

# Women Lead in Emergencies

## Impact and learning from a multi-country pilot (2018-2022)



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SUMMARY

Women have a human right to participate in the public and political life of their community and country. But it's a right that's often denied, especially during disasters, conflict and other humanitarian crises.

The practices of humanitarian systems, agencies and funders continue to be informed by power structures which undermine women's meaningful participation and incentivise the status quo. This is particularly true for women in the global south directly affected by conflict and crisis. Despite considerable need, it is still the case that the humanitarian sector has few tools and approaches designed to support women's participation, voice and leadership within humanitarian crises.

Since 2018 CARE has been working to address this gap by piloting tools and approaches which aim to support women's voice and leadership, by shifting power and resources directly to women in communities affected by crisis.

**The result of these pilots is the Women Lead in Emergencies (Women Lead) approach: a set of adaptable programmatic components and tools to support women's participation and leadership in crisis and improve the accountability, inclusivity, and ultimately the effectiveness of humanitarian response.** In this briefing document we synthesise findings from our independent [multi-country evaluation](#) and from other learning and evaluative work undertaken since 2018, which demonstrates the effectiveness of Women Lead as a model for enhancing women's voice and leadership in challenging crisis-affected contexts.

## Results

### Women Lead in Emergencies has shown results across all our key outcome areas

Women Lead looks to achieve the outcomes that women themselves want to see and at the pace that is right for them. Data, primarily from our longest running pilots in Uganda and Niger, combined with learning from our pilots in Colombia, Mali, and the Philippines, demonstrates that:

- ▶ **Women Lead effectively prepares women to be able to meaningfully participate,** lead and influence within their communities with tailored approaches to supporting confidence, skills, knowledge, and self-efficacy.
- ▶ **Women were not only more regularly present in decision making forums, but they were also inventive in how they engaged.** In some cases, women engaged with existing institutions, committees, and authorities but women were also just as likely to claim space in their own ways, by creating new organisations or engaging in advocacy activities.

- ▶ **We see clear evidence of increases in leadership among Women Lead members, with women’s informal leadership increasing more so than formal leadership.** Nevertheless, there are early indications that Women Lead can help to increase women’s participation in the formal political sphere. Future work will focus on increasing efforts in this space.
- ▶ **The action-oriented focus of the Women Lead model is supportive of collective action.** Women Lead supports women working collectively to address problems or to make change within their communities and on their own terms. The process of women taking action was in itself transformative and legitimising. Community members including men and community leaders often recognised the contribution women were making, and increasingly called on them to participate.

## **The Women Lead in Emergencies approach is innovative and cohesive in design. It addresses a gap in humanitarian programming and can in, some contexts, yield results quickly**

The approach fills a gap within humanitarian practice. The toolkit provides an approach which can yield results quickly (interventions should be at a minimum 9 months). It is innovative and successful because it:

- ▶ **Shifts power to women:** It gives women control over budgets and over activities. It supports women in ways they define and ensures that they define what ‘success’ looks like.
- ▶ **Meets women where they are:** It can flex to the needs of women and moves at the pace they define. As such many groups have chosen to address pre-conditions of participation such as literacy training or income generation before looking to participate in community decision-making
- ▶ **Provides usable and adaptable tools:** The aim of Women Lead is to address a gap in current humanitarian practice and Women Lead does this by offering usable and adaptable resources including tools, guidance notes and examples of adaptation which can be used across multiple different kinds of context.

## **Key learning**

- ▶ **Engaging men is a vital component of Women Lead and does yield results, though it should be noted that progress on social norms is frequently not linear:** Through engaging men, CARE has seen early signs of positive social norms shifts. However, it is also the case that loss of power by any dominant group is uncomfortable. We observe complex reactions of men to Women Lead, which highlights the need for continued engagement. Whilst all Women Lead projects include an ‘engaging men and boys’ approach there is a need for greater documentation of this and clearer integration into the model.

- ▶ **The Women Lead cycle is useful for supporting participation and giving women opportunities to take action. However, as Women Lead programmes mature there is a need to think about how groups move towards more systematic and regularised participation:** Women Lead members have engaged in highly visible and targeted actions and successfully influenced change. However, Women Lead also seeks to habituate humanitarian actors to women’s meaningful participation in decision-making and increase the ‘regularisation’ of women’s participation. CARE should build on existing tools from CARE’s Inclusive Governance programming and on learning generated in our pilots to facilitate this.
- ▶ **There is a need for greater documentation of project outcomes:** The Women Lead in Emergencies project is now moving from a pilot stage towards greater uptake across CARE. However, there have been challenges to the documentation of some of the most high-level outcomes, and particularly those related to advocating and influencing. The project would benefit from working with country teams to develop solutions to documenting this information, to ensure it is possible to capture the full depth of outcomes from Women Lead in Emergencies.

## Next steps include

- ▶ **Scaling the model:** With evidence that the model is effective and can adapt to different kinds of programmatic contexts, CARE will support the scaling of Women Lead.
- ▶ **Updating the Women Lead model, theory of change and toolkit:** With the pilot phase of Women Lead in Emergencies complete CARE will be looking to strengthen the model and tools. We will reassess our Theory of Change to ensure that we continue to test our assumptions in areas such as the modes of participation that women choose, and how we can tailor support for these.
- ▶ **Moving from a project ‘cycle’ to a ‘spiral’ to enable greater regularisation of women’s leadership:** Women Lead uses a ‘cycle’ model but in fact, as groups mature from cycle to cycle there is the potential to expand their scope, potentially moving towards more systemic or deeper participation and leadership.
- ▶ **Development of more sophisticated understanding of humanitarian stakeholders and how to influence them:** The Women Lead team will engage in a Political Economy Analysis to better understand the roles of different humanitarian actors and to ensure that Women Lead’s support of advocacy maximises its transformational potential.
- ▶ **Developing more effective approaches to capturing learning and impact:** Evidence is an important part of learning and of peer-exchange. As such developing new, more women-centred approaches to monitoring and evaluation will be important for further understanding the effects and impact of Women Lead.

## WOMEN LEAD IN EMERGENCIES

Women Lead in Emergencies is a CARE global programme that supports community-based women's groups to take the lead in responding to the crises that affect them and their communities. Women Lead in Emergencies puts resources in the hands of women and enables women's groups to meaningfully participate in public discussion and decisions in their community, but also beyond within local governance structures and humanitarian decision-making processes.



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## What issues does Women Lead seek to address?

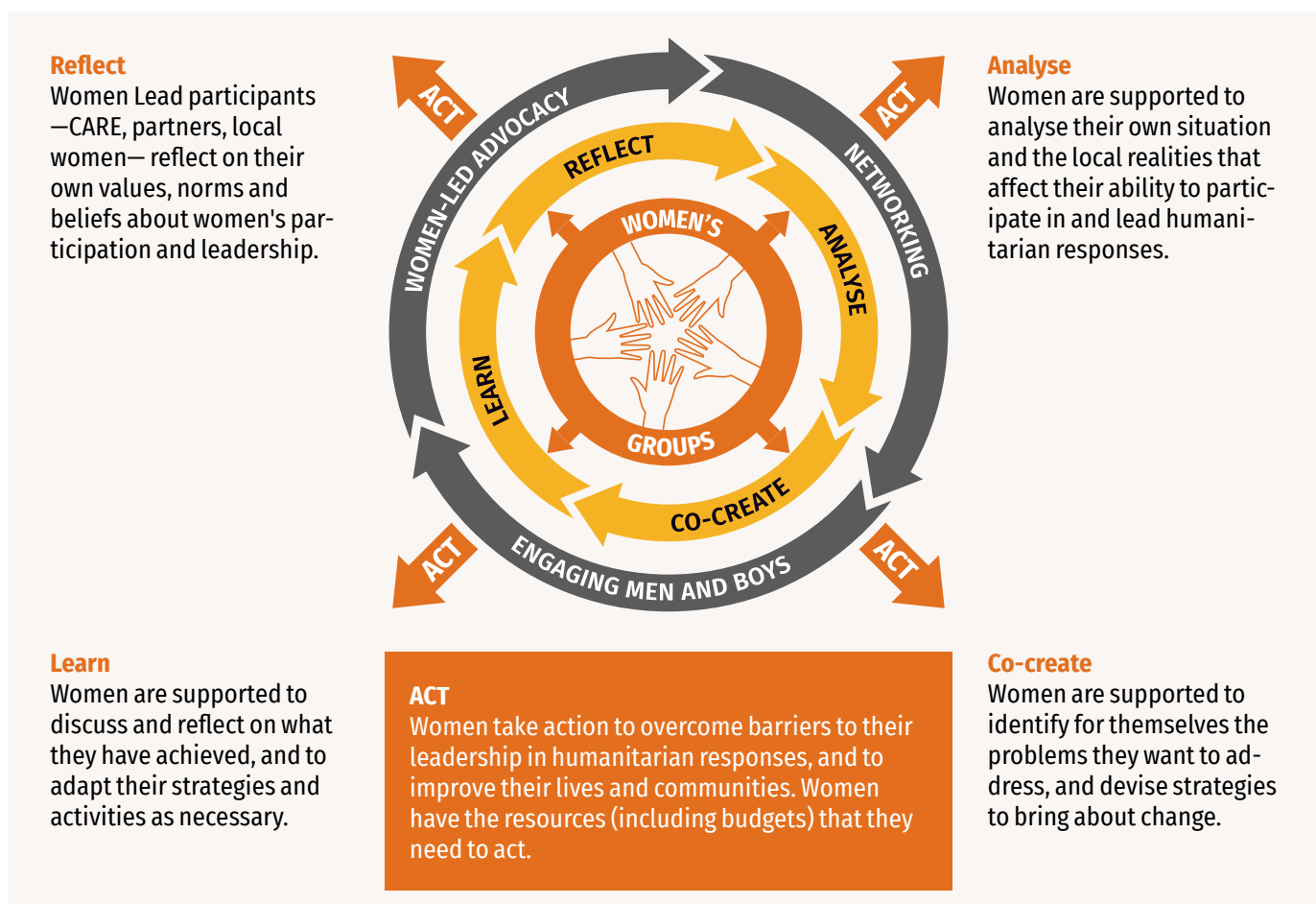
Women's limited involvement in humanitarian decision-making is embedded in a flawed humanitarian system that is both exclusionary and unaccountable to women. The complex and intertwined mechanisms of marginalisation include:

- ▶ **Humanitarian actors ignore the root causes of gender inequality:** Humanitarian stakeholders rarely address the underlying or root causes of women and girls' exclusion. Mandated to save lives, humanitarian responses may at best address some symptoms of gender inequality but often also perpetuate barriers to women's meaningful participation. Humanitarian stakeholders frequently fail to meet women where they are.
- ▶ **Women have few opportunities to develop participation skills:** In some cases, rigid social norms prevent women and girls from equal participation in the public and decision-making sphere. Less access to education and lack of exposure to public roles and collective organising, keeps women away from participation.
- ▶ **Women are consulted rather than enabled to participate:** Affected women know best about their priorities and needs, yet they tend to be excluded from decisions and from defining what success in humanitarian responses looks like. Increasingly, women are consulted but not consistently involved or enabled to lead.
- ▶ **Participation spaces are unwelcoming:** When women and girls are present in decision-making processes, they often do not feel able to be active participants and are not actively listened to by others or given the same respect as men. Often, women's leadership is not acknowledged: at times, it is considered a threat. Limited exposure to collective organising can constrain capacities to strategise and act.
- ▶ **Men are key powerholders in humanitarian contexts:** Men often help form and reinforce social norms around gender, power and participation. Where men are unsupportive of, or even barriers to, women's participation in decision-making, this can have a significant effect. However, this also means that where men are engaged as allies, they can provide critical support to women's participation.
- ▶ **Humanitarian actors lack a set of tools to enable women's participation and leadership:** Humanitarian stakeholders lack practical guidance on increasing the participation of women in humanitarian contexts and in government decision-making settings.

## How does Women Lead address these issues?

The Women Lead in Emergencies approach looks to address many of these issues by directly supporting women's groups, through a combination of:

- ▶ **A five-step model** that consists of five interconnected steps designed to empower women to have a say on decisions that affect their lives, whilst enhancing their meaningful participation and leadership.
- ▶ **A dedicated activity budget, combined with targeted support.** The model ensures that budgets controlled by groups themselves can be used to meet their needs or to achieve goals they identified as part of the 'Act' Phase. However, groups are also empowered to request that CARE and partners provide targeted support, e.g., technical and logistical support.
- ▶ CARE's use of its profile and power to **make space for women within humanitarian and community decision-making spaces.** Supporting women to engage community leaders, humanitarian actors and men and boys to be allies of women's participation and leadership.



The five-step model has been designed so that each of the different steps supports different aspects of women's participation and leadership. For more information on why these steps were developed and the specific issues that they look to address please see [Annex 1](#).

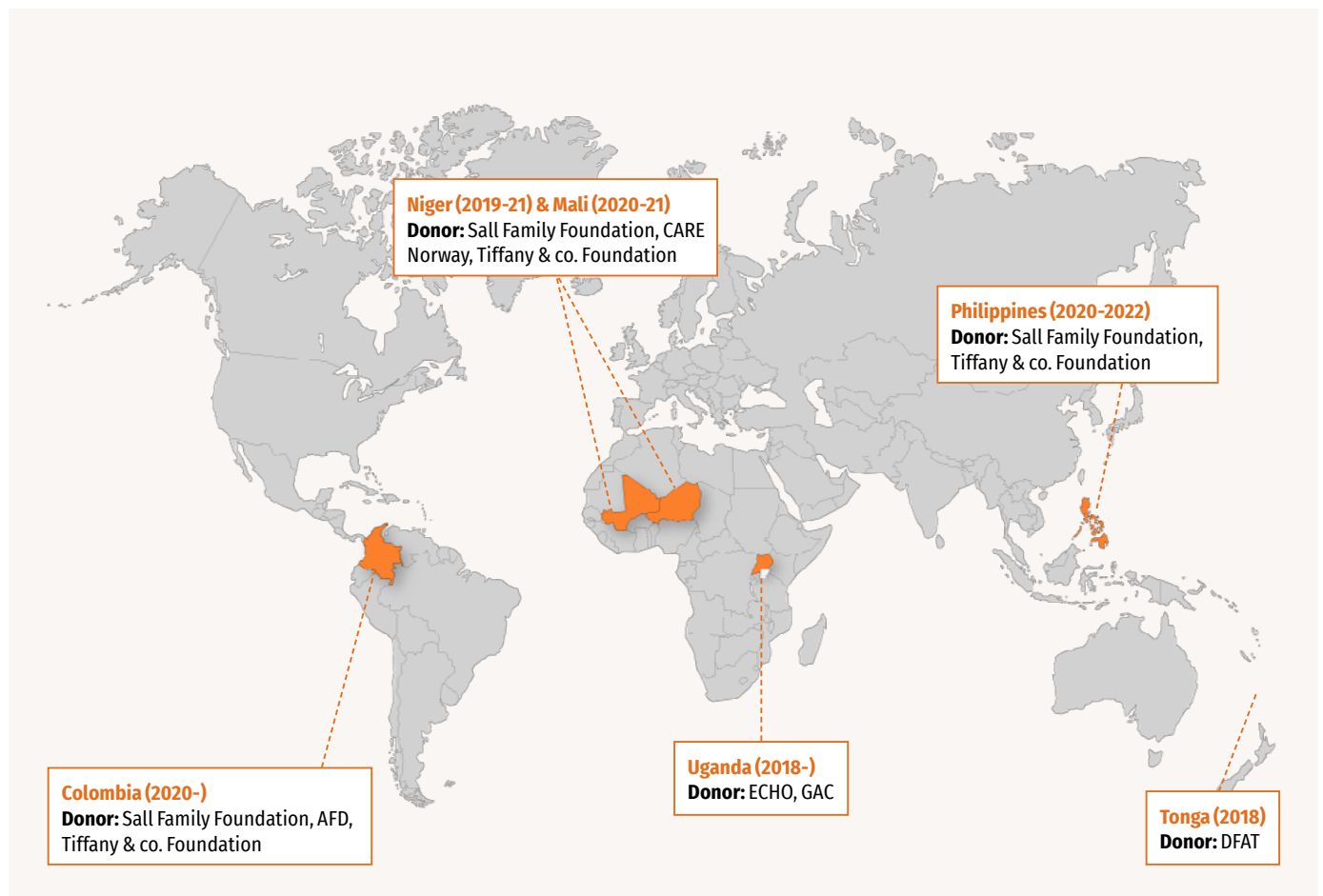


Women Lead in Emergencies focuses on engaging with existing community-based women’s groups. These foundational groups can include, for example, faith-based or savings groups such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). Whilst some groups have gone on to pursue legal registration, Women Lead does not currently focus its approach on working directly with formal women-led or women’s rights organisations.

At the core of the Women Lead in Emergencies approach is a five-step programme of activities called the Women Lead in Emergencies Model. These steps are distinct but interconnected: they are not discrete time bound activities implemented in linear sequence. Reflect and Analyse phases start first, but all phases are then iterative and mutually supportive through the programme cycle. The model is designed to support women in collectively analysing and articulating the inequalities and needs they and their communities face, and how they want to participate in humanitarian action. It supports them to strategise on how to address the barriers and inequities they face, and to take action to make changes and to learn from their actions.

## The Women Lead in Emergencies pilots

This briefing covers results and learning drawn from pilots undertaken across 15 locations in 6 countries. An original test of the model was undertaken in Tonga in 2018 and then pilots began in Uganda (2018), Niger (2019) and in Colombia, Mali and the Philippines (2020).



These pilots had significant levels of variation in terms of the impact populations reached; whether they were implemented in rural, urban or refugee camp contexts; and the mode of implementation.

<b>COUNTRY</b>	<b>CONTEXT<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Colombia</b>	Implemented in the border town of Pamplona with a combination of groups including Venezuelans on the move and Colombian returnees. The communities are also affected by the Colombian armed conflict and its consequences.
<b>Mali</b>	Implemented in four locations in the Ségou region affected by armed conflicts and attacks by non-state armed actors, as well as inter-community conflicts, fueled by drought.
<b>Niger</b>	Implemented in two locations: in Zinder where the food insecurity crisis is exacerbated by environmental degradation and natural hazards (floods, droughts, bush fires) and in Diffa which is affected by conflict-related displacement and general insecurity from non-state armed groups from neighbouring countries.
<b>Philippines</b>	Implemented in five locations affected by natural hazards, climate crises and insecurity. Unlike in other locations, implementation in some of the sites in the Philippines is exclusively through partners rather than through direct implementation.
<b>Tonga</b>	Beta pilot, implemented in the context of the Cyclone Gita response (2018). This was not a full pilot of all Women Lead in Emergencies tools but rather was a project in which some of the initial tools were developed and the need for new tools were identified.
<b>Uganda</b>	Implemented in two refugee settlements –Omugo and Kyangwali– supporting refugees from neighbouring countries (South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo) who live alongside the Ugandan host community.

<sup>2</sup> This section is based on the Women Lead summaries for each of the pilot countries.

## FINDING 1

### Women Lead in Emergencies has shown positive results across all our key outcome areas.

As part of the Women Lead in Emergencies pilots, CARE looked to substantiate change against key domains of change.

The independent multi-country evaluation used a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to understand the outcomes in these domains. **Evaluative data on outcomes was mostly drawn from Uganda and Niger, our longest running pilots where the projects have matured to the point where we can explore the highest levels of outcomes.** This data compares women within communities who participated in Women Lead to those who did not. However, due to the lack of a baseline, the findings are indicative rather than confirmatory and were therefore triangulated with monitoring data and qualitative data in order to be able to draw conclusions about programme effectiveness.

In 2021 there were...	<b>813</b>	<b>WOMEN LEAD IN EMERGENCIES GROUPS</b>	<b>26,157</b>	<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>WOMEN ARE MORE CONFIDENT</b>			<b>88%</b>	<b>WOMEN LEAD PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>In Niger, at the end of the project 88% of Women Lead participants felt confident that they understood their rights and entitlements compared to only 58% of non-participants.</b>			<b>58%</b>	<b>NON-PARTICIPANTS</b>
<b>WOMEN PARTICIPATE MORE IN PUBLIC MEETINGS</b>			<b>77%</b>	<b>WL PARTICIPANTS (NIGER)</b>
<b>In both Niger and Uganda, Women Lead participants were more likely to speak in public meetings than non-participants (77% to 49% in Niger and 83% to 73% in Uganda).</b>			<b>83%</b>	<b>WL PARTICIPANTS (UGANDA)</b>
<b>WOMEN PARTICIPATE MORE IN PUBLIC MEETINGS</b>			<b>31%</b>	<b>WL PARTICIPANTS (NIGER)</b>
<b>In both Niger and Uganda, Women Lead participants were more likely to hold leadership positions than non-participants (31% to 9% in Niger and 22% to 14% in Uganda).</b>			<b>22%</b>	<b>WL PARTICIPANTS (UGANDA)</b>



## **1.1. Women's confidence, knowledge and self-efficacy**

**Key finding → The evaluation found that Women Lead effectively prepares women to be able to meaningfully participate, lead and influence within their communities with tailored approaches to build confidence, skills, knowledge and self-efficacy.**

In Niger, at the end of the project 88% of Women Lead participants felt confident that they understood their rights and entitlements compared to only 58% of non-participants. Women also spoke to the ways in which understanding rights and entitlements, and how they could claim these, had an impact on how they perceived themselves. Women reported that Women Lead helped them overcome shyness and to question social norms which made them previously feel ashamed to speak out.

**“I received a lot of training that allowed me to develop my leadership but also to overcome my shyness thanks to CARE's Women Lead in Emergencies project.”**

—Women Lead Group Member, Diffa, Niger

**“We used to be ashamed to speak in front of the men. It was considered by the community as a lack of shame. But is it something to be ashamed of? No, not at all. It is to defend our rights and to participate in all decisions concerning us. Now we are not afraid to defend ourselves when a decision does not suit us. We will say it out loud because ...we know the ways and means to claim our rights. And all this is thanks to the Women Lead in Emergencies project.”**

—Women Lead Group Member, Diffa, Niger

In Uganda, after a year of implementation, Women Lead participants consistently reported greater confidence: for example, 58% of Women Lead participants stated that they felt confident in accessing services within their community compared to only 40% of non-participants. And again, we see clear evidence that women attribute greater confidence to their participation in Women Lead and report enhanced knowledge:

**“The knowledge I have in leadership has helped me so much to gain confidence in myself. Before joining the Women Lead group, I could not even speak before people at all because back home in South Sudan and according to our culture, men are the only people allowed to speak in gatherings and even make decisions for the home. I was always shy but all this has been taken away by CARE efforts in the trainings I have attended.”**

— Omugo 4, Rhino Settlement, FGD, Uganda

This finding in relation to increased knowledge, confidence and self-efficacy is also present across the other pilot countries where reporting consistently highlights the importance of the five-step model. The ‘Reflect’ and ‘Analyse’ steps are reported to be particularly important for building knowledge of how decision-making happens and helping women to feel confident claiming their rights. In some cases, this confidence helped women to address injustices that were decades old:

#### **Participant perspective: Building confidence and supporting others (Uganda)**

Pasifique is from the Democratic Republic of Congo but left because of conflict. In Uganda, Pasifique joined the Tungane Women’s Saving’s Group, which participated in the Women Lead in Emergencies programme, and through which Pasifique says she has learnt new ideas and gained confidence. **“I used to come and listen without participating, but I’d reflect about my life and when I would go back home, I’d reflect further.”**

With support from Women Lead through training, Pasifique has become a support to others experiencing violence, sharing information on services available and supporting GBV response in her community. Pasifique has now been selected by the group to be their Vice Chairperson. She feels she has changed at a personal level: **“I have gained knowledge on how to manage GBV and how I can position myself for leadership, I’ve built my self-esteem and gained community trust through the activities I am involved in.”**



## 1.2. Women's presence and participation in decision-making forums

**Key finding** → Women were not only more regularly present in decision making forums, but they were also inventive in how they engaged. In some cases, women engaged with existing institutions, committees and authorities but they were also just as likely to claim space in their own ways: creating new organisations or engaging in direct influencing activities.

**“Women before were not allowed to speak in public or at a gathering of men, however ever since the women joined the Women Lead group programme they are listened to and they are allowed to share their concerns.”**

— Kyangwali, Role Model Men FGD, Uganda

We see compelling evidence that Women Lead helps to improve meaningful participation in a range of ways including:

- ▶ By supporting women's presence and participation in existing decision-making spaces.
- ▶ By giving women the support they need to convene new spaces of decision making.

After two years of programming, women who had participated in Women Lead were more regularly present and more likely to meaningfully participate in decision-making forums. In some cases, such as Women Lead communities in Niger and Colombia, this change was unprecedented.

In Niger women were more likely to attend community meetings regularly than non-members (60% compared to only 34%) and this is also the case in Uganda (60% compared to 25%). In both Niger and Uganda, Women Lead members were also more likely to speak in public meetings than non-members (77% to 49% in Niger and 83% to 73% in Uganda). In Niger, when Women Lead members were asked to reflect on the impact that Women Lead had on their confidence to speak in public meetings, 80% of women stated that their confidence had increased a lot since taking part in Women Lead, 18% stated that it had increased a little, and only 2% stated that they felt less confident. This is identified by people who participate in Women Lead as being an important change and one which has shifted broader community perceptions of women's roles:

**“Before, when a woman went to the chief's court, we wondered what she had done wrong. Nowadays women are fully involved in the decision-making process. The fact that a woman is seen in the court of the village chief is no longer an extraordinary thing. She participates or presides over an activity.”**

— Diffa, Participatory change Focus Group Discussion, Niger

We see evidence across our pilots of women's new presence in important decision-making spaces, particularly those related to crisis and livelihoods. In both Mali and the Philippines, women increased their presence within committees aimed at disaster risk reduction, whilst in Uganda we see examples of women increasingly participating in forums like the Refugee Welfare Council.

**“Our confidence and courage has been built especially at the leadership and decision making spaces. We can boldly address people on several issues and have been able to believe in ourselves. We have also been able to learn that what a man can do, even a woman can do. There is a big difference between us and those who are not Women Lead members.”**

— Omugo 5, FGD, Uganda

However, attending public meetings and being invited to join formal committees, is only one way in which women have meaningfully participated in decision-making. In addition to women making space for themselves in existing forums, women also find new opportunities to influence decision-making. This can take different forms. In Colombia and the Philippines for example we can see evidence of Women Lead groups seeking formalisation - registering their informal group with the authorities as a legal entity - which gives them new rights and entitlements under the law, including new opportunities to seek funding.

In some cases, with networking support from Women Lead, women have found opportunities to lobby powerholders outside of existing forums. Through direct engagement with humanitarian actors or local authorities, women have in some cases circumvented standard infrastructure to drive action and create opportunities for themselves to make decisions, take action, or hold leaders to account (see case study on following page).

## Taking a stand against Sexual and Gender Based Violence (Niger)



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Before working with the Women Lead in Emergencies programme Lami states that she was shy and found speaking in public intimidating. She credits Women Lead with helping her to overcome this:

**“I have received a lot of training through the Women Lead project that has allowed me to develop my leadership but also to overcome my shyness.”**

Lami became president of her group and was chosen to be part of a committee to protect women and girls. In the refugee camp where Lami lives, women and girls face considerable risks from sexual and gender-based violence. At one time, there were nightly cases of rape in households within the camp. Lami realised there was a need for the women within the community to organise in order to address this and keep the women of her community safe: **“I was able to overcome my silence and I was the first to mobilise the women.”**

However, addressing this issue was not straightforward and the women found that influencing power-holders was not easy. First, they went to the village chief, but they were ignored. Undeterred, the group decided to seek out new stakeholders to influence. They took the issue to law enforcement and were successful: **“Our voices were heard by the authorities who agreed to patrol every night to prevent men from entering our houses...This was my greatest achievement, I was not afraid or slowed down by anyone. I spoke in public and in front of everyone in order to defend our rights.”**



## **1.3. Women's leadership**

**Key finding → We see most evidence of change around women's participation through informal leadership. However, there are also early indications that Women Lead can help to increase women's participation in formal leadership spaces and future work will focus on increasing efforts here.**

Whilst women's participation in decision-making is a key outcome for the Women Lead project, ultimately the project aims to see not just meaningful participation but also leadership. This means that women - in addition to being able to shape decisions through participation - should also be able to lead, including by setting the parameters of decision-making. By working in this way, we can ultimately ensure that decision making is more likely to represent the needs of women and girls in crisis.

The evaluation demonstrates higher levels of leadership across the pilots. In Niger, two years into the project we saw a significant difference between women who had taken part in the project and those that had not: 31% of Women Lead participants reported holding leadership positions compared to 9% of non-participants. In Uganda, 22% of Women Lead participants held leadership positions in their communities compared to 14% of non-participants. In Colombia, where for this indicator we have pre and post comparison data available, 21% of Women Lead members held leadership positions within their community previously to Women Lead, which increased to 40% by the time of evaluation. All of these forms of leadership functioned to increase women's visibility within their communities and helped to change perceptions of women's roles, normalising their participation.

The Women Lead approach contributes to more women taking up both formal and informal leadership roles in their communities. We also find that women were increasingly taking on diverse leadership opportunities which included:

1. Informal leadership through community organising or through mentorship.
2. Taking on leadership positions within committees or in participation spaces and standing for elected office.

### **1.3.1. Informal leadership**

Women's leadership comes in many forms, and for many participants in Women Lead it comes in the form of organising community members to respond to issues, or stepping in to help resolve a problem faced by community members in an informal capacity. Frequently this more informal role related to community issues like gender-based violence, or tensions between host and refugee communities. Across all pilots we can see

evidence of informal organising around gender-based violence. This took many forms, including demanding services, engaging in community and household dialogues, and offering direct support to affected women.

In Niger, a women's group instituted a practice whereby women affected by gender-based violence could be accompanied by a group of other women when she went to access services. By accompanying the affected woman, the group ensured that the wider community would not know which of them had been affected and this helped to shield the person from the stigma associated. In Uganda, where Women Lead engaged 'Role Model Men'<sup>3</sup> to work alongside Women Lead groups as advocates for change, trained men and women acted as mediators and couples' councilors, helping to prevent gender-based violence through community dialogues.

**“Once we realised that gender-based violence was rampant, it helped us compose songs and dramas and we perform these for the community members. Now GBV has greatly reduced in our community.”**

— Women Lead member, Omugo 5, Uganda

In Biliran, Philippines, groups engaged in prevention of gender-based violence through the creation of GBV watch-groups,<sup>4</sup> not only providing trusted support to community members in need, but also disseminating information in local languages and referring women and girls to specialised services. The groups reported increased perceptions of safety which they directly linked to Women Lead.

However, GBV was not the only area where women informally organised to respond to community needs or issues. Some illustrative examples of women's actions include women repeatedly organising to improve access to water in Niger, lobbying power holders to address shortages of bore holes. Evaluation of the Niger pilot identified 10 successful instances of women's groups demanding an improved right to water. In Uganda we can see groups who opted to offer new services, or training to others, among these was providing information to adolescents about sexual and reproductive health rights.

This kind of leadership can often be a springboard to taking on more formal responsibilities, but it can also be a legitimate and vital form of leadership in itself, one that can help ensure there are systems of support for women in need, that women are visible and influential in their community, and that perceptions of the roles of women are shifted. This was reflected in focus group discussions with men's groups in Uganda:

**“Women are more trusted these days, before when they were not allowed to participate in any leadership position but these days we have seen them emerging successfully in leadership positions in churches and other positions in the community.”**

— Kyangwali, Role Model Men FGD, Uganda

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3 Role Model Men is an approach to working with men and boys in which men are trained and supported to become champions of gender equality within their community.

4 For the Women Lead group members themselves, their engagement as GBV watch-group has brought acknowledgement as valued actors in the community, as well as an increase in visibility thanks to new uniforms.

### **1.3.2. Formal leadership**

Whilst significant changes in formal leadership are likely to take a long time to materialise, we have seen some clear examples of women increasingly taking on leadership positions within and on behalf of their communities by becoming part of local committees, or in some cases standing for and winning elections.

Across pilots, women were increasingly given roles on committees such as Refugee Welfare Councils, health committees, or budgeting committees. However, we also see women standing for elected positions in Niger, Mali and Uganda. In Uganda we can see the most significant change in women increasingly taking on elected positions. When Women Lead activities started running in Omugo in 2019, 50 group members expressed an interest in working towards standing for election on the Refugee Welfare Council and a key barrier they identified was a lack of confidence in public speaking. Because of this, the Women Lead groups opted to make this a focus of their work and chose to use part of their activity budget in order to support leadership training and mentorship:

**“When I arrived in Uganda, I was very shy, and I would panic while speaking in a crowd... If it was not for CARE, the training and mentorship support on leadership...and the support for business that CARE gave us, I would not be a leader here talking in front of you, I would be staying home.”**

— Election candidate and Women Lead member, Omugo Settlement

In election contests held in Omugo, in 2021, 33 women contested leadership positions in the Council and 17 were voted in. This brings the share of seats on the Council occupied by women to 40%, up from just 24% in 2019. Women campaigned to raise issues directly impacting women and girls, such as antenatal care and sexual and reproductive health. We also see examples of men increasingly running on platforms of gender equality. During the campaigns one male candidate was vocal in the need to ensure a gender equal cabinet. Whilst clear examples exist of women successfully taking on formal leadership positions, CARE will increasingly focus mature pilots towards supporting women’s formal leadership in order to increase outcomes in this space.

#### **Participant perspective: Building confidence and supporting others (Uganda)**



Lucy is her Council's newly elected Vice Chairperson. Speaking about her experience she says:

**“Now that I am a leader, I can raise my voice and contribute to discussions that will improve the well-being of women and girls being challenged by their male counter parts...Even the men address me with respect as Honourable Chairperson because I contribute to decisions that matter to the community... This has only been realised through the continued support from Women Lead in our community.”**



## **1.4. Women taking collective action**

**Key finding → The action-oriented focus of the Women Lead model is supportive of women collectively working to change their communities. There are many compelling examples of women taking collective action to address problems or to make change within their communities, on their own terms. The process of women taking action was in itself transformative and legitimising. Community members, including men and community leaders, often recognised the contribution women were making and increasingly called on them to participate.**

The Women Lead in Emergencies approach is action oriented. This means that instead of focusing primarily on training and confidence, the focus of the Women Lead approach is on enabling women to act. Training requirements are defined by women themselves as part of a discussion about what change they want to see and how they can be supported to bring this about. This support can include providing training to women where they feel they need it, but it is also financial. Women are given budgets to take action should they want to. The aim of this is to reduce financial barriers to women acting.

The 'Act' phase is core to the success of the Women Lead model. It not only supports women in active participation within decision-making in crisis affected contexts, but it also supports other outcomes. By taking action, women build confidence, build legitimacy and frequently enhance their future capability to meaningfully participate and lead. Action often brings about change but it is also a route to further change.

Women Lead in Emergencies showcased substantial evidence that Women Lead offers an important platform for collective action for women in crisis. The Women Lead in Emergencies team have identified three clear ways in which women choose to act:

- 1. Direct response:** Women collectively organise to provide a response to a particular issue within their community.
- 2. Advocating and influencing for rights and needs:** Women collectively organise in order to influence a powerholder to respond to an issue within their community.
- 3. Systematising women's participation:** Either by working within the current institutional structures or by creating their own new structures, groups and institutions, women systematically participate and lead within decision-making frameworks.

### 1.4.1. Direct response

We see repeated evidence of women using their activity plan and budget to directly respond to issues that affect them and their communities. Sometimes women organised solidarity activities, or provided direct, timely and relevant support to marginalised and vulnerable community members. In some cases, this support was provided directly to Women Lead members; in other cases, it addressed a broader demand.

In Uganda, Women Lead groups engaged in activities including providing psychosocial support to victims of trauma, and working with couples to address issues of GBV in the household. In Colombia, Women Lead groups also perform the function of providing peer support and organise collective grief sessions to help address the trauma of GBV. Groups frequently also tried to work to address tensions within their communities. In Uganda, the South Sudanese Women's Faith Group began taking action to encourage dialogue and reconciliation between the Dinka and Nuer tribes in Omugo settlement. They called for a meeting with their Nuer cultural leaders and elected representatives to present their idea for reconciliation with the Dinka tribe, which has now been taken forward with support from the Office of the Prime Minister. In Colombia, Women Lead groups actively rolled out measures against xenophobia towards Venezuelan migrants, improving relations at community level, as well as with local authorities.

Improving available services and infrastructure also been a focus of women's actions. In some cases, this has involved women themselves using their activity budget to establish useful community services. This includes, for example, building a women's multi-purpose centre and internet station (the Philippines); building herbal and vegetable gardens on public land for the benefit of communities (Tonga, the Philippines); and building women's self-spaces (Uganda).



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Between July 2016 and 2020 there was an influx of over 880,000 South Sudanese refugees in Uganda, the vast majority of whom were women and children. Harriet was one of these refugees. She was deeply affected by what she had experienced in South Sudan. **“I used to think that whoever comes to me was coming to fight or kill me...In July 2019, I joined the South Sudanese Women's Association. When I joined the group, I realised, there were many other people traumatised as well.”**

Harriet very quickly found herself elected as Vice-Chairperson of the South Sudanese Women’s Association. When the Chair returned to South Sudan, Harriet took on the role of Chairperson, but she still lacked confidence in this leadership position: **“I was elected as the Chairperson... but I had no idea how to lead. CARE came during that time and organised training on how to be a leader... I started to talk without fear.”**

With support and training from Women Lead in Emergencies, Harriet began to feel more able to take a lead in the issues that affected her community. Harriet began to mediate disputes within her community. People would come to her to resolve tensions within their household but also within the broader community. Harriet started to mediate tensions over natural resources which were arising in the community: **“I can say the community has changed a lot through my leadership. There was a lot of tribalism which caused many fights here and I forwarded the issues to [humanitarian actors] who worked to address them. Firewood and land used to be a problem. I organised dialogues with the host communities, and they managed to give us land.”**

## **1.4.2. Advocating and influencing for rights and needs**

The Women Lead in Emergencies projects seek to make humanitarian actors more responsive to the needs of women and girls in crisis. The Women Lead in Emergencies approach has a specific focus on supporting women to advocate and influence powerholders to ensure they listen to women and uphold their duties to communities.

The Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation specifically focuses on understanding how decisions are made and by whom, and helps to identify how powerholders can be influenced. The process of identifying who to influence is therefore core to the Women Lead model. Whilst INGOs and other humanitarian agencies are important actors to be influenced, it is also the case that powerholders in these contexts are diverse and can include traditional leaders, local authorities, religious leaders and others.

We see significant examples from across Women Lead pilots of women choosing to focus efforts on lobbying power holders to uphold duties, to provide services, or to change approaches. Specific priorities of course differed from country to country and group to group, but some themes emerged: all contexts saw examples of where women's groups worked to influence local authorities or other power holders to prevent, mitigate or respond to gender-based violence. This was a clear priority across contexts.

In Niger, where access to water is a major challenge for many people, more than 10 successful actions were taken by different groups to extend access to water. And we can see the degree to which successful action by women on this issue has also helped to increase recognition by men of the value of women's leadership. In the community of Tam, for example, we hear an account of just one the actions taken by a group on securing clean access to water. The Farin Tchikin Kowa group went to the authorities to demand that they address this problem: **“Ga Touwo ga rouwa! How happy we were when only three days after we had gone to ask for water at the town hall of Mainé, we found the drilling team working on the site.”** In response to the women's success the male Chief of the Camp said:

**“The water point in the camp is the result of a fight that the women had led and that [the men] were not able to lead. And it's the only water point for a thousand people. It's a success! The women are proud that they were able to succeed at something that meant so much, not just to their group, but to their whole community.”**

— Chief of Camp, Tam, Niger

We can also see clear examples of the impact that women's actions have on extension of access to humanitarian assistance. Women across contexts worked with humanitarian actors to improve targeting criteria and to ensure that vulnerable or populations which were overlooked had access to humanitarian response.

In Uganda, Women Lead groups indicate that the quality of humanitarian response targeting has improved:

**“Humanitarian actors have shown respect for women, people with special needs and pregnant women. For example when it’s time to receive cash transfers, the pregnant women are considered important and are served first.”**

— Women Lead member, Kyangwali, Uganda

**“Women have also been given ability to access and receive the humanitarian aid from the supporting organisations ...unlike before where men thought they were the only gender allowed to receive the cash fund from World Food Programme”**

— KII RWC III Chairperson, Kyangwali, Uganda

In some cases, Women Lead members played a strong and concerted role in establishing this improved responsiveness of humanitarian actors. In Uganda, for example, one women’s group within the Omugo refugee settlement found that the only food distribution point that they could access was 10km away from the community. The distance not only took a considerable time to get to, it also put women at greater risk of violence on the way to the collection point. In response to this, the women’s group opted to organise a peaceful boycott. Supported by men and others within their community the Women Lead group saw success and the distribution point was quickly moved closer. And this visibility was important, again, for legitimising participation. The leader of the group has since taken on roles within the camp’s Refugee Welfare Council, further highlighting how collective actions can both create change but also be a pathway to the normalisation of women’s participation.



## Demanding recognition from people in power (Niger)



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In Djambourou district, Niger, a neighbourhood had been gradually built that had no recognition from the local authorities, even though around 2,660 people lived there. Without recognition or a chief, the community had no ability to seek humanitarian relief, or to have their grievances heard. The women of the Haské Nour Women Lead group decided to focus an action on this. They developed a list of the 380 households detailing and evidencing all the people that lives in the community in order to demonstrate the need and show the authorities how many people were being forgotten.

Supported by the men of the community and local authorities, the women persisted in going to see the mayor, and made several trips to meet with relevant authorities. Eventually this persistence paid off. After a process that took four months and many meetings the Haské Nour group was successful. The community not only receive the recognition they asked for, but the authorities informed them that a community of that size required an even higher municipal status. With this recognition came the ability to appoint community leaders and to be recognised and included by local authorities.

Beyond that, it also meant that the community could receive humanitarian assistance, and this has made a considerable difference to people's lives. Thousands of people now have access to assistance they couldn't previously qualify for. Vulnerable people have received cash transfers, support has been provided to people with disabilities, and people have access to new support and services.

### 1.4.3. Systematising women's participation

As referenced above, one of the ways in which women chose to lead was in taking big and bold action which received attention and were, in many cases legitimising for women's groups. These bold one-off actions –such as having distribution points moved, or getting new water points established– have a number of benefits, for example:

- ▶ They are **visible** to members of the community who can see and frequently remember a big change that occurred as a result.
- ▶ They can be **legitimising** because women are seen to have successfully contributed to meaningful change to the community.

However, whilst these changes are important and frequently of major significance to the Women Lead group members who feel proud of their achievements, they are also only one form of collective action. Significance should also be given to quieter but potentially more sustainable forms of collective endeavors undertaken by women which seek to regularise or systematise women's participation and action. Frequently those 'big actions' can help towards this. For example, we have seen in Niger that local authorities, men and other leaders increasingly seek out women's leadership and participation as a result of discrete actions by Women Lead groups. This form of systematisation frequently took two forms:

- ▶ **Systematising participation from within:** As seen above in the sections on participation and leadership, women frequently took opportunities to increase formal representation on formal committees, or in other existing institutional forums.
- ▶ **Systematising participation from without:** Women are also collectively taking action to create their own decision-making infrastructure. In Colombia, Uganda, and the Philippines, groups have begun to formalise and are registering their groups as legal entities and civil society humanitarian actors in their own right.

Both of these ways of systematising participation are equally valid, and each have their own benefits. The presence of women in forums traditionally dominated by men is advantageous because these groups are known and understood by the community, and they already have a form of legitimacy.

By comparison, women creating their own spaces and forums offers them the freedom to determine how they want to act and it is clear that for some groups, this route towards systematisation was valued and sought: In **Uganda**, the South Sudanese Refugee Women's Association (SSRWA) formally registered their group to become the first recognised community-based organisation in Omugo Settlement.

In the **Philippines**, several Women Lead groups went through the accreditation process and formally registered their groups as associations. They went on to establish new partnerships and alliances in order to implement the Women Lead Action Plans.

In **Colombia**, several women's groups have been officially certified as foundations or women's entrepreneurial associations, which enables groups to independently apply for funds to implement projects. This is also significant because women previously had limited exposure to collective organising.

By working in this way, groups gain access to new funding streams which would otherwise only be available to registered legal entities. In Colombia, this meant groups could start offering services to the broader community in a formal way, moving away from ad hoc community organising. It also made them part of the landscape of humanitarian actors.

Whilst evidence of this outcome is nascent, this early evidence tells an important story about the role of women in crisis and **the role of agencies like CARE in supporting women**. CARE will be looking to expand this area of work for some of our longer running pilots, ensuring that, where women want to, we are supporting them to shape humanitarian system and a context of participation and decision making in which they are active participants and leaders. In which they don't just demand their rights, but also set the agenda. In addition, CARE will be expanding the use of monitoring and evaluation approaches to capture some of these more systemic changes.

## Providing leadership and support to women in business (Colombia)



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With support from the Women Lead in Emergencies project, Marisa and her group have been able to formalise their Association of Women Entrepreneurs, an organisation that aims to support business and build solidarity between migrants and host communities. While making the long walk from Venezuela to Colombia, Marisa experienced the stark reality of such a journey. She travelled with pregnant women, unaccompanied children, and other highly vulnerable groups. They all faced the constant threat of robbery and predatory human traffickers.

With xenophobia against migrants and refugees also on the increase in Latin America as a result of COVID-19, Marisa knew that even in her place of refuge there could be risks of hostility. **“My power is to transform negative things into positive ones, to try not to stay in the tragedy, that is my philosophy. I always want to leave something good where I go”.**

As Vice-President of the Women Entrepreneurs Association of Cristo Rey - one of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods in Pamplona, with a high concentration of migrants – that is exactly what she has done. The Association supports women to set up small businesses and revitalise the neighbourhood in ways that ensures everyone can benefit, including displaced, migrant and host communities. Marisa says this work has made her feel part of the community: **“When I talk to women, we realise that there are no borders, we are simply women, no matter where you are... you think and feel the same.”**

## FINDING 2

### **The Women Lead in Emergencies approach and toolkit is innovative and cohesive in design. It addresses a gap in humanitarian programming and can in, some contexts, yield results quickly.**

The Women Lead in Emergencies approach addresses fundamental gaps in terms of inclusive and participatory involvement of affected women in the humanitarian sector, as well as barriers that prevent them from having a say in the decisions that have an impact on their lives. The approach offers an effective model and set of tools which can be tailored to different contexts. This addresses a need within the humanitarian sector which traditionally has lacked the tools to more effectively support women's participation in crisis. **It therefore addresses a fundamental gap within humanitarian practice.**

Furthermore, the model can yield results quickly in some contexts. The experience in the Philippines demonstrates that impact is achievable in a short period – 60 days in Year 1 (2020) and 100 days in Year 2 (2021). However, there are likely to be limitations to the nature of actions taken in such a short time. In the Philippines, for example, groups opted for more direct action and less 'complicated' initiatives, prioritising their most immediate community and household concerns. As such, Women Lead ideally requires around 9 months to ensure that groups can progress through the steps, develop capacity, internalise learning and take action. However, beyond this, timeframes can be flexible.

The evaluation finds that **the approach is innovative in the ways it centers women and is cohesive and complete in design.** The model looks to support women's voice and leadership both internally (supporting women's voice within the programme, giving them the power to determine activities, resource, and budget) and externally (supporting women to advocate, influence, respond, participate and lead with external actors).

Key factors which have led to the success of the model include:

1. Shifting power to women
2. Meeting women where they are
3. Providing usable and adaptable tools

## **2.1. Shifting power to women**

The Women Lead in Emergencies approach looks to shift power to women in humanitarian response and ensure their right to participate is acknowledged, both by local authorities and powerholders and, importantly, by us. For this reason, Women Lead seeks to support women to influence others but also enables women to influence the project itself. There are three clear components where the project itself challenges traditional humanitarian practice:

- ▶ A model which does not pre-define activities that the women will undertake, beyond the five steps.
- ▶ A flexible activity budget which women decide how to use.
- ▶ Groups decide what support they want from the project team.

Across the different country contexts and despite high levels of variation in the kinds of groups and types of women we worked with, we found that participants developed high levels of ownership over Women Lead. They engage with the model, they find the approach and ways of implementation useful, and they frequently develop identities as a 'Women Lead Member'.

Women Lead does not prescribe what 'success' looks like, but rather asks women to define the outcomes that they want to see. The role of the Women Lead team is then to support them in achieving those ends. This means that women can choose to focus on what matters most to them, which helps to ensure the programme is relevant to participants, and also gives women the chance to put participation into practice right from the start of project.

## **2.2. Meeting women where they are**

The flexible components which help to shift power also help to ensure that the Women Lead approach can move at the pace that women want and need. The flexible implementation is reflective of the different paces of learning and empowerment of affected women in different emergency contexts.

For instance, some groups require more time than others: this includes new groups that need time to build trust (Uganda) or groups with members who require more time to develop self-confidence (Niger). Some groups require additional cycles to sharpen the application of Women Lead approaches to their local context, have more impact, and engage in more meaningful ways with decision-makers. Meanwhile, other groups consolidate after one cycle, formally register as associations and are then able to apply for humanitarian funds themselves and implement their own projects. These groups may require only a light-touch accompaniment. For some women it is necessary not to focus on things like committee membership initially, but to instead address pre-conditions to participation. This includes establishing income generating activities, accessing psycho-social support or attending adult literacy classes. These women prioritised these issues because without addressing them they would have difficulty engaging in community decision-making. The freedom of women's groups to choose for themselves what they want to do is vital for ensuring programming is relevant to them and works at their own pace.

## 2.3. Providing usable and adaptable tools

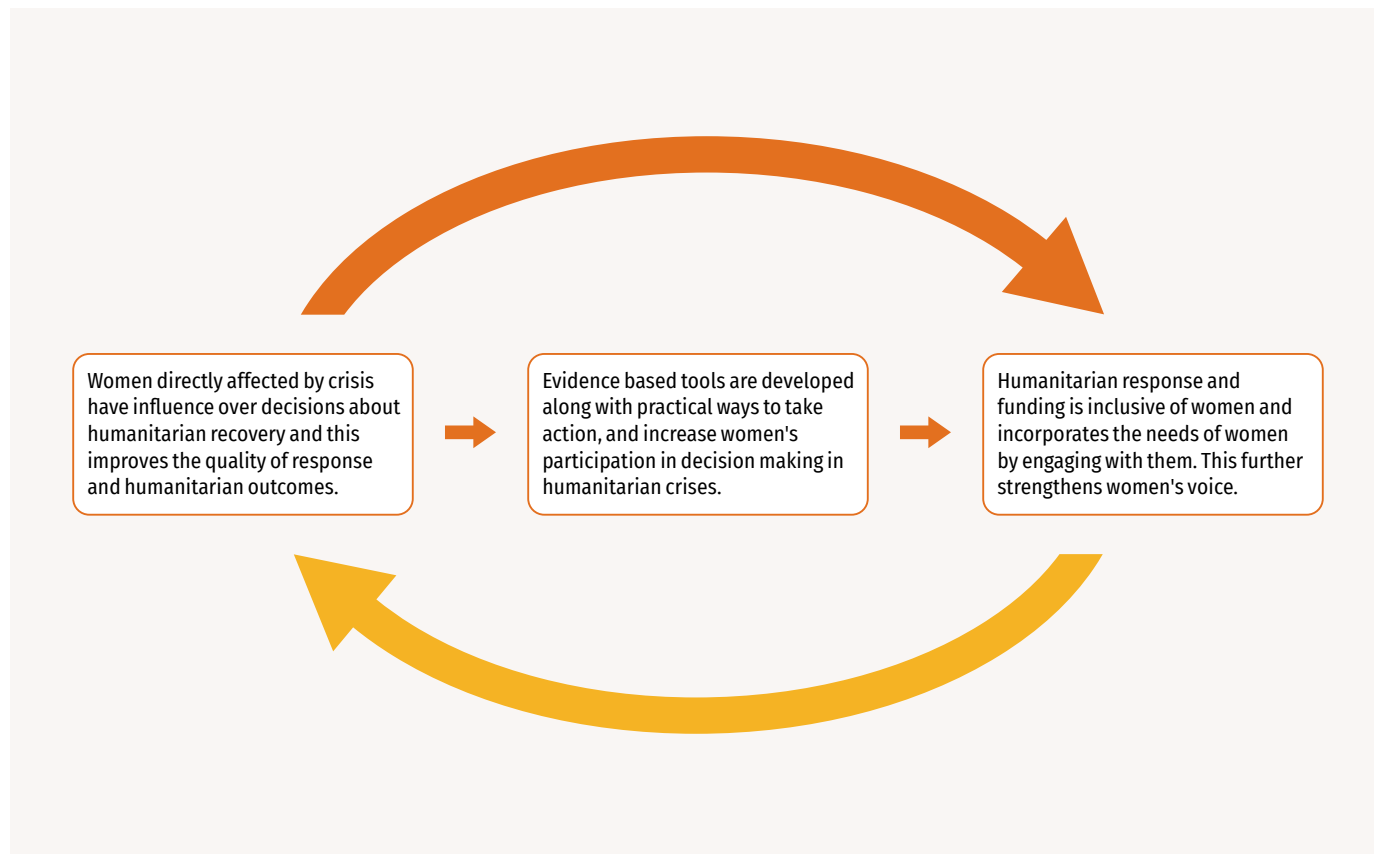
The Women Lead Theory of Change identifies two impact goals:

1. Women directly affected by crisis have influence over decisions about humanitarian recovery.
2. Humanitarian response and funding is inclusive of women and incorporates the needs of women by engaging with them.

Women Lead acknowledges that having evidence-based tools is central to achieving these two goals. These tools must be adaptable to different crisis affected contexts, and there should be useful information and guidance on how to implement them.

Women Lead offers a toolkit and guidance informed by best practice on approaches to advance effective and inclusive governance. In addition, teams are supported to use these tools through training and accompaniment and learning is shared through peer-exchange and learning networks. The tools are highly adaptable to different contexts and the independent multi-country evaluation finds that they can be used to support transformative change in women's participation across contexts.

As Women Lead scales and is implemented in more countries, the tools will continue to be refined based on feedback and learning.





## CONCLUSION

### Key learning

#### **1. Engaging men and boys is vital but progress is not linear**

All Women Lead in Emergencies pilots include components designed to engage men and boys: this is a mandatory component of the model, is integrated within the Women Lead Theory of Change, and is considered necessary both in order to reduce risks to women and because men's allyship and support is critical to increasing Women's Voice and Leadership. 'Engaging Men and Boys' approaches are present in each of the pilots, although the ways in which they are integrated into different contexts differs.

We have seen clear positive outcomes from this within our external evaluation. However, social norms change is frequently not linear. Whilst qualitative evidence from both women and men has yielded positive indications that many men see the value of women's participation and are actively working with women to increase their decision making, it is also the case that we see some men who blame Women Lead for taking women away from their homes. Whilst this can be counteracted through proactive engagement with men, it is also the case that broad norms change around gender roles also takes time and sustained work.



Loss of power by any dominant group is uncomfortable, and as such we observe complex reactions from men towards Women Lead, which highlights the need for continued engagement and confirms the need to ensure engaging men and boys is clearly integrated into all Women Lead projects. Whilst all Women Lead projects include an 'Engaging Men and Boys' approach there is a need for greater documentation of how this is implemented in practice and cross learning between pilots on successful approaches and challenges experienced. In addition, enhancing existing Women Lead tools and guidance and providing a repository of examples would be useful for country teams looking to see what approaches have been used in which contexts, along with guidance for how to adapt engaging men and boys approaches to different context.

## **2. Moving towards systematic and regularised participation**

We can clearly see evidence of outcomes emerging around women's greater participation and leadership. We can even see examples of women taking transformative action, which in some cases impacts the lives of thousands living within their community.

The Women Lead model is currently presented as a 'cycle'. However, as groups mature there is often a need to move beyond big 'one off' actions –which, whilst visible and potentially impactful, are frequently ad hoc– towards a model where subsequent cycles are built into a 'spiral', moving towards more systematic and regularised participation. And CARE has many tools and approaches drawn from across our Inclusive Governance work which can be integrated into such subsequent cycles. Participatory budgeting, community score cards, and social audits are all examples of approaches which could help to ensure women's more systematic inclusion into future community decision-making.

## **3. There is a need for greater outcome documentation**

The Women Lead in Emergencies project is now moving from a pilot stage towards greater uptake across CARE. New guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation, introduced in 2022, will help to address this in new and existing pilots.

However, there is also a need to consider and develop new tools for capturing the highest-level outcomes, and particularly advocating and influencing outcomes. Whilst Outcome Harvesting and Most Significant Change have been used to surface examples of changes within communities, the programme would benefit by focusing on greater documentation of action plans and developing more systematic, achievable approaches to capturing the most impactful outcomes. To achieve this, it will be important to work with country teams to develop implementable solutions to capture the full depth of outcomes from Women Lead.

## Next steps

- ▶ **Scaling the model:** With evidence that the model is effective and can adapt to different kinds of programmatic contexts, CARE will support the scaling of Women Lead. This includes greater incorporation of the approach into CARE's humanitarian programming. However, it also includes ensuring the sustainability of the model going forward. For this reason, CARE is exploring models of training, accompaniment, resourcing, and peer-exchange which will help to ensure the quality and sustainability of the Women Lead in Emergencies model and its scaling.
- ▶ **Updating the Women Lead model, theory of change and toolkit:** The end of the first multi-country pilot stage is an opportunity to revisit the theory of change, to ensure we are incorporating findings from research and continuing to challenge our own assumptions. This work will include:
  - ▶ Picking up on the recommendations and gaps identified in the evaluation, and giving greater visibility to components that are not currently part of the five-steps but are present in the theory of change (such as engaging men and boys as allies in women's participation and gender equality).
  - ▶ Within the theory of change, interrogating and elaborating on different modes of participation and pathways of women's voice and leadership for improved humanitarian action, so that we can ensure the model supports each of these appropriately.
  - ▶ Developing tools relevant to different modes and pathways of participation, including by expanding available guidance and tools (such as by providing example tools to use with groups, a repository of learning, and practical examples).
- ▶ **Moving from a project 'cycle' to a 'spiral' to enable greater regularisation of women's leadership:** Women Lead uses a 'cycle' model but in fact, as groups mature from cycle to cycle there is the potential to expand their scope, potentially moving towards more systemic or deeper participation and leadership. Developing tools, guidance and learning for maturing Women Lead groups working in protracted/cyclical/nexus settings, and integrating approaches from women's empowerment, inclusive governance and advocacy programming in development contexts could help to ensure we are taking opportunities to build on women's successes. As such, CARE will be working towards a model which builds from a 'cycle' to a 'spiral', with cycles building on one another and - at the pace of women - gradually expanding and deepening the participation supported. This is likely to include trialling the integration of CARE's inclusive governance approaches such as Participatory Budgeting, Citizen Charters and Community Score Cards.

- ▶ **Developing a more sophisticated understanding of humanitarian stakeholders and how to influence them:** The Women Lead team will engage in a Political Economy Analysis to better understand the roles of different humanitarian actors. This will enable us to develop targeted, politically feasible influencing strategies to address implementation gaps in donor commitments to women’s voice and leadership in humanitarian action.
- ▶ **Addressing documentation and data gaps:** Evidence is an important part of learning and of peerexchange. It also helps to build our understanding of gender transformative, locally led programming and its impact for sector-wide advocacy. However, the evaluation identified key gaps in the documentation of these advocacy wins. As such, CARE will be developing new, more women-centred approaches to monitoring and evaluation which will be important to further understand the effects and impact of Women Lead. This will include new tools and approaches for documenting action plans, and to understand the impact (including the true reach) of women’s collective action.

# ANNEX 1

WL STEP	Why was the step developed?	How does the step work?
<b>Analyse</b>	Women in emergencies often lack information about who makes decisions in their community and how; how gender inequality and other factors impact inclusion; their entitlements and how to access resources.	A Rapid Gender Analysis on Power and Participation (RGA-P) is conducted to build an intersectional picture of context. This helps to inform choices about actions women may want to take.
<b>Reflect</b>	Affected women in emergencies, and Women Lead project teams themselves, often lack spaces to reflect on their own experience of gender inequality and social norms.	Building off CARE’s Social Analysis and Action tools, women’s groups, powerholders, men and the implementers of Women Lead such as CARE and partners, are given the space and tools to explore how gender and other power hierarchies and norms influence people’s decisions and power. This helps to ensure a shared understanding of power and builds consciousness of rights denial and injustice.
<b>Co-create</b>	Women in emergencies often don’t have the confidence, knowledge or resources to be able to collectively define what their priorities and goals are for participation and leadership, and to strategise together on how they can achieve them.	Using participatory tools, combined with the increased knowledge and confidence generated by the Analyse and Reflect steps, groups define collective objectives and plan for the activities they want to undertake. This helps to build skills and solidarity to take action.
<b>Act</b>	Women in emergencies are systematically excluded from participating in decision making by local power holders including local authorities and humanitarian actors.	The Act phase gives women’s groups the support, accompaniment and budget to be able to put their action plans into practice. Women Lead projects provide activity budget to fund action as well as other support to implement action plans, including facilitating access to humanitarian actors such as local authorities and NGOs and to implement action plans.
<b>Learn</b>	Women in humanitarian emergencies are frequently not included in defining what success in humanitarian response or participation looks like.	The Learn phase uses participatory tools to define what success looks like for women and to support reporting on and learning from activities.
<p><b>In addition to the five steps above, Engaging Men and Boys is outlined in Women Lead guidance as a core requirement of any Women Lead programme.</b></p>		
<b>Engaging men and boys</b>	Men are often key power holders and gatekeepers of information and access in humanitarian contexts, and they help to form and reinforce social norms around gender, power and participation. Women’s participation work can also threaten men and increase violence towards women or other forms of control and resistance if they are not actively engaged.	Working with men and boys is a core component of the Women Lead approach, but how project teams do this is not predetermined and depends on the context.  Men and boys work alongside Women Lead programmes as partners, supporters and allies, mitigating risks of gender-based violence (GBV) for women speaking out in public, whilst jointly advocating for gender equality.

**Women Lead in Emergencies. Impact and learning  
from a multi-country pilot (2018-2022)**

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