



©CARE/Josh Estey

CARE International

Women's Economic Empowerment Impact Report 2018



1. Women's economic empowerment impact report – summary

What we do

Women still have fewer economic rights, less access to economic opportunities and less control over economic resources than men due to a range of social, legal and political inequalities. Women's economic empowerment (WEE) is first and foremost a human rights issue but is also vital for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, boosts economic growth and is good for everyone due to the unique multiplier effect of women's spending choices.

CARE defines women's economic empowerment as the process by which women increase their rights to access and control economic resources. Our Theory of Change outlines three conditions for WEE: increased **capabilities**, **decision-making** power and an **enabling environment**.

Increasing individual women's capabilities can lead to temporary increases in their economic opportunities and income but their economic **empowerment** can only be achieved through also transforming unequal power relations and discriminatory structures.

CARE focuses on 4 inter-related pathways to achieve women's economic empowerment:

- ▶ **Financial inclusion**
- ▶ **Dignified work**
- ▶ **Women in value chains**
- ▶ **Entrepreneurship**

In addition, CARE has a specific focus on adapting tools from the four pathways to enable **WEE in fragile contexts**.

What we've achieved

Our reach

CARE's reach in WEE is significant. In the 2016-17 financial year, CARE implemented almost **300** projects in **60+** countries, reaching **2.6 million** women who participated in WEE-related activities.

Because of the **multiplier effect** of women's empowerment, **for every woman participant** in CARE's women's economic empowerment activities, **a further 7 people** in her family or community benefit, meaning CARE's WEE programming indirectly reached almost **18 million** women, men, girls and boys.

Our impact

CARE has ambitious impact goals of 30 million women being economically empowered. At the mid-point of the [CARE 2020 Programme Strategy](#), evidence shows we have contributed to the economic empowerment of almost **4.5 million** women. Our analysis shows that:

- ▶ we have had a **significant impact on women's capabilities**, but that this alone is not enough to shift the power relations that are an obstacle to women's economic empowerment
- ▶ we are building a better understanding of **what works in improving women's decision-making power**, but that challenging deeply entrenched structural barriers takes time and requires a range of partnerships
- ▶ we are generating more momentum behind **creating an enabling environment** on targeted issues.

What we've learned

Capability

- ▶ **Through training and skills development** CARE has contributed to positive economic outcomes for women, including increased economic options and increases to women's productivity, income and savings.
- ▶ **When skills and knowledge-based training is combined with soft skills training**, like communication, leadership and negotiating skills, it can lead not only to improved economic outcomes for women but an improved sense of **empowerment** and job satisfaction, and reduced tolerance for gender-based violence.
- ▶ **Training to raise awareness of women's economic rights**, from inheritance/land rights to labour rights – in conjunction with other types of support – has positive impacts on women's awareness of and willingness to fight for their rights and entitlements.

Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) are a particularly effective model that serve as a platform not only for different types of training, beyond basic financial literacy, but also for women to develop self-esteem and confidence and to begin to question gender roles and power relations.

1. Women's economic empowerment impact report – summary

Decision-making

- ▶ **Knowledge does not automatically equal power.** Despite successes in the provision of training leading to increased productivity, income and savings, we see examples of limited impact on household decision-making.
- ▶ **This is in part due to the limitations of current measurement techniques.** We need smarter ways to measure the complex and dynamic relationship between women's capability and household relations.

Programmes that provide spaces for men and women to reflect on gender roles and relations – such as **Family Business Management Training**, **Social Analysis and Action** tools and **Farmer Field Business Schools** – demonstrated positive impacts on decision-making.

- ▶ **Supporting women to organise** can lead to more meaningful participation and leadership by women in decision-making processes.

Models like **VSLAs**, **EKATA groups** and **Community Development Forums** have enabled women to negotiate with their employers, participate in community governance and engage with government.

- ▶ But building a collective voice at the micro level is not enough to **influence the structural barriers to WEE**, which is why CARE 'accompanies' social movements working to achieve change at the macro level.

Enabling environment

- ▶ **Coordinated and targeted advocacy** can lead to increased momentum behind structural changes.

#ThisIsNotWorking is a great example of different parts of CARE coming together to work as part of a larger labour and civil society movement to influence governments and companies to adopt the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention to end violence in the workplace.

- ▶ **But policy must be put into practice** and companies' value chains must be more inclusive for change to be realised.
- ▶ **Creating an enabling environment takes time and partnerships** between a range of actors. NGOs such as CARE, governments, companies, civil society, women's networks and individuals all have a role to play in women's economic empowerment.

An integrated approach across all three conditions – capability, decision-making and enabling environment – is required to achieve genuine and sustainable change.

What next?

Whilst we are very proud of the impact achieved so far, we are re-doubling our efforts over the next few years in line with our vision. We are actively pursuing a number of exciting initiatives to scale-up successful models, innovate to address gaps, and influence the policies and practices of governments and companies in order to multiply our impact. These include:

Impact Growth Strategies

Impact Growth Strategies with a strong focus on women's economic empowerment:

- ▶ **Made by Women:** 8 million women garment workers in Asia are economically empowered by 2021.
- ▶ **Equal Value Equal Rights:** 5 million women domestic workers in Latin America and the Caribbean know and exercise their human and labour rights by 2020.
- ▶ **Women on the Move:** 8 million women are economically and socially empowered in West Africa by 2020.
- ▶ **Her Harvest, Our Future:** transforming the lives of over 10 million people in Southern Africa by 2020.

VSLA scale-up strategy

50 million women and girls are economically and socially empowered through savings groups by 2030.

WEE learning strategy

This report is the first step in sharing best practice and providing WEE practitioners throughout CARE with learning that can further improve impact.