



Women's Economic Justice (WEJ) 2030 Strategy

Executive summary

The economic marginalization of women is a gross injustice that denies half of humanity their human rights and limits their freedom to pursue their potential. Promoting women's economic justice (WEJ) is the right thing to do. It is also the necessary thing to do to achieve gender equality, and advance social justice and sustainable development for all. CARE defines women's economic justice as the fulfilment of women's fundamental human right to economic resources and the power to make decisions that affect their lives. This requires women to have **equitable access to** and **control over** economic resources – including the time and opportunity to engage in economic activities – but importantly, it also requires **changes to discriminatory social norms and economic structures**, laws, policies and practices that marginalize women. CARE's goal is that 50 million women have more equitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities by 2030.

Women, in coalition with a wide range of stakeholders, have driven **significant gains towards women's economic justice**: there are more women in management positions; the gender gap in starting new businesses is narrowing; a new ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (ILO C190) has been adopted; and governments across Sub-Saharan Africa have recognized the power of informal savings groups. However, **COVID-19** has exposed and exacerbated the deep inequalities in our societies and economic systems and **threatens to roll back decades of progress**. Increasing risks from climate change, political instability, concentrated private sector power and a growing dependence on digital technology threaten to compound barriers to women's economic justice even further. **Yet, there are still some shoots of hope** in the energy of growing youth movements, the potential for economic and leadership roles for women in a zero-carbon economy and the use of technology as a force for good. There is also a significant movement to decolonize the aid sector to support an agenda which is inclusive, anti-racist and gender responsive.

CARE must adapt our ways of working to respond to these threats and harness these opportunities, so that in partnership with others, we can protect and accelerate progress towards women's economic justice. To do this, we must:

- Ground our work in CARE's Gender Equality Framework and **invest in our ability to transform unequal power relations and discriminatory economic structures**.
- **Build on our successes of working in partnership** to scale up Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs); promote dignified work for women garment and domestic workers; advocate for ratification and implementation of ILO C190; support women's entrepreneurship; and adapt our WEJ programming in fragile and complex contexts.
- **Continue to focus on the most economically marginalized women**, with attention to how economic structures further discriminate against women based on intersecting aspects of identity, such as ethnicity, race, class, age, sexual orientation, physical ability and immigration status. Our sub-impact groups will include workers, entrepreneurs and small-scale producers, as well as VSLA members and women engaged in unpaid care work.

- **Prioritize key areas** where CARE and partners will deliver change: from strengthening women’s aspirations and awareness of rights; to supporting space for women’s voice and leadership; and advocating for and influencing market policies, institutions and systems.
- **Commit to continuous learning**, identifying which approaches are impactful and replicable, and contribute to gender equality outcomes and to the sustainable advancement of women’s economic justice at scale.

CARE cannot, and should not, do this alone. We can only achieve women’s economic justice by joining with women, feminist movements, civil society, private sector allies and governments to transform the discriminatory structures, systems and norms that exclude women, so that they can fulfil their economic rights and aspirations.

Rationale for the Strategy

CARE GLOBAL VISION AND MISSION

CARE’s 2030 Vision strengthens our rights-based approach, accelerates our journey to shift power from north to south and puts gender equality at the heart of everything we do.¹ We have done this in recognition that gender equality is a human right and is also necessary to achieve CARE’s mission to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. CARE’s strategy for Women’s Economic Justice builds on this vision. Women’s inequitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities is a gross injustice that denies women their human rights and limits their freedom to pursue their potential.

Women’s economic justice: CARE defines **women’s economic justice** as the fulfilment of women’s fundamental human **right** to economic resources and the **power** to make decisions that affect their lives. This requires women to have **equitable access to** and **control over** economic resources – including the time and opportunity to engage in economic activities – but importantly, it also requires **changes to discriminatory social norms and economic structures**, laws, policies and practices that marginalize women.

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Women, in coalition with a wide range of stakeholders, have driven **global gains towards women’s economic justice:** the number of women in management positions is increasing;² in some countries the gender gap in founding startups is narrowing;³ a new ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work has been adopted; and there has been government recognition of the power of savings groups as a tool that can support social safety nets,⁴ as well as the economic and political participation of marginalized women. 2020 witnessed the resilience of women – adapting their businesses, adopting technology, and supporting their communities in response to COVID-19. Despite these breakthroughs, **barriers to women’s economic justice remain widespread and deeply rooted** in the prevailing legal and political structures, social norms and market systems:

- **Discriminatory legal and political structures**, such as patriarchal property and inheritance laws, limit women’s control over land and assets;⁵ other laws result in unequal wage rates⁶ or fail to address gender-based violence in the world of work.⁷ The underrepresentation of women in politics also limits women’s voice and leadership in public life, creating a vicious cycle of political and economic systems that do not take women’s needs, contributions or aspirations into account.
- **Entrenched social norms** restrict women’s rights and influence within the economic systems that keep women marginalized. They mean women have less access to and time to engage in economic activities due to the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work that is traditionally

shouldered by women.⁸ Norms and beliefs can limit women's freedoms outside the home and dictate the jobs and spaces available to them. This is compounded for women facing intersecting forms of discrimination due to their age, marital status, religion, ability, race, ethnicity, caste and sexual orientation, amongst others.

- **Exclusionary market systems** are evident in workplace policies that prevent women's career progression, or in the lack of financial products and services designed for and accessible to women, which means that just one in three businesses (usually informal and small-scale⁹) are run by women.¹⁰ Current market systems operate without accountability and prevent women's equal participation.¹¹ This can result in women being concentrated in precarious forms of employment with limited access to rights. An increasing dependence on technology threatens to exclude women even further, if more is not done to close the Digital Divide.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed these structural fault lines, but threatens to roll back decades of progress. Initial data suggest women are 1.8 times more likely to have lost jobs during the crisis¹² and are doing more unpaid care and domestic work.¹³ COVID-19 has also highlighted the lack of universal social protection for diverse groups of women. Yet, fewer than one in five initial COVID-19 social protection measures have been assessed to be gender sensitive.¹⁴

Global trends threaten to compound obstacles to women's economic justice. The next ten years will see the world deal with the fallout of COVID-19, including an anticipated increase in multiple forms of inequality, as well as increasing risks from climate change and other protracted crises.¹⁵ An estimated 60% of the world's poor will live in a fragile or conflict-affected state by 2030.¹⁶ Globally, we are seeing patterns of increased political polarization,¹⁷ shrinking civic space, concentrated private sector power, and an increased dependence on digital technology.

There are also positive trends that will enable the global community to double down on women's economic justice and gender equality: the energy of a growing youth population and their movements, the potential for economic and leadership roles for women in a zero-carbon economy¹⁸ and the use of technology as a force for good. There is also a growing focus on decolonizing the aid sector, recognizing power imbalances and making it inclusive, anti-racist and gender-just.

CARE must adapt its ways of working to respond to these threats and harness these opportunities, so that in partnership with others, we can protect and accelerate progress towards women's economic justice.

CARE'S VALUE ADD

CARE stands in solidarity with women living in poverty and supports their efforts to fulfil their economic rights and aspirations. We focus on supporting women to access financial services, participate in dignified work, and thrive as entrepreneurs and small-scale producers.¹⁹ Since 2014, CARE has contributed to the economic empowerment¹ of **11.6 million women**. CARE's greatest value-add is the **depth of our gender expertise**. CARE's women's economic empowerment programming has a strong record of contributing to positive change in the agency domain of **CARE's Gender Equality Framework**.²⁰ Now we need to invest in our ability to transform unequal power relations and discriminatory economic structures.

We can only do this by working in **partnership** with others. We have carved out a role as a global connector: bringing women together, building partnerships, and connecting women and communities to duty-bearers in ways that transform and accelerate change. We commit to building new and more inclusive, equitable partnerships, particularly with feminist organizations, Women's Rights Organizations and social movements.²¹ At the heart of CARE's work is our **connection to communities** and trust earned over decades of listening to women. We must build on this to ensure that our programming and advocacy **promotes women's voice and leadership** and responds to women's own aspirations for social and economic change.

Since 1991, the **VSLA model** has played an important role supporting group members — 81% of whom are

¹ Here we refer to "economic empowerment" in acknowledgement of the fact that our past programming has not always been as gender transformative as we aspire to be. Elsewhere in this section we refer to "economic justice" as we cite examples from our programming that have contributed to positive change in the relations and structures domains of CARE's Gender Equality Framework.

women – to increase their access to and control over resources. Over time, complemented with tools that engage men, community members and market actors, VSLA participants gain increased influence over decisions in their homes and beyond. VSLAs, often independently of CARE, routinely support each other to set up small businesses, negotiate fair prices in the marketplace, advocate for gender equality in their communities, and pursue public office. Our [VSLA Scaling Strategy](#) outlines a priority focus to work with women and partners to support more women to form high-quality savings groups, and to use their collective power to define their own priorities, demand their rights and achieve their goals.

CARE has promoted **industry-wide change for women in the garment industry** by partnering with women workers and their organizations and advocating for better public policies and business practices that respect the rights of workers. This includes strategies to address workplace violence, including a sexual harassment prevention package for garment factories and coordinated global advocacy in support of the **ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment (190)**.²² CARE’s long-term support of the domestic worker movement in Latin America includes joint advocacy in support of ILO Convention 190 and an **ILO Convention on Domestic Workers (189)**, as well as seeking large-scale **changes to how society values care and domestic work**. Our work with garment and domestic workers shows some progress in [how CARE supports social movements](#), but we need to go further in our role as ally, convener, amplifier and resource partner.

CARE has supported hundreds of thousands of **women entrepreneurs** to develop and grow their businesses and to have more control over their economic resources. Beyond strengthening women’s aspirations and skills, our entrepreneurship programming also tackles structural barriers by increasing access to market information and the digital economy,²³ increasing women’s leadership and participation in the development of government policies,²⁴ co-developing gender-equitable financial products and services,²⁵ and working in allyship with men and boys to challenge patriarchal social norms.²⁶

CARE works at the nexus of life-saving humanitarian assistance and development programming. We have growing experience adapting our women’s economic justice programming in fragile and complex contexts to support some of the most marginalized and vulnerable,²⁷ including specific approaches for women entrepreneurs.²⁸ Our work on resilient market systems in the MENA region highlights the importance of private sector engagement and market-based approaches,²⁹ including gender-sensitive cash and voucher based assistance.³⁰ We will continue to use and scale-up market-based approaches that build resilience. CARE is already working to expand its VSLA in Emergencies work,³¹ which provides a significant opportunity to work across the nexus, promote women’s leadership and contribute to life-saving response and protection at scale.

Women’s Economic Justice Impact Goal (2 pages)

IMPACT GOAL

We believe people of all genders have the **right** to economic resources and opportunities, and the **power** to make decisions that benefit themselves, their families and their communities. This requires women to have **equitable access to** and **control over** economic resources, including the time and opportunity to engage in economic activities.

In our pursuit of women’s economic justice, CARE commits to model and support feminist forms of leadership and partnership that enable people of all genders to change the way economies and societies work, so that they are inclusive of and benefit everyone.

2030 Goal: 50 million women have more equitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities.

CARE's Women's Economic Justice Theory of Change

The Women's Economic Justice Theory of Change (Figure 1) is based on catalyzing change at three levels in line with [CARE's Gender Equality Framework](#):

- **Agency:** Women have the choice, capability and confidence to identify, pursue and realize their economic rights and aspirations.
- **Relations:** Women have the power in their homes, communities and places of work to individually or collectively influence, negotiate and make economic decisions, in allyship with men.
- **Structures:** Formal and informal power holders work to build economic systems that are gender-just and equitable.

The elements of the Women's Economic Justice Theory of Change (ToC) are interrelated, with for example women's power and collective voice influencing formal and informal power holders. A primary objective of the ToC is to place the onus on the right actors to make the changes needed. For systemic change to happen, power holders have an important role to play.

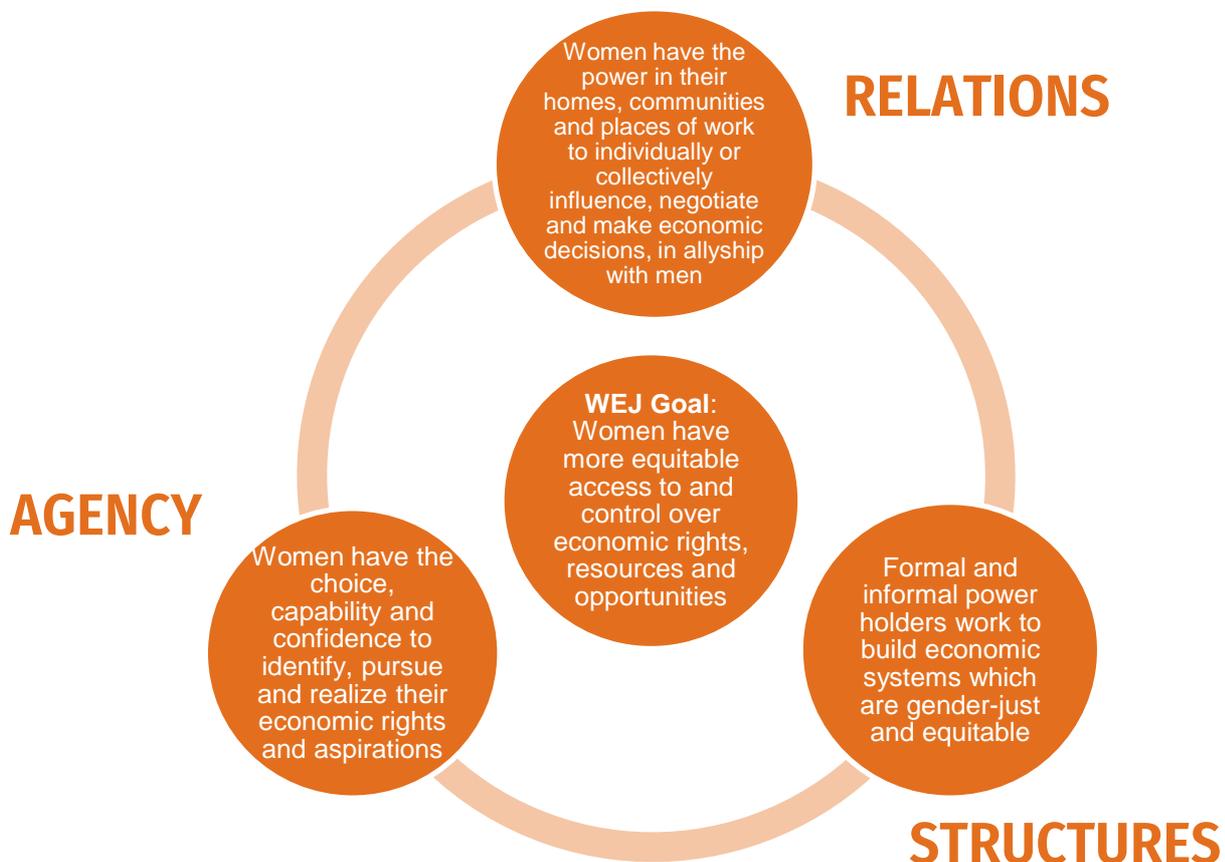


Figure 1: CARE's Theory of Change for Women's Economic Justice

CARE's Women's Economic Justice Theory of Action

The Women's Economic Justice Theory of Action (Figure 2), the delivery mode for the Theory of Change, highlights the priorities needed to achieve our goal of 50 million women having more equitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities by 2030. It highlights the core elements of our programming, building on the work that has been done, including dignified work, financial inclusion and entrepreneurship. CARE and partners will work with women to define their own goals.

CARE will work with and learn from Women’s Rights Organizations, trade unions and others seeking to achieve women’s economic justice, and we will align our agenda globally and in each region with their agendas. This Theory of Action (ToA) can be adapted to meet emerging changes in fluid contexts – either connected to human-made crises (i.e. fragile and conflict-affected settings with forcibly displaced persons) and/or natural disasters. The framework not only recognizes the unique contexts, but also the different degrees of severity – whether it is acute humanitarian fragility, early recovery stage, or a nexus context with potential to work on post-crisis stability.

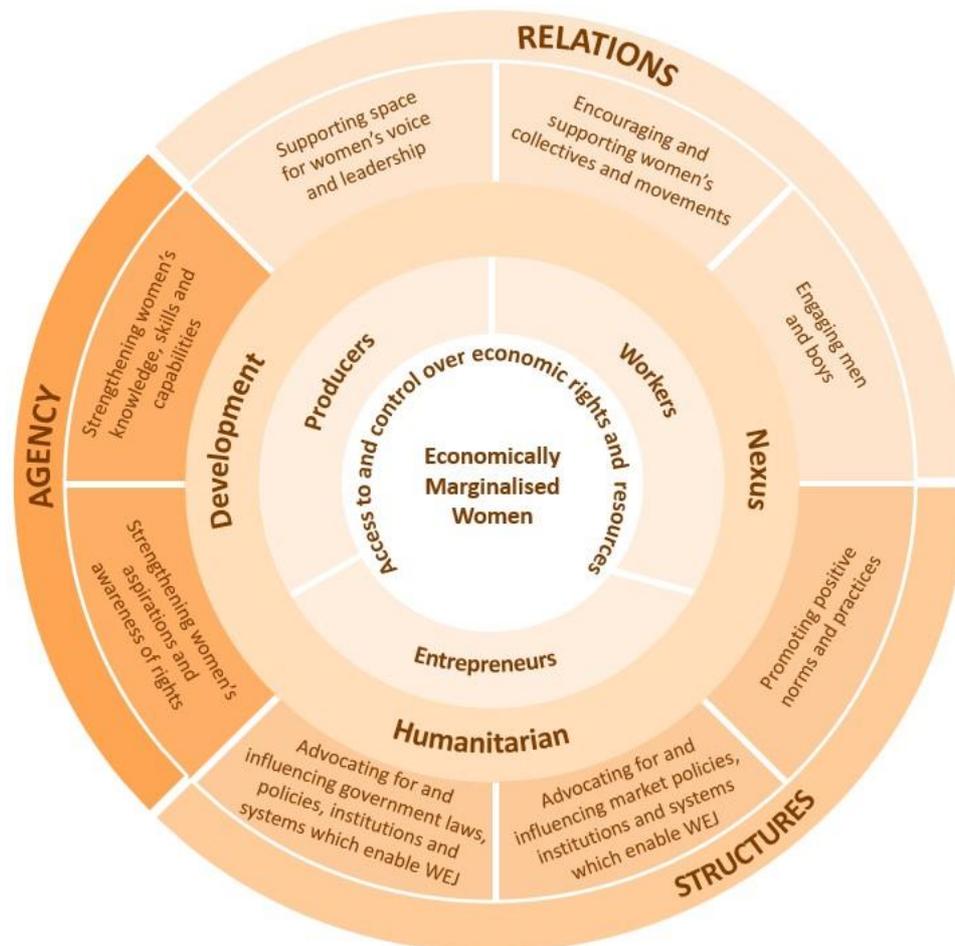


Figure 2: CARE's Theory of Action for Women's Economic Justice

The following interconnected priorities reflect CARE’s Theory of Action and the core elements of programming. By working with women and partners, we will support the collective achievement of women’s economic justice by focusing on women’s economic agency, their power to make economic decisions (relations) and transforming economic structures which limit their power:

Women have agency to realize economic rights and aspirations

Strengthening women’s aspirations and awareness of rights: CARE and partners will work alongside women, expanding their understanding of their economic rights (in their households, communities, workplaces and markets), their economic opportunities and how economic inequality and power affect their lives. We will partner with women to translate knowledge into action towards realizing those rights.

Strengthening women’s knowledge, skills and capabilities: Through CARE’s programming, women will strengthen their knowledge and skills, so they have the choice, capability and confidence to pursue and realize their economic rights and aspirations. This includes, but is not limited to, financial literacy, digital literacy and skills, negotiation, business management, and leadership skills.

Women have the power to influence and make economic decisions

Encouraging and supporting women’s collectives and movements: We will work with partners to support the creation of VSLAs, worker and producer organizations, and other types of women’s collectives. We will work with women to network VSLAs through group-to-group collaboration, so collectively they can support their ambitions. We will link women’s collectives to social movements, so they can amplify their voices.

Engaging men and boys: We will work in allyship with men and boys (including their organizations, networks and platforms) to jointly influence economic power holders, institutions and systems, and address entrenched social and cultural patriarchal norms to transform gender stereotypes about caregiving and women’s and men’s roles in economic participation.

Supporting space for women’s voice and leadership: We will support economically marginalized women to access decision-making spaces, where they can take the lead on economic decisions that affect their lives. We will support space for women to challenge and transform the unequal power relations and decision-making structures that deny women’s economic rights – in the household, workplaces, markets and in all aspects of public and private life.

Power holders build gender-just and equitable economic systems

Promoting positive norms and practices: We seek to promote equitable gender norms within our programming and by building partnerships with women (individuals and groups), Community Based Organizations and Women’s Rights Organizations, in order to support their efforts to transform discriminatory social and gender norms that are barriers to women’s economic justice. Social norms sustained by communities, power holders and within institutions – for example norms that sanction gender-based violence and the inequitable distribution of unpaid care and domestic work – prevent gender-just and equitable economic systems.

Advocating for and influencing market policies, institutions and systems which enable women’s economic justice: CARE together with partners, and in support of feminist social movements, will influence the policy, practice and culture of business and financial institutions and the power holders within them, to provide equitable access, voice and resources to economically marginalized women. We will continue to partner with and influence national and global companies, including financial services providers, to deliver gender-just and inclusive products and services, and to protect and respect women’s economic rights in their operations and their supply chains.

Advocating for and influencing government laws, policies, institutions and systems which enable women’s economic justice: CARE and partners, in collaboration with feminist social movements, will influence the transformation of inequitable economic structures, laws and policies that marginalize women – at local, sub-national, national and international levels. We will work with people at all levels, including duty-bearers, to ensure effective delivery of laws, programmes and policies, make services more accessible, and ensure that duty-bearers are held accountable to deliver public goods and services that are gender-just, inclusive and meet the needs of the most economically marginalized women.

CARE FOCUS

Impact populations

Our impact population is **economically marginalized women** who have no or limited access to and control over economic rights, resources and opportunities. They are often engaged in precarious and undervalued forms of paid and unpaid work – including unpaid care and domestic work – and have limited power over the economic and financial decisions (within households, communities, workplaces and markets) which affect their access to and control over economic resources, opportunities and rights. We will work with and alongside economically marginalized women and their organizations in rural, urban and peri-urban environments, and across development and humanitarian contexts, including fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Intersectionality: The specific forms of discrimination and economic marginalization faced by women are influenced by how they are able to engage in the economy and financial markets, and by their intersecting forms of identity. Women working in paid employment experience different barriers to accessing inclusive financial services than women entrepreneurs, while small-scale producers in agricultural value chains may experience different challenges to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of their unpaid care and domestic work to women who are refugees during a protracted crisis. Economic structures further marginalize and discriminate against women based on intersecting aspects of women's identities, such as ethnicity, race, class, age, sexual orientation, physical ability and immigration status. Two priority aspects of women's identities that this strategy focuses on are **young women (ages 18-35)** and **women living in fragile or conflict-affected contexts** (including women who have been displaced). CARE defines our priority sub-impact groups based on the different forms of economic engagement.

Workers: waged women workers with no or limited access to labor, social protections and economic rights, and who are often found working in the poorest paid, most precarious forms of work. Some key groups include:

- Women working in the garment sector
- Women domestic workers

Entrepreneurs: women-owned and women-run micro to small enterprises. Key groups include:

- Women who run (unregistered) microenterprises or engage in other income-generating activities in settings where other paid jobs are scarce.
- Women who run micro to small enterprises with the motivation for financial sustainability, wealth creation, or increased income. This group includes growth-oriented businesses.
- Women entrepreneurs in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

Producers: women small-scale producers engaged in food production (see CARE Right to Food, Water and Nutrition strategy³²) and other value chains. We will work together with women in the most marginalized livelihoods, including women-headed households and unpaid family labor in value chains.

We will also work with women who do not identify as workers, entrepreneurs or small-scale producers. This includes our work with economically marginalized women who engage in VSLAs and in some of our work with women living in fragile or conflict-affected contexts.

Food and Water Systems (FWS): CARE will implement its Women's Economic Justice impact area strategy synergistically with the **Right to Food, Water and Nutrition strategy**, whose goal is to strengthen systems that support empowered women to exercise their right to food, water, and nutrition.

This strategy is based on an integrated model involving eight interrelated pathways of change, which include social protection and local structures and systems; women's access to and control of inclusive markets, sustainable productive resources, water, sanitation and hygiene services; improved nutrition and ecosystems protection; and livelihoods diversification and rural development. FWS impact populations include women and girls living in water scarcity and who are small-scale food producers.

Target contexts and geographies

We will work where there is local demand for our work, where the need is greatest for the most economically marginalized women, where CARE and partners have knowledge and interest, and where funding is available. Within these criteria, we will work with women who are excluded from economic resources and opportunities and are concentrated in precarious and undervalued work in **low-income and low-middle income economies**.

We will also work in contexts where there are **protracted crises**, power is often in informal spaces and economies are fragile. This may be due to a range of reasons, including but not limited to climate change, resource scarcity, conflict or political insecurity. Women face compounded barriers to accessing their economic rights and making choices about their own lives. We will have a smaller but important focus in **humanitarian contexts** on women's access to and control over resources and decision-making power.

CARE will **deepen gains we have supported in specific regions** with our partners, such as dignified work for women garment workers in Asia and the domestic worker movement in Latin America, and VSLAs in sub-Saharan Africa, and where appropriate extend this support. We will do this through our work with partners and allies, and we will explore how CARE can build on, support and connect work towards women's economic justice through our impact at scale pathways.

RESULTS/MEASURABLE INDICATORS

With CARE's [Gender Equality Framework](#) at the center of the Women's Economic Justice strategy and Theory of Change, our three global indicators seek to capture the impact of Women's Economic Justice projects and programming in line with the Agency, Relations and Structures framework. The three global indicators can also be applied across CARE's diverse Women's Economic Justice programming:

1. # and % of women who have **increased capability** to participate equitably in economic activities (AGENCY)
2. # and % of women who have **meaningfully participated** in economic decision-making in (a) the household and/or (b) their workplace/community (RELATIONS)
3. # of new or amended policies, legislation, public programmes and/or budgets which impact women's equitable access to and control over economic resources (STRUCTURES)

These three global indicators, alongside supplementary indicators that target more specific elements of CARE's Women's Economic Justice programming (including VSLA membership, WEJ in humanitarian contexts, and engaging men and boys), will be used to measure progress towards our **impact goal**. By 2030, CARE aims to support **50 million women** to have more equitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities. Recognizing that some impact measurements may be slower due to project and evaluation timelines, the numeric impact target for the first three years of the 2030 strategy is **10 million**.

CARE's Women's Economic Justice and Gender Equality impact area teams will also work together to identify a means of measuring the contribution of Women's Economic Justice programming to CARE's Gender Equality impact goal. We will also work together across CARE's impact areas (including Humanitarian, Gender Equality, and Right to Food, Water and Nutrition) and CARE's pathways (including market-based approaches, social norms and advocacy) to align supplementary indicators and shared impact.

LEARNING

Learning and research will enable us to drive impact and change towards women's economic justice. We will develop purpose-driven learning and research to enable evidence-based decision-making by CARE, our partners and other key stakeholders who promote women's economic justice. We seek to be led by programme participants and stakeholders to help enhance locally-led programme impact and catalyze change. We also need to build our skills in feminist research and learning methods so that the stories and experiential narratives of those closest to our work are at the center of our approach. We commit to prioritizing equity analyses in our work to improve our understanding of how to impact people of all genders, in particular marginalized women. We will also learn from our successes and failures. Whilst we recognize learning is a challenge in a decentralized organization, we will work together across all impact areas at CARE, to learn and drive impact.

Learning questions: In line with CARE's 2030 Vision, our primary learning question is: **How does advancing women's economic justice contribute to the realization of gender equality?**

Within this we will focus on three areas of enquiry:

1. How do we determine which approaches are impactful and replicable, and can also contribute to the sustainable advancement of **women's economic justice at scale**?
2. How does advancing women's economic justice contribute to increased resilience and gender-transformative change in **humanitarian and nexus contexts**?
3. How can we work to drive changes in the **relations and structures** domains in women's economic justice?

How will we do this

GENDER EQUALITY AT THE HEART

CARE's Women's Economic Justice strategy is built on CARE's [Gender Equality Framework](#). CARE and partners seek to influence change at three levels – agency, relations and structures – so women have equitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities. In the Women's Economic Justice strategy, we will **build on our strong record of positive change at the agency level and invest in our ability to transform unequal power relations and discriminatory structures**. We will build on gender equality approaches and adapt them to women's economic justice outcomes with our partners and with feminist social movements.

We will strengthen our focus on **gender-based violence** both as a barrier to and a risk of women's economic justice programming. We will support spaces for **women's voice and leadership** so they can access decision-making spaces where they can take the lead on economic decisions that affect their lives. We also seek to **identify and build links with CARE's work on girl's education** as a core foundation of women's economic justice. We will continue to strengthen our work in engaging with men and boys for gender equality.

IMPACT AT SCALE PATHWAYS

We will contribute to women's economic justice beyond the direct work of CARE and our partners. We will do this primarily through the following interconnected pathways:

Impact at scale: Scaling and adapting proven models

CARE will work with partners to scale models that support women to strengthen their choice, capability and confidence, that help women increase their power to influence and negotiate in economic spaces, and that work with power holders and duty-bearers to build economic systems that are gender-just and equitable. Models to scale include:

- **Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs):** a model to increase access to and control over resources, and a platform for women to use their collective power to define their own priorities, demand their rights and achieve their goals.
- **VSLA in Emergencies (VSLAiE):** adaptation of the VSLA model which, when combined with cash and voucher assistance, can support improved outcomes for crisis-affected populations.
- **EKATA** (Empowerment, Knowledge and Transformative Action): community-based groups that build solidarity and critical awareness, and provide space for women's voice and leadership.
- **STOP:** a workplace-based model to prevent violence and harassment.
- **Community Score Card (CSC):** promotes participation, transparency, accountability and informed decision-making.
- **Women's entrepreneurship models:** support women to develop and grow their enterprises and to have more control over their economic resources.

Impact at scale: Advocacy

CARE's shift towards women's economic justice emphasizes the need to transform the underlying structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Long-term structural change requires targeted advocacy to change inequitable, oppressive and/or discriminatory laws, policies and institutions, and to build towards economic and financial systems that are gender-just, sustainable, inclusive and equitable.

CARE's Women's Economic Justice advocacy priorities will be defined at Country Office level, based on the regional and national context and programming priorities. CARE's global level advocacy will initially focus on three key themes that will be reviewed following consultation across the Confederation:

1. A gender-just, equitable, sustainable and inclusive economic **recovery from the COVID-19** crisis.
2. Wide **ratification and implementation of the ILO Convention on Violence and Harassment (190)**.
3. Optimizing opportunities presented by the Generation Equality Forum **Action Coalition on Women's Economic Justice and Rights**.

The global Women's Economic Justice Advocacy Team will work to identify and optimize opportunities to influence decisions and policy-making at the global level, and will work in partnership with others, particularly Women's Rights Organizations and local partners, to support their advocacy priorities and accelerate the women's economic justice agenda. For more information, see [Annex 1](#).

Impact at scale: Systems strengthening

CARE will work alongside our partners to strengthen the accountability of public and market systems and institutions to women themselves, in order to break down structural barriers to women realizing their economic rights. We seek to understand the formal and informal power dynamics that limit women's access to their economic rights through political economy analysis, so we can work with women and stakeholders to strengthen economic systems in development, humanitarian and nexus settings.

Impact at scale: Inclusive market-based approaches

Market-based approaches (MBAs) play an important role in CARE's 2030 impact goal for Women's Economic Justice. Alongside the VSLA scaling strategy, the MBAs that will have the largest impact are those that

enable women's equitable access to input and output markets, growing investment in women's entrepreneurship and impact investing that promotes women's economic justice. Other key impact drivers include advisory services to influence corporate Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) practices that enable women to realize their economic rights.

Impact at scale: Social norms

We will deepen impact by promoting positive gender norms and practices by tackling the social and cultural norms (such as those related to gender-based violence and unpaid care and domestic work) that act as persistent barriers to women's economic justice. We will adapt proven models and work with partners to challenge adverse norms in society and within institutions.

Impact at scale: Social movements

CARE will work as an ally, convener, resource partner and amplifier³³ of the voices of grassroots, feminist activists working towards women's economic justice, changing the way we engage and listen, respecting the autonomy, culture and identity of movements, and — where appropriate — prioritize movements' agenda and vision over ours. We recognize that there is a range of movements that express the voices and interests of diverse groups of women (for example domestic workers, garment workers, migrant workers) and we seek to engage across movements. In this initial strategy period, we will identify opportunities for CARE to play this role and develop the internal values and competencies to do this responsibly and effectively.

PARTNERSHIP

Partnership is central to CARE's global vision and to the achievement of the Women's Economic Justice impact goal. Within CARE's Women's Economic Justice programming and advocacy, we work with a diverse range of partners in different ways. This means there is sometimes a tension between partners with different objectives that we must be mindful of, for example between the private sector and social movements. To be a better partner, as articulated in CARE's partnership paper,³⁴ we recognize that this requires a shift in the way we work. We need to be more adaptable and flexible, and support partnerships based on reciprocity and mutuality. We need to recognize the power imbalances and inequities in the global aid system, and seek to redress this balance and support better outcomes for women's economic justice by shifting the power. We also need to shift our role to a convener, ally, resource partner and amplifier. We actively seek new partners that pursue a transformative agenda towards women's economic justice.

CARE will work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to support women's economic justice. We will build on the following partnerships and build new ones:

- **Women's Rights Organizations:** We seek to build on and develop partnerships with Women's Rights Organizations who advocate for and represent economically marginalized women.
- **Organizations promoting the rights of workers, producers and entrepreneurs:** We will build on and grow partnerships with organizations that represent our impact groups, such as trade unions.
- **Governmental institutions:** We will partner with governments, from local to regional institutions, to advocate for policy change, connect government duty-bearers with rights holders, and build the capacity of government institutions and service providers.
- International decision-makers, including **multilateral agencies:** We will build on and grow partnerships to influence structural change.
- **Financial institutions** (banks, MFIs, etc.): We will partner with financial institutions to develop fair and accessible financial products that target economically marginalized women.
- **Private sector** including multi-national and national companies: We will partner with companies to ensure respect for women's economic rights in their operations, markets and supply chains.

- **Investors:** We will partner with investors to use their influence to promote change in business policies and practices.
- **Peer organizations:** We will share knowledge and expertise, and work together to change imbalanced power dynamics in the development sector and support the decolonization of aid.

CONTEXTUAL ADAPTATION

CARE's Women's Economic Justice strategy lays out a common framework to enable change and it is intended that CARE and partners will adapt the approaches for different contexts.

Approaches adapted to humanitarian contexts, including fragile and conflict-affected settings, **need to be flexible and adaptable as situations develop**. CARE and partners will build on and adapt intersectional analysis tools to identify specific challenges related to women's economic justice, and maintain timely analysis on the needs of women in emergencies. This will include **Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA)** and **Emergency Preparedness Plans**. This will help to inform the most suitable programme adaptations for women in need of immediate support, as well as women who are economic actors (e.g. women-led businesses as suppliers in humanitarian crisis).

Women's economic justice is vital in the most severe humanitarian contexts, enabling women to better manage shocks and stresses. CARE and partners will leverage existing approaches that foster resilience. We will build on the work being done on **Cash and Voucher Assistance Plus (CVA+)** and **VSLA in Emergencies (VSLAiE)** which are used beyond humanitarian support as a safety net and are a vital step in promoting resilient market-based approaches in the long-term. Spaces like VSLAiE also help build women's aspirations and awareness of rights, and provide a platform for the **Women Lead in Emergencies** approach to promote women's voice and leadership, supporting women's collectives and – where relevant – women's movements to respond to the crises that affect them and their communities.

In some contexts, CARE and partners will be able to influence equitable policies and laws in fragile settings, while in certain conflict-affected areas, working with de facto governments might be very restricted. CARE will then seek to influence relevant market policies and institutions that enable women's economic justice, including access to finance, safe work environments, etc. CARE will also increase our focus on **engaging men and boys** to tackle harmful social and gender norms that often strengthen in humanitarian settings and act as a significant barrier to women's economic justice.

FUNDING AND RESOURCING FOR THE PROGRAM

Our funding strategy will support our intentional shift towards women's economic *justice* and will consider which actors are most aligned with our vision of what justice looks like. We will refresh our analysis of funders to confirm or identify priority and emerging donors that fund women's economic justice. This will include institutional donors as a core funder, along with private sector actors and public-private partnerships, which are likely to increase over the next decade. We will explore emerging models of delivering sustainable development outcomes, such as social enterprises and impact investment vehicles.

We will identify core influencing targets to help strengthen the focus of women's economic justice outcomes within the sector. We will also work with new entrants to the aid landscape such as Asian and African development institutions, national development actors, philanthropic organizations and private actors based in the Global South, to increase scale and impact. Our funding strategy will uphold relevant CI commitments on gender equality³⁵ and partnerships.³⁶ It will further be informed by work to decolonize aid and consider how we can improve our own approach and funding behavior, as well as support influencing efforts to shift donor thinking on funding of Civil Society Organizations and Women's Rights Organizations.

We will build on what we are already doing well, including geographies with the greatest potential for women's economic justice, and strategies to deliver impact, notably the VSLA scaling strategy priorities and the Made by Women strategy. The high-level outline of our funding strategy is as follows:

Our overall aim is to achieve CARE's vision on women's economic justice through the continuation and deepening of existing donor partnerships; supporting impact-driven funding plans and strategies already in place; and growing new relationships and donor funding, especially from non-traditional sources and new, emerging donors that align with our priorities.

Targeted resource mobilization efforts by teams working on funding for women's economic justice

Objective 1: pursue key opportunities with institutional, private sector and foundation donors aligned with our areas of work and approach to women's economic justice.

Objective 2: prioritize engagement and information with new donors that are most likely to align with and contribute to women's economic justice.

Objective 3: provide timely, high-quality bid inputs in the form of technical expertise, evidence and learning, capacity building and tools in support of strategic Women's Economic Justice programme opportunities and initiatives across CARE.

Objective 4: increase new, non-traditional sources of funding for women's economic justice.

Efforts that support and enhance resource mobilization efforts for women's economic justice

Objective 5: ensure that we consider and apply the right combination of pathways to scale in the design and development of initiatives, in order to increase our impact for women's economic justice.

Objective 6: deliver high quality communications to key internal and external audiences by being present at critical events and using the right channels to showcase and present our achievements and learning.

Objective 7: continually improve our evidence base and data to inform programming and proposal design.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND ROLES

The implementation of the Women's Economic Justice impact area strategy requires changes in the way we work. Our institutional arrangements, structures and leadership need to reflect the cultural, political, economic and geographical diversity of the CARE Confederation. The global Women's Economic Justice Team will build on the progress made so far and will ensure that leadership and decision-making follow feminist values and principles.

Steering Committee

This WEJ impact area strategy has been developed with inputs from across the CARE Confederation including Country Offices, Regional Management Units (RMUs) and CARE Member Partners (CMPs). The leadership of this process was shared between the Global WEJ Team and the MENA Applied Economic Empowerment Hub. The implementation of the WEJ impact area strategy will build on this approach.

Within the first 12 months, a Global WEJ Steering Committee will be set up, representing the diversity of the CARE Confederation. The Global WEJ Team will register interest from CMPs, RMUs, Country Offices, other Global Teams and impact at scale pathways, to become part of a steering committee.

The Global WEJ Steering Committee will be co-led by CIUK and a Global South Member or Country Office, and will explore including external actors or creating an external advisory board.

The Global WEJ Steering Committee will:

- Provide strategic direction
- Set the policy and advocacy agenda and approve strategic partnerships

- Ensure the accountability of the WEJ Team
- Represent the WEJ Team within the CARE Confederation and externally

Global WEJ Team

The Global Women’s Economic Justice Team will support the achievement of the WEJ impact goal by delivering the five global team functions of Lead, Support, Advocate and influence, Develop, and Learn.³⁷

In delivering these functions, the WEJ Team will not “own” strategies, approaches, programmes or projects but rather act as a virtual hub, coordinating and connecting all parts of CARE with an interest in and with knowledge of key women’s economic justice issues.

This **Distributed Thought Leadership Model** (©MENA Applied Economic Empowerment Hub) will enable the WEJ Team and all internal and external stakeholders to stay connected, exchange information and share learning. This model will also enable the WEJ Team to benefit from the expertise that exists across CARE and therefore expand its global support capacity. The team will ensure a good balance between the project/programme-based functions (Support and Develop) and the strategic functions (Lead, Advocate and influence, and Learn).

The Global WEJ Team is composed of the Head of Team and four Technical Advisors in key technical areas (Women and Markets, Dignified Work, Entrepreneurship and Financial Inclusion). They will be supported by several full- and part-time roles in Advocacy, MEAL, Business Development, Knowledge Management and Communications, Project Management, Finance and overall management.

The Global WEJ Team will also collaborate closely with technical advisors from other impact areas, including Gender Equality, Humanitarian and Food and Water Systems, and impact at scale pathways, including the VSLA scaling strategy.

Currently, three of the WEJ Technical Advisor positions are based in the Global South. The team will be looking to increase that trend to other positions.

Based on the FY20 and FY21 financial data, the total Global WEJ Team annual costs are estimated at USD 875,000, requiring an unrestricted investment of between USD 375,000 and 450,000 per year. In addition, the WEJ impact goal will rely on the unrestricted investment made into the impact at scale teams, including the VSLA scaling strategy.

Core deliverables and accountability

There is still a lot to explore in the operationalization of the WEJ impact area strategy. The below deliverables and accountability mechanisms provide a range of options. Key priorities will be identified over the next few months. We will:

Lead

- Socialize the strategy and produce and disseminate an operationalization plan for the WEJ framework, including guidance for the WEJ indicators, within the first year.
- Set up the WEJ Steering Committee with co-leadership from a CARE southern member and representation from across the Confederation within the first year.



- Connect and coordinate the WEJ impact area. An annual CMP/Country Office survey will monitor the quality of leadership and support.
- Continue bringing technical support closer to the programmes they serve and prioritize hiring global advisors in the Global South.

Support

- Provide technical support to Country Offices and CMPs and/or facilitate access to external expertise (assessed by annual survey).
- Provide this support in a way that is as local as possible, as international as necessary and always in a way that promotes equitable partnership and tackles unjust power dynamics.

Advocate and influence

- Develop and implement the WEJ advocacy strategy.
- Provide targeted coordination and support to WEJ advocacy across the Confederation, including engagement across key external influencing networks and alliances where appropriate.

Develop

- Develop a WEJ funding strategy within the first year.
- Produce and regularly update capacity statements on technical areas and key donors' engagement plans.

Learn

- Prepare and deliver annual WEJ PIIRS data sensemaking sessions and summaries.
- Prepare learning materials and organize webinars on key successes and failures.
- Regularly share information about projects and programmes through newsletters and CARE platforms, especially by maintaining the WEJ Hub on CARE Shares.

Annex 1 – Advocacy draft strategy

ROLE OF ADVOCACY

Advocacy has the potential to multiply the impact of CARE’s work by advocating for more equitable systems, structures and policies that reinforce the outcomes from CARE’s programming, and has as such been identified as a crucial scaling strategy. CARE’s MEL 2019 report found that advocacy had more than doubled the 46.1 million people for whom CARE’s work had contributed to positive change by the end of 2018.³⁸ Advocacy will continue to be a core element of CARE’s work to contribute to achieving economic justice for 50 million women.

CARE’s intentional and strategic shift towards women’s economic *justice* emphasizes the need to transform the underlying social norms and structures that perpetuate gender inequality. Advocacy is a key tool for contributing to this transformation at national and global scale, whilst catalyzing a shift in the balance of economic power and equity required to deliver women’s economic justice. Long-term structural change, in particular, requires targeted advocacy to change inequitable, oppressive and/or discriminatory laws, policies and institutions, and to build towards economic and financial systems that are gender-just, sustainable, inclusive and equitable.

PRIORITY ADVOCACY TOPICS AND TARGETS

WEJ advocacy priorities will be defined at Country Office level, based on the regional and national context and programming priorities.

CARE’s global level WEJ advocacy priorities for the three-year duration of this strategy have not yet been finalized. Once the WEJ and other impact area strategies approach a more final stage, the global WEJ Advocacy Team will consult thoroughly with the WEJ advocacy group across CARE and selected peers in sister organizations to refine specific WEJ advocacy targets or priorities. In the meantime, and for at least the next few months to one year, the global WEJ Advocacy Team will continue to focus on three key themes that have been guiding our joint work in 2020:

1. A gender-just, equitable, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis

Building on CARE’s two WEJ and COVID focused reports, Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on WEJ,³⁹ and Building Forward,⁴⁰ WEJ advocacy continues to call for a gender-just, equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This targeted and longer-term approach seeks to influence governments, multilateral stakeholders and private sector stakeholders to take the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on women and girls into account, and to build forward in more gender-just ways. The aim is to ensure that decision-makers commit to building back equal by putting in place economic and financial recovery strategies that:

- a) Integrate a focus on gender equality
- b) Protect and accelerate progress towards women’s economic justice
- c) Build back more equally, reducing structural gender inequalities and removing barriers to women’s economic justice and rights

2. Wide ratification and implementation of ILO Convention C190

Workplace violence and harassment remains a huge barrier to women’s access to dignified work. Following the successful adoption of the ILO’s Violence and Harassment Convention (C190) in June 2019, CARE launched a global campaign in support of wide ratification and implementation of the Convention to ensure its strong and inclusive protections are translated into laws and practices at national level. Given that two countries had ratified the Convention by June 2020, it will take legal force in June 2021 and we are planning

to intensify our advocacy efforts in the lead-up to this event. Key messages (which were also included in the Building Forward report recommendations) are:

1. Governments should urgently ratify, resource and implement the International Labour Organization's Violence and Harassment Convention (C190).
2. Businesses should recognize this new benchmark and strengthen their policies and practices to meet the international labor standard.

3. Optimizing the WEJ advocacy opportunities presented by the UN Generation Equality Forum Action Coalition on Women's Economic Justice and Rights

CARE was selected as a co-lead for the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) Action Coalition on Women's Economic Justice and Rights (EJR) – the only INGO to be given this opportunity across the six Action Coalitions. We see our role as not only ensuring that our WEJ priorities are included in the Action Coalition's Blueprint for Action, but also to facilitate meaningful participation in the GEF process for smaller and national NGOs and Women's Rights Organizations. The core objective is to help ensure that the Action Coalition on EJR sets the right ambition and working structures to deliver game-changing progress on women's economic justice, by:

1. Deciding on a joint programme of work that delivers both accelerated progress on enablers for WEJ, and tackles structural barriers
2. Putting in place inclusive ways of working
3. Maximizing influence on key WEJ issues, including structural issues (unpaid care and social protection), financial inclusion, dignified work and entrepreneurship

The Global WEJ Advocacy Team will work to identify and optimize opportunities to influence decisions and policy-making at the global level, and will work in partnership with others, particularly Women's Rights Organizations and local partners to support their advocacy priorities and accelerate the women's economic justice agenda.

KEY GLOBAL WEJ ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITIES 2021 (subject to change)

1. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 65: 15-26 February
2. Generation Equality Forum, Mexico City: 29-31 March
3. International Women's Day: 8 March
4. Business Fights Poverty Gender Summit in partnership with CARE: 9-11 March
5. World Bank and IMF Spring Meetings: 5-11 April
6. ECOSOC FFD meeting and/or financing recovery summit: April (tbc)
7. W7 Summit: 21-22 April
8. Generation Equality Forum, Paris: June (date tbc)
9. International Labour Conference: 7-18 June
10. UK-hosted G7 Summit, Cornwall: 11-13 June
11. ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (C190) taking legal effect: 25 June
12. World Economic Forum Special Annual Meeting (Singapore): 17-20 August
13. UN General Assembly: 14-21 September
14. World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings: 11-17 October
15. SEEP Annual Conference: date tbc, usually October
16. UK-hosted COP26: 1-12 November

- ¹ CARE, 2020 [CARE 2030: Our Shared Vision](#)
- ² International Labour Organization [Labour statistics on women](#)
- ³ Harvard Business Review, 2019 [The Trillion-Dollar Opportunity in Supporting Female Entrepreneurs](#)
- ⁴ The SEEP Network, 2018 [State of Practice: Savings Groups and the Role of Government in Sub-Saharan Africa](#)
- ⁵ World Bank, 2020 [Women, Business and the Law 2020](#)
- Gebu, 2019 [Women's Land Rights in Africa](#)
- ⁶ UN Women, 2018 [Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)
- ⁷ Human Rights Watch [Gender-based Violence in the Workplace](#)
- ⁸ Kings College London, 2020 [Women's unpaid care work has been unmeasured and undervalued for too long](#)
- ⁹ World Economic Forum, 2020 [Global Gender Gap: Report 2020](#)
- ¹⁰ Halim (World Bank blogs), 2020 [Women entrepreneurs needed—stat!](#)
- ¹¹ International Labour Organization, 2018 [The gender gap in employment: What's holding women back?](#)
- ¹² McKinsey & Company, 2020 [COVID-19 and gender equality: Countering the regressive effects](#)
- ¹³ CARE, 2020 [She Told Us So: Filling the Data Gap to Build Back Equal](#)
- ¹⁴ IFPRI, 2020 [Gender-sensitive social protection: A critical component of the COVID-19 response in low- and middle-income countries](#)
- ¹⁵ United Nations, 2020 [The Climate Crisis – A Race We Can Win](#)
- ¹⁶ Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 'States of Fragility', 2016. P.20
- ¹⁷ Carothers and O'Donohue, 2019, *Democracies Divided*, [Introduction](#)
- ¹⁸ CARE Climate Justice Strategy 2030
- ¹⁹ CARE Right to Food, Water and Nutrition Strategy
- ²⁰ CARE, 2018 [Women's Economic Empowerment Impact Report 2018](#)
- ²¹ CARE, 2021 [Partnership in CARE](#)
- ²² CARE, 2019 [Learning from Advocacy on ILO Convention #190](#)
- ²³ CARE, 2020 [Women Mean Business: A Global Report on Women's Entrepreneurship](#)
- ²⁴ CARE, 2019 [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Programme \(GEWEP\) II: Final Report](#)
- ²⁵ CARE, 2020 [Ignite Program: Unleashing the Power of Entrepreneurs](#)
- ²⁶ CARE, 2018 [The 'Women for Women' project](#)
- ²⁷ CARE, 2019 [Bringing Gender Equality Closer to Women's Economic Empowerment](#)
- ²⁸ CARE, 2020 [UptakePreneur: Model for Uncovering & Accelerating Social Enterprises & Social Market Solutions in Fragile Settings](#)
- ²⁹ CARE, 2020 [Resilient Market Systems Standards: A Compendium for Practitioners](#)
- ³⁰ CARE, 2018 [Global Playbook for Cash & Voucher Programming](#)
- ³¹ CARE, 2019 [Women's economic empowerment in emergency contexts, Niger: A Case Study](#)
- ³² CARE Right to Food, Water and Nutrition Strategy
- ³³ CARE, 2019 [Supporting women's social movements and collective actions: a CIGN position paper and a guidance note for CARE](#)
- ³⁴ CARE, 2021 [Partnership in CARE](#)
- ³⁵ CARE, 2018 [CARE International Gender Equality Policy](#)
- ³⁶ CARE, 2021 [Partnership in CARE](#)
- ³⁷ CARE, [Roles of teams leading on the CARE 2020 Program Strategy](#)
- ³⁸ CARE, 2019 [CARE International Advocacy and Influencing: A Review of Pathways to Success](#)
- ³⁹ CARE, 2020 [COVID-19 could condemn women to decades of poverty: Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's and girls' economic justice and rights](#)
- ⁴⁰ CARE, 2020 [Building Forward: Creating a more equitable, gender-just, inclusive and sustainable world](#)