

Gender-Transformation within the Government of Ethiopia

Results from the Systems-Level Evaluation of the Seizing the Moment Project

KEY TAKEAWAYS



The project was instrumental in leading the first-ever National Gender Policy in Ethiopia and the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth adopting gender transformative approaches across its activities.



The project enabled Ministry staff to reflect on how gender norms affect their own attitudes, lives, and their work, leading to changes in work practices and significant impacts on their work with communities.



The project institutionalized gender transformative approaches across the Ministry, creating a Gender Levelling Tool with integrated Gender Responsible Budgeting to support policy and programs.



The project guided a context analysis and HR assessment which facilitated a more gender inclusive organizational culture and workplace within the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth.

Background

Problem: The remit of the Ethiopian Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY)¹—to advance the needs of women, children, and youth, and hold other line Ministries to account for doing so—was made more explicit in 2018. However, the Ministry had limited organizational capacity to confidently address gendered barriers and limited tools with which to support and hold other ministries accountable on gender issues. The current National Policy on Ethiopian

Women (NPEW) does not conceptualize the subordination of women as related to socially constructed gender roles and relations, nor does it consider fully the multi-dimensional forms of inequality that shape women’s lives. Despite Ethiopian law stating that all sectors and Ministerial offices should address the affairs of women in their policies, laws, development programs and projects², government did not have capacity to do so.

Solution: *Seizing the Moment* (STM) was a pilot project implemented by CARE Ethiopia between the period of July 2019 and June 2020, later extended until October 2020. The project worked with MoWCY to transform its internal organization while also supporting it with the external application of its Ministerial mandate. The project also leveraged on the recent more open legislative space within Ethiopia for civil society organizations (CSOs) and development partners to undertake advocacy and engagement towards the government.

Expected outcomes and impact: The two project outcomes were: (1) Improved organizational capacity and working culture, especially around gendered norms, at the MoWCY – ensuring Ministry staff are more confident in addressing gendered barriers that constrain their effectiveness; and (2) In line with its new remit, MoWCY has better systems and tools with which to support and hold other Ministries accountable on gender issues. The project also sought to achieve systems-level change through employing a range of CARE’s pathways to scale.

Questions and Methodology

The evaluation was designed to explore the following questions.

1. Process: What did the program do and how were the systems-level pathways integrated across its activities?

2. Systems-change: What changes were achieved by the project through different systems pathways (applying the Vision 2030 pathways to scale framework)? How did the systems-level changes across these pathways reinforce or support each other?

3. Population-wide impact: How did those systems-level changes result in changes in individual level impacts on people’s lives?

4. Sustainability: How sustainable was this systems-level effect?³

The evaluation employed the Outcome Harvesting (OH) methodology (see box) to answer these questions. Following the six-step [OH methodology](#), the evaluation harvested data on STM outcomes,⁴ the significance of the outcomes and the contributions of the project to the outcomes.



Outcome harvesting is a participatory approach in which the harvester facilitates the collection of evidence of what has been achieved and works backward to determine whether and how the project or intervention contributed to the change.

Findings

Through its close collaboration with the Government of Ethiopia, STM successfully influenced gender-transformation within the MoWCY through an approach that integrated advocacy, systems-strengthening and social norms transformation in a mutually reinforcing manner.

Key results include:

A gender-transformative policy environment.

The STM project influenced critical change within the MoWCY and played a pivotal role in laying the groundwork for Ethiopia’s first ever National Gender Policy, collaborating with the Ministry to conduct research and policy analysis that generated recommendations and an action plan for moving the policy forward. Further, the project influenced the drafting of the National Policy for the Prevention and Protection against Gender-Based Violence and the adoption of a gender-transformative approach across all activities of the MoWCY. CARE Ethiopia extensively reviewed the NEPW, collected primary data and engaged with CSOs, government offices and communities at all levels, which informed and supported advocacy efforts for the decision to draft a new Gender Policy which includes the need to address norms.

A gender-transformative approach across the MoWCY

The project built the capacity of the MoWCY to institutionalize a gender transformative approach throughout its work. The Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approach has changed the content and outcomes of staff training; development of a ‘leveling-tool’ increased the capacity of the ministry

to design, implement and monitor policies and programs that are gender-transformative. Finally, the project strengthened budgeting and human resources processes to be more gender-transformative and conducive to positive organizational change.

“I used to allow things to happen in my life, but the training made me reflect on why I allow this to continue.”

MoWCY staff member

Staff transformation within the MoWCY and capacity to cascade SAA across the Ethiopian government

Since July 2019, staff are more aware of social and gender norms and are taking practical steps to challenge harmful norms after a series of SAA discussions led by CARE, where a training of trainers was provided and further cascaded.

Sustained changes two years on

Many of the effects of STM are still evident and progressing nearly two years after the project, including:

- MoWCY continues to push for the adoption of the new National Gender Policy soon, and the draft National Policy for the Prevention and Protection against GBV is currently under review.
- The Levelling Tool is close to completion.
- The ongoing focus of social norms within the community-level work of the Ministry continues.
- The impact on inclusive governance within the MoWCY continues to inform its culture and work.
- The transfer of knowledge and sharing of resources has been crucial to creating Ministry ownership for sustainability.

“We used to get resistance; they would feel their values and cultures are being changed but now we are challenging the root causes and allowing conversations that lead to participants believing in the needed change.”

MoWCY Staff member

Population-wide impacts need to be further evaluated

The evaluation did not include a detailed focus on individual impact (because of systems-level change). However, the policies and decisions made at the national level do impact the lives of individuals. The assumption can be made that the review of the National Policy on Ethiopian Women and adoption of a new Gender Policy will impact the lives of millions. One more direct way that MoWCY’s work reaches individuals is the Social Norms and Male Engagement manuals that are cascaded from national to regional to community levels. The integration of the SAA approach and the transformation of the gender outlook of the individuals working in the Ministry has allowed the SAA approach and focus on social norms to be cascaded to the community through using these manuals.

Lessons Learned

The evaluation generated many findings relevant to improving how CARE and other actors work to influence systems-level changes and impacts. Specifically, the STM project worked collaboratively with the Government of Ethiopia and much of the success was due to what we might call the soft skills CARE’s staff and other ‘intangible’ skills and ways of working. That is to say: success hinges as much as **how** CARE works as on what CARE activities does.

- 1. Partner-led approaches work best when collaborating with government.** Two of the most impactful activities the project conducted were suggestions made by the MoWCY during the initial workshop.
- 2. Building rapport and relationships is critical to realizing change.** The project built on the strong and deep relationships and partnerships that were developed with key personnel across the Ministry, ensuring their inputs were included early on, regularly, and flexibly in what is often a changing context.
- 3. Working with governments requires unique approaches,** in part due to the motivations and dynamics of government structures and staff. Having the know-how to navigate this complex environment is critical to success.
- 4. Frequent leadership and structural changes within governments** requires a constant presence to remain relevant, exercise influences and support sustainability.
- 5. Flexible timelines and adaptive management are key to success.**

Recommendations and Future Directions

FOR CARE

- **Provide platforms to discuss and create clarity and understanding on gender transformative approaches.**

Although the project earned the buy-in and agreement on the use of the GT approaches from the Ministry, the Ministry still has challenges explaining and championing this approach to other departments and stakeholders. In its work in Ethiopia and beyond, CARE should sensitize and advocate for a full and common understanding of this approach among all actors, such as policy makers.

- **Improve consultation and communication with development partners and non-state actors.** CARE should ensure to creatively engage all relevant stakeholders in future projects, and ensure sufficient acknowledgement of prior groundwork. This will prevent any feelings of exclusion among stakeholders.

- **Continue to shift from a project-based approach to program-based approach for systems-level work.** Systems-level work requires CARE and other actors to prioritize

continued relationship building and constant presence and influence among systems-level actors, which are constantly changing. Project-based work hampers CARE's ability to maintain this constant presence and influence.

- **Adopt a more deliberate focus on systems-level change during design, monitoring and evaluation:** The STM project did not set out to deliberately effect systems-level change, but did so organically. A more deliberate integration of these strategies within project design, M&E and the articulation of the intended impact should be encouraged across the CARE confederation. This will deepen the impact of CARE's work.

- **Expand the approaches CARE Ethiopia used for successful gender transformative systems change through government to other locations:** Support learning from, and use of CARE Ethiopia's successful approaches to embed a GT approach within government – particularly using the SAA with Ministry staff and the Gender Levelling Tool - across other CARE offices and contexts.

FOR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PRACTITIONERS

- **Political economy or context analysis** should take place at the onset of the project and capacity to do so is critical to success.

- Systems-level evaluations should be **designed to surface unintended outcomes.** Systems are dynamic and projects designed to influence those systems are likely to evolve during implementation and therefore yield outcomes not anticipated. Documenting and understanding program evolution and changes – anticipated and not – is critical to effective learning.

- **Explore use of the outcome harvest methodology with partners.** During the evaluation, the MoWSC expressed interest in the outcome harvest methodology to evaluate other areas of its work. CARE's partners are likely to welcome and benefit from capacity strengthening activities related to systems-level evaluation to better understand and document the impact of their work.

Endnotes

1 The MoWCY has since changed its name and is currently called the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs.

2 Article 46 of Ethiopian Proclamation No.691/3A/3

3 Sustainability, in this context, is defined as the extent to which the output/practices of the project are utilized today and whether MoWCY has taken ownership of the tools/practices brought forth by the project.

4 A change in the behavior, relationships, activities, actions, policies or practices of individual, group, community, organization, or institution with whom a program works directly.

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The full Ethiopia Outcome Harvesting Evaluation report is available for further information [here](#).