



Raising the Bar for Women and Girls

CARE believes that at its root, poverty is caused by the unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunities. This is especially true in countries where most women can't work, go to school, access health care, move about freely and safely in society, choose their own marriages or plan their own families and futures.

Globally, 1.2 billion people live in absolute poverty and most of them are women and girls.

CARE recognizes that gender inequality and gender-based violence (GBV) are embedded in social norms and long-term approaches are required to address these barriers. But we know that things are changing –in many countries the acceptance of violence against women is decreasing. It will take every one of us — advocates, elected officials, international leaders — standing in solidarity across the globe to end gender inequality and the injustice of violence.

CARE's experience in communities around the world has demonstrated that reducing gender-based violence is possible through coordinated engagement by government and civil society actors and strategic interventions that address the root causes of poverty and inequality.

The Problem:

In many of the poorest countries, social and cultural norms and violence prevent women from accessing vital resources and participating in educational, occupational and economic opportunities that could lift them out of poverty.

The global scale of gender-based violence is devastating. It's estimated that **at least one out of three women globally** has experienced gender-based violence in her lifetime. It primarily impacts women and girls and includes, rape, domestic violence,

child marriage, female genital cutting and other harmful traditional practices.

Child marriage affects 15 million girls annually, impeding their education, livelihoods and choice of when, if and whom to marry. Girls who marry young are more likely to face domestic violence and negative health consequences resulting from early pregnancy and childbirth.

In times of crisis, violence against women increases. In emergencies, women and girls are often the last to eat, access health services or find safe haven for themselves and their families, and they are highly vulnerable to abuse, violence and exploitation. In refugee camps or in situations of internal displacement, women and girls lack security and social networks, leaving them vulnerable to violence and abuse. For example, sexual violence against women and girls by combatants during or after armed conflicts is reported globally. Other forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, abuse of children and early and forced marriage are also common during crisis.

Gender-based violence has profound implications on survivors and communities, including increased risks for HIV, unintended pregnancy and life-threatening reproductive health complications. In addition to physical harm, many survivors suffer deep psychological scars that endure for the rest of their lives. Without intervention, the cycle of violence is likely to continue in the next generation.

There are also very real economic costs that result from gender-based violence. For example, a USAID-funded study conducted by CARE found that in Bangladesh, the cost of domestic violence alone equaled two percent of the country's GDP – the same amount the Government of Bangladesh spends annually on health and nutrition programs.

The Solution:

Eradicating gender inequities and gender-based violence is possible through emergency and development programs that equip women and girls to exercise agency and influence in their own lives. Research shows that when women and girls are supported by their families and community to have equal access to education, resources, rights, employment and economic opportunities, and when they're able to make their own decisions about when or whether to marry or have children, the benefits are far reaching.

CARE focuses on finding community-driven solutions that address gender discrimination and negative social norms, that raise the value of girls, and that increase opportunities for girls, their families and their communities. CARE's broad programming to prevent and respond to gender-based violence includes initiatives aimed at addressing social norms that perpetuate violence, engaging men and boys, empowering women and girls and building the capacity of local organizations and community systems to respond holistically to the needs of survivors and to promote the rights of women and girls.



Next Steps:

CARE advocates for the U.S. Government to integrate gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment throughout its foreign assistance programs, to include strong policies and robust resources that combat gender-based violence, prevent and address child marriage, and support women and girls in emergencies and humanitarian settings. Specifically, CARE calls for:

- Full and robust funding of the foreign affairs budget to include interventions specifically proven to save lives, improve women's economic security and reduce incidences of gender-based violence.
- Passage of the International Violence Against Women Act, which elevates the importance of women's empowerment and gender-based violence, including child marriage, as a foreign policy priority.
- U.S. Government implementation of long-term comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and the empowerment of adolescent girls.

CARE USA Headquarters
151 Ellis Street, Atlanta, GA 30303
404-681-2552 | www.care.org

CARE Action
1899 L Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20036
202-595-2800 | www.careaction.org

