CARE International Strategic Impact Inquiry on Gender in Emergencies: *In brief*

Project Summary

As humanitarian crisis looms ever larger in the global fight against poverty and social injustice, CARE is launching a Strategic Impact Inquiry (SII) on Gender in Emergencies to understand the contributions our work makes (and does not make) to gender equality in crisis-affected communities. This multi-year action-learning inquiry will leverage financial and human resources from across interested CI members and Offices, fostering organization-wide engagement to strengthen our core identity, thought leadership and credibility. This document shares early thinking about the purpose and methods, and is an invitation to contribute to the development of this important effort.

Introduction, Purpose & Goals of the SII on Gender in Emergencies (GiE)

Emergency. Disaster. Crisis. The words evoke fear, devastation, disempowerment – especially for those with the fewest material, social and political resources. With two-thirds of the world's poorest people projected to be living in fragile states by 2030, it is both a strategic and a moral imperative for CARE to promote gender equality in the crucible of humanitarian crisis. As the world scrutinizes - rightly - the ethics and practices of humanitarian organizations, CARE must tap this interest to strengthen the theories and practices that drive this work. We can galvanize our efforts to promote equality in the hardest of contexts, and contribute new insights to the wider field.

Today, CARE is emerging as a leading humanitarian agency known for its particular ability to reach and empower women and girls in emergencies. Yet although CARE's SII on Women's Empowerment and ensuing programmatic work revealed much about the process of gendered social change in our development work, the links between CARE's emergency response and its lasting impacts on gender relations remain unclear. The purpose of an SII is to build clarity from the ground up about the nature and drivers of enduring impact, and about CARE's contribution to it. Consultation with strategy leaders across CARE International over the past year identified strong support for conducting an SII on GiE.
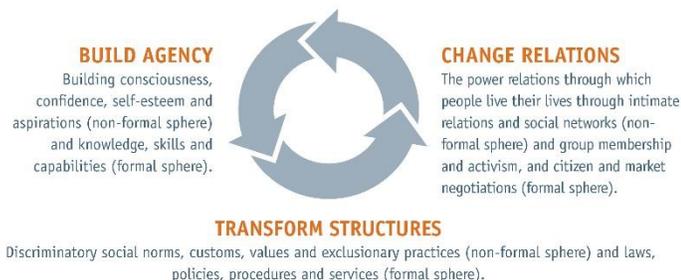
Guiding Research Questions

The SII on GiE organizes inquiry around two central questions designed to improve theory and practice.
- What impacts are CARE's emergency response programs having on gender equality in communities during and in the wake of humanitarian crisis?
- How do CARE's ways of working – our culture, structures, constituencies and accountabilities – lead our crisis interventions to result in higher, or lower, levels of impact on gender equality?

Answering these questions is more than a measurement exercise *– they require us to get clear about what we mean*. They force us to talk about what we are accountable for, with respect to how different kinds of emergency work and engagement with the humanitarian architecture can shape gender relations in the short and long term. They connect results with our organizational culture and systems, and so concern all of CARE - and this SII is an opportunity to clarify our concepts, explore answers, and respond to findings as a stronger, more integrated whole.

CARE'S GENDER EQUALITY FRAMEWORK

BUILD AGENCY
Building consciousness, confidence, self-esteem and aspirations (non-formal sphere) and knowledge, skills and capabilities (formal sphere).

CHANGE RELATIONS
The power relations through which people live their lives through intimate relations and social networks (non-formal sphere) and group membership and activism, and citizen and market negotiations (formal sphere).

TRANSFORM STRUCTURES
Discriminatory social norms, customs, values and exclusionary practices (non-formal sphere) and laws, policies, procedures and services (formal sphere).

Conceptualizing Impact on GiE

The SII on Women's Empowerment (2005-9) established a conceptual framework that guides CARE's gender work today, including its approach to gender in emergencies. The SII on GiE will explore how emergencies play out through the gendered beliefs, capabilities and actions of individuals (agency), the nature and strength of the
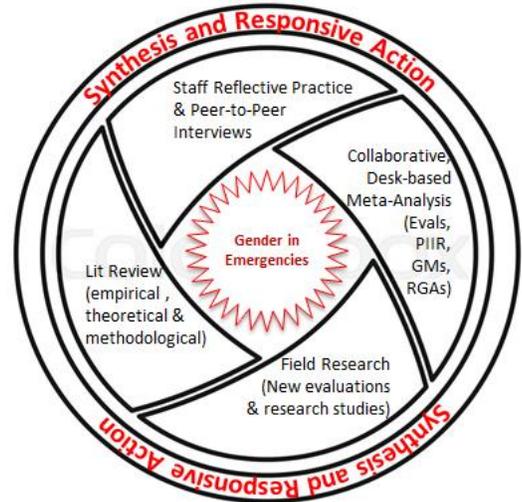
relationships through which individuals negotiate their needs and rights (relations) and the institutions that shape what can be imagined and achieved (structure).

This framework - and the 23 dimensions of change it explores – is the starting point for understanding gendered social change in the context of emergencies. Our thinking may incorporate new possibilities as we build the Global Research Protocol for the SII on GiE; it should shift further as the research and learning unfold. Annex 2 of this document introduces just a few ways this SII on GiE can enrich our ways of imagining and assessing impact, leading CARE to engage more effectively for gender equality in all settings.

Research Methods for Organizational Learning and Change

The SII is best understood as a kind of action research - where those who want to learn shape core concepts, data, analysis and response to findings. Its lens integrates qualitative and quantitative research, using existing data and past studies as appropriate, producing new data and analyses where necessary.

Annex 1 offers a starting point for thinking about methods for the SII. Such methodological diversity and triangulation is a strength of an inquiry designed to learn from multiple ways of knowing and motivate diverse stakeholders to convert insights into action. It is also a necessary response to the emergency context: the vulnerability of community members, the high turnover and operational constraints on response teams, the prioritization of action over analysis, and the resulting scarcity of useful monitoring data. These realities demand methods that are both practically feasible and ethically defensible.
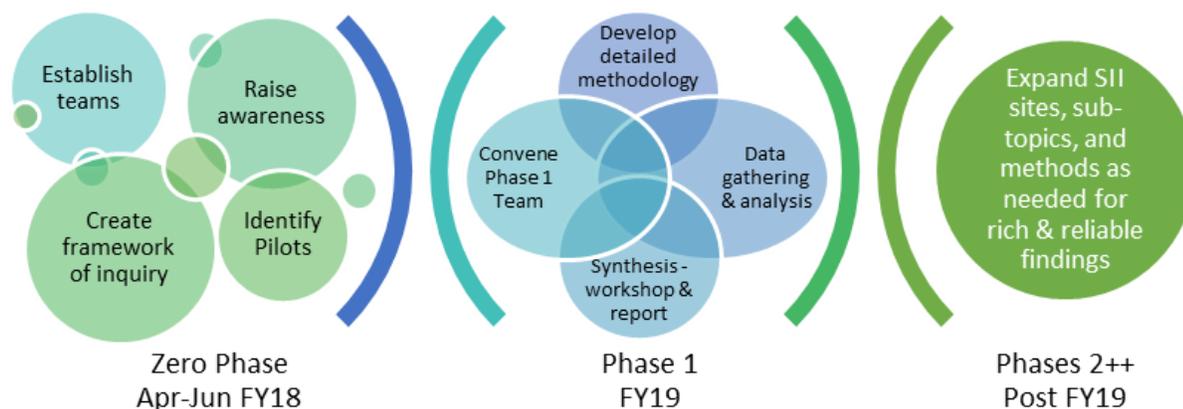

Organizational Commitments Needed

The SII is designed to be collectively shaped and advanced. A coordination team of CARE's gender, emergency response, and MEL staff is consulting scholars, peers and colleagues to build the SII's design and guide its roll-out. But its ultimate success requires senior managers and leaders across CI to make specific commitments to:

- foster curiosity: encourage and join staff and partners in exploring our work's meaning
- commit time: adjust operational plans for SII team members and to support wider staff reflection
- allocate resources: fund SII core costs, seek external funds, and align planned research & evaluations with SII
- be accountable: commit to promoting understanding and response to SII findings in CARE and wider sector

Proposed Timeline and Phases of the SII

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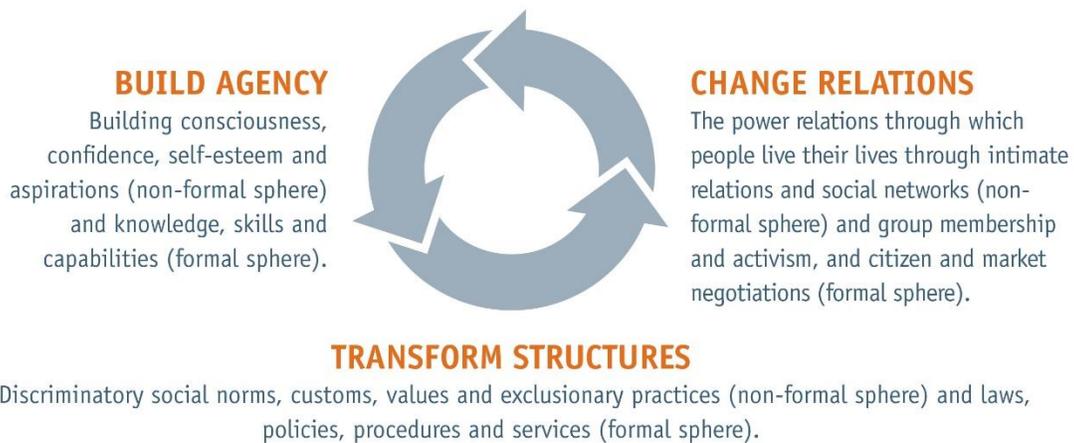
Annex 1: Sample of Proposed Methods

● Brief **literature review** of leading studies on the dynamics of gender in emergencies and on research methods used to study the gendered impact of humanitarian action.

● **Peer-to-peer key informant interviews** promoting inter-office exchange among staff to refine concept of impact for GiE and identify existing, experiential knowledges.

● **Survey of key external stakeholders in the humanitarian and GiE communities**, at global and regional levels, and in the countries where field research is taking place.

● **Meta-analysis of existing program documents** by distributed teams of CARE staff, applying a common analytic framework. Meta-analyses may review evaluation & research reports, emergency program designs, Gender Marker reviews, and Rapid Gender Analysis reports

● **Meta-analysis of PIIRS data**

● **Prospective integration of SII framework in current/future evaluations and after-action reviews.** The SII team may develop guidance to integrate the SII framework into planned and funded evaluation studies and after-action reviews.

● **In-depth field research.** Begin with pilot studies in 2 regions, one focused on natural disaster response and another a response to political conflict. Field research should always ground local research design in **participatory impact dialogues** on the visions of gender justice sought by those served by our emergency response, and over time should include **current response sites in acute or protracted emergencies**, and also **post-response site revisits**, to trace the evolution or reversals of gendered impacts in the transition and recovery period.

Annex 2: Conceptualizing Impact on GiE

The Strategic Impact Inquiry on Women's Empowerment established a conceptual framework that guides CARE's gender work today, including its approach to gender in emergencies. The SII on Gender in Emergencies is guided by CARE's overarching theory that gendered social change plays out through the gendered beliefs, capabilities and actions of individuals (agency), the nature and strength of the relationships through which individuals negotiate their needs and rights (relations) and the institutions that shape what can be imagined and achieved (structure). The original SII explored these three broad domains of change inductively, asking community members, staff and partners what they understood as "women's empowerment," and deductively, measuring change in 23 dimensions tied in the research to gendered power relations.

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This conceptual framework is the starting point for understanding gendered social change in the context of emergencies. Our thinking may incorporate new possibilities as we build the Global Research Protocol for the SII on GiE; it should shift further as the research and learning unfold. The SII on Gender in Emergencies is an opportunity to test and extend our guiding concepts. In addition to revealing **evidence of change** in key dimensions, the SII on GiE can sharpen our understanding of **how that change happens.** In a world that still seeks to frame program impact in terms of attribution and causality, the disrupted emergency setting highlights the complex and dynamic factors shaping an intervention's impacts. CARE has worked to resist oversimplification while striving to identify our **contributions** among the interacting forces driving change. This inquiry will sharpen our analysis of contribution and feedback loops in systems change.

The second relates to **time** - demanding better ways of tracing the long-term gender impacts of humanitarian action. The field has long thought in terms of a "relief-development continuum," but CARE's gender work spans before, during and after the moment of humanitarian crisis. Moreover, the GiE response itself may be to an acute, time-bound emergency or a more protracted crises. For the SII on gender in emergencies, then, the question arises: where does the impact of CARE's GiE work begin and end? In order to avoid reinforcing artificial distinctions between relief and development that impede sustained challenges to the underlying causes of persistent vulnerability, it is worth dedicating careful thought to this question of timeframes for the SII studies.

Rethinking these problems of cause-and-effect and beginnings-and-endings are just two of the ways the SII can help CARE work more effectively through complex moments and constant transitions.