

# CARE International UK Strategy 2023-2026: Women's Voice and Leadership is at the centre of what we do

Focus: *Women's Voice and Leadership*



Women's voice and leadership gives women and girls the ability to actively participate and take a leading role in the decisions that affect them. Through this we can ensure all people have the power and space to define a more equal and just world.



# Why are we putting Women's Voice and Leadership at the centre of our Strategy?

**All people, of all genders, all ages, all abilities have a fundamental right to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.** Yet we know that many people are excluded from exercising power. This particularly affects women, girls and marginalised groups (including people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities). They are expected to remain silent. Their experiences are trivialised and ignored; their fundamental rights are denied.

Women's equal voice and leadership means that everyone has the opportunity and ability to meaningfully participate in decision-making at all levels of society and government. **Meaningful participation** requires that people not only have access to or are present within decision-making processes but have influence over their format and outcomes.

At CARE we know:

- 1 To be effective we must address the many ways in which people are excluded from the spaces and power structures that affect their lives.**
- 2 CARE's mission to fight for a world without poverty and social injustice means focusing on those who are most discriminated against. Often this is women and girls, however we must also acknowledge and address the many other diverse forms of discrimination that affect people.**
- 3 If we don't integrate Women's Voice and Leadership, we risk reinforcing the injustice we seek to address.**

Sorya a garment worker Takeo,  
Cambodia  
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For these reasons CARE International UK (CIUK) makes the commitment that by 2026 Women's Voice and Leadership will be at the centre of all our work, ensuring we support impactful, sustainable and meaningful change.

# How do we work with Women?

**In all spheres of life, and in all our work we must ensure that women have the right to decide their own futures. CARE supports:**

- **Women within their households** to have the power to participate in household decisions, to exercise their reproductive health rights, to live lives free from violence and abuse, and to ensure they do not disproportionately bear the burden of unpaid work.
- **Women within their workplace** to have the power to exercise their rights, negotiate for better conditions, be free from violence, abuse and harassment, and have equal access to resources, assets and opportunities.
- **Women within their communities** to have the freedom to choose where and how they participate in community life, how they interact with others, and the power to be able to access resources, and influence decision-making.
- **Women to shape societies** so that public life, laws, policies, and services are responsive to their needs and wants, and ensure social justice.
- **Women's Voice and Leadership** is also vital to our effectiveness and impact as an organisation. This means supporting and making space for women individually and collectively (women's rights organisations and women-led organisations) to **influence us** as well as others, our programming and our response.

# What does this mean for how we work?

CIUK will look to ensure that all of our work, and our operations as an organisation, support changes in the power structures which prevent women from raising their voice, participating in the decisions that affect their lives, and leading.

**We will programme to support women's voice and leadership.** Our programmes should **explicitly speak to ensuring women's equal and meaningful participation in formal and informal decision-making spaces within the spheres in which we are working.**

For example, if we are supporting women in agricultural value chains we must seek to support women, groups of women, and/or women's organisations (e.g. through producer groups or agricultural unions) to have voice in those value chains, to be able to claim their rights, individually and collectively address the issues that affect them. We must also work with power holders in value chains to help dismantle the structures which hinder gender equality.

Women on the Move is a CARE regional strategy to mobilise savings group in West Africa, including Niger  
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## **We must hold ourselves accountable to Women's Voice and Leadership**

Our approach to our work should explicitly make space for all participants – and specifically women and girls – to meaningfully influence programming approaches. Organisationally, we must be accountable to our partners and to those we work with: seeking input and feedback and acting upon it.

Where possible, we should give budget and power to participants so they can make their own choices about what they need. When this is not possible, our budgets must allow for us to meaningfully respond to this feedback, and we must design our activities to do this well.

## **We must be positive partners to WROs and WLOs**

CIUK will look to rebalance the way in which we partner in order to facilitate more locally-led approaches to programming. This will include prioritising partnership with women-led organisations and women's rights organisations.

This means deliberately seeking to partner in equitable and meaningful ways with WROs and WLOs:

- working to support their expressed needs
- de-risking their participation
- supporting their leadership
- ceding or making space for their voice and participation

## **We will change the narrative**

In the way we communicate and in the way we devise our advocacy strategies, a focus should be on demonstrating the power of Women's Voice and Leadership. This means, giving time and space for the women and girls that they work with to tell their own stories. CIUK will live the values of the [Pledge for Change](#) by supporting women-led advocacy and ensuring all our advocacy activities work to transform structures, laws, and policies that hinder gender equality.

Shopna is an Acting Supervisor at NRN Knitting and Garments Ltd, one of three factories taking part in the two-year pilot project Empowering Women Workers in Bangladesh, funded by Cotton On Group.  
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## What We Stand For

### Vision

A world of hope, inclusion, and social justice, where poverty is overcome, and all people live in dignity and security.

### Mission

Save lives. Defeat poverty. Achieve social justice.

### Focus

We cannot overcome poverty until everyone, everywhere has equal rights and opportunities – that's why women and girls are central to our work.

Above photo: Women from the Matu Masu Dubara Network of Tam in Diffa, Niger, with Aminatou Galadima, manager of one of our Women Lead in Emergencies pilot projects. Photo © Olliver Girard/CARE 2019

Font cover photo: Village Savings & Loans Association (VSLA), East Darfur, Sudan. Photo © Ala kheir/CARE



Registered office  
CARE International UK  
c/o Ashurst LLP,  
London Fruit & Wool Exchange  
1 Duval Square  
London E1 6PW  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7091 60000

[careinternational.org.uk](https://careinternational.org.uk)  
[insights.careinternational.org.uk](https://insights.careinternational.org.uk)  
[lendwithcare.org](https://lendwithcare.org)

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