhpiego and partners. MCSP also aims to improve quality, equity, gender sensitivity and sustainability of services along the continuum of care. This means improving health outcomes in facilities, as well as increasing community use of and demand for high-quality reproductive health and maternal and child health services.

IMPACT: This program aims to reduce preventable child, neonatal and maternal mortality in 20 districts of Rwanda. In 10 of these districts, MCSP is increasing coverage and utilization of evidenced-based, high-impact, low-cost interventions, while strengthening MOH capacity to manage and scale up these practices. To date, the program has increased capacity of healthcare workers through training, including educating more than 40 trainers and 300 healthcare providers in emergency obstetric and newborn care; providing healthcare training to nearly 800 providers on focused antenatal care. continued on next page ►

► **IMPACT:** The program has also helped create an enabling environment for the scale-up of emergency oncological care (EmONC) best practices through the revision of national maternal and newborn health guidelines and adaptation of the EmONC training package for use in health centers. The program has also helped to train 268 maternal health mobilizers in community maternal and newborn care to serve as the key point of contact with mothers and their family members.

DONOR: U.S. Agency for International Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: Jhpiego; Save the Children; John Snow, Inc.; Rwandan Ministry of Health

A Story from the Field

Claire Mukashyaka and her husband are currently expecting their second child. All throughout her second pregnancy, Claire has received pre-natal check-ups from her community health mobilizer Chantal Nyinahabineza. Due in just a few weeks, Claire explains how she did not attend as many prenatal visits when she was pregnant with her first daughter, who is now two years old. Although, she did not experience any birth complications with her first pregnancy, she is grateful to meet consistently with her community health mobilizer. She feels more aware of the potential warning signs if she is to experience any birth complications or go into early labor. Furthermore, she likes that her husband can play a more participatory role in her and her growing child's health as well, since he is also able to join the health visits and play a more supportive role to her and their daughter.



The group closed the day with a reception, joined by Peter H. Vrooman, the new U.S. Ambassador to Rwanda. At the event, the delegation heard from local NGO representatives, private sector partners and representatives from the U.S. Mission on the current development challenges in Rwanda and how the U.S government, in partnership with the Rwandan government and other key stakeholders, is working to improve opportunities for women and youth throughout the country.

→ DAY 3

A Day in the Life of a Mother

On the third day of the trip, the group traveled to Nyanza, a city located in Rwanda's Southern province, to see how CARE and other partners are working to reduce the barriers many women and families face in accessing health and nutrition services for themselves and their children and access to economic opportunities to support their families. Below are some of the program highlights from the day:

Gikururu Integrated Nutrition and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Program

LOCATION: Nyanza, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: The primary purpose of Gikururu program is to improve the nutritional status of women of reproductive age and children under five years of age, with an emphasis on the 1,000-day window of opportunity from pregnancy until a child's second birthday. Gikururu builds on the theory that if the Rwandan government's community-based programs are fully implemented at district, sector and community levels by skilled and equipped district staff and volunteers; if civil society contributes to these programs in complementary, coordinated and sustainable ways; if each household member participates fully and equally in promoting positive nutrition and hygiene behaviors; then sustained demand for nutritious, diverse and fortified foods, as well as hygiene and sanitation supplies and materials, will be high enough to attract broad-based community mobilization and private sector investment.

IMPACT: Since the program began, nearly 38,000 households across five districts have directly or indirectly benefited from the program interventions and nearly 3,800 children have been rehabilitated from moderate malnutrition through the Village Nutrition Schools. The program has also supported water and sanitation across 8 districts in Rwanda and supported the construction of more than 32,000 handwashing stations and upwards of 28,000 basic latrines and 15,000 improved latrines.

DONORS: U.S. Agency for International Development

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: Catholic Relief Services-United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (CRSUSCCB); the Netherlands Development Organization; FXB International

A Story from the field

Ruth, a trusted community member who has served as a community health worker since 2007, was requested by fellow community members for her to join the Gikururu program in 2015 to help link expectant and new mothers to important nutrition and health services, particularly during the critical window of the first 1,000 days of a child's life. As a mother of two, Ruth decided to become a community health worker and participate in the program because she recognized the challenges of malnutrition and stunting in her community and wanted to contribute to helping children achieve better health outcomes. Today, Ruth supports 145 households and more than 500 community members in her village. Ruth was inspired by the change she saw in the growth of infants and young children in the community – even after just a few incremental changes were made to family diets and cooking practices – and she hopes the new feeding practices and kitchen gardens she has helped other women in the community establish will help children and families lead happier, healthier lives today and for generations to come.



A Story from the field



Thérèse Nyirajyambere first joined a CARE VSLA in 2007 and was eventually elected president of the VSLA group. In 2010, she became a village agent, supporting several groups in her community. In 2015, she was elected as president of the village agents and was re-elected to serve a second term in this role in 2017. As president, she directly oversees 24 VSLA groups and provides oversight to 789 VSLAs at the district level. Through her own savings from her VSLA group, Thérèse has bought her own land upon which she grows sweet potatoes - and she donates a portion of this produce to the local schools to provide to malnourished children. Also with her VSLA savings, Thérèse used the money to buy materials to rebuild her family home. Thérèse is a mother to six children and since she first began working with the VSLA group she has earned money which has helped her send all of her children to secondary school, high school and to university. Thérèse talked about how she grew up in a very poor household, and she was forced to drop out of school by the time she reached sixth grade and was never able to continue her studies. She wanted a better life for her children and is glad the VSLA program has given her the tools and financial means to support her children's education.

CARE Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Program (GEWEP)

LOCATION: Muhanga District, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: CARE's Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Program (GEWEP) works to empower women and girls socially and economically so they can exercise their rights. Utilizing effective strategies to understand, challenge and change inequitable social norms, GEWEP ensures women's meaningful participation in every aspect of decision-making processes that affect their lives, and improves their social, political and economic empowerment. It focuses on delivering a comprehensive package of community-level interventions, using Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) as an entry point for interventions on maternal health, gender-based violence, advocacy, governance, financial literacy and engaging men and boys.

IMPACT: To date, the GEWEP program has created 5,261 VSLAs with 144,376 members where 79 percent are women. Currently, nearly 87,000 women and girls who are participants in a VSLA group have been supported with financial literacy training, enterprise development training, adult literacy and numeracy training and gender-based violence (GBV) awareness. Together, these groups have saved a total of \$4,763,763 USD.

DONORS: Norwegian Agency for Cooperation (NORAD)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS: CARE

The delegation closed the day with a dinner discussion with Nadine Umutoni Gatsinzi, the Permanent Secretary of the Rwandan Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF), who provided an overview of the government's gender and health priorities. Nadine also provided context on how MIGEPROF works to ensure gender is integrated across all other government ministries and within all government led or implemented initiatives, including those focused on health, nutrition, education, employment and economic opportunities for women.

→ DAY 4

On the fourth day of the trip, the delegation observed the impact of programs that focus on integrated, holistic approaches to women's economic empowerment. Through a tour of the Urugo Women's Opportunity Center followed by a lunch with influential female corporate partners, the delegation gained a deeper understanding of the role the private sector plays in developing the marketable skills of female entrepreneurs and connecting vulnerable women to markets.

Urugo Women's Opportunity Center

LOCATION: Kayonza, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: Since 1997, Women for Women International has developed a program that offers Rwandan women a constructive, dignified way to regain control of their lives. Their foundational training helps them know and defend their rights, influence decisions at home and in their communities, initiate activities that generate income, and save money for the future, contributing to economic self-sufficiency in their lives and for their families. In June 2013, Women for Women International opened the Urugo Women's Opportunity Center (WOC) in Kayonza. The center serves as a central meeting place that bridges the gap between urban buyers and rural farmers and provides a permanent space for training participants in life skills and business, and for use by members of the community. The Women's Opportunity Center is a place for rural entrepreneurs to incubate new businesses, gain new skills and transition from subsistence farming to larger-scale entrepreneurial agriculture. **continued on next page ►**



The Urugo Women's Opportunity Center provides a space where some of Rwanda's most vulnerable women and men can come to learn marketable skills to help lift themselves and their families out of poverty. These skills include tourism, hospitality, financial management, entrepreneurship and cultural dance, as pictured here.

► **IMPACT:** In 2018 alone, the Women's Opportunity Center has trained more than 1,500 women in a variety of entrepreneurial and vocational skills, including handicrafts, financial literacy, cooperative management and business development skills. The program has also helped train more than 100 men in microsavings, cultural dance and global entrepreneurship. Since the program's inception, the center has empowered more than 10,000 women socially and economically, helping to provide a secure, supportive environment where women can find support, access resources and build life-changing skills to move from crisis and poverty to stability and economic self-sufficiency.

DONORS: Women for Women International (founder)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: Marriott Hotels, Gahaya Links, Tigo, Government of Rwanda, Rwanda Development Board, Rwanda Development Fund, Rwanda Agriculture Board, University of Tourism and Business, Workforce Development Authority

→ DAY 5

Taking Action Back Home

Before returning home, the group visited the Rwandan Genocide Memorial in Kigali to understand the historical context in which development has occurred in Rwanda and held discussions with a group of female cross-border traders who are helping to foster cross-cultural ties and peace through income-generating activities.



The COSOPAX cross-border trader participants from Rwanda, Burundi and DRC discuss with the delegation the progress they have seen in cross-cultural communication – from barely interacting previously, to now working together and thriving as business women.

On this five-day trip, the delegation saw firsthand the role that U.S. investments and partnerships play in empowering women and girls to lift themselves out of poverty and be catalysts for change in their families and communities. The highlight of the trip included field visits to programs in Kigali and throughout the country's southern and eastern provinces, where the delegation sat down with women and girls in their communities to see the impact of investments in maternal health, better access to nutritious food and expanded economic opportunities. Through these program visits and meetings with change-makers, representatives from non-government organizations (NGOs), technical experts and the U.S. mission, the delegation learned about the positive reach and scope of U.S. foreign assistance in women's empowerment, health and development in Rwanda.

Catholic Relief Services Commerçantes Solidaires pour la Paix (COSOPAX) Program

LOCATION: Kigali, Rwanda

BACKGROUND: Since 2013, Catholic Relief Services has worked to reinforce and build upon the natural connections between women traders from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the Commerçantes Solidaires pour la Paix (COSOPAX) Program. As trust is built, COSOPAX women collaborate and learn from one another to strengthen their commercial activities across borders and serve as conduits of peace, first in their households and communities, and ultimately on a larger national and regional scale. COSOPAX's model consists of two equally essential and mutually reinforcing pillars: conflict transformation/peacebuilding and economic strengthening. Through training in social cohesion using a combination of binding, bonding and bridging, COSOPAX women learn to acknowledge and critically examine and challenge their own prejudices; to transform conflict beginning at the interpersonal level and within their own lives; and to contribute to, and advocate for, similar transformation among their family, friends and neighbors.

IMPACT: Since July 2013, the COSOPAX project has targeted and reached 60 direct beneficiaries and scale up to 120 women participants. At present, the implementation of project activities is carried out through a permanent social cohesion framework for consultation among 120 female traders, comprised of 30 members per four targeted dioceses of Bujumbura in Burundi, Uvira and Bukavu in Congo and Cyangugu in Rwanda. The program has indirectly benefited 40,555 through different market venues in three countries and regional events organized during 2017.

DONOR: Catholic Relief Services

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER: Catholic Relief Services

→ POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INVESTMENTS IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

CARE advocates for the U.S. government to integrate gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment throughout its foreign assistance programs. By emphasizing the critical role women and girls play in the development and prosperity of their communities, by recognizing their agency and influence, and by equipping them with educational tools and economic opportunity, we can provide communities with the tools needed to sustainably lift themselves out of poverty. We can achieve this by investing in women's economic empowerment and advancing strong policies and robust resources to promote women and girls' education and leadership, prevent child marriage, combat gender-based violence and foster food and nutrition security. This, in turn, fosters more stability and self-sufficiency at a national level and can help promote America's prosperity and security around the world.

CARE supports the bipartisan **International Violence Against Women Act (IVAWA)**, which makes ending violence against women and girls a top diplomatic, development and foreign assistance

priority. IVAWA focuses on preventing violence by transforming social norms; promoting political, legal and institutional reforms that recognize such violence as a crime; and training police and the judiciary to respond and hold violators accountable. Such reforms also include responding to the needs of survivors and reducing women and girls' vulnerability to violence by improving their economic status and educational opportunities.

CARE advocates for the bipartisan House **Women's Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment (WEEE) Act**, which improves USAID programs and activities focused on women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment globally. The WEEE Act recognizes critical barriers to women's economic empowerment, focuses on expanding women's access to and control over resources such as property, and supports the financial inclusion for women necessary to grow their businesses, savings and prosperity. The introduction of this bill signals a step forward in U.S. efforts to make development assistance work effectively to lift women, their

families and their communities and nations out of the cycle of poverty.

The International Affairs budget is the U.S. government's primary funding source for international programs for emergency response and long-term development. Although the international affairs budget remains roughly 1 percent of the overall U.S. budget, it is routinely targeted in budget cuts. In the Administration's FY18 Request, funding for Rwanda was cut and recently Rwanda was removed as a Feed the Future focus country. Therefore, while Congress has continued to reject steep cuts proposed by the Administration, the distribution of those funds may change and the prioritization of countries shifts within Administration strategies.

The recent FY18 and FY19 budget deal increased pressure on the International Affairs budget by reducing the amount of Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) that can be made available to foreign assistance programs. This reduction of OCO funding, which provides critical, life-saving humanitarian aid, can have significant impact on communities. The Administration's proposed cuts – of up to 30 percent to the International Affairs budget – has also raised serious concerns about the future of American leadership and how the U.S. will contribute to addressing urgent needs around the world and reap the gains of addressing poverty.

CARE believes that the U.S. cannot afford to cut the International Affairs budget at this time of historic global crises and need. U.S. foreign assistance programs save millions of lives every year, address the root causes of poverty, decrease dependency and build stronger, more resilient societies. CARE also advocates for greater accountability and transparency of these funds. Reducing funding for foreign assistance is against our national interest for a peaceful and more prosperous world.



Pictured here is the typical Rwandan basket, which women who have been trained in handicraft making and basket weaving through programs such as the Urugo Women's Opportunity Center are able to create, market and sell to help enhance their household income.

Photos: All Images: Ilan Godfrey/CARE

We are deeply grateful to the many people who generously gave of their time to make this visit to Rwanda a success. CARE specifically thanks the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for its generous financial support of the Learning Tours.



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