Power Within Brief
## Adolescent and Youth Life Skills Competencies

Background

Young people represent a large proportion of the population in many countries: one in six people worldwide is between the ages of 15 and 24, and nearly half of the global population is under 30[i]. These formative years are filled with opportunity, yet they are a finite amount of time to inform the pathway of a young person's future. CARE's Power Within model is a competency-based framework to support young people in building essential life skills during this critical window. In 2008, CARE launched the Power Within model for adolescent leadership development, focused on building five core competencies for people ages 10-19. In 2024, the model was updated to include youth (now inclusive of ages 10-24) and reflect lessons from CARE's work and other prominent models and evidence regarding what young people need.

Program Overview

Power Within's competency framework supports young people's development by building life skills that help them deal with the challenges and demands of their daily lives. The model contains three primary competency domains: **strong self-image, strong mind, and strong voice**. The competencies are transferable, which means that they can be applied in many situations, and they can be practiced throughout program activities in most, if not all, of CARE's direct work with adolescents and youth. This approach is similar to teaching Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies in formal education that integrate 'soft' skills into a subject area curriculum. Power Within also aligns with the Positive Youth Development Framework, which prioritizes the development of young people's assets, agency, contribution, and enabling environment.

Life skills competencies in action: *"A friend of mine is in class five this year. Her parents wanted her to get married to an old man and take her out of school. My friends and I went to the parents and talked to them...about the importance of educating and empowering girls in society. The parents took our advice and canceled the marriage. Now our friend is back in school."* – Baidoa, a member of a CARE-supported Girls' Empowerment Forum in Somalia.

'Wellbeing' is a foundation. As shown in the Power Within framework below, the development of other competencies is dependent on participants building wellbeing. Wellbeing is a sliding scale that is defined by each participant individually. While not objectively assessable as a standard minimum threshold, efforts to build and protect wellbeing among participants is a prerequisite for developing competencies across the three domains.
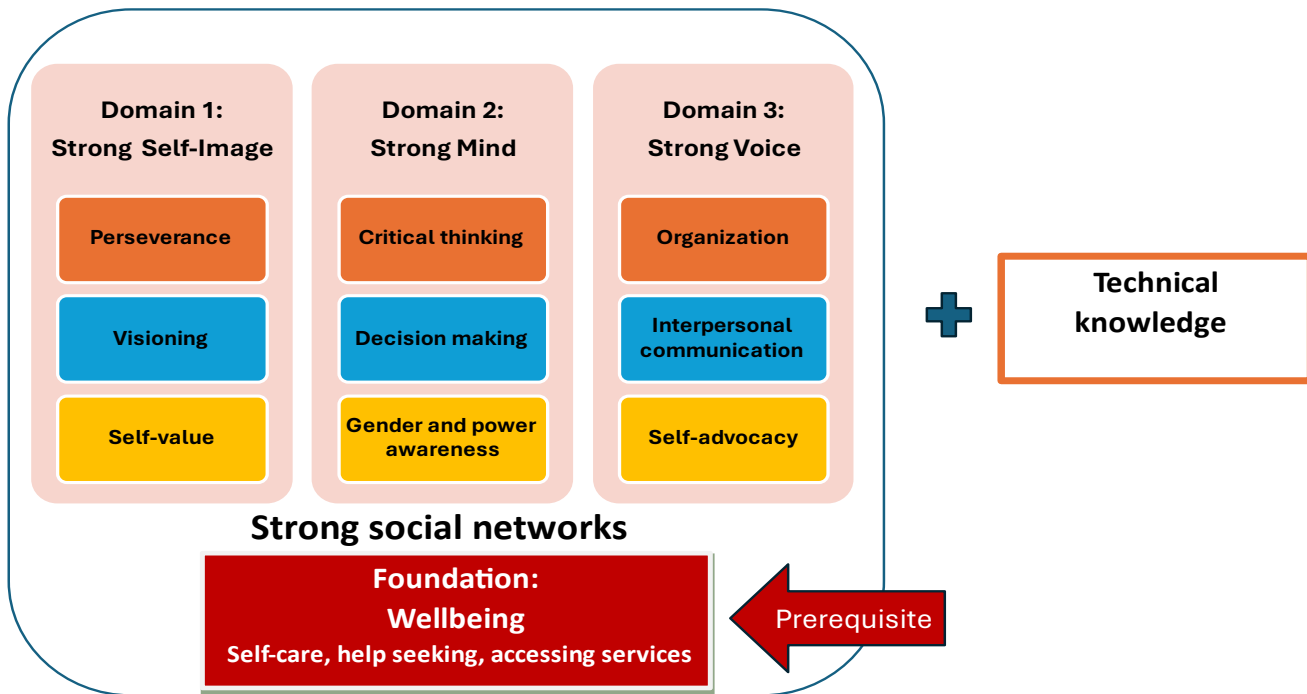
Competencies may be applied individually—by one young person—or collectively—by a group of young people with a common aim or interest. The description of each competency includes examples of individual and collective applications. The inclusion of 'strong social networks' refers to the role that supportive and healthy relationships play in fostering competency development.

It is a **progressive model**, with a stepwise aggregation of competencies that build on each other. In the image above, this is illustrated through the use of color: participants should start their Power Within journey in each domain by building the yellow competencies first, followed by blue, and then orange.

Technical knowledge in the model refers to the knowledge that program participants gain in sectoral programs, such as financial management, literacy and numeracy, or facts about human reproduction.

For more information

Additional information on the technical model of Power Within may be found in the *Power Within Competency Framework for Adolescents and Youth* (CARE, 2024). Additionally, for practitioners interested in incorporating the Power Within competencies into their work, the *Power Within Activity Toolkit for Adolescents and Youth* (CARE, 2024) provides sample activities for use and adaptation.

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[i] Adolescence is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) as between 10-19 years with two stages: early adolescence (ages 10-14) and late adolescence (ages 15-19). 'Youth' is a category that is defined with varying age ranges that extend into adulthood; UNICEF defines youth as ages 15-24 years. 'Young people' comprises all these age groups, 10-24 years.