



RESILIENT MARKETS

Strengthening women's economic empowerment and market systems in fragile settings



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PHOTOS

Front cover: In Jordan, CARE – in partnership with the H&M Foundation – supports 2,000 vulnerable women through a Village Savings and Loan Association programme. The women, who have all been affected by conflict, poverty and discrimination, receive vocational and skills training for business development. CARE organises bazaars where women can market and promote their products. The programme also runs workshops for both men and women to increase awareness on the position and role of women in society, women's rights and gender-based violence, and to promote women's involvement in enterprise development. Photo © deBode/CARE 2015

Page 4: Shymaa, a young woman in Yemen who received skills training and a start-up loan from CARE, making *bakhoor*, a type of incense. "This fund changed my life. It made me powerful and I am able to support myself and my family," says Shymaa. Photo © Thana Farooq/CARE 2015

Page 5: Nasser, age 12, watches over his family's shop in the market area of the Berseve 1 camp for internally displaced people in northern Iraq. Photo © Mary Kate MacIsaac/CARE 2015

Page 7: Bedryyah, a Syrian refugee living in Jordan, runs her own catering business which she set up with business training and support from CARE, in partnership with the H&M Foundation. "The programme has made my life better. I don't need anyone to pay the rent, my electricity and water any longer," she says. Photo © Prtic /CARE 2016

Page 9: A CARE-supported VSLA group in East Hararghe, Ethiopia. Photo © Michael Tsegaye/CARE 2014

Page 21: Rajitha is manager of a handloom business set up by a group of 15 women in the village of Mulliyavallai in Sri Lanka. They have been supported by a women's economic empowerment programme run by CARE in partnership with the H&M Foundation. Photo © Jayawardena/CARE 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Functioning market systems and a responsible and responsive private sector are critical to livelihoods, autonomy and well-being. However they are both heavily impacted by crisis, including war. Market system failure brought on by crises undermines the ability of women and men, and by extension their families and communities, to survive and thrive. Women, who face greater barriers to economic activity than men, are particularly at risk.

Therefore, and in order to support women and vulnerable groups to manage and benefit from market systems during periods of crisis, actors like CARE need to draw on multiple aid and development disciplines, as well as on our private sector partnerships, to:

- strengthen women's abilities to adjust to shock, and operate effectively within market systems during crises
- build the resilience of the market system itself before, during and after shocks
- tap into the potential of the private sector and market systems to tackle the root causes of poverty and fragility in the enabling environment, notably structural inequality and conflict.

This briefing paper outlines CARE's initial thinking on fostering economic empowerment for women and the resilience of market systems in fragile contexts. It concludes with intervention areas that show promise, and working recommendations for a range of actors active in and working on markets before, during and after crisis.

- Risk-sharing and information access is vital for effective crisis prevention and absorption, and large firms have both an interest and a duty to ensure that they actively understand and mitigate risk for the whole market system.
- Crises offer opportunities for more equitable gender norms to be reinforced through aid and economic interventions, including cash, enterprise funding and social investments. All actors must be sensitive to these shifts and build them into their programming.
- Prosperity and economic development strategies in fragile contexts should be focused at both the macro and the micro levels, with approaches that seek to build stability through investment in productive sectors which encompass both the formal and informal economy.



INTRODUCTION

People's ability to buy and sell goods and services in a functioning market system is a critical means for them to generate income, earn livelihoods, exercise control over their situation and build dignity, social capital and self-worth. Where communities or countries are affected by war or crises, the ability of these market systems to redistribute goods and services or generate income is impacted, and people's ability to navigate market opportunities and secure an income comes under great strain or threatens to collapse.¹

In almost every country men and women experience different opportunities and benefits from market systems. Strong gender inequality around the world often gives rise to specific barriers that women face such as lower ownership of assets, lack of or unequal access to productive resources, or a disproportionate responsibility for unpaid household or care work that limits the time they have for higher-paid activity.² Likewise, women experience different vulnerabilities and opportunities than men during and after crisis, and face higher levels of mortality in the period after crisis ends.³ When conflicts, natural and economic crises and social disruption impact on communities, women can find themselves disproportionately absorbing the shock. Women may double-up existing workloads with additional economic responsibilities, yet because of structural inequalities they also face more barriers than men in performing this role.

How to support effective market systems in crisis is a very current debate. An increasing proportion of the world's poor are now concentrated in fragile contexts,⁴ and global and regional trends indicate an increase in both complex and protracted emergencies in response to political crisis, climate change, and economic disruption and health

¹ See Overseas Development Institute, [Markets in crisis and transitions, March 2013-March 2015](#) (web page)

² USAID, [Women's economic empowerment: Pushing the frontiers of inclusive market development](#), LEO (Leveraging Economic Opportunities) Brief (undated, accessed August 2016)

³ Ormhaug et al, [Armed conflict deaths disaggregated by gender](#), PRIO (International Peace Research Institute, Oslo), 2009

⁴ According to the [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2016](#) at least 76% of people living in extreme poverty (on less than \$1.90 per day) – around 677 million people – are estimated to live in countries that are either politically fragile, environmentally vulnerable or both. There is no one definition of fragility, with different donors and multilateral institutions framing this in different ways. The OECD has created one useful model for capturing the different dimensions of fragility, locating 51 states among five fragility clusters: Violence, Justice, Institutions, Economic Foundations and Resilience. See OECD, [States of fragility 2015: Meeting post-2015 ambitions](#), 2015

pandemics.⁵ The aid sector is also increasingly moving towards market-based approaches to relief and preparedness for core sectors such as shelter, and water and sanitation. This opens up opportunities for some market actors, but also risks crowding out others. Meanwhile private sector actors have become more prominent in delivering aid, and firms large and small are being looked to by aid donors and governments as the primary means of creating the jobs assumed to be essential to stabilising fragile social contexts. Policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals,⁶ the Sendai Framework⁷ and the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States⁸ have all indicated the importance of economic development in preventing and responding to crisis but also speak, to varying degrees, of the value of gender equality as a driver of both greater rights and greater stability.

In response to these policy and socio-economic trends, CARE has established a strand of work called *Resilient Markets* to bring together the gender, peace and economic dimensions of delivering its women's economic empowerment work in fragile contexts.

This work seeks to reinforce:

- the coping capacity of women working in, and nurturing relationships within, market systems
- the resilience of these systems and their constituent parts
- the wider transformative potential of market systems to stabilise contexts and promote positive change through shifts in the enabling environment.

In this sense, *Resilient Markets* work draws on multiple parts of CARE's programming portfolio, experience and policy areas. With a central principle of promoting gender equality as both a goal and a driver of resilience,⁹ it intersects:

- women's economic empowerment
- disaster risk reduction
- humanitarian response
- conflict transformation
- food and nutrition security
- climate adaptation.

This briefing paper draws on aid literature and CARE's own programming to outline key opportunities for supporting individual and collective women's economic empowerment, and the resilience of market systems, before, during and after crisis. In recognition of the rapidly evolving body of work in this area, this paper is not intended to be the final word and we welcome discussion on both the examples and the conceptual framework. The paper ends with recommendations for policy thinkers grappling with how to support inclusive and gender-transformative economic development in fragile settings.

⁵ The failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation was listed by the World Economic Forum's [Global Risk Report 2016](#) as the biggest impact risk, but the report noted that the broad risk landscape identified in the 2016 report is unprecedented in the 11 years the report has been put together, with mounting evidence of an growing interconnectedness of risks. See <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2016/press-releases/>

⁶ [Sustainable Development Goals 3, 5, 8 and 16](#)

⁷ [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030](#)

⁸ [New Deal: Building Peaceful States](#)

⁹ CARE, [Enhancing resilience through gender equality](#), 2016; see also CARE, [Beyond words: Advancing gender equality in climate change policy and programming in Vietnam](#), 2016.



WHAT AND WHY: DEFINITION OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND RESILIENT MARKETS

CARE defines women's economic empowerment¹⁰ as the process by which women increase their right to economic resources and power to make decisions that benefit themselves, their families and their communities. This requires equal access to and control over economic resources, assets and opportunities as well as long-term changes in social norms and economic structures that benefit both women and men. The focus of CARE's women's economic empowerment programming is on four inter-related and key pathways to economic empowerment, namely:

- financial inclusion
- women and value chains
- dignified work
- entrepreneurship.

Globally CARE is committed to ensuring that 30 million women have greater access to and control over economic resources by 2020. One of the approaches that CARE will take to achieving this outcome is to improve women's economic resilience in the face of increasing shocks.

Alongside reducing drivers of risk and securing the natural environment, CARE's working definition of resilience¹¹ targets supporting individuals and communities to better deal with shocks, stresses, uncertainty and change. This breaks down into the capacity of people to better **anticipate** and foresee risks, **absorb** shocks in the short term, and **adapt** in the longer term. Throughout phases of a crisis, CARE also seeks to address the drivers of risk to remove the threat as much as possible by **transforming** the enabling environment. Transformation work can be done in conjunction with work supporting individuals and markets to survive and thrive through crisis.¹²

Economic empowerment for women is one part of CARE's overall belief that poverty cannot be overcome without addressing the underlying power imbalances that exist in the world, in particular gender inequality. As with the economic empowerment approach this requires changes in women's individual **agency**, their **relations** with others

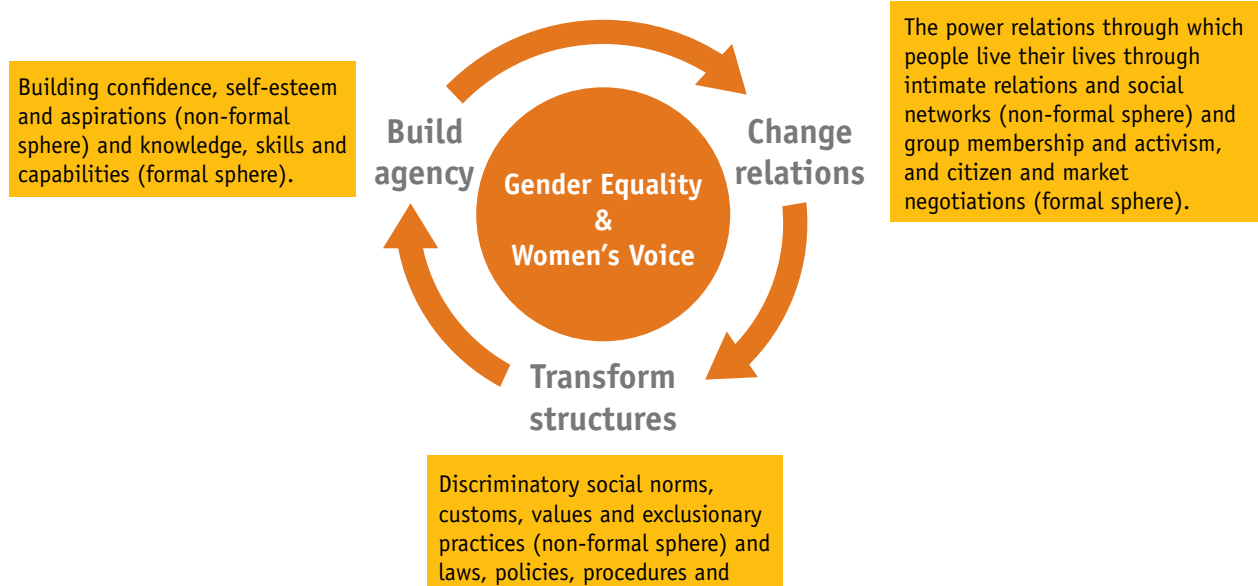
¹⁰ CARE, [CARE's Women's Economic Empowerment Strategy 2016-2020](#), published 2016

¹¹ From a forthcoming CARE Resilience Guidance Note

¹² This language and CARE's ideas are also influenced by the work of the USAID Leveraging Economic Opportunities (LEO) community. See LEO, [Market systems for resilience](#), 2015

including with men and boys, and the **structures** in public and private that constrain their potential. All these domains of change pertain to the question of women’s access to markets, their decision-making power, and their ability to navigate periods of social, economic, ecological or political turbulence.

CARE’s Gender Equality Framework



As economic actors, women operate within a market system as producers, entrepreneurs, employees, or consumers. A market system incorporates simple and complex value chains, which are the links between all the actors, activities and services required to take a product from conception to market and beyond, including input suppliers, manufacturers and retailers. However, a market system goes beyond the individual and a value chain itself and encompasses enabling and disabling factors such as regulatory frameworks, norms governing behaviour (such as gender), environmental conditions, education and training, or security and peace.



Bringing together the language of market systems and gender equality, interventions to address the economic empowerment of women in market systems focus on the agency level (individual women economic actors), the relational level (the links in the value chain and collective economic action, called here ‘markets’) as well as the structural level (the enabling environment).

Market systems are highly dynamic. During periods of crisis, the added volatility can strain the links of the chain, as well as disrupt the operating environment, to the extent that the system fails.¹³ In some cases this is more extreme than others. For instance in Syria, the ongoing conflict has seen widespread market system failure across numerous sectors. Triggers for this have included:

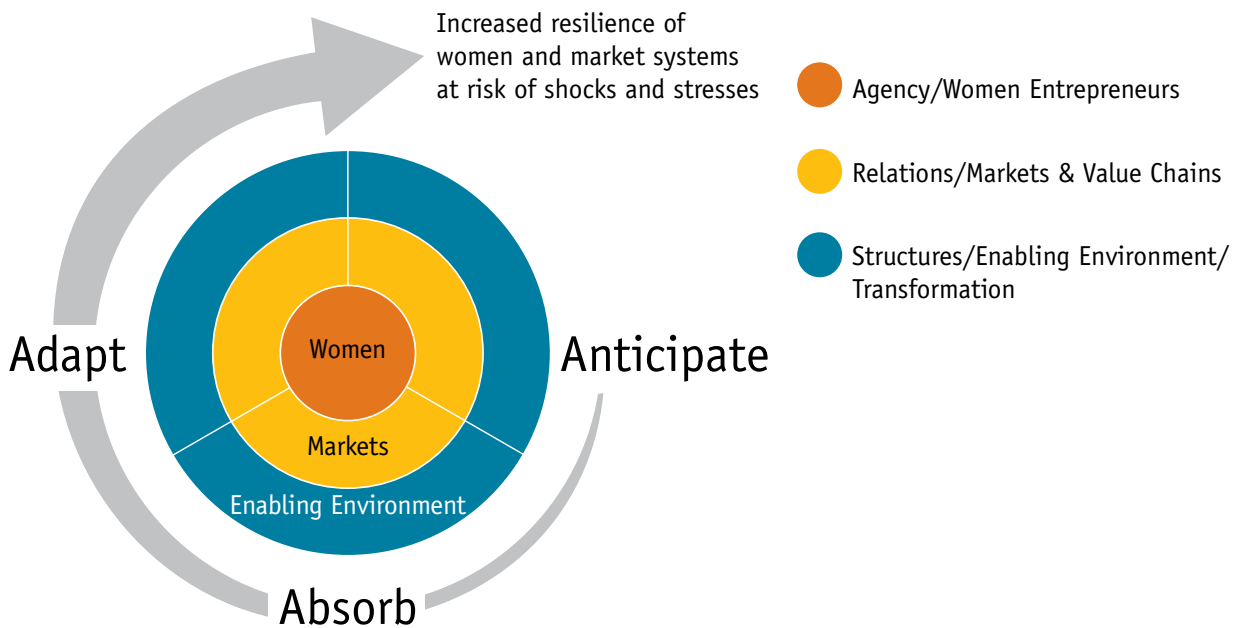
- the destruction of critical infrastructure and productive capacities
- the displacement of value chain participants
- the disappearance of jobs, meaning skills become obsolete
- the destruction or weakening of governing institutions’ capacity to regulate the market or provide critical services
- the loss of property rights and run-down of assets, particularly for small enterprises
- the increase in violence including gender-based violence
- significant increases in production and transaction costs because of scarcity and insecurity.

¹³ CARE, [Resilient market systems: Workshop report and an emerging framework](#), 2016



HOW: RESILIENT MARKETS IN PRACTICE

To plan for programming in fragile and crisis contexts we are adding in resiliency. Therefore this paper frames economic empowerment interventions alongside the resilience structure of anticipating, absorbing and adapting (AAA) to shocks. In this treatment, efforts to change the enabling environment – which is the third element of the market system along with the individual and the market value chain – are presented as an element of the transformative part of resilience. This section looks at each of the three A's in turn and illustrates the type of interventions that can support the greater resilience of individuals and markets, and supportive changes in the wider enabling environment that can promote the economic empowerment of women.



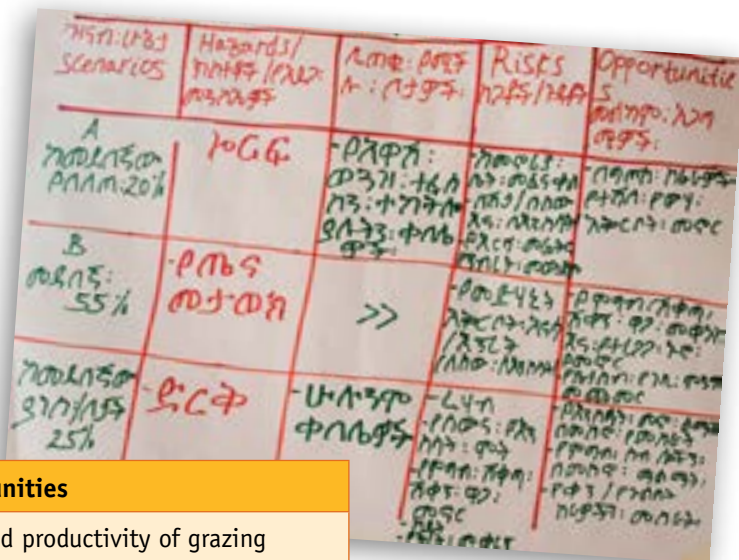
ANTICIPATE – preparation for disaster and the development of coping strategies

INDIVIDUAL WOMEN – INFORMED RISK MANAGEMENT

As noted in the Sendai Framework, women’s involvement is critical to achieving disaster risk reduction and resilience-building – in terms of leadership, managing disaster risk and designing response – but deliberate steps have to be taken to build their capacity to prepare for disaster and secure alternative means of livelihoods in post-disaster situations.

Fundamental to this state of preparedness is access to information and use of knowledge and scenario planning as well as early warning tools. In Ethiopia, CARE’s GRAD (Graduation with Resilience to Achieve Sustainable Development) and PRIME (Pastoralist Areas Resilience Improvement through Market Expansion) projects have used weather patterns and meteorological data, combined with indigenous knowledge, to support smallholder farmers to make appropriate investment decisions. The principle in Ethiopia is to exploit the relatively steady pattern of good and bad seasons (normally 2-3 years of good seasons before a downturn) with precise strategies to reflect this, through short-term diversification that takes advantage of new opportunities and markets that emerge during poor seasons. Cattle might be sold and the money invested in other businesses or other opportunities to diversify. Experience shows that the information needs to be translated, time-appropriate, accessible and relevant to the end users to make an impact. Interestingly the PRIME project found that women were more open to adopting new practices than men, and would be the trailblazers others followed in their communities.¹⁴

Scenario planning of risks and opportunities based on weather data from the PRIME project in Ethiopia¹⁵



Scenarios	Hazards and Risks	Opportunities
Scenario A (above normal, 20% probability)	Flood: Livestock disease, human disease, displacement, destruction of crops and agricultural land	Increased productivity of grazing lands, increased water availability
Scenario B (near normal, 55% probability)	Livestock disease, human disease, shortage of drugs	Stability in household incomes and prices of grain and food items
Scenario C (below normal, 25% probability)	Drought: Death of livestock, increase in price of grain and food items, shortage of water and fodder, children leaving school	Triggers engagement in alternative income-generating strategies

¹⁴ Mercy Corps, [Climate change and development: Experiences from Ethiopia and the Mercy Corps’ PRIME program](#) (undated)

¹⁵ CARE, Merging science and community voices for multi-scale risk reduction and climate resilience: A participatory scenario planning approach (author: Alebachew Adem), 2016 (unpublished)

MARKETS – MAPPING THE MARKET

Along with individual preparedness, work can be done at the collective level to encourage information sharing, scenario planning and investment in schemes to prevent or prepare for the worst.

Members of community savings groups (most of whom are women) could be well placed to access information in the future, as they often already have a group mobile phone that could be a means of accessing market price information and weather data. Recognising the technological gap between men and women in rural areas is key to planning anticipatory activities in a gender-sensitive way.

As part of scenario planning, **pre-crisis market analysis** (PCMA) is increasingly being used by agencies operating in crisis-prone environments to develop a baseline of how markets operate when they are not under stress. PCMA can inform contingency planning, preparedness, resilience-building and future responses. Once mapped, actors can plan for likely bottlenecks and constraints in the market system depending on the different crisis scenarios being predicted. Other tools exist for price monitoring¹⁶ which can give an early indication if markets are coming under strain. Market-based approaches are now extending to markets for service delivery as well as agriculture and other commodities – eg drinking water in Bangladesh (Oxfam), latrines in Pakistan (ACF), and housing in Jordan and Lebanon (NRC and others).

Market maps are limited. First, by their nature they are only a snapshot and require periodic updating. Second, by being commodity-focused they may struggle with more complex market systems. Housing and shelter, for example, intersect complex construction, rental and sales market systems which are often highly inelastic and politically charged but yet often make up the largest portion of people's financial expenditure or assets. Third, while a gender lens is a crucial component for understanding market systems¹⁷ and is recommended under the revised PCMA process, in reality it is up to the mapping team to ensure it is implemented. Working within these constraints, the PCMA is a valuable tool for ensuring that women and girls are visible in early market systems analysis and the subsequent response plans.

CARE's climate adaptation work has produced lessons relevant to agricultural and wider market systems as it responds to all types of shock. Using scenario planning and making investment decisions on the basis of likely climate risk, the data shows that investing \$1 in adaptation generates between \$1.45 and \$3.03 of wealth accruing to participating communities. Even when using a high discount rate (the preference for 'money now' over 'money later') the costs of intervention were 2.6 times lower on average than the costs of not intervening to address climate change and extreme weather events.¹⁸ Nevertheless, investment in preparedness typically seems to lag behind what it should. In Pakistan for instance, research by CARE shows that a single post-2010 flood programme spent six times as much as all the preparedness projects undertaken in KP province by local authorities.¹⁹

As a market actor, the **private sector** is contributing to emergency response and preparedness at many levels and in diverse ways such as new technologies, sharing of technical capacities in areas such as logistics, telecommunications and cash transfers.²⁰ As well as being able to deliver aid, perhaps as a logistics company brought in by an aid agency, market systems are being used as a supplier for whole modes of aid delivery. Likewise, emergency livelihoods work looks to restore the market system to support individuals, rather than just focus on the delivery of aid. However, depending on the crisis, it is likely that dwarfing these responses will be the existing and ongoing response of private

¹⁶ Local and Regional Procurement Learning Alliance, [Mark it: Price monitoring, analysis and response kit](#), 2015

¹⁷ Control of land and housing is often highly gender unequal, and humanitarians can use this knowledge to address the issue of women's access to land titles and tenure rights. See CARE, [Housing, land and property issues in Nepal and their consequences for the post-earthquake reconstruction process](#), 2016, and Norwegian Refugee Council and International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, [The importance of addressing housing, land and property challenges in humanitarian response](#), 2016

¹⁸ CARE, [Why community-based adaptation makes economic sense](#), 2012

¹⁹ Initiative For Development And Empowerment Axis and CARE International In Pakistan, [Disaster risk reduction/management: Legal framework, issues and challenges](#), 2016 (unpublished)

²⁰ See Overseas Development Institute, [Humanitarian crises, emergency preparedness and response: The roles of business and the private sector, September 2013 to March 2014](#) (web page)

sector actors large and small acting in their own commercial interest, uncoordinated by the NGO response. At best, businesses may develop models which are commercial in nature but which ultimately help to meet humanitarian needs and reduce vulnerability to future disasters – after all, ensuring the resilience of its supply chains is critical to a business’s own preparedness and bottom line.

This nexus of commercial interests, emergency preparedness and risk reduction has immense potential for humanitarian action. For instance, businesses can play a valuable role in supporting community cohesion to prevent tensions rising by being sensitive, in their hiring and business practices, of the effects this will have on relationships between different groups. In other words, the private sector has both the capacity and the self-interest to be **conflict-sensitive** in its business practice – recognising and understanding the potential for harm that their operations could provoke and finding ways of contributing positively to community cohesion.

Typology of private sector actors operating in crisis



ENABLING ENVIRONMENT – VALUING PARTICIPATION AND INVESTING IN PREVENTION

Beyond the individual or group decisions of value chain actors and other actors, rules and norms in the operating environment can impact on the resilience of market systems. CARE stresses that gender equality is an enabler of better coping strategies through diversification of actors, as well as solidarity structures. This extends to other principles of inclusion. **Participatory approaches** to decision-making have been core to humanitarian and development practice for decades but still need to be re-emphasised because they run against the grain of how decision-making takes place in most parts of the world. The norm of community engagement and preparedness has pragmatic value as well as reflecting the values of the aid community.

For instance, in Niger, community engagement in climate adaptation decision-making in the communities around Hamdallaye led to plans being created at village level and presented to the local authorities rather than the other way around. This followed the pattern of previous communities where local-led planning led to council funds being allocated for the upkeep of adaptation projects beyond the lifetime of the project, in a way which was not the case previously when plans were led by external actors.²¹

A further lesson for policy-makers from climate adaptation work and community-engaged decision-making is to recognise the need to mix investments. This means changing the orthodoxy that only ‘hard’ investments in infrastructure and economic production are valid in the face of anticipated climactic risks. Instead, community-led decision-making emphasises the need for soft investments in access to weather and climate information, financial literacy, or building the capacity to collectively process information through communal institutions. Without this

²¹ BRACED consortium case study, Description of the process of integrating a climate change lens into community development plans: The case of Hamdallaye, forthcoming 2016

investment in ‘soft’ areas of human capital, it is likely that more marginalised populations active in market systems – such as women – will be excluded and therefore unable to make informed and more effective risk-management decisions.²²

Therefore, in managing risk, governments, large market actors, collectives as well as individuals must focus their efforts on pre-empting crisis. Private sector actors (large retailers in the garment industry, for instance) could be working with smaller suppliers to identify and strengthen preventive investments in the face of likely economic or political shocks, rather than waiting to mitigate the worst when it happens. CARE already runs climate risk analysis on value chains in Ethiopia,²³ and there should be a greater role for actors such as CARE to facilitate this type of scenario planning, drawing in a range of market actors to further develop specialised preparedness exercises for market systems as a whole.

ABSORB – accommodating the impact

INDIVIDUAL WOMEN – BUILDING AND USING ASSETS

Once a shock hits, absorption is the ability to accommodate the impact it has on people’s livelihoods by making temporary changes in their usual practices and behaviours. Some of these changes may be positive in terms of breaking down barriers, but they may also represent periods of high stress and insecurity.

CARE and others’ experience with **Village Savings and Loan Associations** (VSLAs) demonstrates how participation for individual women contributes to household food security and resilience by allowing for the accumulation and draw-down of assets in fragile settings such as the Sahel,²⁴ Côte d’Ivoire, Burundi, Rwanda, DRC and Ethiopia.²⁵ Access to savings, or in some cases cash interventions, can also act as a buffer against selling productive assets and therefore hasten the return to income-generating activities. A second support factor is the strengthened solidarity that communal savings groups inspire. VSLAs all have social funds into which all members regularly contribute small amounts, which in turn provide small grants for specific emergency assistance such as funeral expenses, school fees for orphans, or to replace what is lost in a fire. In the event of a large crisis the fund is probably inadequate to cover all members, but the assumption is that it will have created a solidarity and trust between members which could prove critical to surviving the shock.²⁶ In emergency settings, CARE has experimented²⁷ with savings groups operating on shorter loan cycles, with a lump sum contribution from the agency at the outset to kickstart the VSLA group capital, which is then transferred to start new groups once the savings pot has grown sufficiently.

There are limits to the VSLA approach, which needs trust and a sufficiently stable population to begin with. However, technology that allows groups to bank using mobile phones²⁸ may now open up the possibility of groups forming virtually, or staying together despite being displaced from their original homes. There are also intriguing possibilities about linking VSLAs more deliberately to cash programmes to help transition individuals from direct support to more self-sufficient coping strategies.

²² CARE, [Why community-based adaptation makes economic sense](#), 2012

²³ CARE, Merging science and community voices for multi-scale risk reduction and climate resilience: A participatory scenario planning approach (author: Alebachew Adem), 2016 (unpublished)

²⁴ CARE, [The resilience champions: When women contribute to the resilience of communities in the Sahel through savings and community-based adaptation](#), 2015

²⁵ Catholic Relief Services, [Empowering women through savings groups: A study from the Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement \(WALA\) program](#), 2014

²⁶ CARE International Programme Note: VSLA and increasing resilience, 2016 (unpublished). Studies currently underway by ODI and CARE in Niger will test some of these assumptions.

²⁷ CARE, [“Our small peace cannot survive alone”: Lessons in peacebuilding and economic development in South Sudan](#), 2015

²⁸ See the case study on Airtel in Uganda, where three PIN holders and one SIM card holder could remotely authorise transactions out of a digital savings group, and how this was being linked to formal bank accounts. GSMA, [Connected women case study: Airtel Uganda: A mobile money solution for savings groups](#), 2015

Despite the opportunities that crises may present for women to become more economically active, there are risks that women become both overburdened and subject to higher levels of physical or sexual abuse in the domestic or public space. Greater economic insecurity can be a driver of **gender-based violence** that increases in humanitarian crises, and whilst accumulating economic assets can help women and girls reduce their exposure to violence, it can also increase risks in other circumstances. Gender-sensitive programming is vital, including an understanding of how gender norms, economic activity and crisis interact.^{29,30} Despite the clear relationship between economic insecurity and some forms of gender-based violence, there remains a programming gap in this area. CARE has worked to integrate psycho-social support into its programming in places like Jordan to help women and men facing new stresses and to support them in the adjustment to new roles and responsibilities.³¹

MARKETS – FINANCIAL INCLUSION, JOBS AND DEMAND STIMULUS

One barrier to bringing the resilience benefits of savings groups to scale is the **low rates of financial inclusion in fragile states** for both men and women. High usage of bank accounts supports the savings culture necessary for building up assets that may prove vital to surviving periods of uncertainty. Formal financial inclusion also opens up access to financial services in the event of disaster including micro-insurance and emergency loans, for meeting immediate needs or for financing reconstruction. Data shows that in fragile and conflict-affected states just 15% of adults have an account at a formal financial institution while 26% report having saved in the past year. Adults in these economies are significantly more likely than those in the rest of the developing world to report borrowing for health or emergency purposes.³²

Private sector financial services actors are, however, alive to the potential of the savings market which has been calculated as worth \$380bn globally,³³ and some have collaborated with INGOs on closing the financial inclusion gap, particularly but not only in more stable contexts. Key lessons from private sector forays into this market include the rise and potential of mobile technology to reach the excluded.³⁴ More data is needed to track the effects of financial inclusion policies specifically in fragile settings and to develop a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how people in fragile economies save, borrow, make payments, and manage risk.

Without private savings, **cash** is now widely recognised as a vital and effective means of supporting the capacity of people to absorb shocks in the short term. It is both an individual-level intervention and a means of alleviating strains in a wider market system by boosting consumption and demand. In early 2016 the UN Secretary General described cash-based programming as supporting “the agency of people by allowing them to purchase the goods and services they need most while also supporting local economies”. This double benefit, along with obvious efficiencies of low implementation costs for donors, led many to conclude that cash-based programming should be the preferred and default method of support where markets allow.³⁵

Cash for work is one popular form of conditional cash programming, particularly where employment is scarce or in emergencies where labour is required in support of relief and recovery efforts. Current thinking suggests cash and cash for work, rather than skills programmes, may in fact be the most effective tools for putting people to work and boosting incomes in poor and fragile states.³⁶ However, cash for work programmes do require a gender lens to prevent the exclusion of women who may not be able to participate if they are the sole carer for children, or if their social environment does not support women working. Equally, definitions of ‘work’ should not be limited to tasks traditionally undertaken by men. As will be discussed below, job creation is now a high priority for donors reacting to

²⁹ Women’s Refugee Commission, [Empowered and safe: Economic strengthening for girls in emergencies](#), 2015

³⁰ Women’s Refugee Commission, [A double-edged sword: Livelihoods in emergencies](#), 2014

³¹ CARE, [Resilient market systems: Workshop report and an emerging framework](#), 2016

³² World Bank, [Financial inclusion in fragile and conflict-affected states](#), 2013 (web page)

³³ Accenture, [Billion reasons to bank inclusively: Customizing banking services for the world’s unbanked population](#) (web page)

³⁴ The Mastercard Foundation, [Change that matters: Learning from our partnerships](#), 2014

³⁵ United Nations, [One humanity: Shared responsibility – Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit](#), 2016, and High Level Panel on Humanitarian Cash Transfers, [Doing cash differently: how cash transfers can transform humanitarian aid](#), 2015

³⁶ Blattman, C, and Ralston, L, [Generating employment in poor and fragile states: Evidence from labor market and entrepreneurship programs](#), 2015

large-scale refugee movement. Historically there are plenty of examples of cash for work programmes at huge scale, but they tend to be government-led, linked to social safety net programmes and, invariably, short-term.³⁷

Unrestricted cash is not the only modality for producing demand stimulus. **Vouchers** that work with local value chain actors and markets serve to support local and existing market actors, including the private sector. While unrestricted cash provides the maximum autonomy, vouchers give a degree of confidence to retailers that a certain quantity of demand exists in the market, allowing them to pre-order and alert suppliers. Vouchers of either a certain monetary or commodity value are less likely to be hoarded, saved or stolen than cash, and in the longer term may lead to new relationships with suppliers, including the creation of credit economies. Similarly there are benefits to consumers. In contexts of high or hyper-inflation, commodity vouchers can maintain their value despite the volatile market conditions.³⁸ In fragile contexts, particularly ones with active conflict, a dominant war economy and/or the presence of armed groups proscribed as extremist organisations, restricting and controlling cash through the use of vouchers also becomes a question of risk management and liability. However, each restriction takes away from the efficiency of the model and the multiplier effect in the wider economy of a financial stimulus. Programmes responding to the crisis in Syria, often using remote management techniques, are now at the cutting edge of exploring both appetites for risk among donors and the practicalities of delivering cash in conflict.³⁹

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT – BANKING SECTOR REGULATION, TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

The low rate of financial inclusion, and therefore the ability to build up assets, reflects a number of challenges for fragile settings. Where wider state institutions are weak this could be reflected in the lack of **regulation and confidence** in the banking sector. Equally, external regulation could limit the ease with which financial systems can be set up. Know Your Customer regulations enforced by US banking regulators on all international banks working in US dollars because of counter-terrorism concerns have slowed the expansion of financial services in countries with weak or absent systems like Somalia.⁴⁰ Efforts to improve money transfer systems for remittances to Somalia to be more compliant with due diligence while still supporting financial inclusion goals have been led in the UK by the ‘Safer Corridor’ taskforce,⁴¹ but it has yet to publish results. Even where systems are in place, as with many other parts of the world there may simply be an absence of products suitable for remote or low- income populations.

Even where regulation may exist, **trust and rules** governing a market system can come under strain during crisis, damaging the relationship and cooperation between actors such as suppliers, producers and buyers. In these scenarios, NGOs or state actors can play a facilitative role to help re-establish links and support actors to take up new opportunities as they arise. One example of trust-building is for the sharing of risk between large and small actors in a value chain, such as the extension of insurance to producers at discounted rates negotiated by large actors. Examples such as the setting up of weather-based crop insurance schemes in India which reach tens of millions of farmers each year, with the government subsidising 60-75% of the cost of premiums, shows the possibility of what can be achieved at scale.⁴² As a matter of course, large actors further along value chains must become aware of the risks smaller producers face and make the necessary investments to add value to the chain as a whole while reducing risk for all participants.⁴³

³⁷ The New Deal in the USA is estimated to have created four million jobs in two years, but by 1939 the unemployment level rose to above where it was when the New Deal was launched. In a different era the Argentine *Programa Jefes* and its predecessor *Trabajar* provided a social safety net of \$160 a month in return for work on infrastructure projects or training for over 2 million workers. See Devereux, S, and Solomon, C, [Employment creation programmes: The international experience](#), Economic and Labour Market Analysis Department, International Labour Office, 2006

³⁸ Information from Emily Sloane, via International Rescue Committee Markets in Crisis Discussion Group (private message board, accessed 13 September 2016), topic: ‘In fragile economic environments, can market-based programming be utilised for supporting prevention, preparedness and response to waterborne disease outbreaks?’

³⁹ See ECHO and other agency guidelines on due diligence and remote management

⁴⁰ Jozwiak, G, [Terrorism, fines and money laundering: Why banks say no to poor customers](#), Guardian Development Professionals web page, 9 February 2015

⁴¹ [UK-Somalia Safer Corridor Initiative – October 2015](#)

⁴² CARE International submission to the Loss and Damage Working Group of the UNFCCC, ‘Best practices, challenges and lessons learned from existing financial instruments at all levels that address the risk of loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change’, March 2016. See also CARE, [From compensations to claims: Benefits of micro insurance for the poor](#), 2010

⁴³ CARE, [Adding value to value chains: How to unlock the poverty-fighting potential of value chains](#), 2015

ADAPT – longer term changes and options

As crises persist, those affected are forced to come up with longer term or permanent changes in their lifestyles and coping strategies, often taking up new economic roles, responsibilities or professions. Recognising that these strategies exist and can be supported is critical for effective relief programming, however so too is getting the balance right between addressing more immediate needs and strengthening longer-term outcomes. Aid actors should be ensuring that economically active women are given options and choices of strategies to pursue.

INDIVIDUAL WOMEN – FINDING NEW WORK

The increased attention from the international community on jobs⁴⁴ has highlighted the need for more research on the impact of employment creation programmes in fragile settings, as serious gaps remain.⁴⁵ Three avenues into work seem possible: working for yourself in some form of micro-enterprise (or larger enterprise); working for private sector actors through formal or informal working relationships; and engaging in large-scale state-funded work schemes.

For people who have been displaced or become refugees, adapting to new markets is inevitable, and more radical shifts in employment type or focus may be required. **Entrepreneurship** is a particularly key skill for adaptation as it helps groups and individuals navigate and tap into new or existing market opportunities (even after a crisis happens). However, not all people have an entrepreneurial aptitude, time or resources and not all vulnerable groups are good fits for entrepreneurship development. In the Middle East and North Africa region, the entrepreneurial activity rate is much lower for women than for men, mainly due to restrictive social norms, poor access to finance and limited asset ownership (see box below).

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN WEST BANK AND GAZA

In order to support more gender-transformative entrepreneurship development, CARE in West Bank and Gaza has adopted a series of approaches to try and close the gender gap. These range from the individual level to the group and the wider enabling environment. Areas of focus include:

- **Skills:** In addition to women's technical and business capacities, the team develop women's soft skills such as communication, negotiation, leadership, self-esteem, and aspiration.
- **Organisation:** Supporting women's individual and collective entrepreneurship capacities such as joint business development planning.
- **Structures:** Tackling barriers such as inheritance rights by linking women to advocacy networks while forging linkages with national committees and platforms.
- **Social norms:** Challenging prevailing restrictive norms and culture and promoting women's entrepreneurship not just at the small and backyard scale but also as holders and leaders of medium-sized and large enterprises. The team also showcases female business leaders as success stories or role models for new women entrepreneurs just starting out.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, R, [Enabling economic development and livelihoods in countries affected by the Syrian regional crisis](#), Business Fights Poverty blog, 2016

⁴⁵ Holmes, R, et al, [What is the evidence on the impact of employment creation on stability and poverty reduction in fragile states: A systematic review](#), ODI, 2013

Where workers are entering into the formal economy with weak legal protections, enhanced due diligence responsibilities will fall on employers, including larger actors in the value chain, to enforce existing **labour standards and rules**.⁴⁶ This should include decent work for all women and men and equal pay for work of equal value.⁴⁷ The work of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) with garment and agricultural sector partners in the countries absorbing large numbers of Syrian refugees speaks to the importance brands put on ensuring that their suppliers do not engage in exploitative practices or undermine human rights standards. The ETI base code⁴⁸ and its due diligence policies⁴⁹ are currently being adapted to reflect the additional complexities of operating in fragile contexts where large numbers of workers may be undocumented. In the best cases, employers support undocumented workers in their supply chains to become legally registered and ensure that through the process they do not lose their job or income. Elsewhere, the ILO has collaborated on a fragility compass⁵⁰ to help analyse and navigate employment and decent work activities in fragile settings.

Governments play a key role. They are in a position to recognise and champion the **economic potential of refugees** and support their entry into labour markets. This could be through extending business development services to new arrivals, identifying and filling skills gaps, and creating enterprise funding for small businesses, in particular those run by women, which can all support women's integration in new market systems and help them transfer or adapt their skills. Likewise, governments also control the availability and accessibility of work permits to allow skilled workers to more easily enter their labour markets. A large focus of refugees' rights in the Syria response has been on securing legal working status from the governments in the region. Jordan, for instance, issued more than 20,000 work permits⁵¹ but a report mid-way through 2016 showed that fewer than 2% have gone to women.⁵² Turkey, which does not now limit the number of work permits, nevertheless caps at 10% the proportion of a workforce that can be hired from the Syrian community, ostensibly to smooth possible tensions between different communities. Where tensions do exist, businesses are among the first responders, and must be ready to proactively find ways of building cohesion among their workforce through positive initiatives.

MARKETS – INVESTMENT FOR GROWTH

While crises can create areas of high instability, there are nearly always more stable areas within states or in neighbouring regions. These become critical for the coping strategies of internally displaced people or refugees who flee there, and for the eventual reconstruction and recovery of the affected areas. The international response to the crisis in Syria⁵³ has highlighted the growing importance of leveraging **foreign direct investment** to boost economic growth in these stability pockets, while also supporting local economic actors, particularly in the informal economy.

At the local level, cooperatives, community-based organisations and sometimes community-wide social enterprises are important actors in improving resilience for vulnerable groups, and also strengthening market systems. **Collectives** have advantages over individuals in terms of more easily linking with other market actors in the system and being able to secure more favourable market conditions through economies of scale and collective bargaining. This is particularly true in CARE's experience in the agriculture sector, where collectives can deliver quite rapid improvements in income for members by improving on the scattered system of production, processing, and selling that occurs when women act on their own. In more socially conservative contexts such as in the Middle East, collectives have also benefited from the cultural acceptance of women-only groups, allowing greater mobility and visibility in non-

⁴⁶ See for instance the Human Rights Council endorsed '[Protect, respect and remedy](#)' framework on preventing child exploitation, ILO conventions such as [C182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour](#), and national laws such as the [UK Modern Slavery Act 2015](#)

⁴⁷ [SDG Goal 8, Target 8.5](#)

⁴⁸ [Ethical Trade Initiative Base Code](#)

⁴⁹ [Ethical Trade Initiative Due Diligence Human Rights Framework](#),

⁵⁰ Fragile States and Disaster Response Group, [Employment and decent work in fragile settings: A compass to orient the world of work](#), 2015; see [ILO website](#)

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² ILO Presentation to Jordan Livelihoods Working Group, June 2016, found in Oxfam, [From words to action: Reviewing the commitments made at the 'Supporting Syria and the Region' Conference six months on](#), 2016

⁵³ Gilbert, R, [Enabling economic development and livelihoods in countries affected by the Syrian regional crisis](#), Business Fights Poverty blog, 2016

traditional economic spaces.⁵⁴ Not only do collectives ensure value is redistributed more effectively down the value chain, but by grouping individual actors, formalising processes and facilitating capital investment, they also improve the capacity of the market system to adapt to shocks by buying time and security.

At a macro level, one of the levers open to the international community is to relax **tariff restrictions** on goods originating from crisis-affected areas in order to boost the economic health of these market systems,⁵⁵ sometimes linked to the employment of targeted groups like refugees. However, the international community also needs to think of investment as more than just capital expenditure. Rather than pure capital spending, investing in **social spending**, for instance in health, education or the care economy, will provide an economic return over time, and moreover also tend to provide more employment for women.⁵⁶ Similarly, it is not proven that support to multinational firms or export-boosting strategies will provide either quick employment creation or promote equality. Investment in production may lead to an upgrade of technology and machinery rather than an increased workforce, and therefore efforts by donors to work with the private sector on job creation require careful consideration and an alignment of objectives, particularly on timescales.

Over time it will be important to revisit these three areas – the trade deals; the trade-offs between capital and social investment strategies; and large-scale investments with lower transaction costs versus smaller-scale support for the local economy that may do more to boost resilience – to determine who benefits most.⁵⁷

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT – CHANGING GENDER NORMS

CARE's studies⁵⁸ have examined how **gender norms** become more fluid during crises, with examples well documented in East Africa, Jordan and Yemen among others. This is true in the immediate aftermath of crisis and so starts off as a coping strategy, but it has longer term implications that should be seized. In Syria and neighbouring countries, five years of war and displacement have triggered fundamental shifts in gender roles and responsibilities. Syrian women and men feel that their roles and responsibilities basically have been reversed, with women increasingly participating in decision-making on income and expenditure, and assuming responsibilities outside the house, while their male partners lose their role as the sole breadwinner and decision-maker. However, the exchange of roles is often incomplete, as women continue to shoulder the majority of household chores and men are reluctant to embrace new responsibilities within the home and, overall, feel emasculated.⁵⁹ In the Middle East and in other crisis contexts, this can trigger increases in gender-based violence, but also the risk that women in emergency situations can become overburdened if required to become economic actors in addition to all their pre-existing responsibilities as carers or household managers.

Nevertheless, actors should also look to support these positive changes in gender roles where they can, by partnering with women's rights organisations to benefit from the insight, analysis and legitimacy they have on tackling gender inequality.⁶⁰ Interventions that try to address women's strategic interests alongside practical gender needs can bring greater political, economic and social outcomes.⁶¹

⁵⁴ CARE, [Resilient market systems: Workshop report and an emerging framework](#), 2016

⁵⁵ For instance, the EU and Jordan deal reduced tariffs on goods coming from 18 economic areas, on condition that a minimum number of refugees were employed there: see <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/priti-patel-calls-for-fresh-international-push-on-education-and-jobs-for-syrian-refugees-on-visits-to-jordan-and-lebanon>

⁵⁶ ITUC, Investing in the care economy: A gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries, 2016, found in Gender and Development Network, [Breaking down the barriers: Macro-economic policies that promote women's economic equality](#), 2016

⁵⁷ Hoffman, A, [Policy review: International and Dutch policies in the field of socio-economic development in fragile settings](#), IS Academy, 2014

⁵⁸ CARE, [Adversity and opportunity: Gender relations, emergencies and resilience in the Horn of Africa](#), 2015

⁵⁹ CARE, [Women, work and war: Syrian women and the struggle to survive five years of conflict](#), 2016

⁶⁰ See, for example, CARE, [No future for Yemen without women and girls](#), 2016

⁶¹ O'Connell, H, 'What are the opportunities to promote gender equity and equality in conflict-affected and fragile states? Insights from a review of evidence', *Gender & Development*, 19:3, 455-466, 2011

Cash, as noted above, is increasingly favoured for its efficiency and multiplier effects. However, there is also good evidence that it can be supportive of **gender equality**. Examples from Somalia⁶² showed that targeting women with cash did not initially change existing unequal gender roles because household expenditure was seen as within the ‘feminine’ domain. However, over time, cash was potentially transformative as some women managed to purchase long-term productive assets such as livestock, and use of cash increased women’s bargaining power and access to credit and reduced debts, contributing to an increase in social status for women. Other studies have concurred, showing that cash transfers increase women’s decision-making power and choices including women’s choices in relation to marriage, family planning and engagement in sexual activity. However, the same studies found that there was not a reduction in emotional abuse, making additional activities that engage men and boys in communities a necessary accompaniment to cash programmes targeting women.⁶³

Market development approaches to build stability, peace and security

Work in the enabling environment seeks to reduce the exposure of vulnerable populations to risk so that the overall impact of a crisis is managed or removed entirely. Market actors and their relationships are not just affected by the wider environment but are able to affect change in the wider system, including addressing the triggers of disasters such as tensions leading to violent conflict.

Since the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States⁶⁴ in 2011 called for more innovative engagement with the private sector, there has been a growing convergence⁶⁵ between the two distinct policy fields of **economic development and peacebuilding** in order to understand drivers of fragility. The ILO sees employment creation partnered with social dialogue as a key strategy in its approach in fragile settings,⁶⁶ and has worked with trade unions in Guinea to promote peacebuilding objectives. CARE’s work in South Sudan has looked at building on shared economic interests between and among communities to foster closer cohesion, as well as provide relief from the economic hardship that can drive grievances.⁶⁷ The key lesson of these interventions, and others such as International Alert’s peace and prosperity framework, is that peace and economic development should not be treated separately but be considered jointly in programming, to maximise the benefits of both.⁶⁸

Gender norms have a crucial role to play in addressing risk and fragility. Evidence shows there is a strong link between **economic empowerment, women’s leadership and peace outcomes**⁶⁹ but the connection is not automatic and requires deliberate support. Women are not passive victims in conflict settings and are ready to formally engage in political, economic and social recovery, and thereby contribute to better peacebuilding with the right assistance.⁷⁰ However, without additional steps, it can be the case that even with increased income and greater community-level decision-making authority stemming from their improved economic status, women will still be marginalised in higher-level political processes.⁷¹

As a subset of peacebuilding, a strong focus among donors and the international community on **countering violent extremism** has led to interest in the economic dimensions of radicalisation. However, there is a growing body of

⁶² Wasilkowska, K, [Gender impact analysis: Unconditional cash transfers in South Central Somalia](#), The Somalia Cash Consortium, 2012

⁶³ Hagen-Zanker, J, et al, [Understanding the impact of cash transfers: The evidence](#), ODI, 2016

⁶⁴ See GSDRC, [A new deal for engagement in fragile states](#), 2011

⁶⁵ Hoffman, A, [Policy review: International and Dutch policies in the field of socio-economic development in fragile settings](#), IS Academy, 2014

⁶⁶ ILO, [ILO in fragile situations: An overview](#), 2014

⁶⁷ CARE, [“Our small peace cannot survive alone”: Lessons in peacebuilding and economic development in South Sudan](#), 2015

⁶⁸ International Alert, [Peace through prosperity: Integrating peacebuilding into economic development](#), 2015

⁶⁹ CordAid, [Women: From fragile to flourishing – CordAid’s approach and track record, Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo](#), 2014

⁷⁰ United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office and United Nations Development Programme, [Women and natural resources: Unlocking the peacebuilding potential](#), 2013

⁷¹ International Alert, [Women’s political participation and economic empowerment in post-conflict countries: Lessons from the Great Lakes Region in Africa](#), 2012

evidence⁷² that finds no relationship between joblessness and a young person's willingness to engage in, or support, political violence. Rather, in contexts such as Afghanistan, Colombia and Somalia, young people resort to violence because they are angry rather than because they are poor, with the principal drivers of political violence rooted in experiences of injustice: discrimination, corruption and abuse by security forces. This would suggest that an economic strategy to defuse radicalisation is likely to fail. However, CARE's work in Niger founded on economic empowerment strategies has delivered positive results by emphasising the gendered dimension of political violence. As one part of a wider dialogue approach, CARE partners with women's rights organisations and local women leaders who from a position of existing community respect facilitate discussions on the consequences on extremist ideologies. Rather than being viewed with suspicion, the women who lead the discussions in communities are the same women who have participated for many years in CARE's Village Savings and Loan Associations (first piloted by CARE in Niger 25 years ago, in 1991), and who have long ago won the acceptance from their community that women can be economically and also politically active. In contrast, efforts to use the language of gender equality and the women's rights movement to counter extremism without addressing the fundamental issues of inequality or recognising all forms of gender-based violence, is exploitative and laden with risk.

⁷² Mercy Corps, [Youth and consequences: Unemployment, injustice and violence](#), 2015



Conclusion

Women's economic empowerment in fragile contexts is vital to building the coping strategy of individuals, markets and other market actors to manage crisis and risk. However, to best support women to survive and thrive through crisis, interventions have to target the whole market system, and the roles and relationships within each contextual market system, before and during crises, in order to smooth the transition to longer-term recovery.

A critical opportunity to develop this is through the transformation of gender roles which become more fluid during crisis and which offer new opportunities to improve the inclusiveness and strength of the market system as a whole. Likewise, market actors – including those from the private sector – can be agents for positive change to prevent or remove drivers of crisis, investing in adaptation strategies and supporting moves towards peace or helping to secure the natural environment.

A number of areas show high promise for supporting inclusive economic activity through challenging periods but require further study.

- Financial inclusion models, from cash to village savings groups to technology-powered formal banking, are showing good evidence of building assets, solidarity and adaptive capacity, but more needs to be known about savings patterns in fragility and how these areas fully link up.
- Working with large actors in supply chains to support work for crisis-affected populations such as refugees offers another avenue to support dignified and protective work, as does using a risk analysis with a whole supply chain to help actors to share risk and establish appropriate safety nets. Evidence is now needed to show how large market actors who have invested in risk prevention, conflict sensitivity and shared risk approaches have reaped the benefit, in order to make the business case to others.
- Entrepreneurship, particularly gender-transformative programmes that build skills and confidence and remove legal barriers, is key to maximising the capacity of individuals and collectives to work through crises where formal employment is unavailable. More research is required to understand the barriers women entrepreneurs face, and how support for them at the micro level can effectively link with larger economic stimulus programmes or job creation initiatives through large firms.

- Women’s economic collectives are powerful advocates for countering violent extremist views that insist on restricted gender roles, but what is the best way of using market development approaches to build more peaceful societies while respecting the value of women’s leadership as a goal in itself?

Recalling the many and varied roles of private sector actors from delivering aid through to independently reacting to crisis, donors, NGOs and entrepreneurs must continue to find new ways of harnessing market forces to support women’s economic resilience, transforming communities and market systems, and saving lives.

Recommendations

Drawing from CARE and others existing work to improve resilience and growth of market systems and to empower women economically, clear lessons can be identified.

ANTICIPATE

1. No intervention is an island. All actors should be using the three A’s framework (anticipate, absorb and adapt) as well as a broad understanding of the market system as a whole to target and link interventions across a crisis and through multiple actors. Humanitarian actors must incorporate market systems thinking into their emergency preparedness planning, with an emphasis on a strong gender lens in their market analysis.
2. Large actors must underwrite the risk with smaller parts of a market system, and should take on responsibility for investing in preventative capacity, including leveraging technology to improve access to information and scenario planning. NGOs should lobby and play a role in conducting the risk analysis and facilitating the discussion between large and small actors in the system.

ABSORB

3. Humanitarian actors should support cash programming accompanied by a deliberate gender transformation strategy and continue to gather data to see how cash translates into greater empowerment. Cash should be linked more deliberately to VSLAs, entrepreneurship approaches and formal financial inclusion efforts to help with the creation and draw-down of assets during crisis.
4. Firms should seek to generate positive social impacts in fragile contexts including examining how their business practices can contribute to building cohesion and stability. As employers, firms must ensure that labour codes are upheld even in periods of instability, including equal pay for women and men. As market actors, large firms should seek to share risk with smaller players in supply chains including using crisis modifiers, protective pricing or extending insurance coverage to help suppliers and customers absorb shocks.

ADAPT

5. Prosperity and economic development strategies should be focused at both the macro and the micro levels, with approaches that seek to address fragility and risk through investment in formal and informal economies in productive sectors. More research is required to understand the right mix of investment in different contexts.
 - a. At the macro level, donors and governments must ensure that job creation initiatives are designed with a gendered lens, supporting the safe, legal and dignified access of women to jobs, including through greater access to work permits.
 - b. Social spending must be accepted as an investment with equal or potentially greater economic returns than capital investment, but with a more positive return for women.
 - c. At the micro level, along with the cash, skills and micro-savings initiatives focused on women’s entrepreneurship in the informal economy, donors and private sector firms should work with women’s collectives to more rapidly expand the power of women in the market system.
 - d. In conflict-prone areas, economic and peace objectives should be developed jointly by policy-makers and considered as two sides of the same coin.

6. Gender norms are in flux during crises. Humanitarian actors, the private sector and donors should act deliberately to support more equal roles for women through longer term support to their businesses and livelihoods, as well as providing platforms to translate economic empowerment into political leadership and decision-making.
7. Political and business leaders should do more to value the economic and social contribution of refugees. Public statements and examples of the economic and social contributions that refugees can make to host communities should be supported with start-up loans, investment and collaboration with the private sector to re-launch businesses lost during crisis, or to allow skilled workers to adapt to host economy job markets.



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