



**GIRLS' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN ACTION:**  
CARE's Experience from the Field



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE







**AUTHORS:**

**Joyce Adolwa**

**Camber Brand**

**Ginny Kintz**

**Lotte Renault**

**Catherine Toth**

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## Foreword

As the leaders of CARE and the Girl Scouts of the USA, two organizations that work to empower girls and women around the world, we recognize that cultivating leadership skills in adolescent girls is a critical step to ensuring they succeed and excel throughout their lives. Girls need a foundation of knowledge, skills and experiences to gain control over their lives, better articulate their needs, protect their personal assets, participate in community development decisions and shape their futures. They can truly become leaders when they discover what matters to them, connect with others to achieve their vision and, finally, take action. But they can't do it alone. Girls need access to equitable quality education, safe spaces and welcoming communities that support and encourage their growth and development. We believe that ensuring girls have trusted adults in their lives, supportive communities, and the time and space to learn and play is critical to their success as individuals and as leaders.

CARE and the Girl Scouts both work in over 80 countries around the world. Our organizations bring more than 165 years of combined experience in helping girls become leaders and ensuring that their families and communities welcome them in doing so.

The Girl Scouts of the USA and CARE most certainly share the same conviction: When a girl succeeds, so does society. An investment in a girl is an investment in our future—our global future.

Helene Gayle  
*President and CEO*  
CARE USA

Anna Maria Chávez  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Girl Scouts of the USA



## Girls' Leadership Development in ACTION

CARE applauds the tremendous global gains made in enrolling and retaining girls in school. Yet, as stated in our 2009 publication *The Power to Lead: A Leadership Model for Adolescent Girls*<sup>i</sup>, we believed that the greatest remaining obstacles to girls' education were not a lack of schools or teachers, but the low social status in which girls are held.<sup>ii</sup> We set forth the case that the considerable benefits of girls' education could be sustained, deepened and multiplied if integrated with deliberate efforts to address and alter girls' social status. CARE proposed doing so by cultivating leadership skills in adolescent girls and supportive changes in behaviors, customs and policies in the societies around them, and developed the *Girls' Leadership Model* to guide those efforts.

The *Girls' Leadership Development in Action* paper that you are reading now is the next chapter of the story. CARE has made an explicit commitment to adolescent girls in dozens of countries, commensurate with their "importance as contributors to the achievement of social and economic goals,"<sup>iii</sup> and because this marginalized segment of the human population deserves no less. CARE staff and partners have tested our *Girls' Leadership Model* in 28 countries, reaching hundreds of thousands of girls and boys. We have monitored and evaluated our work and its outcomes, and refined our approaches with and on behalf of adolescent girls. Above all, CARE has continued to learn from the girls with whom we work: from their considerable intelligence, wit and talent; their drive, plans and aspirations—in short, from their humanity.

What can CARE confirm so far? Given opportunity, support and resources, adolescent girls can challenge and overcome many of the limitations that are imposed upon them. CARE's leadership projects and accompanying research—the topic of this paper—demonstrate girls' keen ability to influence the people around them and to work with and be heard by the guardians of traditional notions of appropriate behaviors and spheres of action for girls. Adolescents can and do alter those notions, in their own and others' minds. They actively define their lives and interests, and expand the spheres of activity and influence available to them. At the same time, others who are influential in society can (and indeed must) analyze and reshape the attitudes, norms and ultimately behaviors that limit girls' opportunities and contributions, and that relegate girls to a status in which they are objects of exploitation or protection, rather than individuals with human rights.

In this *Girls' Leadership Development in Action* paper, CARE draws on our extensive fieldwork and research—and that of our partners—to demonstrate that building girls' leadership skills and helping power-holders, fathers, mothers and boys to reassess the social value assigned to girls, can lead to nothing less than the empowerment of girls.

## CARE's Girls' Leadership Projects "AT A GLANCE"

Aïsha is from a poor family in the remote Yemeni village of Al Dahr. Like other girls there, Aïsha and her four sisters contribute to their family's livelihood by cleaning, collecting water, gathering firewood and herding goats. And like other girls in conservative communities, their lives are bound by traditions that include seclusion in the home and early marriage.

Yet Aïsha has gone further in her education than might once have been possible for a girl – in part thanks to her participation in a CARE girls' leadership project. She's currently a 10th-grade student at the Beit al Rabooie School, a four kilometer walk from her home, in a class with six other girls.

Before her involvement, Aïsha was a shy girl who could focus on little else besides her domestic responsibilities. Now, having completed leadership training and several extracurricular activities such as youth club, games and sports, she is proud and self-confident. And she is passionate about education. She attended a literacy teacher training and now leads a daily literacy class for 14 women in her village. She will soon run the village library.

With the support of the leadership project, Aïsha wrote a letter to the government of Hajjah governorate, requesting a regulatory change so more girls like her could get an education: *We are rural girls, Aïsha wrote, who live in society and lack many necessary things which should be there. Electricity and water, for example. [As for] education, the school building is poor, and we don't have incentives to further our studies. We also lack female teachers and there is much unemployment in our area. Please [reduce licensing requirements and] accept high school graduates to become teachers in Bani Qa'is District.*

The letter was printed in the governorate newspaper. Education officials are considering her proposal and expressed pride that Aïsha had the confidence and courage to advocate for her idea, something few young people in her community have undertaken in the past.

**Each of the girls' leadership projects that CARE implements is designed to meet the needs and concerns of adolescent girls in their specific social and cultural environments. That said, the projects are similar at their core, and each includes activities across three domains:**

### **DOMAIN 1. GIRLS GAIN AND RETAIN ACCESS TO EQUITABLE, QUALITY EDUCATION**

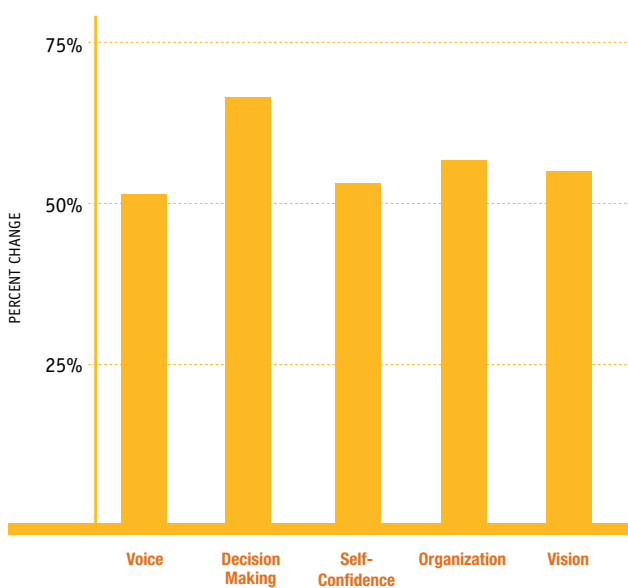
CARE and our partners have long worked to ensure that all children have access to primary education of good quality, and that girls and boys are equally valued in the classroom. Our leadership projects typically build upon former or ongoing CARE education programs that offer innovative teacher training, create gender transformative learning models, promote child-centered teaching methods, make schools safer for girls, make school management more responsive, and develop innovative ways to serve girls who never enrolled, started late, or dropped out of school. As needed, our girls' leadership projects continue or supplement this work by providing teacher training, curriculum revisions, or gender training for school staff and parent-teacher associations. CARE and local partners work continuously to gain and retain community acceptance of girls' schooling and, by extension, their participation in school-based leadership activities.

*In Honduras, CARE's leadership project is active in urban neighborhoods notorious for their poverty and violence. The daunting environment cannot prevent girls like 12-year-old Maria Ruiz Lanza from shining. "I used to be very shy, but now I talk to others. I believe in myself, and I say what I think. I'm more responsible with my assignments at school, too. When the teacher asks a question about any topic, I reply. I'm even a tutor to my classmates, and I try to be very patient...I like to teach children because they are our future. We need to show them the right way for our country's future, and this right way is through a better education. I want to support my family financially [and] help them live in a better place, without gangs."*

## DOMAIN 2. GIRLS CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES THROUGH SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Girls in CARE projects acquire and practice five essential leadership competencies—voice to express their own opinions, decision-making, self-confidence, organization and vision—via a slate of extracurricular activities that they help design. These typically include sports, arts and drama, life skills training, technology clubs, school governments and youth councils, civic and environmental clubs, debate and academic teams, music, field trips and scouting. The graphic below shows the high percentage of Yemeni girls who demonstrated positive change in the five essential leadership competencies, as measured by CARE’s *Girls’ Leadership Index*,<sup>1</sup> after participating in a project that fostered community support for girls, offered them an array of extracurricular activities, and ensured their access to equitable education. The changes these girls made from project baseline to project end—in a remote region of Yemen—illustrate their tremendous potential.

### Percentage of Girls Demonstrating Positive Change in Leadership Competencies from Baseline to Present in Yemen



With ongoing guidance from teachers and volunteers trained by CARE, girls in Yemen and in 27 other countries are putting the leadership competencies to use by taking action on issues of their choice—from village sanitation to child marriage, from student governance to sexual violence—often building coalitions and alliances with other social actors for mutual support, greater voice, and/or access to resources.

*In Bangladesh, 13-year-old Orpita considered dropping out of school because a boy harassed her daily as she walked to class. In the company of several friends, Orpita asked the boy to stop. When he did not, the girls went to the boy’s parents and demanded their action. CARE’s interventions in this area focused on getting parents to take responsibility for stopping the harassment of girls. Since then, Orpita goes to and from school in peace. She attributes her action to participation in the girls’ leadership project: “I can raise my voice against [harassment] and child marriage,” she says. “My self-confidence has increased and I am aware of my rights.”*

## DOMAIN 3. FOSTERING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GIRLS’ RIGHTS

CARE helps ensure that girls’ leadership gains can survive setbacks and backlash, by promoting long-term changes in the social and cultural environment around them. Our projects help community influencers—parents, boys, leaders of all types—analyze prevailing attitudes and behaviors towards girls, and make new choices that support girls as they gain and use leadership competencies. Our staff raise awareness on gender and social norms, help people understand harmful traditions, and guide communities to develop mechanisms and alliances to enact new behaviors. This work helps recast girls not as objects of protection or exploitation, but as rights-bearing individuals who have much to contribute to their communities and societies.

*In rural Tanzania, Sekelaga credits her participation in a CARE project with helping her gain confidence, become a scout leader among her peers, and aspire to someday be a member of parliament. But she also sees shifts in the environment around her. “The attitude of the community towards girls is changing,” Sekelaga says. “We are now valued and respected more. Before, we couldn’t sit next to boys even when we were in class. But now, we interact freely. Some boys have even encouraged me to work harder and they say that I can do it.”*

<sup>1</sup> CARE’s Girls’ Leadership Index measures changes in girls’ perceptions of themselves as leaders. Since its initial use, this tool has been revised and tested to measure changes in both girls and boys. This revised tool is CARE’s Youth Leadership Index. For the purpose of this paper we refer to the data collected from the original tool, the Girls’ Leadership Index.

## In This Paper

This paper begins with a brief look back, to the period several years ago when CARE conducted a process of reflection on global lessons learned on the importance of girls' education, then applied the concepts of our framework for women's empowerment to the crucial issues that adolescent girls face. Extensive consultation and research helped us refine our leadership model and led CARE to emphasize girls' leadership development in addition to education as a robust vehicle for girls' empowerment. Our ***Girls' Leadership Model*** took shape.

**From Action  
to Theory**  
Page 1

Next, we discuss how CARE put the ***Girls' Leadership Model*** to the test, by re-orienting existing projects and designing new projects to achieve the change we seek: adolescent girls capable of acting, alone and in coalition with others, to realize their human rights in an environment that supports them to do so.

**From Theory  
to Action**  
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The paper proceeds to a discussion of the results of our girls' leadership projects, presenting qualitative and quantitative outcomes according to the ***Girls' Leadership Model's*** three domains:

**Results of CARE's Girls'  
Leadership Projects**  
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### **GIRLS ACCESS QUALITY, EQUITABLE EDUCATION**

Leadership projects improve girls' academic performance, help shift parental attitudes about girls' education, and support girls' demands for educational quality and equity.

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### **GIRLS CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES THROUGH SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**

As adolescent girls gain skills and competencies, they begin to see themselves as leaders—as do the communities around them.

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### **FOSTERING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GIRLS' RIGHTS**

As girls take action for their own interests and rights, others in their environment bear the responsibility to uphold those rights. CARE's programs guide men, women and boys to evaluate and make informed choices about harmful gender norms—and their role in changing them. CARE also builds the capacity of implementing partners in every country to support ongoing social change.

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Finally, we reflect on what our girls' leadership projects are teaching us, and how we will carry these lessons into future work for and with adolescent girls.

- Building leadership on a foundation of education is the right choice, although school systems should not be the sole partners in leadership projects.
- Boys and men must be deliberately involved, from the beginning, in girls' leadership projects.
- Girls make rapid gains in leadership skills, and participate avidly in leadership activities of their choice when introduced to leadership projects.
- Changing social norms, attitudes and behaviors to support girls' rights is the more complex, time-consuming challenge. Without these changes, however, girls will not be empowered.

**What Girls'  
Leadership  
Development  
Projects Are  
Teaching Us**  
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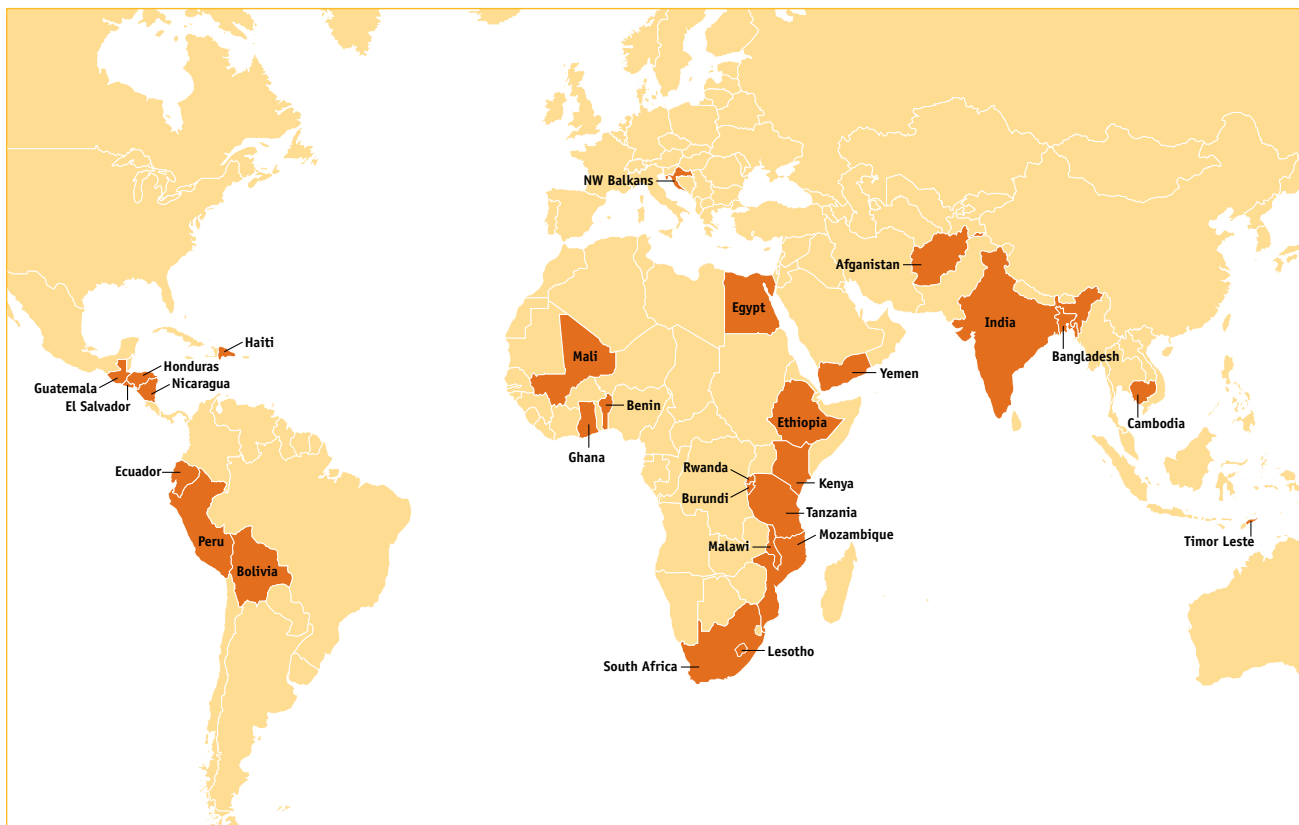
## Acknowledgements

CARE thanks the organizations and donors that make our work with marginalized adolescents possible. Special recognition goes to USAID for its support, both financial and technical, of the Power to Lead Alliance (PTLA) and Innovation Through Sports: Promoting Leaders, Empowering Youth (ITSPLEY) projects, which provided the foundation of data and learning for this document.

The Sports for Social Change Network partners in East Africa provided valuable technical support. In addition, we thank our donors for their generous support and for being champions of adolescent girls' rights. We are especially grateful to: USAID's Global Development Alliance, Nike Inc., Priscilla Bullitt Collins' Remainder UniTrust, Merck, Elma Foundation, Dubai Cares, Trehan Foundation, Sunbridge Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Credit Suisse.

Finally, we recognize the girls and boys throughout the developing world whose courage and strength inspire us to defend dignity and fight poverty.

## GIRLS' LEADERSHIP MODEL IN ACTION IN 28 COUNTRIES



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In our work with adolescent girls, CARE's aim is nothing less than empowerment. CARE defines an empowered girl as an active learner in school and a confident actor in her family and community. She has an expansive view of her possibilities, and lives in a community that expects fairness, where peers, parents and role models support her progress and her goals—indeed, her rights.

In this section, CARE presents our argument that education is an essential element of girls' empowerment, but that empowerment cannot result from education alone.

## Girls' Education is Crucial for Empowerment...

Every discussion of overcoming poverty requires an acknowledgment of education as a basic human right and as an important driver of social and economic development. Education plays a foundational role in building girls' and women's capacities to improve their own lives. Evidence shows that basic education for girls is the highest-yielding development investment that poor nations typically make.<sup>iv</sup> Girls who complete primary school generally enjoy better outcomes in future income, health, motherhood and civic participation. In other words, girls are able to carry some of the advantages of their education into their adult lives, and positively affect their own and others' well-being.<sup>2,v,vi</sup>

Encouraged by the growing body of evidence of education's power, and especially by the 1990 *World Conference on Education for All*, CARE made education a priority development initiative in 1994. In the ensuing years, our education work in thousands of communities in dozens of countries has evolved alongside our evolving conceptual

<sup>2</sup> Investment in education also leads to national prosperity—and even peace. Global evidence shows that male and female citizens of the world's most equitable societies—by measures of schooling, health, economic and political participation—are on average wealthier, healthier and better educated than in countries where women are most marginalized. Gender inequity, by contrast, tends to slow economic growth and make the rise from poverty even more difficult. And dollars spent on education may yield a higher return in peace and security than the equivalent military spending, per UNESCO.

approach to the complex phenomenon of poverty—and education’s part in poverty’s eradication. Thus CARE’s education programming today encompasses multiple types of interventions, including community support for all children’s enrollment and retention in school; quality education that promotes active learning; and equitable curricula and learning environments in which girls and boys are equally valued.

## ...but Education Alone is Insufficient

CARE is thus in a position to observe that enrolling and retaining girls in school, and even ensuring that their education is equitable and of good quality, is not enough. As powerful as the advantages of educating girls are, they are insufficient to achieve empowerment. In fact, CARE’s stance is that it is unjust to expect girls to make the difficult journey to empowerment if we focus solely on their formal education. Consider:

- In regions such as Latin America, more girls than boys are enrolled in secondary school, and in fact girls are outperforming boys in spite of their heavy workloads at home. Yet a recent study from **Central America** suggests that these academic gains are not matched by gains in equality, either in school or society. Most girls are not transitioning into jobs or university; indeed, they are experiencing teenage pregnancy and gender-based violence at alarming rates.<sup>vii</sup> Girls’ presence and even performance in school does not translate into an ability to control their own lives, nor to changes in the societies around them.
- While the world has made significant advances in girls’ parity in primary school—globally, 52 percent of girls are not participating in primary school education and only 48 percent of girls are enrolled in primary school as reported by UNESCO, UN Population Division—too many girls never make it to or through these crucial years of basic education.
- Secondary school-aged girls are three times more likely to be out of school than their male counterparts.<sup>viii</sup> In other words, despite having a primary education, these girls are unable to negotiate the transition to secondary school. They may not see the value of continuing in school, or know of any girls who have. Their families and communities may consider that girls of this age belong at home, in the fields or even in wedlock.
- Child marriage remains a common fate for many girls, especially those in rural areas and from the poorest of families. Three-quarters of girls in **Niger** and the **Democratic Republic of Congo** are married before they turn 18; the same is true of half of girls in **India, Afghanistan** and **Bangladesh**. The United Nations clarifies, “It is no coincidence that the same countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East that have high rates of child marriage are those with high poverty rates, birth rates and death rates; greater incidence of conflict and civil strife; and lower levels of overall development, including schooling, employment [and] health care.”<sup>ix</sup> Despite available opportunities for education, many girls are not given the choice to remain in school by their families, and are pressured to marry young, for a variety of economic, social and security factors. In many places it is a simple fact that a girl’s marriage may have more economic value to her family than her education does.

**“Now I can express my ideas. But I still have no opportunity to do so, because no one is interested in hearing a girl’s ideas.” Leadership Project Participant, Egypt**

## What CARE Means by Gender

For CARE, ensuring girls’ access to a quality, equitable education is the first step towards empowerment and a rise out of poverty. However, we understand poverty as the result not only of absent assets, skills and knowledge, which education can go a long way to overcome, but also of the social, cultural, political and economic systems that prevent some people—above all women and girls—from participating in the decisions that shape their lives. The gains that poor individuals make in knowledge, education, health or economic security risk being

temporary and reversible unless there are deeper changes in the ways that any given society allocates resources and opportunities among its members—that is, changes to the social norms including rigid gender norms that limit choices and opportunities.<sup>3,x</sup>

While sex refers to biological maleness or femaleness, by the presence of XY or XX chromosomes, gender refers to the social, cultural and economic attributes and opportunities that human societies attach to being a man or a woman.<sup>4,xii</sup> Gender heavily influences roles, status, aspirations, spheres of influence, and power for men and women, boys and girls, in any given society. Because gendered social norms are applied and learned from the moment of birth, gender differences can seem as much a part of the natural order as sex differences. Yet gender norms profoundly circumscribe the lives that females and males can aspire to live. For females especially, gender differences—not sex differences—translate to poverty and lack of power,<sup>5</sup> and prevent women and girls from fully contributing to and thriving in their societies. Gender divisions remain at the heart of some of our most resistant development challenges. Quite simply, gender inequality is central to the problem of poverty.

CARE defines **women's empowerment** as the sum total of changes needed for a woman to realize her full human rights. Empowering women and girls is essential to achieving **gender equality**, where females and males have equal enjoyment of their rights, resources, opportunities, and benefits. If women are to be empowered, they must gain new skills and knowledge. But this alone is insufficient. CARE, our partners and especially the communities where we work must also (a) support new alliances through which women can amplify the effects of their individual change, and (b) analyze and alter the formal and informal rules, including gender norms, which exclude most girls and women from power or from the authority to manage their own lives.

Our women's empowerment framework, drawn from academic theory and tested by CARE research and experience in scores of countries around the world, clarifies that empowerment requires change in three domains: **Agency** refers to the aspirations, resources, capabilities, attitudes and achievements of women themselves. **Structures** are produced by people but, once produced and normalized, they condition women's choices and chances and they range from policies and laws to unwritten rules. **Relationships** are the power relations through which women must negotiate their paths in life.

## Girls' Leadership Model

CARE sought to apply the concepts of our women's empowerment framework to the crucial period of young adolescence. As stated above, for girls in this age group, educational gains alone do not lead to empowerment. To echo the language of our women's empowerment framework, CARE acknowledged education's value in promoting agency change. We then asked: how can our projects help adolescents leverage the benefits of education, and guide families, communities and governments to re-think the opportunities and roles available to girls? How can these changes then accrue toward girls' futures as empowered women?

Adolescent girls (aged 10 to 14) are at the center of CARE's **Girls' Leadership Model** for several reasons. These crucial years span puberty, and physically signal the end of girlhood. While in many cultures, boys' adolescence means greater possibilities and a broadening world, for girls the abrupt transition to womanhood often means restrictions on physical

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<sup>3</sup> Simply defined, social norms refer collectively to the socially shared definitions of the way people should behave, based on their sex, sociocultural, economic and political standing in society. Gender norms are one type of social norm.

<sup>4</sup> CARE draws from multiple academic sources to frame our work in gender and empowerment, including the Strategic Impact Inquiry.

<sup>5</sup> CARE acknowledges that, in many societies, women may gain power and status as they age and (often) as a consequence of child-bearing—although typically the sphere in which they wield their greater influence remains the household, extended family and perhaps community. In fact, it is common that older women gain power over younger women but not over males other than their sons. Age, therefore, can trump gender or sex when it comes to power in some arenas. Children and youth, and especially young females, are excluded from power in almost all conservative cultures.

freedom and opportunity. CARE's extensive research into adolescent girls' marginalization<sup>6</sup> found myriad ways that these restrictions are enacted:

- In **Yemen**, 73 percent of girls in CARE's project area were withdrawn from primary school, mostly between grades three and six, and married at an average age of 12.
- In **Malawi**, sexual abuse of adolescent schoolgirls was found to be staggeringly common. It was perpetrated by teachers and fellow students, and flourished in a conspiracy of silence. Parents withdrew girls from school, or girls withdrew themselves, in an effort to avoid rape and harassment.
- In **Cambodia**, CARE confirmed that domestic labor was a primary barrier between girls and education. Eldest daughters bore a disproportionately heavy workload.
- In **Egypt**, girls' marginalization was summed up by an informant who said, "The problem here is that females are not allowed to leave the house."

#### WHO IS A GIRL LEADER?

For CARE, a girl leader is an active learner who believes that she can make a difference in her world, and acts individually and with others to bring about positive change.

Reaching girls in early adolescence offers an opportunity to guide their development, self-discovery and identity in positive ways. Reaching their families and societies offers an opportunity to reflect upon and redefine prevailing gender norms so that a wide variety of girls' and women's aspirations and contributions are valued, including and extending beyond motherhood and domestic labor.

Building on in-depth research into the theory and practice of girls' leadership,<sup>7</sup> combined with lessons from our decades of work in girls' education programming and from our country-specific research into marginalization, CARE developed the ***Girls' Leadership Model***. The model emphasizes that girls' educational gains can be sustained and yield even greater returns—foremost for girls themselves, but also for their families and societies—when combined with explicit efforts to challenge and reshape the sociocultural forces that limit girls' lives. The model acknowledges the three domains of our women's empowerment framework (agency, structures and relationships) but tailors them to the needs and capacities of young adolescents.

**Girls' education and the development of leadership competencies (agency) merge with the formation of supportive alliances (relationships) that promote girls' leadership, and work with the household, community and societal levels to deconstruct attitudes, norms and even laws (structures) that marginalize and threaten the well-being of girls and the women they will become.**

<sup>6</sup> Twenty-eight of CARE's country offices have selected adolescent girls as a key impact group. CARE seeks to create deep and lasting change in the underlying causes of an impact group's poverty and marginalization, not only because group members merit such change but because they have the potential to make broad, positive change in their communities and nations. Each of the CARE offices that prioritized adolescent girls undertook in-depth research into the causes of their marginalization.

<sup>7</sup> When undertaking this research several years ago, CARE found a paucity of information about girls' leadership in developing countries. We reviewed the literature on leadership development for adults and girls' empowerment and found that most of the current work at that time was based on the Girl Scouts and some youth development work.

# CARE's Girls' Leadership Model

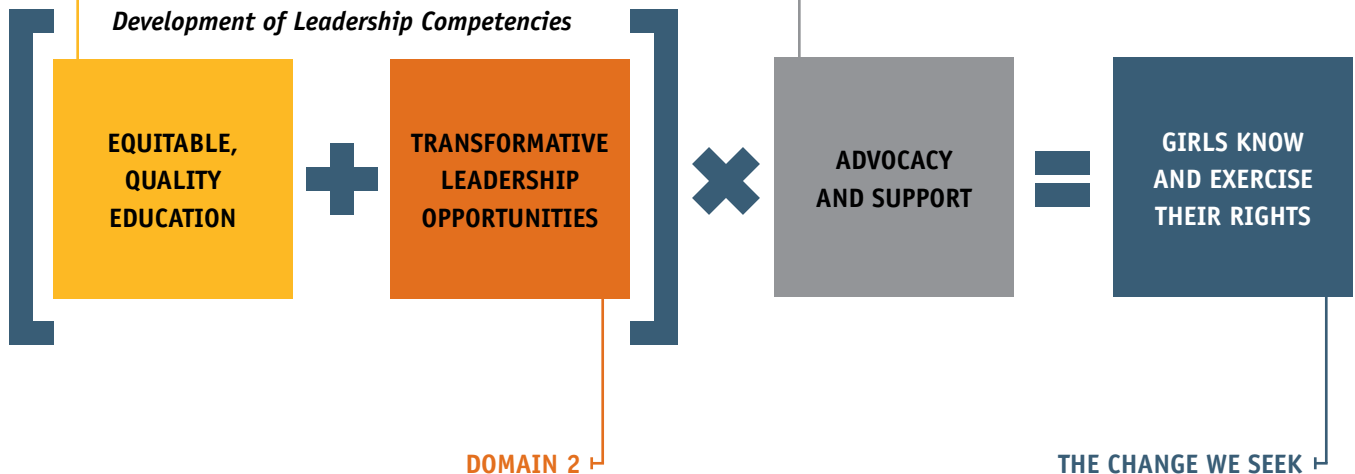
## DOMAIN 1

**Girls Access Equitable, Quality Education.** All human beings have the right to an education. CARE knows that girls who complete a primary education generally have better development outcomes in future income, health, motherhood and civic participation. Classrooms are often one of the only spaces outside the home where girls are allowed to spend time; in leadership projects, they are the initial spaces where girls can learn to lead others, hone their communication skills, develop problem-solving capabilities, and be mentored by caring adults.

## DOMAIN 3

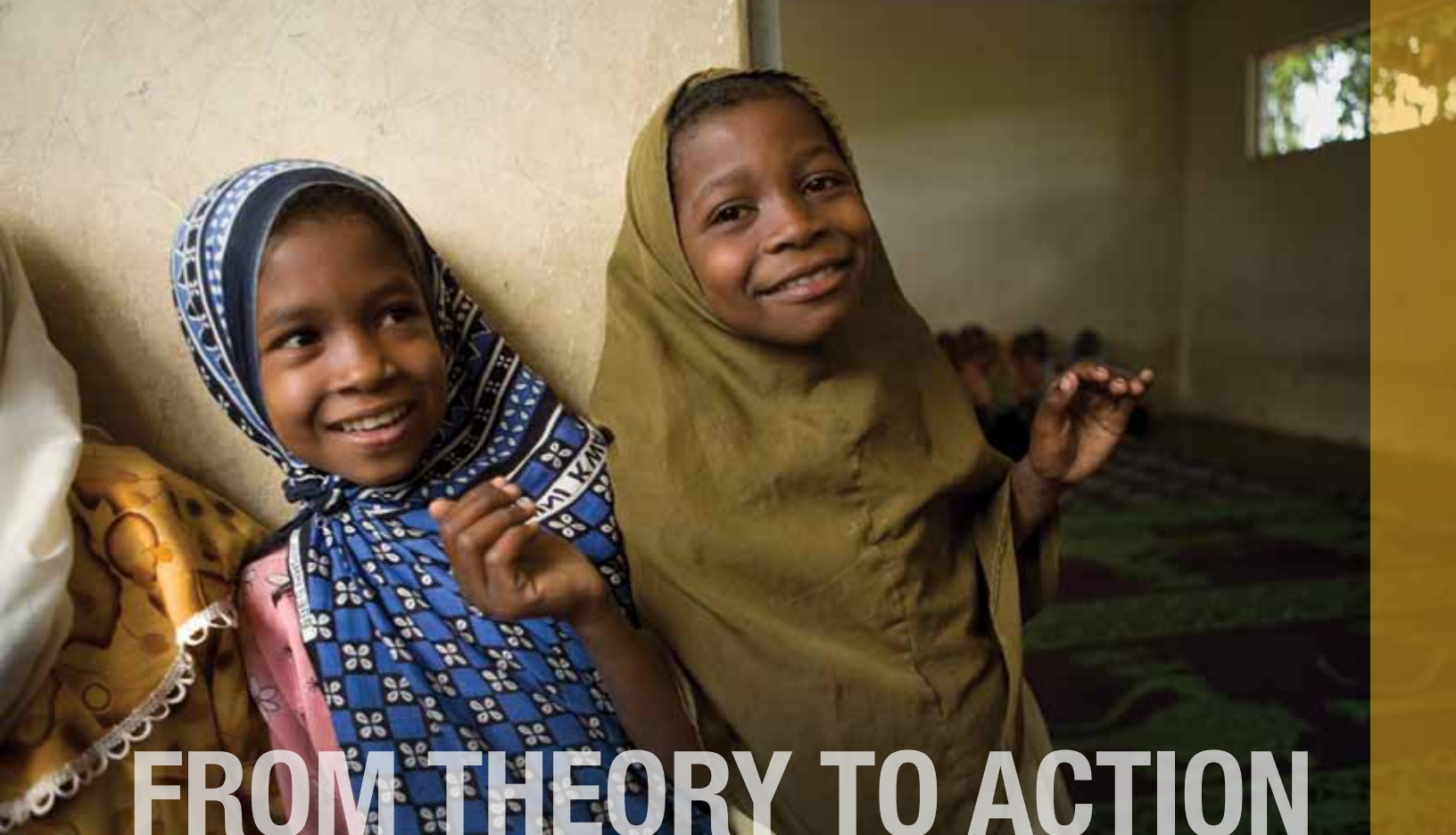
**Fostering An Enabling Environment for Girls' Rights.** As girls build confidence and competencies to act, alone and in coalition, for their interests and rights, others in their milieu bear the responsibility to uphold those rights. Parents, siblings and extended families, teachers and community power holders, begin to change their perceptions of what girls can or cannot do at the individual and community levels. All members of society, from formal power-holders to family members, should examine and alter social norms that limit girls' lives and opportunities.

### *Development of Leadership Competencies*



**Girls Cultivate Leadership Competencies through Supportive Leadership Opportunities.** CARE recognizes that leadership development occurs best when girls have exposure to new experiences and people, when they have help to build their social networks, and when they are recognized as legitimate actors in public spaces. The focus here is on girls' leadership development outside the classroom.

**Girls Understand and Act with Others to Realize Their Human Rights.** CARE seeks to build leadership competencies in girls, giving them space, skills and opportunities to form supportive relationships; girls and others in turn influence social norms to uphold girls' full rights. Notably, girls' decisions to become leaders in the conventional sense of the word are their own. CARE focuses on leadership skills development, rather than more narrowly focusing on developing leaders.



# FROM THEORY TO ACTION

## The Pathways

Having developed the *Girls' Leadership Model*, our next task was to operationalize it. In other words, CARE organized our ongoing and new adolescent-focused projects around the world so that they would lead more clearly toward the change we seek: changing the perception of the value of girls in society and girls understanding and acting with others to realize their rights.

Reverting to our research into girls' marginalization, CARE developed ten priority pathways to girls' empowerment. Each pathway is linked to a domain, as shown below, and suggests a set of actions for CARE, our partners, communities and leaders.

### DOMAIN 1

Girls Access Quality, Equitable Education

### PATHWAYS

1. Equitable, quality education
2. School transitions<sup>8</sup>
3. Learning opportunities for older girls
4. Gender sensitive policies and programs

Thoughtfully designed education programs can reverse negative gender stereotypes in textbooks, curricula and teacher attitudes; address the sexual violence that disproportionately affects girls in school; and remediate the insecure school environments and inadequate facilities that keep girls from attending classes.<sup>xii</sup> CARE's education projects develop innovative teacher training, create gender transformative learning models, promote child-centered teaching methods, make schools safer to support girls' learning and retention, provide libraries and

use them to promote literacy, and make school management more responsive. CARE also develops and implements educational models to meet the needs of girls who never enrolled, started late, or dropped out of school.

<sup>8</sup> Research makes clear that girls need particular support at the moment when they shift or transition from primary to secondary school. Many girls drop out/are removed from education at this juncture. (Other crucial transition points are between secondary and higher education or between school and a job in the formal economy.)

With the *Girls' Leadership Model* as our guide, CARE builds upon this solid base of education programming. Our leadership projects are typically linked to schools for the crucial reason that, in many societies, schools may be the only places outside the home where girls are allowed to spend time.<sup>9</sup> Thus within a well-constructed and -managed leadership project, schools often serve as the initial, safe space where girls gather, interact with their peers, gain and practice leadership competencies, and are mentored by caring adults.

## DOMAIN 2

Girls Cultivate Leadership Competencies through Supportive Leadership Opportunities

### PATHWAYS

5. Diverse extracurricular activities for girls
6. Social networks of girls
7. Girls' participation in civic action

The conventional definition of a leader brings to mind not only a person who has specific qualities and skills, but the sphere in which she deploys them: a political leader, for example, or a business leader or social activism leader. In conservative societies, girls are typically excluded from these spheres because of their age and sex. CARE, therefore, chose to emphasize leadership skills, rather than leadership roles or spheres, to develop our **definition of a leader**: an active learner who believes that she can make a difference in her world, and acts individually and with others to bring about positive change.<sup>10</sup> Focusing on what it takes to

develop leaders who fit this definition, CARE identified **five essential leadership competencies**<sup>xiii</sup> that can help girls seek new opportunities to lead or collaborate with others to bring about positive change:

1. **Voice**—a girl's ability to engage in a rational process to arrive at an opinion, and her belief that she has a right to express that opinion.
2. **Decision-making**—her sense that her decisions matter in her own life, and can affect the lives of others.
3. **Self-confidence**—her belief in her own value as a human being, and self-assuredness in her judgment, abilities and power.
4. **Organization**—her ability to arrange her thoughts and actions to carry an idea through to a final product.
5. **Vision**—her ability to motivate others, to bring people together to accomplish an objective and to play an active role in her community.

Leadership skills development occurs best when girls are exposed to new experiences and people and when they have help building their social networks. In CARE projects, girls engage in structured activities that promote critical reflection and discovery—or transformation. Transformative leadership opportunities mean that girls analyze the status quo, organize their response with others, take carefully chosen actions to provoke change and reflect upon the experience. As several examples in this document show, critical reflection of and action against prevailing gender norms is a bold and often risky undertaking—but girls can do it, within supportive relationships and in safe spaces.

As girls acquire leadership competencies, they need the space—physical location, but also permission and opportunity—to put them into action. In most communities, this space is traditionally accessible only—or mostly—to boys and men. CARE projects therefore help communities challenge the traditions that prohibit girls' participation in the public arena, and that shut their voices out from debate and decision-making. The *Girls' Leadership Model* guides CARE, our partners and participants to gain greater awareness of the issues that affect girls, and to promote an enabling environment for both girls and boys. It encourages communities to allow girls to negotiate new relationships, to occupy new spaces and participate in civic life, to take responsibility for their own decisions—and ultimately to be respected for these actions.

<sup>9</sup> In heavily insular societies, schools may offer a window to the world beyond the village. A female teacher may be the first educated woman whom girls encounter: her presence as a non-traditional role model can be transforming for girls.

<sup>10</sup> CARE holds that every girl can benefit from developing and using leadership skills. Some will emerge as leaders in the conventional sense of the word, but all girls can use leadership competencies to contribute to change, alone or in coalition with others. Every human being has the right to make and act on decisions that improve her or his own life.



Even as girls gain a quality education, and build the skills and confidence to act for their own interests and rights, others in their environment bear the responsibility to uphold those rights. CARE's framework for women's empowerment clarifies that individuals cannot empower themselves via personal gains alone, and this concept finds its parallel here in the ***Girls' Leadership Model***. All members of society—formal and informal power holders, parents, boys and girls—should examine and alter the gender norms that limit individuals' lives and opportunities, including harmful traditions and socially determined vulnerabilities such as early marriage or sexual predation.

We know that perceptions of norms shift more readily, and are more closely related to behavior change, than do personal beliefs.<sup>xiv</sup> The ***Girls' Leadership Model***, therefore, suggests working with community stakeholders to recognize and address norms that serve as barriers to girls' education and participation in society. Linked to this, CARE's leadership projects find and develop the talents of mentors and role models. These are people who are already challenging, or are willing to challenge, gender norms, such as female teachers and government officials, older girls who have gone to secondary school or university, or mothers who become activists for girls' education. The girls look up to them, and they help the girls' voices to be heard. Male champions of girls' rights play a particularly crucial role as well.

## The Projects

One way that CARE began to apply our ***Girls' Leadership Model*** was to integrate it into relevant, existing programs in the 28 countries where we had designated adolescent girls as an impact group. This strategic exercise helped CARE to expand and deepen the impact we aim to have on this segment of the population, and to determine the additional activities, new partnerships and participants, and/or refocused strategies that would support our broader goals.

CARE also used the ***Girls' Leadership Model*** as a guide to design and manage two new, large-scale girls' leadership innovations called the Power to Lead Alliance (PTLA) and Innovation through Sports: Promoting Leaders, Empowering Youth (ITSPLEY).<sup>11</sup> Together these projects reached more than 196,000 girls and 136,000 boys in **Bangladesh, Egypt, Honduras, India, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania** and **Yemen**. Guided by teachers, mentors and community volunteers trained and supported by CARE staff, girls and boys aged 10 to 14 gained and practiced leadership competencies across an array of extracurricular activities offered through local schools or community groups.

CARE draws from this pool of projects for the results presented in this paper.

### WORKING WITH BOYS IN GIRLS' LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

Many of the participants in our girls' leadership projects are boys. Why is this so?

CARE's empowerment framework clarifies that individuals—in this case, adolescent girls—cannot empower themselves alone. Social norms, especially those linked to gender and power, must be examined and acted upon by all members of society, often through new alliances and coalitions seeking a more equitable and prosperous future for all. CARE works with boys because engaging boys helps create awareness of and opportunities to challenge gender norms that limit everyone's lives: men and women, girls and boys.

More information on boys' participation appears in Results, Domain 2 and Domain 3.

### DOMAIN 3

Fostering An Enabling Environment for Girls' Rights

### PATHWAYS

8. Attention to harmful traditional practices
9. Reduction of risk and vulnerability
10. Role models, mentors and champions for girls

<sup>11</sup> PTLA (2008-2011) and ITSPLEY (2009-2012) were both funded by USAID.



# RESULTS OF CARE'S GIRLS' LEADERSHIP PROJECTS

CARE recognizes the need both to construct theoretical foundations for quality programming, and to ensure that program changes are carefully assessed. For our education portfolio, CARE's **Common Indicator Framework** monitors educational quality, equity and attainment, and several elements of girls' empowerment. With the introduction of projects based on our **Girls' Leadership Model**, CARE complemented our **Common Indicator Framework** with two evaluation tools that are the source of most numeric data in this report:

1. The **Girls' Leadership Index (GLI)**, to detect girls' changing perceptions of themselves as leaders. We used the GLI with participant and control groups in the multi-country PTLA and ITSPLY initiatives,<sup>12</sup> thus offering evidence of the effect of project participation on girls' self-reported leadership competencies.
2. The **Gender Equity Index (GEI)**<sup>13,xv</sup> to measure participating and control-group girls' and boys' perceptions of equality of rights and gendered social norms.

In this section, we present outcomes of CARE's girls' leadership projects, as measured by the GLI and GEI, and other quantitative and qualitative evaluation tools.

## DOMAIN 1: GIRLS ACCESS QUALITY, EQUITABLE EDUCATION

CARE's girls' leadership projects contribute to girls' educational experiences in three significant ways. First, we promote a quality, equitable learning environment and support efforts to hold teachers accountable. Second, girls who participate in leadership activities remain in school and often improve their academic performance. Third, parental attitudes about the value of girls' education change, resulting in greater support for their continued schooling.

<sup>12</sup> In Yemen, CARE used the GLI and GEI with participants only, at baseline and final evaluations. We assigned girls identification numbers, offering a unique opportunity to track changes in individuals over the life of the project.

<sup>13</sup> CARE acknowledges the contributions of Gary Barker and Julie Pulerwitz from Instituto Promundo's Gender Equitable Men Scale to our GEI.

## i. Quality, Equitable Learning Environment and Accountable Teachers

Relatively modest investments in training teachers to use child-centered and gender-responsive pedagogical methods can yield rich results in classroom experience. In a dozen participating schools in **Tanzania**, for example, CARE’s monitoring showed strong teacher performance in didactic methodologies, learning activities, classroom set-up and interaction, and selection of teaching and learning materials. Teachers were able to recognize gender biases in existing materials and transform them into positive content. Among 72 teachers—half of whom were men—86 percent were able to prepare gender-responsive lesson plans and 80 percent involved girls and boys equally in thinking and problem-solving processes. The teachers’ increased skills translated to increased student performance and attendance, better school discipline and fewer dropouts—especially among girls.

## ii. Girls Who Participate in Leadership Activities Remain in School and Improve Their Academic Performance

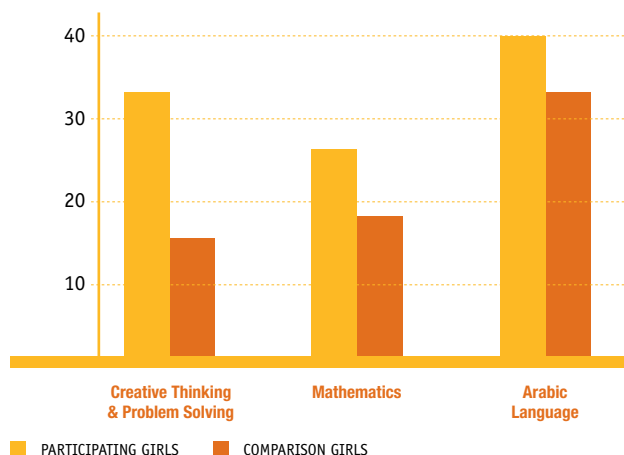
CARE’s work in **Egypt** provided a clear example of how girls’ participation in leadership activities enhanced their educational performance. Our leadership project took place in several, but not all, districts where CARE’s girls’ education activities were already underway. After about two years of implementation, CARE organized a learning outcomes study among two groups: 143 girls who had participated in leadership activities, and 146 who had not—and who did not live in districts where leadership activities were present. All study girls attended schools that had been supported by CARE education programs, were of the same age group, and came from similar socioeconomic backgrounds; the sole independent variable was participation in leadership activities.

Leadership girls out-performed their peers in 30 of the 32 skills tested in three topics: mathematics, language, and creative thinking and problem solving. Their aggregated scores were higher for all three topics (Figure 1). Researchers in **Egypt** concluded, “The difference between the two groups is attributed to the effect of the independent variable, which is the learning and leadership program for girls.”<sup>xvi</sup>

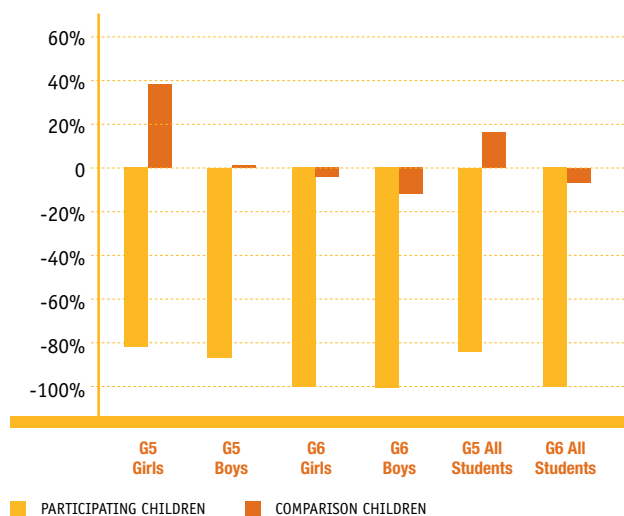
In **Timor Leste**, CARE’s work led to a marked increase in girls’ retention in grades five and six—a period when many rural **Timorese** girls drop out of school. After 26 months of a leadership project that engaged girls to design and participate in an array of academic, artistic and athletic activities, dropout rates for girls in participating schools decreased dramatically—up to 100 percent—while dropout rates for girls in comparison schools increased or showed only modest decrease (Figure 2). Participating schools also saw far fewer dropouts among boys in both grades.

Final evaluations of our girls’ leadership project in **Malawi** included an assessment of three schools where girls and boys were active in academic clubs, quiz competitions and debate teams. The zone’s education advisor reported that girls’ participation increased from 40 to 70 percent since

**Figure 1: Egyptian Girls’ Average Scores in Three Topics**



**Figure 2: Percent Change in Dropouts, Grades 5 and 6, Timor Leste, Nov. 2010 - May 2012**



the project began. Head teachers in all three schools reported improved academic performance by girls and boys, fewer discipline issues and dropouts, and better attendance overall. One said, “This school has traditionally been among the lower performing schools in the zone—always 9th or 10th of 12—but now ranks in the middle.” Absenteeism in that school plummeted, from about 33 to just three percent on a typical day. In another school, 62 of 63 students (31 girls and 32 boys) passed the national exam for graduating from primary to secondary school, a “phenomenal academic performance,” according to the head teacher.

In **Yemen**, CARE used several tactics to increase girls’ enrollment. We developed activities for dropouts, including preparing a school re-entrance exam. We played a lead role in bringing gender training to school staff, locating female volunteers to teach girls—existing staff were all male—and changing one co-educational school to an all-girls school. All told, enrollment of boys and girls increased by 47 percent in the participating schools, and girls’ enrollment alone rose by 85 percent. By project’s end, almost half of all students in the project area were girls.

**I used to cry and say, “I don’t want to participate in the project.” But my family encouraged me to take literacy classes. They advised me to ignore the people in the community who spoke negatively about girls’ education. My brothers told me, “Study and get a certificate so you can achieve whatever you wish.”**

**Leadership Project Participant, Yemen**



### iii. Parental Attitudes Change, Resulting in Greater Support for Girls' Continued Education

Parents are, of course, deeply involved in decisions about their daughters' education. In the **Yemen** events described above, for example, it is easy to detect the influence of parents in girls' increased enrollment—and to grasp that the presence of an all-girl school, or classrooms with female teachers, helped prompt their attitudinal change.

CARE detected other less direct, but still important, ways that parents showed their growing support for girls' education. In several countries, mothers and fathers freed girls from at least some household work so they could attend class and complete their homework. In **Egypt**, women reported shouldering some of their daughters' workload, while in **Tanzania**, community leaders stated that the distribution of labor was shifting toward greater involvement of boys so that girls could attend school—and even have time to play. Several participating boys reported helping with cleaning, cooking and doing dishes—something only one boy from the control group reported. A CARE staffer reported that even some men had begun to help carry water and wood, jobs traditionally assigned to women. And in **Yemen**, where CARE's baseline research found that girls spent up to ten hours a day on domestic labor, mothers began coordinating chores such that “work that previously was carried out only by the girl is now performed by both girls and boys. When the girl goes to school, the boy tends the sheep, and when the boy goes to school, the girl tends the sheep.”

More information on parents' changing attitudes and behaviors, and the work CARE undertook to support them, is found in **Domain 3: Fostering An Enabling Environment for Girls**.

## DOMAIN 2: GIRLS CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES THROUGH SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

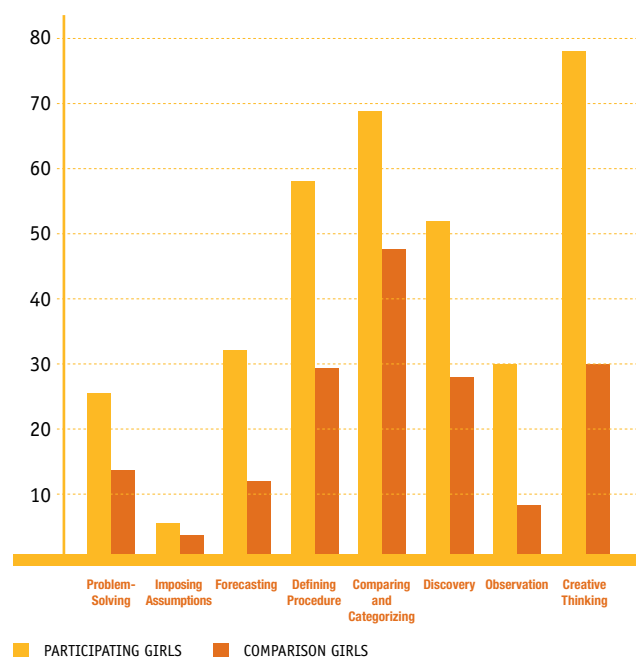
In this section, we present descriptive and numeric information on girls' acquisition of leadership competencies and how they judged themselves as leaders, followed by a discussion of how—and with what results—CARE, girls and other key actors negotiated space for girls to acquire and apply their growing skills.

### i. Girls Cultivate Leadership Competencies

In Domain 1, we presented the results of a learning outcomes study in **Egypt**, which found that participants in CARE's leadership project outperformed girls in the comparison group in three topics. Figure 3 shows the girls' average scores on each of the eight skills tested within the topic of creative thinking and problem solving.

Clearly, girls who gained leadership competencies by engaging in activities such as drama, debate club, Internet lab and sports were stronger than comparison girls in all eight skills, including creative thinking and its sub-components of flexibility, originality, and even sense of humor. Participating girls' strong performance demonstrates the degree to which they had internalized several of the leadership competencies. Again, the researchers concluded, “The reason [for] this difference...is attributed to the effect of the independent variable, which is the learning and leadership program.” Drawing from qualitative information gathered as a corollary to the

**Figure 3: Egyptian Girls' Averaged Scores in Creative Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills**



test, researchers remarked, “The girls said that practicing the various activities helped them to become more patient, to accept challenges, to shoulder responsibility, to share and cooperate while approaching problems to be solved, and to plan beforehand.”<sup>xvii</sup>

**I am confident in what I do—the way I talk, the way I play, and even the way I study. I just believe in my abilities that I can perform better.**

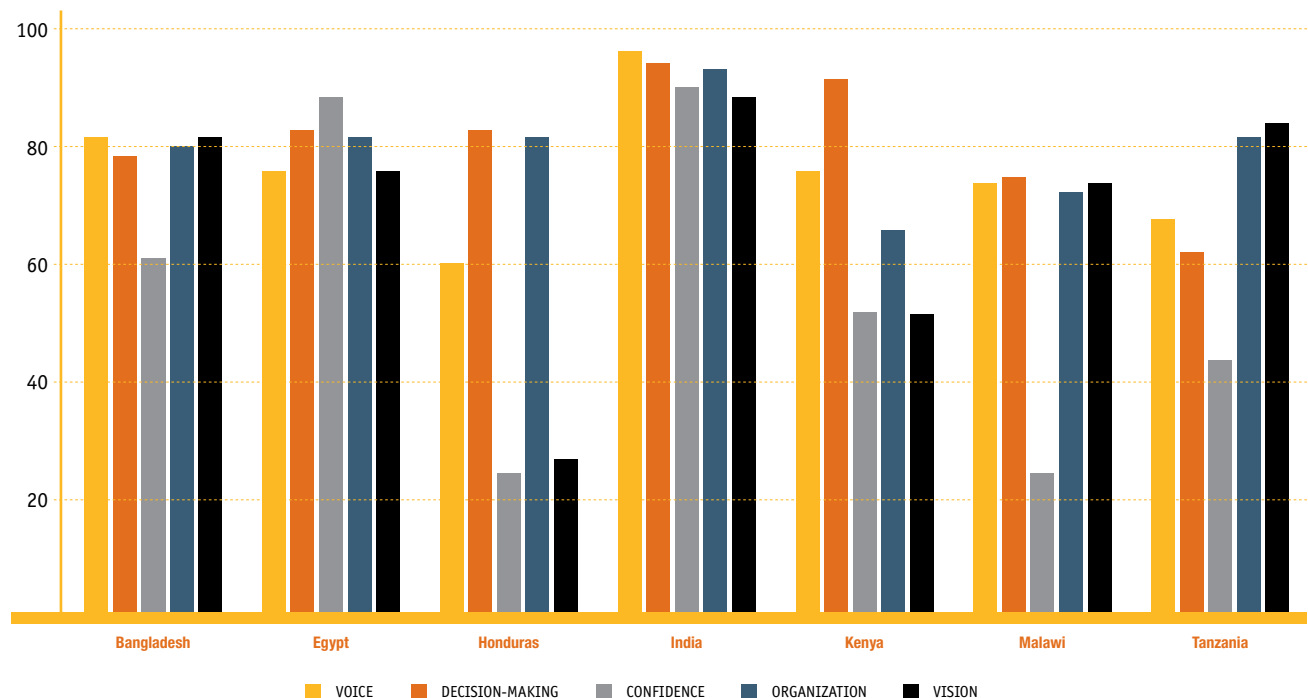
### Leadership Project Participant, Tanzania

CARE’s *Girls’ Leadership Index (GLI)* was administered to participant and comparison-group girls during final evaluations of the multi-country PTLA and ITSPLEY initiatives, thus offering evidence of the effect of project participation on girls’ self-reported leadership competencies. One set of GLI questions asked participating girls to reflect on the changes they see in themselves as a result of gaining and practicing leadership competencies via project activities. Figure 4 below represents, by country, the percentage of participating girls’ positive responses to five statements on leadership competencies.

Statements:

- **Voice:** I do not hesitate to let others know my opinions.
- **Decision-making:** I recognize that I have control over my own actions.
- **Confidence:** If someone treats me unfairly, I take action against it.
- **Organization:** I can help organize others to accomplish a task.
- **Vision:** I realize that things I say and do sometimes encourage others to work together.

**Figure 4: Percent of Participating Girls Who Responded Positively to Statements on Leadership Competencies**





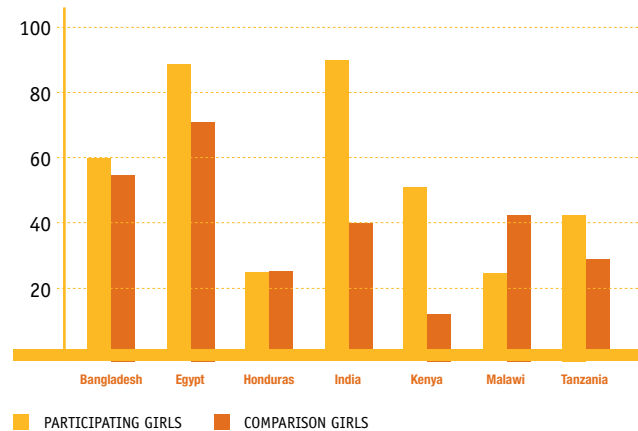
When juxtaposed with comparison groups, participating girls scored higher on average in their responses on the five leadership competencies. In **Bangladesh** and **India**, participants scored higher across the board, while slight discrepancies were noted in the remaining five countries. Ultimately, these incongruities may be attributed to the complexities inherent in defining these types of concepts. Participants put leadership skills into practice and experienced how their personal growth changed from project beginning to end. This created self-awareness and a greater understanding of what the leadership skills truly mean. As a result of their deeper understanding, participating girls may have rated themselves more conservatively.

Note that the confidence statement refers to taking action when encountering unfair treatment. Participating girls in five of seven PTLA and ITSPLEY countries were more likely to respond positively than comparison girls (Figure 5), and participating girls in four of seven countries responded that they “always” or “often” took such action. At the other end of the scale, less than one quarter of participating girls in **Honduras** and **Malawi** responded positively.

Contextual knowledge is helpful for interpreting these results. In **Honduras**, girls in CARE’s leadership projects—implemented in some of the most violent communities in a country whose urban violence is among the highest in the world—may have interpreted this question in light of the repercussions on someone who complained about gangs and crime. Yet these were the same girls who organized themselves into youth groups that approached girls and boys involved in gangs, persuaded them to join activities benefiting the community, and ultimately led some to leave the gangs and re-enroll in school. These girls mentored children in neighboring communities, and became entrepreneurs, eventually forming handicraft cooperatives that have attracted donor funding. In **Malawi**, despite the relatively low response, girls campaigned actively to address issues affecting them, such as gender-based violence. They raised their voices against perpetrators through clubs, village rallies and participatory education theater.

In **Yemen**, more than half of all GLI respondents claimed positive growth in leadership competencies including two measures of taking action (confidence), as shown in Table 1. These are remarkable advances<sup>14</sup> for girls who, according to CARE’s pre-project research, had no leadership opportunities or extracurricular activities, and no voice in their households, schools or communities.

**Figure 5: Percent of Girls Who Responded Positively to Confidence Statement**



<sup>14</sup> Evaluators were careful to note that, in the absence of a control group, it is not technically possible to attribute changes in Yemen to CARE’s interventions alone, yet no other reason for the changes could be detected.

**Table 1: Percent of Yemeni Participants Who Reported Positive Change in Leadership Competency since Baseline**

COMPETENCY	STATEMENT	%
Voice	When I have an idea or opinion, I am able to express it at school.	53
Decision-making	I make decisions that I believe I can implement.	67
Confidence	When I don't understand something at school, I am not shy about asking a question.	59
	When someone treats me unfairly, I say something or take action.	53
Organization	I am good at organizing time to do my chores for the family.	56
Group Dynamics	When we are in a group, my friends prefer me to take a leadership role.	55

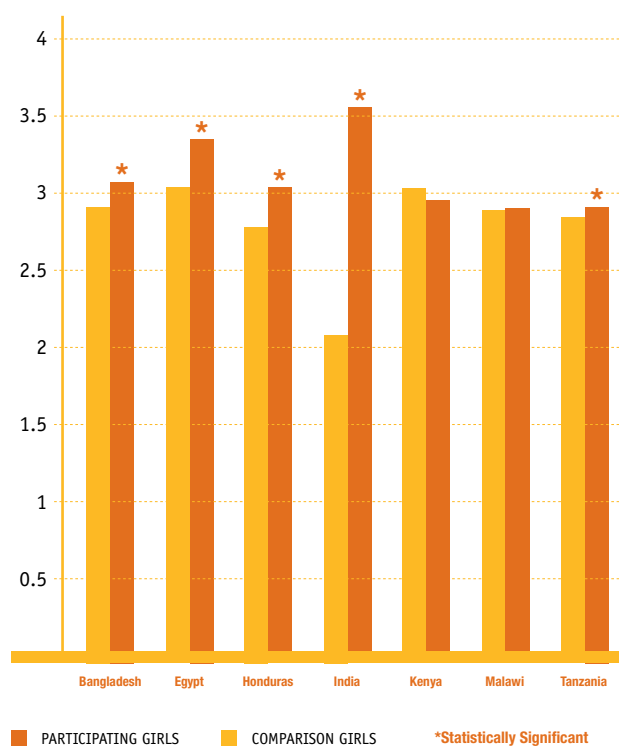
Finally, use of the GLI with participants and control groups in seven countries allowed evaluators to compare average composite leadership scores. Figure 6 shows that in five of the seven countries, participants reported a greater acquisition and use of leadership competencies—to a statistically significant degree—than their comparison peers. It appears that participation in girls' leadership projects affected how girls saw themselves as leaders. They reported being more likely than non-participants to enact leadership skills such as seeking advice, providing opinions, making decisions that influenced others, considering different perspectives, and not hesitating to speak. The effect was especially large in **India, Honduras** and **Egypt**.

### ii. Supportive Leadership Opportunities

As we have just seen (Table 1), girls in **Yemen** made notable advances in leadership competencies, and did so despite a profoundly restrictive sociocultural environment as their starting point. Initially, in fact, Yemeni communities refused to allow girls to participate in CARE's leadership project at all.

Our staff engaged in extensive community preparation in Yemen, during which we met with community leaders, held awareness campaigns on girls' education and girls' rights, elicited the opinions and cooperation of the community at large, trained teachers and principals, advocated that one school be designated girls-only, and identified and trained local women to serve as volunteer teachers for girls. This preparation phase lasted more than a year in some communities. Yet it ultimately resulted in creating space for girls' participation—or, in the words of our **Girls' Leadership Model**, it fostered the supportive leadership opportunities in which girls could gain and practice leadership competencies. In the course of three years, CARE saw these girls become school and class presidents,

**Figure 6: Average Composite Leadership Scores of Participating and Comparison Girls**





serve as teachers' assistants, take responsibility for managing new community libraries, gain tremendous enjoyment from playing sports and undertake many small-scale development initiatives in their communities.

Creating and claiming space was a continuous activity in CARE leadership projects, in **Yemen** and all other countries; to varying degrees, custom and tradition restrict adolescent girls' presence in public spaces and put severe limitations on what they can do with their time. One way that CARE helped foster supportive leadership opportunities in **Yemen, Tanzania, Malawi** and **Egypt** was to bring girls and boys into the activity design process. With guidance from project implementers, they collaborated to design the activities through which they would develop and practice leadership competencies. In so doing, they created a new space for girls and boys to work together.

**When CARE says that girls need “space” in which to act, we mean not only a physical location— and negotiating access to physical spaces can be a challenge— but opportunity and permission, resulting from shifts in perception among men, women, boys and girls themselves that girls can and should be allowed to engage in a given activity.**

Research on youth and community participation shows that when boys and girls collaborate, their self-efficacy rises, and they are more likely to succeed at creating a space they can control. Among CARE's activities in **Egypt** was to revitalize student unions as spaces where pupils could engage with administrators and local leaders to improve education. The languishing unions—once boys-only—saw the active participation of a sizeable number of girls. Boys experienced firsthand the capabilities of their female peers, and some changed their perceptions as a result. Thousands of girls were nominated to various posts within the student union committees, and 869 were elected.

Another extracurricular opportunity available to **Egyptian** girls and boys was Core Group, a somewhat utilitarian name for what proved to be a popular activity. Each Core Group of about 50 adolescents, guided by a school counselor, met regularly to analyze local problems, discuss possible solutions, then carry out civic actions such as planting trees or helping needy families. CARE and partner staff agreed that the Core Groups offered two novel sights to participating villages: girls undertaking civic action, and girls and boys undertaking civic action *together*. As barriers between boys and girls diminished, the number of girls in Core Groups rose. Ultimately, three-quarters of members were girls. Said one teacher, “These girls are completely different from last year. They wouldn't have talked, played or participated in any activity. They started to respond to the [leadership] project, and they revealed their hidden skills.”

In **Malawi**, meanwhile, one activity available to girls and boys was participatory educational theater, or PET. The evolution of the space in which PET operated was remarkable. Adolescents chose to explore the topic of girls' right to education: they learned about the issue, then wrote and performed dramas that raised awareness of barriers to realizing that right. In their analyses, the girls and boys found themselves negotiating increasingly difficult and even taboo topics. Beginning with a new government policy that allowed re-enrollment of adolescents forced to drop out due to pregnancy, PET groups tackled early marriage for girls, and sexual abuse and rape in schools and communities. Not surprisingly, some adults reacted negatively to the PET performances. Yet others formed alliances with the adolescents and supported not only their dramas but changes to the issues they raised. PET groups, school management committees, parent-teacher associations (PTAs), local leaders and especially mothers' groups participated in a set of activities that succeeded in shining a light on unwanted sexual activity and holding perpetrators publicly accountable for their acts. (See Domain 3 for more information on how participants in **Malawi** addressed gender-based violence.)



The examples above clarify that creating supportive leadership opportunities for girls is a continuous activity, and one that can vary in complexity even within the same community as girls grow in their leadership competencies. CARE staff intentionally used spaces that were already available to girls, or easily attained, as stepping stones to negotiating more difficult spaces. Where needed, we compromised if it meant the difference between a limited opportunity for girls, and no opportunity at all. In **Egypt**, for example, most stakeholders quite readily accepted girls' participation in student unions and in Core Groups: they saw these spaces as serious rather than frivolous and as legitimate extensions of girls' and boys' participation in school. CARE then proceeded to more controversial spaces: village youth centers which, with their sports fields, libraries and other facilities, were used solely by boys. Our staff and partners negotiated with leaders from the governorate (state) to the village level, and eventually the youth centers in several communities approved a schedule whereby girls had sole access to the facilities one day a week. This seemingly small change was in fact a breakthrough. Prevailing social norms stated that girls could not play sports (because boys and men might see them), nor could they risk unsupervised interaction with boys—thus girls were sequestered at home when not in school. By gaining exclusive access to youth centers, even if only for one day a week, girls played sports and used libraries for the first time in their lives. CARE staff noted, "As communities embrace girls' right to safe access to public spaces, more places will be created where girls can be heard and try out new skills."

In all cases, negotiating and renegotiating space means dealing with an array of gatekeepers, or the people who, wittingly or unwittingly, enforce prevailing social and gender norms and thus deny girls' access to opportunities. These are community leaders and school authorities, but they are also fathers, mothers, brothers and other adolescent boys, and sometimes adolescent girls themselves. CARE's work with social norms and with gatekeepers is addressed in Domain 3.

## DOMAIN 3: FOSTERING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR GIRLS' RIGHTS

CARE defines an enabling environment as one that recognizes and reinforces mutual rights and obligations among members of society.<sup>xviii</sup> Whereas CARE works with communities to foster supportive opportunities for girls in Domain 2, we shift to a higher order in Domain 3: if girls' new opportunities are to be sustained and expanded, girls must be recognized as rights-bearing human beings.

In this section, we present information about how CARE approached the deconstruction of several specific social norms, and with what outcomes. Next, we examine how our projects worked with gatekeepers: community and school leaders, men, women and boys. Third, this section analyzes how girls' views of themselves began to shift—from individuals with competencies (as measured by the GLI, Domain 2) to individuals with rights. Finally, we discuss the crucial investments CARE made in building capacities within, and coalitions of, local partner organizations, whose work to support social change continues after the close of our projects.

### i. Deconstructing Social Norms

Fostering an enabling environment for girls' rights has much to do with addressing and altering social norms—the powerful but informal laws that govern human behavior in a given society—and especially gender norms, which dictate the opportunities and roles that are considered appropriate for men and women, girls and boys. As CARE established in our women's empowerment framework, everyone is affected by rigid gender norms, and it is everyone's responsibility to challenge and change harmful ones.

Some negative norms, we can safely say, are present in all countries where CARE has chosen to work with adolescent girls as an impact group, and must be confronted if leadership projects are to be implemented at all. These include norms around the relative importance of education for girls, whether or how girls should be seen in public spaces, and the roles and responsibilities of girls in the household. Other common, negative norms have to do with gender-based violence and early marriage. In many of our project locations, it is participants who choose the negative norms that concern them most, and their choices evolve as they grow in their leadership competencies and experience. With time, it is the girls themselves who become important and influential drivers of attitude change. The people around them recognize the girls' growing skills and accomplishments, and their ideas of what girls can and should do begin to shift.

However, as the examples below will show, CARE also carries out explicit activities designed to change the perceptions and behaviors of the men, women and boys in the girls' environment—the gatekeepers who, deliberately or not, enforce the norms that girls begin to challenge. Our broad approach to supporting normative change begins with helping participants examine how a given norm is enacted and reinforced at multiple levels—community, household, school, individual—and how those levels are interrelated. We guide discussion of who is affected by the norms, and how. Participants identify the negative attitudes that accompany the norm, and finally work to change those attitudes among gatekeepers.

**... Remarkably, acceptance was indeed gained within the three-year [project] in all settings. Even in the most resistant communities, outright refusal on the part of parents and community leaders gave way to reserved permission and finally to enthusiastic approval. Once they developed some level of confidence, it was the girls themselves who began to challenge the previously tightly held norms and push for more freedom to participate. PTLA Final Report, CARE, 2011**

## Gender-Based Violence

In central **Malawi**, CARE and communities addressed sexual violence and the underlying norm that males should correct, discipline or coerce females with violence. The abuses that girls faced were significant and systemic, and included rape, bullying, forced touching, and “love relationships” with teachers in exchange for good grades or money.<sup>15</sup> CARE held reflective sessions with girls and boys on children’s rights, girls’ rights, sex and sexuality. But we also worked extensively with parents and community leaders. CARE and partner staff raised awareness on rights, gender and gender-based violence; and helped form and train community-based organizations such as school management committees, PTAs, and mothers’ groups as upholders and watchdogs of men’s and boys’ behavior, and girls’ safety and equitable education. In schools, staff trained teachers and administrators on gender, law and codes of conduct, and developed joint management with community organizations and increased accountability in schools. In the year following CARE’s training of school management committees and PTAs, 75 percent of the schools monitored indicated a significant reduction in reported sexual abuse of girls by male teachers. The chairman of one school management committee stated, “Teachers were taking advantage of their [committee members’] ignorance of existing policies and regulations...but from now on we will be checking them.”

Mothers’ groups in **Malawi** became a powerful force for attitudinal and behavioral change. As they gained knowledge of rights, the women were able to overturn a social norm—that men should discipline girls and women with violence—as a human right—that girls have the right not to be violated, and then took action on it. Women defended their own and others’ daughters, and extended their watchdog role beyond school grounds. Moreover, they did so at some risk to themselves. When women in one village flouted the culture of silence around rape for the first time, by reporting to police a case in the local school, some community members threatened to burn the women’s houses. Mothers’ groups persisted, and eventually CARE helped them develop strong reporting mechanisms, involving student clubs, traditional leaders, the police, the board of education and health clinics, for cases of violence and discrimination. CARE’s final evaluation found that mothers’ groups were seen as effective in their work with others—village chiefs, parents and teachers—to bring about attitudinal change. A PTA member reflected, “In the past, when a girl said ‘no’ to a proposal, people [sic] used to tell her, ‘We shall deal with you during the maize season, when you’ll be coming from school.’<sup>16</sup> A lot of girls used to drop out because they were afraid. Most girls are now in school and the practice of hiding and beating girls when they’re coming from school has stopped.”

In **Bangladesh**, CARE embedded our girls’ leadership project within an established adolescent reproductive health project that CARE promoted the active participation of men and boys as key agents for normative change. In just one example, boys and men addressed “Eve-teasing,” the euphemism for sexual harassment of any girl or woman who ventured out in public. Activist Joyonto Dev clarified the gender norm behind this harassment: “Boys see this as their right. It is mere fate for those who are born as women.” Indeed, CARE’s research found that 95 percent of women and girls had experienced “teasing.” Men and boys, meanwhile, claimed to be provoked by women’s mannerisms and dress, and viewed rape and violence as a means to teach women and girls a lesson.<sup>xix</sup>

CARE’s explicit work with men and boys proceeded through several stages, beginning with knowledge gathering. Discussions, exercises and games helped boys and men see and analyze sexual violence not as a norm but as a problem with profound effects on women and girls. Reflective processes helped them view the world through a female’s eyes, to empathize and test new attitudes. Men and boys monitored instances of gender-based violence in their communities, from verbal harassment to physical assault. Shifting to the knowledge dissemination stage, boys and men held demonstrations to protest gender-based violence and performed participatory theater to initiate community discussion and debate on negative gender norms. Volunteer activists worked with other men to attain critical self-awareness as a prerequisite to choosing their attitudes and actions rather than blindly accepting prevailing norms. Activist Dev reflected on his own past as an “Eve-teaser”: “I did such things, but was able to self-analyze and think through [my behavior]. I had such ugly feelings about myself, and I tried to change my attitudes. And today I am succeeding in making my peers realize and follow the same path.”

<sup>15</sup> CARE found that in the case of boys, abuse involved physical violence and child labor, resulting in removing boys from school. We lack data on sexual abuse of boys.

<sup>16</sup> The tall maize obscured the criminals and their crime from public view.



### Child Marriage

When CARE began our leadership project in **India**, initial meetings with communities revealed some parents' fears that girls' participation would make them opinionated, stubborn and extroverted. Such girls might not cooperate with their parents, and it would be difficult to marry them off. It can be said that this very phenomenon came to pass, albeit with a positive outcome.

Adolescents formed *kashori samooh*, or girls' groups, to gain and practice leadership competencies, and to forge friendships—a rarity in areas where the onset of puberty often means sequestration at home. When one group learned that a member's parents were planning to marry her off—she was not yet 14—the girls collaborated and took action. A delegation visited the parents in question and advocated politely but firmly that their daughter be allowed to remain in school and stay single until she reached legal age. The advocacy was a success. “My [older] brother will get married first,” reported the girl. “I still have some dreams to pursue.”

It is notable that even as these girls gained the competencies to advocate against child marriage, CARE's project engaged adults in activities and reflections on negative gender norms. In other words, by the time *kashori samooh* members became “opinionated, stubborn and extroverted” enough to take a stand against child marriage, parents had become ready to re-evaluate the practice's value.

The legal age for marriage in **Bangladesh** is 18, but the law is widely ignored when it comes to girls. “Fathers want to marry [their daughters] off quickly,” said a CARE staff member. “They are scared to keep them at home, because they can become a victim of sexual harassment,” and thus be deemed unmarriageable. In a social environment where “gang rape, killing after rape, ‘Eve-teasing,’ kidnapping...are only the bad habits or whims of men,”<sup>xx</sup> girls were seen by their families as objects of protection rather than subjects of human rights—and early marriage, paradoxically, was seen as a form of protection. CARE worked extensively to help communities recast girls' vulnerability to violence and abuse

as social in origin—and therefore changeable by society. Our work included youth groups for girls and boys, in which members learned life skills and reflective analysis under the guidance of caring mentors. With the hard-won support of parents and community leaders, 28 boys in Fatehpur village made a courageous and public stand against child marriage: they donned white burial shrouds to represent 28 young women who had died in the past five years of violence or the complications of early childbearing. A network of youth groups declared their five villages to be “child marriage-free,” and their declaration was eventually supported by adults and authorities. One union (administrative district) chairman stated, “We have 40 villages and in almost all, early marriage has been stopped or strong advocacy is underway to stop it.”

**I asked a man in the audience, ‘who is responsible for the harms that girls suffer?’**

**The man replied, ‘We are. We are responsible. If we want to change our society, we have to change ourselves first.’ Male Activist, Bangladesh**

## ii. Gatekeepers

**Men:** In most projects, CARE staff work with men in their roles as community leaders and as fathers or heads of households. Less commonly, we work intensively with men to deconstruct their beliefs and behaviors—or, as stated in the **Bangladesh** case above, to “attain critical self-awareness” as a pre-requisite to choosing their attitudes and actions rather than blindly enacting prevailing norms.

To take the case of **Yemen**, CARE engaged in extensive preparation with communities’ leaders and parents—foremost with men in both roles—before our project was accepted, and made several compromises, such as designating an all-girls school and locating and training female volunteer teachers, to accommodate men’s demands. The support that CARE built for girls’ participation was eventually strong but not unanimous: several Yemeni men withdrew their daughters from school when girls’ sports were introduced, for example. The project’s final evaluation found a generally positive shift in men’s attitudes. They reported trusting girls more—some even mentioned asking their daughters for advice—and giving them more scope for freedom of movement. In one participating village, evaluators estimated that fully 75 percent of fathers had come to believe that girls’ education was important.

In **Tanzania**, the project evaluation detected changes in men’s perceptions and in family interactions. Where fathers once saw girls as assets who could be traded in marriage for cows, many began to speak out for girls’ education. Some families reported that girls and women could now sit with fathers and brothers for a family talk, for example; girls were included in discussions of family problems and offered workable solutions. They also could discuss aspects of their personal lives with fathers and mothers, and girls felt that their fathers had become more accessible to them. In **Honduras**, evaluators noted that attitudes towards girls were more likely to change among men younger than 40, but that older men were far more likely to resist challenges to gender norms.

**Women:** As CARE’s leadership projects progressed, we noted that women often became allies and advocates for their daughters—and sometimes for themselves. The discussion of changing norms, above, described how mothers in **Malawi** became fierce champions of girls’ rights to attend school and pursue other activities without being assaulted. Likewise, women in many countries were instrumental in opening space for girls’ education and leadership activities, by shifting domestic labor burdens.

Community leaders in **Kenya** astutely linked changes in girls to changes in women. “Initially, mothers used to silence girls, but the girls now insist that they also have a voice. The girls have enabled the women to grow and accept the transition,” our final evaluation found. In the strict social environment of rural **Yemen**, where CARE’s baseline research confirmed that



**Whereas initial reactions of men...to the project varied from indifference to outright resistance, all countries reported a more supportive attitude; in some cases, men even went so far as to be actively engaged as mentors, patrons and advocates for girls' participation in the community. PTLA Final Report, CARE, 2011**

mothers were girls' greatest influence in the home, our project organized mothers' councils, whose members became active in raising awareness of the importance of girls' education, encouraging families to re-enroll dropouts, raising stipends for the female volunteers who were engaged to teach girls, and even speaking out against child marriage. A member of one council observed, "We women did not have any role in our girls' education, and communicating with the school was considered inappropriate...Now, going to school to ask about my daughter is considered normal."

Girls can act as gatekeepers for other girls, discouraging them from taking actions that challenge local gender norms—sometimes through insults, ostracism or violence. Yet with practice, girls can also become each other's champions and role models. Participants in CARE leadership projects often encouraged their co-participants and other girls to envision new opportunities and try new things.

In Tanzania, Sekelaga's ability to express herself and make decisions grew as she took part in extracurricular activities. She took on a leadership role at school and led a scouting group. Eventually, she became the speaker of the "Girls' Parliament" in her ward (administrative division). "I thought that I could not do it, but now I feel capable," said Sekelaga. "My friends are always encouraging me in my leadership activities. One of them told me that if I managed to lead a scout's group, I will also manage to lead the parliament. Now I speak loudly and confidently."



**Schools and Communities:** CARE works with numerous people in their capacity as educators and school administrators, and as community leaders—from elected officials to traditional chiefs, from volunteer mentors to members of community-based organizations such as PTAs and mothers’ groups. This array of actors advocates for new norms and even for new policies on girls’ rights and freedoms. (We use the word policy here to indicate a verbal or written change to routines, typically at the community level.) Some **Egyptian** villages, as discussed above, enacted a new policy granting girls unfettered access to youth centers one day a week, and girls and boys jointly participated in school unions and Core Groups. A group of chiefs in **Malawi** established a policy that parents who kept their child—girl or boy—out of school to perform domestic chores would be fined. Teachers followed with a rule that the parents of children with unexcused absences must come to school for a meeting.

Thus signs of normative change can be seen in girls’ greater freedom to be in public, to play sports, to go to school and to interact more freely with each other and with boys. While modest on the surface, these changes show the beginnings of important cultural shifts, and a greater acceptance of girls’ and women’s rights. Carefully managed, these shifts can open the door to more substantial change.

**Boys:** Boys’ participation in our girls’ leadership projects is crucial for two reasons. First, community leaders and parents in many countries are simply unwilling to support an initiative that benefits girls but not boys. And at several of CARE’s project sites, boys became jealous and threatened violence against girls until they too were invited to join activities.

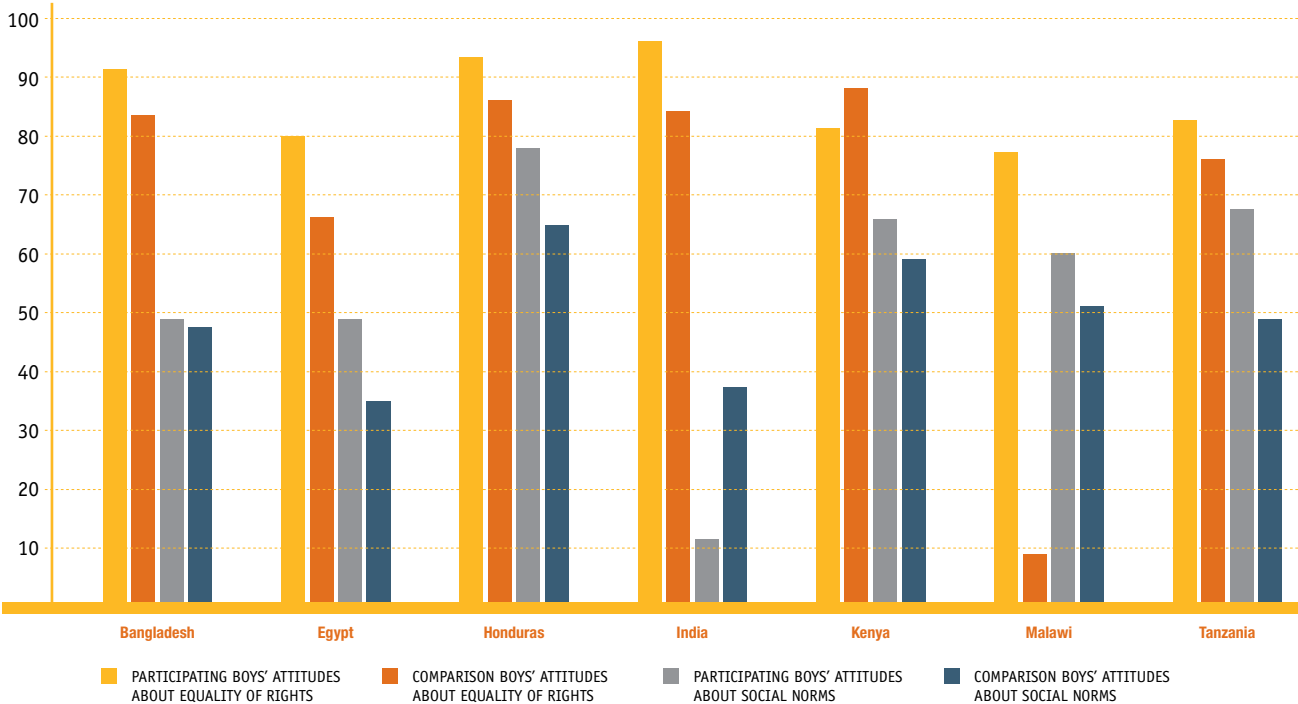
Second, and ultimately more important: with help to change their attitudes and behaviors, boys can become powerful allies for girls’ rights. CARE’s final evaluations of PTLA and ITSPLY found changed dynamics between boys and girls in all eight countries. Engaging in joint activities—such as debate team, school government or other co-educational extracurricular events—enabled boys to experience firsthand the capabilities of their female peers, and many changed their perceptions as a result. Some even became champions of girls’ rights, as seen in activists against “Eve-teasing” in **Bangladesh**, boys who joined PET in **Malawi**, and boys engaged in Youth Groups in **Honduras**.



In **India**, CARE noticed that structured activities for boys and girls led, somewhat unexpectedly, to younger boys’ greater unstructured engagement with girls. Boys took an interest in learning to sew, bake and help with household work. Some participated in sewing competitions, and were able to articulate a deliberate intention to disrupt the social norms associated with such activities. CARE noted, however, that this blurring of gender roles was not seen with older boys. In **Bangladesh**, meanwhile, CARE was deliberate in initiating activities that helped boys see the world from a girl’s point of view. In one exercise, boys donned the *hijab*, or headscarf that girls and women must wear, and attempted to engage in vigorous play while keeping their heads and shoulders modestly covered. The boys discovered that—contrary to their initial assumptions—girls were not necessarily bad at sports. Rather, a social norm meant that girls were physically encumbered in ways that boys were not.

CARE’s **Gender Equity Index (GEI)** was administered to participating and comparison boys during final evaluations of the multi-country PTLA and ITSPLY initiatives. Figure 7 shows the proportion of boys’ responses that indicated a favorable attitude toward equal rights and more equitable social norms.

**Figure 7: Percent of Participating and Comparison Boys’ Positive Responses on the GEI**



In most countries, participating boys demonstrated a greater appreciation of equality of rights, and more positive changes in their perceptions of gendered responsibilities and gendered social norms than did their non-participating peers. However, in **India** and **Kenya**, the percentage of positive responses was lower among participating boys than the comparison group. In these two cases, evidence points to a more nuanced understanding among participants of what equality of rights involves, coupled with a deeper awareness of what is needed to bring about change at all levels of society, which may result in less positive answers than the comparison group.

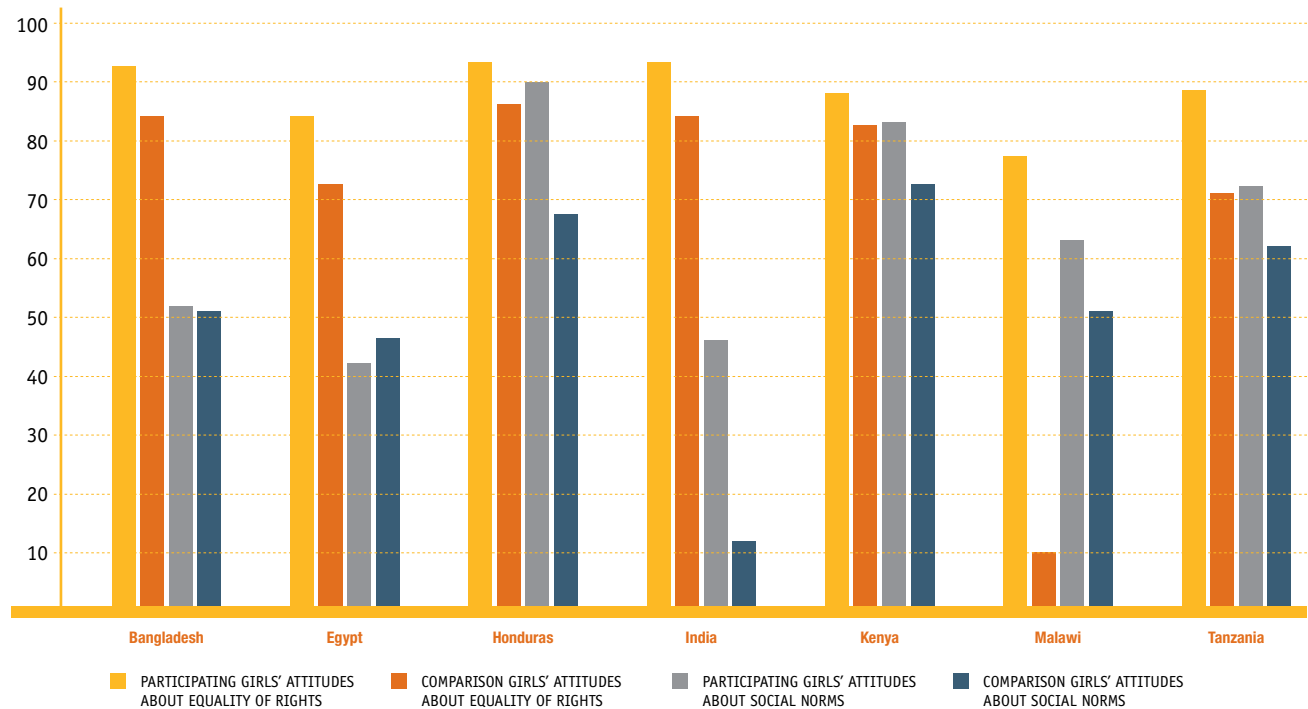
These generally positive results are only a beginning, and CARE recognizes that much more must be done to sustain and expand these early gains. Data from focus group discussions (also part of the PTLA and ITSPLY final evaluations) revealed a fair amount of discrepancy between boys’ self-reported attitudes and beliefs,

and their behavior, as self-reported or reported by girls. In **Egypt**, for example, boys may “know” about social changes underway, but still feel strongly about traditional gender norms and have difficulty changing their behaviors. Nearly 100 percent of **Egyptian** boys agreed that girls have the same right as boys to express their opinions, but many held reservations about the value of those opinions, especially within families. One said, “Parents select the boy’s opinion because God gifted boys with good thinking.” The majority of active boys in Tanzania agreed that girls have the same right to education, but several qualified that right by insisting, “In our area, boys are first.”

### iii. Girls’ Changing View of Rights and Social Norms

When evaluators of PTLA and ITSPLEY administered the GEI with adolescent girls—participant and comparison groups—two phenomena emerged. First, as can be seen in Figure 8, participating girls scored higher than comparison girls in attitudes about equality of rights and social norms. In most cases, the differences were statistically significant. Second, almost all girls were more likely to respond positively to statements about equal rights than they were to statements about social norms.

**Figure 8: Percent of Participating and Comparison Girls’ Positive Responses on the GEI**



Focus group discussions with girls revealed their awareness that others in their environment—boys and men, notably—demonstrated resistance to changes in social norms, and this may partially explain the difference between positive responses to equality of rights statements (participating girls in six of seven countries scored above 80 percent) and positive responses to social norm statements (participating girls in only two countries scored above 70 percent). In other words, girls’ social norms responses may reflect their experiences rather than their ideals. A girl in **Honduras** explained, “Women support us when we play football. Boys do not support us when we win in football; they say that girls are not for playing football because...we make so many mistakes and we are weak. Men make comments like, ‘Football is for men, not women.’” In **Malawi**, girls observed that boys behaved rudely after participating in the *gule wamkulu* rite of passage to manhood, which reinforces traditional male power roles.



#### iv. Building Partners' Capacities

CARE seeks partnerships with, and builds capacities of, local organizations as a matter of principle: by working with others, we extend the scope and impact of an intervention, and lay the groundwork for continued change even after our formal role in a project ends.

Social change usually results from a combination of pressure from below—acts of individual courage, grassroots activism—and from above—new laws and social policies, but is always most effective when it comes from *within* a society. One of CARE's global standards leads us to "work with others to maximize the impact of our programs, building alliances and partnerships with those who offer complementary approaches, are able to adopt effective programming approaches on a larger scale, and/or who have responsibility to fulfil rights and reduce poverty through policy change and enforcement." The latter part of this statement—to fulfill rights and reduce poverty through policy change<sup>17</sup>—becomes especially important when it comes to provoking and sustaining social change.

In the PTLA and ITSPLY projects, CARE built capacities at two levels. First, we honed capacities *within* partner organizations as needed to implement girls' leadership activities, including the operational—financial and human resource management, for example—and the technical—incorporating leadership skills, integrating gender issues, guiding social analysis and action.

Second, we promoted alliances *between* partner organizations, from the grassroots to the national level—from community-based organizations and local non-profits to Ministries of Education—so they could (a) support each other's mastery of organizational and technical issues, (b) jointly implement leadership projects and jointly advocate for changed practices and policies, and (c) sustain activities for girls over the long term.

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<sup>17</sup> In our discussion of gatekeepers, we used the word 'policy' to mean a verbal or written change to routines, typically at the community level. Here, we expand the definition to also encompass the possibility of formal policy at governmental level and national scale.



# WHAT GIRLS' LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ARE TEACHING US

This initial period of girls' leadership projects—the roughly three years in which CARE put the *Girls' Leadership Model*, as described in this paper, into practice—included especially strong investments in girls themselves. Borrowing terminology from our women's empowerment framework, we can say that the several dozen leadership projects invested in agency gains for participating girls. Indeed, in most cases, CARE built girls' leadership into ongoing projects, such as girls' education, that were focused on agency.

Yet CARE knows that effecting change in individuals—in this case, the girls who gained leadership competencies and opportunities to practice them—is easier and faster than fostering and supporting the deeper social change that will sustain the gains of individual girls. Our leadership projects confirm what our women's empowerment work has taught us: enacting durable change in the gendered social norms that dictate men's and women's opportunities, roles, behaviors and powers is the more time-consuming and complex task.

For the more than two dozen countries where CARE has identified adolescent girls as a key impact group, the many lessons we have drawn from our girls' leadership projects to date have direct implications for ongoing and future programming.

## **Building leadership on a foundation of education was the right choice**

Our work confirmed several assumptions that CARE made when we chose to construct our *Girls' Leadership Model* on the foundation of quality, equitable primary education. First, basing our leadership projects and activities within the school framework was the right decision: schools were already—or became, with negotiation—a place outside the home where girls were permitted to spend time. Schools provide a physical structure in which to launch activities, and a staffing and resource framework that both accelerate and support leadership projects.

Secondly, adolescents themselves taught us that their participation in leadership projects enhanced their educational performance, attendance and retention. And some girls began to take an active and vocal role in the quality and equality of their own schooling. In short, girls apply their new skills and confidence to the schoolroom, for the potential benefit of all students.

### **School systems should not be the sole partners in leadership projects**

Working only with schools may simplify and streamline project implementation, but a variety of partners—including community-based organizations—adds breadth and variety, and more firmly connects activities to the communities in which the adolescent girls live.

### **School facilities may not provide all the space girls need**

Girls must have physical space, resources and materials to undertake leadership activities. Negotiating girls' safe access to existing space—youth centers reserved for boys, school facilities outside school hours—takes a great deal of time, and sometimes nets a sub-par outcome—access for girls only one day a week, for example. If needed, leadership projects, along with the communities, should plan to build or refurbish facilities where girls can freely engage in sports and other activities.

### **Boys and men must be deliberately involved from the beginning**

Involving boys earlier in the program and offering more opportunities for men to engage will ultimately lead to greater success for girls and help bolster girls' agency gains with structural change. It may be useful for CARE's leadership projects to target young boys, who are more likely to be open to notions of equality than older boys, and who may succeed in maintaining changed attitudes into their adolescent and adulthood—and influence others along the way. Project designs must include adequate allocations, such as time, staff and money, for men and boys' engagement from the beginning.

### **Changing attitudes, norms and behaviors takes time**

While much progress can be made in the course of a few years, changing attitudes requires extensive and repeated efforts: mobilizing support, training participants, providing opportunity to practice newly developed skills, and waiting for individual and social outcomes to emerge.

### **Girls' leadership initiatives have more to teach us**

CARE's girls' leadership work to date has provided an intriguing body of knowledge and experience that we intend to build upon in several ways:

- Determine how to follow leadership participants over time, fortify the gains they have made and track the impact of participation on their lives and life choices.
- Further explore the relationship between girls' leadership and women's empowerment, and how to positively support it.
- Borrow new lessons and techniques from CARE's and others' work in gender-transformative opportunities for boys and men, and apply them within the context of the *Girls' Leadership Model*.
- Further develop and refine monitoring and evaluation instruments, both qualitative and quantitative, to detect change in and impact on attitudes, behaviors and norms.

## Concluding Remarks

CARE's girls' leadership work to date provides evidence to support our theory that education is at the foundation of girls' well-being and indeed their empowerment, but that we can better serve girls—and the women they will become—by acknowledging the complex sociocultural environments in which they live. Leadership skills, in addition to basic education, help girls to analyze and act, alone or in coalition with others, to challenge that environment and make it one in which they can thrive. At the same time, thoughtful leadership projects can prepare others in the environment—mothers, fathers, leaders, boys—to reconsider and alter the socially constructed norms that keep girls marginalized.

Girls in dozens of countries around the world have proved their ability to gain leadership skills. They have demonstrated their avid interest in leadership activities, including those, like athletics, that challenge basic societal notions of what girls can and should do. CARE knows that helping an individual to change—to gain skills, to hone and use her talents—is the easiest and quickest type of effect that our projects can have.

But we also know that the changes an individual makes can be easily reversed or sidelined if not supported by the people and social structures around her. Fostering social change is a complex and long-term process. CARE's ***Girls' Leadership Model*** is a worthy guide, clarifying that society as a whole has the responsibility to support girls in their quest for empowerment. CARE's girls' leadership projects demonstrate that girls, boys, parents and leaders can participate in and progressively take responsibility for working toward the change we seek: adolescent girls acting alone and with others to realize their human rights in an environment that supports them to do so.



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[www.care.org](http://www.care.org)

### Headquarters

#### CARE USA

151 Ellis Street, NE  
Atlanta, GA 30303-2440  
USA

T) 404-681-2552

F) 404-589-2650

[genderandempowerment@care.org](mailto:genderandempowerment@care.org)

#### CARE Washington DC

1825 I Street, NW, Suite 301  
Washington, DC 20006  
USA

T) 202-595-2800

F) 202-296-8695

[genderandempowerment@care.org](mailto:genderandempowerment@care.org)

Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year CARE worked in 84 countries and reached 122 million people around the world. To learn more, visit [www.care.org](http://www.care.org).

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