Working for Poverty Reduction and Social Justice:

The CARE 2020 Program Strategy

CARE works in Niger supporting women's economic empowerment. © 2010 Josh Estey/CARE

The strategy's purpose

This program strategy takes shape in a period of tremendous change in the world and within CARE. We are witnessing significant shifts in the patterns of poverty and inequality. In spite of global progress in reducing absolute poverty, wide gaps persist between and within countries.

CARE's vision is of a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security. Based on 70 years of experience in poverty – fighting and humanitarian action, the CARE 2020 Program Strategy describes the changes in the world we want to see and our role in bringing about those changes. The purpose of the strategy is to focus our programs to clarify – both internally and externally – how we will contribute to eliminating poverty and social injustice. This strategy is part of a broader transformational change process in CARE, where all parts of the organization are expected to prioritize programs and investments in line with this strategy, including focusing our resources, capacities and experience for maximizing impact.

The injustice of poverty

At its root, poverty is caused by **unequal power relations** that result in the inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities between women and men, between power-holders and marginalized communities, and between countries. CARE believes that poverty cannot be overcome without addressing those underlying power imbalances.

> *"Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice."*
>
> Nelson Mandela

Globally, of the 1.2 billion people that live in absolute poverty, the majority are women and girls. Over a quarter of a million women die each year from largely preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. On average, greater numbers of women and girls die during and after natural disasters than men, and in situations of conflict or political unrest, they are extremely vulnerable to sexual violence. Women play critical roles in food production and preparation, but in many cultures they consume the poorest quality food and are the first to face hunger when food is scarce. In Africa, despite contributing a large share of agricultural labor, women own just 1% of agricultural land and have less say than men over decisions and less control over household resources.

The data speaks for itself: poverty-fighting and humanitarian action programs need to place a special focus on empowering women and girls. Without such an approach, any programs that set out to fight poverty will be short-lived and unsuccessful. Addressing the social inequality that underlies poverty, especially **gender inequality**, is indispensable for making a significant impact on poverty.

Together with gender inequality, we recognize **humanitarian crises** – including conflict, disasters and situations of chronic insecurity and vulnerability – as both cause and effect of poverty and a major cause of injustice and insecurity in the world. The impact and frequency of these crises is rising due to climate change, environmental degradation, political fragility, conflict, population growth and urbanization. Principled humanitarian action to save lives and help communities recover and grow more resilient is both a response to basic human rights, to protect the dignity and security of all people, and a pre-requisite to assuring sustainable gains in poverty reduction.

CARE Peru works with communities to increase their food and nutrition security and their resilience to climate change. © 2014 Erin Lubin/CARE

One of the greatest inequalities of our time is reflected in the causes and consequences of **climate change**, which threatens the livelihoods of billions of people and poses major new challenges for feeding a growing world population. The world's poorest and most vulnerable, who are least responsible for causing climate change, will unfairly continue to bear the brunt of its impacts. This is an extreme global injustice. If the global community fails to take action, the consequences for humanity, both in regard to food and nutrition security, and more broadly, will be devastating.

Inequality, power imbalances and climate change are also worsening the impacts of the following key trends, which further exacerbate poverty and vulnerability:

- **Rising food insecurity.** Feeding and nourishing a growing population in the face of climate change will be one of the defining challenges of the 21st century; 600 million additional people could be at risk of hunger by 2080 as a direct result of climate change.

- **Growing concentration of poverty in middle income countries.** The distribution of poverty is changing as a growing proportion of the extreme poor live in middle income countries (MICs). Today, 72% of the poor live in MICs. While MICs show high economic growth, they also hide deep and increasing inequality.

- **Continued population growth and urbanization.** The world population of 7.2 billion in 2014 is projected to increase by almost one billion people within the next 12 years; virtually all of this growth is in developing countries. The world population is also increasingly urban with more than half of it living in and around cities. By 2050, this figure is projected to rise to 75%. Given current highly unequal and unsustainable resource use in the world – where a child born in the United States will be responsible for more than 160 times the carbon emissions of a child born in Bangladesh – population growth is leading to critical strains on the natural environment and our ability to provide essential services.

Other current conditions also have important impacts. The **private sector** is increasingly a major player for development and international trade flows, and global supply chains are among their central concerns. While the growing role of the private sector brings new resources to tackling poverty, it also poses significant challenges. It is essential to ensure that poor people benefit economically, socially and environmentally from economic growth. There are also **major changes in traditional development aid**, such as a movement away from an exclusive north-funds-south model to creating more opportunities for south-to-south development cooperation and new types of partnerships and fundraising from emerging middle classes in the developing world. Major traditional donors in the Global North are reducing their aid budgets, with a growing focus on the poorest countries and fragile states. Today, technology is revolutionizing many aspects of aid and development work: important developments include the use of mobile phones, smartphones and tablets to generate, disseminate and receive real-time data. Social media has also made it possible to experiment with new forms of engaging the public in the fight against poverty and social injustice.

Our response: CARE's strategy

WHAT WE DO

CARE plays three roles for impacting on poverty and social injustice in our efforts to achieve lasting impact at scale and promote inclusive development. Working with our partners, we use effective models and approaches to support the most marginalized communities to overcome poverty, social injustice and humanitarian crises. We then use and apply the evidence and learning of our programs to influence broader change and to scale up effective solutions:

1. **Humanitarian action.** In emergencies, we respond to save lives, with special attention to the needs of women and girls and the most marginalized. Our humanitarian action includes preparedness and early action, emergency response and recovery, and encourages future resilience and equitable development.

2. **Promoting lasting change and innovative solutions.** CARE and our partners trigger innovative solutions for sustainable development through supporting new ways of supplying or strengthening essential service delivery, building capacities, building resilience for reducing risk, and empowering the most vulnerable, particularly women and girls. They

are based on a deep, historical understanding of the drivers of poverty and social injustice in a particular context and tailored to the needs of the most marginalized. We have a special focus in the areas of rights to sexual and reproductive health; to a life free of violence; to food and nutrition security; and women's economic empowerment. The evidence and learning from these programs is essential for our third role, which amplifies our impact.

3. **Multiplying impact.** All our work seeks to impact in and beyond the communities in which we directly work. Together with our partners we use the evidence, learning and innovation from our humanitarian action and long-term development programs to influence broader social change, at significant scale. It is through this role that CARE can contribute to deeper and sustainable impact by documenting successful models, leveraging knowledge, advocating for replication and expansion of proven approaches, promoting pro-poor solutions, influencing power holders at all levels to change their policies and practices, and convening and brokering linkages between actors.

In all three roles, CARE works in **partnership** with a wide range of actors from civil society, government and the private sector. Each of these sectors has a critical and complementary role to play. Given CARE's expertise and knowledge, we aim to be the partner of choice for governments, civil society organzations, social movements, the private sector and donors who seek long-term solutions for fighting poverty and social injustice.

THE CARE APPROACH

Based on CARE's depth of experience from 70 years of poverty-fighting and humanitarian action, our analysis of the strategies that drive positive change and our full commitment to addressing the most important factors inhibiting the fulfillment of rights – especially those of women and girls – we have defined an overarching approach for all our programs: **to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice and to bring lasting change to the lives of poor and vulnerable people.** It means that the focus of our actions will be determined from analyzing the underlying causes of poverty and drivers of change at all levels. This leads us to identify the most impactful level and course of action in line with CARE's vision and expertise,

CARE provides assistance to people displaced by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
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alongside our partners and allies. This is the foundation for all of our work across the three roles above — humanitarian action, sustainable development and multiplying impact. We prioritize the following ways of addressing the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice:

- **Strengthening gender equality and women's voice.** Based on CARE's own experience and global evidence, we recognize that addressing gender inequality and women's empowerment is an effective strategy for reducing poverty and tackling social injustice. This focus also stems from a firm commitment to the right of all people to live free of poverty. CARE promotes the empowerment of women and girls, and engages with men and boys, to transform unequal power relations and address gender inequality, including gender-based violence. We have a particular emphasis on strengthening the voice of women and girls and enabling them to effectively participate in and influence the decisions that affect their lives. With our partners, we will also be a strong voice at the international level on the importance of women's and girls' participation.

- **Promoting inclusive governance.** We promote good governance in three key areas of change: a) empowering poor people to know and act on their rights and represent their interests; b) influencing those in power, such as governments, traditional leaders and the private sector, to be more responsible, responsive and accountable; and c) brokering linkages and convening spaces which enable effective and inclusive relations and negotiation between the two.

- **Increasing resilience.** In a context of increased unpredictability from climate change, disasters and conflict, CARE strengthens poor people's capacity to absorb and adapt to shocks, manage growing risks, address underlying causes of vulnerability and transform their lives in response to new hazards and opportunities. A focus on strengthening resilience enables CARE to better integrate its humanitarian, disaster risk reduction, social protection, climate change adaptation, natural resource management and other development actions. When communities are resilient the chances of moving out of poverty in the face of worsening shocks and an uncertain future climate are greatly enhanced.

We commit to assessing the extent to which we address the underlying causes of poverty through our programs, analyzing their impact and reorienting our actions where required.

OUR IMPACT BY 2020

Our expected impact by 2020 outlines the changes that we would like to see in the world and where we can add the most significant value, given our identity and experience. By playing our key roles and applying our approach in all programs, CARE will support the following impacts:

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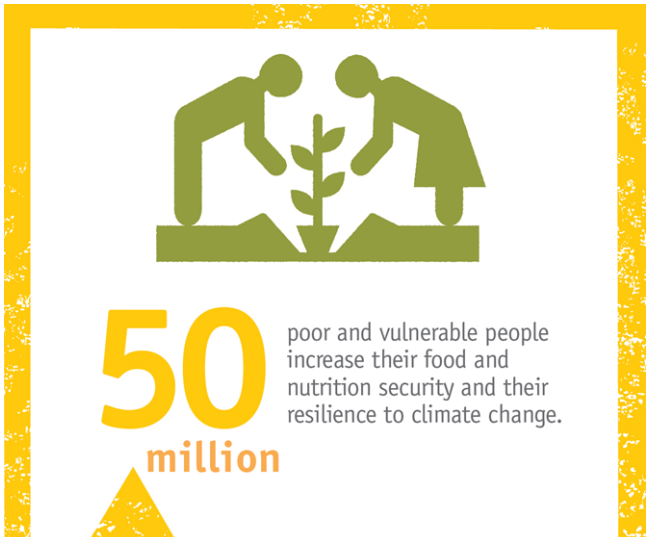
By 2020, CARE and our partners will support 150 million people from the most vulnerable and excluded communities to overcome poverty and social injustice.

We commit to these specific outcomes by 2020:

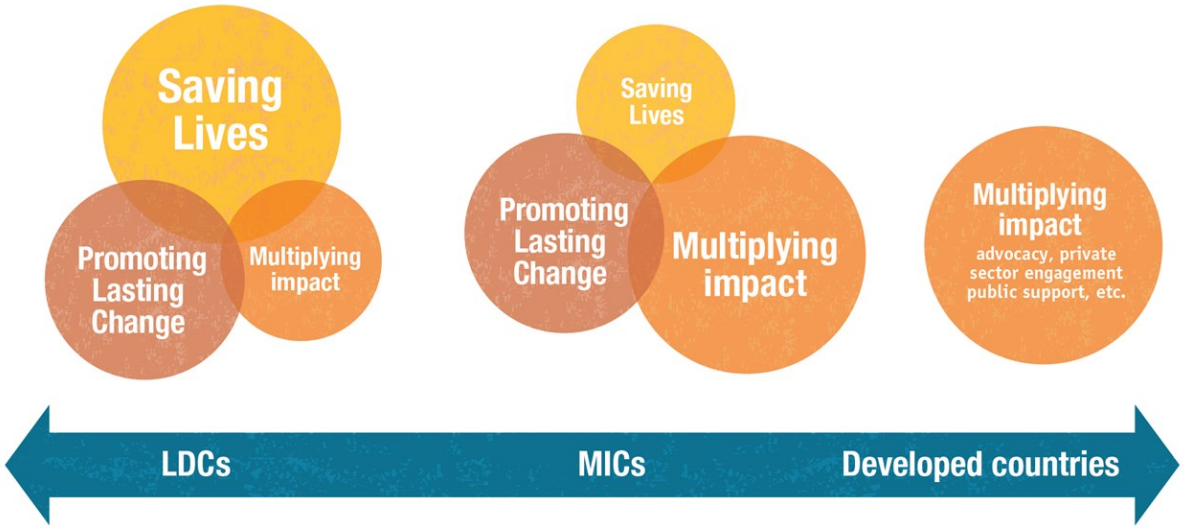


WHERE WE WORK

CARE works in least developed countries (LDCs), fragile states, MICs and countries affected by crises and disasters, as well as in developed countries. At the same time, we recognize that we need to align our presence to reflect the levels of resources available and our added value in specific contexts. It takes meaningful resources, invested in a sustained way over time, to deliver on the approach described above and implement effective programs that can contribute to impact at significant scale. In order to be able to make the levels of investment that will be needed to realize our vision and desired impact, CARE needs to continually evaluate its presence in specific countries. This strategy proposes to:

- Have CARE's largest physical presence in LDCs and in fragile states.
- Adjust our presence in MICs based on the following criteria: a) the number of poor people living in a particular MIC; b) our ability to play the multiplier role; c) CARE's experience, networks, partnerships and constituencies in the country; and d) the potential of tapping into new opportunities and resources for impacting on poverty and resourcing poverty-fighting programs.
- Review our presence and role in developed countries to support the vision, desired impact and the roles we seek to play, in particular regarding our advocacy and fundraising goals.
- Gradually develop a greater focus on urban areas in our poverty-fighting programs.

CARE's program roles in LDCs, MICs and developed countries.



The distribution is illustrative of roles in different types of countries; they will vary depending on the context and over time. For example, in fragile MICs, saving lives may become a larger focus and in stable LDCs, promoting lasting change may be the primary role.

HOW WE WILL IMPLEMENT THE STRATEGY

The CARE 2020 Program Strategy is a fundamental aspect of CARE's transformational change. By working together through programs which are more focused and outcome-oriented, and drawing more effectively on our comparative strengths and knowledge, CARE will achieve greater relevance and impact.

Several changes are required in order to successfully implement this strategy and to prioritize internal investment and reform. The detailed implementation plan carefully sequences actions, ensuring they systematically build CARE's strengths over time. Some key areas include strengthening partners and supporters, especially from the global South; amplifying our reach through public engagement; growing unrestricted revenues and those from institutional and private donors; resourcing our humanitarian strategy to respond to emergencies with appropriate speed, scale and quality; establishing systems and processes that assure program coherence, cost-effectiveness and quality; and focusing our work on fewer countries, to ensure an adequate level of resourcing can be met.

The strategy also requires strengthening CARE's capabilities and expertise in specific areas, namely:

- **World-class expertise in priority areas.** For achieving significant impacts, we commit to consolidating and increasing our expertise in humanitarian action, gender equality, governance, resilience and climate change, women's economic empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and food and nutrition security.

- **Advocacy, impact measurement, knowledge management and learning.** Significant improvements are needed in these areas for making substantial advances in program quality, for accounting for CARE's results and for increasing our impact.

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CARE India's programs focus on the empowerment of women and girls. © 2013 Josh Estey/CARE

Accountability

The CARE 2020 Program Strategy guides the decisions and investments of all parts of CARE and in doing so provides **the focus, identity and impact which binds us** and which makes our efforts as powerful as possible. All programming must be consistent with the roles and approaches outlined in this strategy. Decisions by CARE members on resource investments and fundraising will be aligned closely with this strategy.

Systems will be developed and implemented to monitor accountability for the implementation of and alignment with this strategy. This will include agreement on a performance monitoring system for tracking and reporting as well as reviews by peers, partners and participants. The new global structure and culture of CARE must be oriented towards ensuring the implementation of this strategy at all levels.

Conclusion

In the introduction to this document, we noted that this program strategy takes shape in a period of tremendous change in the world and within CARE. This requires that we adapt our thinking and our programs to meet the needs those changes present. The shared vision put forth in this strategy encompasses CARE's knowledge, expertise and adaptability to those changes in order to enhance our effectiveness in fighting poverty and social injustice. This is our fundamental call to action, the reason for our being and the cause to which we have committed ourselves. This plan harnesses the expertise of our staff worldwide, providing a singular focus and path forward. It is our blueprint for CARE's future for working for a world free from poverty and injustice.

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