

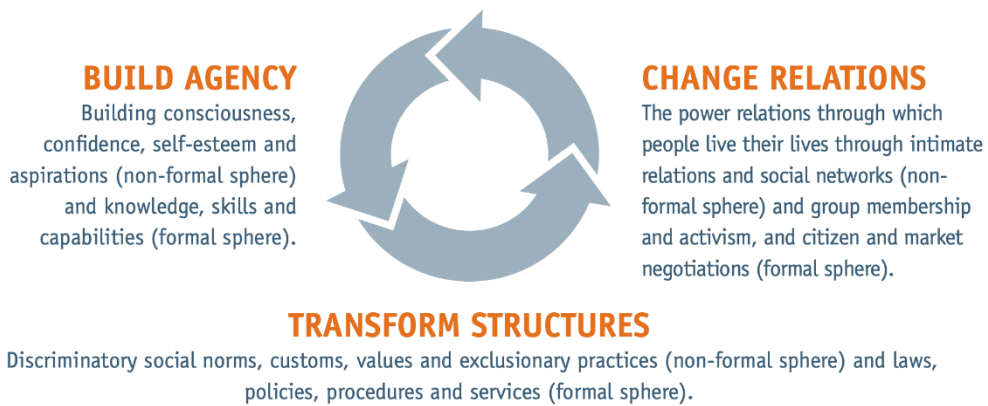
Gender Equality Framework

CARE's Theory of Change for achieving gender equality


CARE's **Gender Equality Framework** (GEF) guides how we approach gender equality across all our programming. This is based on our experience that achieving lasting change in the power and choices women have over their own lives requires transformative change.¹


The aim is to **build agency** of women and girls and life stages, **change relations** between them and **transform structures** in order that they realize full potential in their public and private lives and are able to contribute equally to, and benefit equally from, social, political and economic development.


TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE means addressing the structural causes as well as the symptoms of gender inequality, with the aim of achieving lasting change in the power and choices women have over their own lives, rather than just a temporary increase in opportunities.



CARE's extensive evidence base emphasizes that change needs to take place and be sustained in **all three domains** to achieve transformative impact.

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AGENCY: Building individual and collective agency to lead positive change
Our goal is that women and girls in all their diversity², have the power and capabilities to effect change in their own lives and the world around them, including their consciousness, self-esteem and aspirations (non-formal sphere) and their knowledge, skills and capabilities (formal sphere).
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RELATIONS: Changing relations and power dynamics to achieve gender equality.
Our goal is that women and girls in all their diversity* have equitable and enabling social, political and economic relationships with others, including their intimate relations and social networks (non-formal sphere) and their group memberships & collective action, and citizenship & interactions with the state, traditional authorities and the market (formal sphere).
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STRUCTURES: Transforming formal and informal patriarchal systems and structures so they are positively gender equitable.
Our goal is that social, political and economic institutions (rules) and structures enable, protect and fulfil the human rights of women and girls in all their diversity*, including social norms, customs, values and practices (non-formal sphere) and laws, policies, regulations, procedures, budgets and services (formal sphere).

¹ For more on how CARE measures transformative change, visit care.org/gendermarker.
² While we seek greater gender equality for people of all genders, our impact population is primarily those people that most experience gender discrimination: women, girls and marginalized groups (including people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities). We also work with men and boys as target populations, to challenge discriminatory and patriarchal norms that have negative impacts for they themselves, as well as for others in society.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

CARE first developed a Women's Equality Framework (WEF) to frame a 2008 Strategic Impact Inquiry into the impact of CARE's work on women's empowerment and gender equality.

It was later updated to the Gender Equality Framework (GEF) to capture learning that our women and girls' empowerment approaches must be synchronized with and complementary to how we engage men and boys and people of all/diverse genders for gender equality.

In 2022, CARE teams from around the globe reflected on what the GEF means for CARE's 2030 Vision and how we can ensure our work advances gender equality.

CARE'S INFLUENCE

CARE's Gender Equality Framework has influenced other frameworks for women's empowerment and we continue to provide leadership on tools and approaches with the potential to bring about lasting change in the lives of women and girls.

Change is required in both **private and public spaces** (i.e. at individual, household, community and societal level), in both **formal and informal settings**. This includes engaging **social norms** – the unspoken rules that influence human behavior.

There are a number of assumptions inherent in CARE's Theory of Change:

- **Individual agency is a key part of empowerment** whereby conscious and empowered individuals take steps to achieve their rights.
- **Gender equality must include men and boys** as well as women and girls, and people of all/diverse genders, so that everyone is making necessary changes and is involved in the process of creating new, more equitably beneficial societies.
- **Government actors are primary players**, as duty-bearers who are responsible for following through on their international commitments and frameworks. Other social institutions and actors also have key roles to play.
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a critical role**, eg through specific activities, through supporting advocates and women's rights organizations and/or holding duty-bearers accountable.
- **Combining gender-specific programming and advocacy** on women's rights, complemented by gender-integrated programming is necessary to achieve gender equality.
- **Shocks and backlash against women's rights are to be expected**, and thus change for women's rights may take time, involve setbacks and follow a non-linear change pathway.

CARE believes gender equality and women's empowerment are about **societal change, and not just individual change**, so we need to build programs with longer time frames, support action in communities and beyond, link and facilitate strong partnerships and support for social actors, and retain a level of agility since we can't predict or control the pathways that social change will take.

Addressing gender inequality is **not just a technical issue**; it requires challenging and changing **unequal power relations**, so CARE's work on gender equality must not simply be a technical response, but also a political response, **engaging political actors and supporting political movements**. Much of CARE's work is with groups (e.g. community groups like VSLA, mother's groups, religious leaders, government officials), so facilitating dialogues that build consciousness of inequalities and building skills for collective action to challenge the inequalities is critical to achieving greater impact.

For more information contact

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