



**Claiming Rights -
Promoting Gender
Equality:** Women's
empowerment and male
engagement for gender
transformation in post-
conflict and chronically
food-insecure settings
December 2016

CARE Österreich Framework Program Phase III

PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM UGANDA

Phase III of the CARE Österreich Framework Program (FP III) was implemented from January 2013 to March 2016, and promoted gender equality in Ethiopia, Uganda and Nepal, benefitting approximately 60,000 people. In Austria, the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution UN1325 was also supported.

The new Framework Program (FP IV), "Learning for Change (L4C) Strengthening Women's Voices in East Africa" is based on the rich experiences gained in FP III. With the support of CARE Österreich and the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), L4C is being implemented from April 2016 to March 2019 and promotes women's leadership, gender equality and diversity, psychoso-

cial well-being and advocacy in the context of women, peace and security (UN1325) and GBV. The regional program is implemented in Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda and has an advocacy component in Austria and at the EU level. The main focus is on capacity development of multipliers in civil society and government organizations to promote gender responsive programming.

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PROGRAM OVERVIEW

CARE Österreich Framework Program Phase III – A Brief Description

Overall objective

The **overall objective** of phase III of the program was “To contribute to increased effectiveness in development program quality in conflict, post-conflict, and food insecurity situations through a holistic approach to women’s empowerment and gender equality and through evidence-based research, learning and sharing of best practices.”

In phases I and II, CARE Österreich, in cooperation with the CARE country offices and implementing partners, built a holistic women’s empowerment intervention model. At the beginning of phase III, the team decided to visualize and summarize what this holistic approach to women’s empowerment means in practice and, as such, created a simple one page graphic (see below). The holistic approach of the program engages three main domains: psychosocial well-being, transformation of social norms and meaningful participation. The graphic shows the steps the program implemented in these domains at various intervention levels (individual, family, solidarity groups, community, local government, regional and national and international).

Contribution to the overall objective

Considering the overall objective of the program, in **phase III considerable efforts were made to develop relevant learning and research questions** (Expected Result 4 of the program) that would speak to the effectiveness of the holistic women’s empowerment intervention model in comparison to less comprehensive interventions. Therefore, surveys were conducted in three countries (Uganda, Nepal and Ethiopia), comparing participants of CARE savings and loans groups (VSLAs) who received the holistic intervention package with participants of other savings and loans initiatives who mainly received economic literacy.

SOME ENCOURAGING FINDINGS FROM THIS RESEARCH ARE:

- When savings and loans activities are combined with those of personal and social empowerment – which was the case in CARE’s interventions – economic outcomes of women are improved.
- The active involvement of men in the promotion of women’s empowerment leads to more economic prosperity for women.
- Visits from a role model man make a significant difference in lowering the reports of conflict in households. (Role model men are those who demonstrate transformed gender behaviour and are good models of how gender equality is put into practice in daily life. Often, the women who participated in the program selected role model men themselves; the program then trained these men on gender issues).

SUMMARY OF CARE UGANDA’S APPROACH TO ENGAGING MEN:

- Community selects Role Model Men (RMM)
- CARE and partners support RMM to become agents of change in their own and others’ lives
- Each RMM reaches out to at least 10 households, supporting increased gender equality
- The holistic women’s empowerment intervention model

The holistic approach to women's empowerment



Specific objective

The CARE Österreich Framework Program's specific objective was "By 2015, 40,703 women and 15,019 men, either affected by conflict in Uganda (34,062 direct beneficiaries: 23,843 women and 10,219 men) and Nepal (10,660 beneficiaries: 9,160 women and 1,500 men) or by food insecurity in Ethiopia (11,000 households: 7,700 women and 3,300 men), are able to exercise gender equality by addressing agency/individual, institutional/structural and relational aspects of their empowerment."

The Framework Program supported three country projects: Berchi in South Gondar, Ethiopia; Roco Kwo III in Northern Uganda; and Sakcham III in the Churia Region of Nepal. These projects were implemented by local government entities in Ethiopia and local civil society non-governmental organizations in Nepal and Uganda.

- **Ethiopia:** Women and Children's Affairs; Food Security Task Force
- **Uganda:** Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET), Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G)
- **Nepal:** Rural Women Service Centre (RWSC), Kalika Community Women Development Centre (KCWDC) and Dalit Social Development Centre (DSDC);

Contribution to the specific objective

In Uganda, the Women's Economic Empowerment Program (Roco Kwo) III project funded by the program, is part of the broader Northern Uganda Women Empowerment Program (NUWEP) of CARE Uganda (which is primarily funded by NORAD). NUWEP has supported 1,637 VSLA groups (with an average of 25 members – approximately 40,000 persons). Some of the positive outcomes of the project are: women feel that the program has reduced barriers to the market; they report higher incomes and increased capacity to cope with economic shocks; men's attitudes regarding core gender issues have changed, which has led to increased family harmony, and women having more influence on family and community group decision-making.

In Ethiopia, the Berchi project organized 558 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) with a membership of 11,224 persons, of which 7,384 were women. Additionally, the project established 120 Social Action and Analysis Groups (SAA) in 30 kebeles (villages), and organized and supported School Gender Clubs in 10 schools. These vehicles (VSLA groups, SAA groups and Gender Clubs) helped improve the understanding between poor and marginalized persons and key opinion leaders and power holders and also bridged the gap between generations. Some of the positive outcomes of the project are that apart from the improved economic situation of the participants, women report increased involvement in household decision-making, more control over productive resources and taking on leadership roles in community groups. Government stakeholders, community members and village agents were engaged in the project as partners in service delivery and benefited from capacity-building activities organized by the project. The involvement of these stakeholders was crucial in creating an enabling environment and facilitating the social change process.

In Nepal, the SAKCHAM III project was implemented in 45 localities or village development committees (VDCs) in three districts: Kapilvastu, Makwanpur and Chitwan. The project has sustainably increased the income of about 8,885 women who participated in the 395 REFLECT adult education centres of the project. Some of the positive outcomes of the project are: women report increased access to services and public resources and 66% of the participating women report being able to cope with economic shocks. Concerning gender norms, a considerable success of the project is its influence on the knowledge and attitudes of women and men on gender-based violence (GBV). Silence on GBV has been increasingly shattered in the project area, with 85% of the women mentioning awareness of a place to complain to in case of GBV. The project has helped create representative and sustainable women's networks that effectively engage in village planning processes, which are linked to the national women's movement. Women report increased influence on household and community level decision-making on strategic gender issues and those that have an impact on the quality of their lives.



Women in **all three participating countries reported improvements towards gender equality** in strategic gender issues such as leadership capacity, control of income, equal education opportunities for girls and boys, participation in strategic community and household decisions, deconstruction of gender stereotype distribution of roles and responsibilities and social connectedness outside the family due to the holistic intervention of the program.

The lessons learned and research implemented in phase III of the program confirm the effectiveness of this holistic approach and **justify further investment in capacity-building of staff and partners in the implementation of holistic women's empowerment interventions which will be the program's focus in the next phase.**



LESSONS LEARNED FROM UGANDA

CARE Uganda's Roco Kwo "Transforming Lives": a program based on the holistic women's empowerment intervention model

The Roco Kwo Program was part of the CARE Österreich Framework Program (FP III) supported by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA). The following briefs explain the analysis of the evaluation data of Roco Kwo Program. This analysis enabled CARE to prove that some interventions were especially effective in advancing strategic outcomes for women and can thus be recommended for replication in other development programs.

CARE International in Northern Uganda implemented the program with civil society partners Women and Rural Development Network (WORUDET) and Gulu Women's Economic Development and Globalization (GWED-G), and with national level strategic partners Isis Wicce, UWOPA, UWONET, Raising Voices, CEDOVIP and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

The implementation areas were the Amuru, Gulu, Kitgum, Pader, Agago, Lamwo, Nwoya districts in the Acholi sub-region.

Over two decades, an armed conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Ugandan government forces raged in Northern Uganda, leading to massive abductions, gruesome human rights violations and large-scale internal displacement. Living in crowded camps for years, men had no land to produce for their families. Many individuals lost their self-esteem and became vulnerable and prone to negative behaviours, including alcohol abuse, contractual sex and violent relationships. Women, more often than men, were aid recipients and were given support to organize in groups, so many took on new roles and became involved in petty trade. As a result of the shifting gender roles between women and men in the camps and long-term insecurity, family conflicts and domestic violence increased. Following the negotiated Juba peace agreement, internally displaced persons began to return to their home villages in 2007 and 2008.

In this context, CARE International developed the program, **Roco Kwo** (in Acholi language “Transforming Lives”), to contribute to a “peaceful society where women and men are equally empowered to enjoy their human rights.” This was to be attained by implementing interventions in the following three domains of change:

- Women and girls affected by the conflict would gain the information, support, skills, access and opportunities to pursue and ensure resilient and sustainable livelihoods;
- An environment of peace with strong, functioning mechanisms would be put in place for peace building, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and resilience to crisis/shocks;
- Governance systems with the frameworks, structures/institutions and implementation would uphold human rights, provide quality services and work in an inclusive/participatory, accountable, transparent and gender sensitive manner.



Women-run savings groups, Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs), became the main vehicle of the program. These groups were open to both women and men, but women filled the main roles of chairperson and treasurer. By mainstreaming a psychosocial approach, women who were isolated due to any kind of stigma (abductees, for instance) were included in the activities of the program. Roco Kwo established over 30 social counselling units for the survivors of gender-based violence, and provided identified, community-based women with special training on leadership, advocacy and conflict-resolution. Program participants selected men and couples as role models for gender equality, and they received extra training to promote shared roles and responsibilities to the ten families living closest to them.

By emphasizing training on dialogue skills, Roco Kwo also tried to reduce domestic violence, to renegotiate social norms and to increase women’s psychosocial well-being and social cohesion.

Interested men and women also received training and support for local-level advocacy activities on issues related to the rights of women and girls. Also supported was networking between partner organizations and national women’s organizations and networks. Additionally, VSLA members were given support to participate in various women’s rights monitoring activities, and women were encouraged to participate in local budgeting processes.

CARE International developed the program, Roco Kwo to contribute to a “peaceful society where women and men are equally empowered to enjoy their human rights.”



Savings groups are a key tool for women's empowerment

Brief 1: Evaluation of CARE Uganda's Roco Kwo Program for Women's Economic Empowerment

Written by Elizabeth Brezovich, Brigitte Holzner and Pablo Torija

Purpose

Across the world, many consider women's savings groups to be a key tool for women's empowerment. However, stories from program participants suggest that a combination of activities is crucial for women's economic empowerment. The Roco Kwo team wanted to explore if this was true quantitatively¹.

With a holistic set of activities, the team wanted to assess whether additional activities (transforming gender norms, increasing psychosocial well-being and encouraging meaningful participation beyond mere savings aspects) made a difference for women's economic empowerment.

During our analysis, the economic outcomes for women in Roco Kwo-supported VSLAs were compared with the outcomes for women who were members of VSLAs not

supported by Roco Kwo. This allowed us to dissect the effects of these extra activities that go beyond savings groups on economic empowerment.

Contribution to women's economic empowerment

When we compare women in VSLA groups that were not supported by CARE with those in CARE-supported VSLA groups², the latter more often report:

- having a bank account
- having taken out a loan in cash or in-kind over the past twelve months
- engaging in a small-scale income generation activity, usually from selling agricultural products
- owning a mobile phone
- Being able to always send their children to school.³

These extra activities are good for women's psychosocial well-being and improve their economic outcomes. Being a member of a savings group is not enough to succeed economically. A solid psychological and social basis boosts economic inclusion and investments in child education.

Role model men's contribution to women's economic empowerment

When we compare women whose families received visits from a role model man to women in CARE-supported VSLAs who did not have this access, we find that the attitudes of the former are more progressive towards ownership and control of assets. These women are more likely to report that:

- they believe that women should be able to own and control the same assets as men, such as bicycles.
- women should be able to own cash savings and decide on how to use them.
- women should be able to inherit and keep property or assets coming from their husbands, fathers, mothers or other relatives.

Women also report higher levels of fixed capital, such as owning land or a second hut; being always able to send their children to school; and that, overall, the Roco Kwo program reduced their vulnerability to shocks.

The role model men program thus did not only increase family harmony, but also resulted in changed attitudes towards gender equality regarding economic autonomy of women.

Conclusions and Lessons for Future Programming

Savings groups should not stand alone if they are meant to contribute to economic empowerment.

Personal and social empowerment are the foundation for economic empowerment of women.

Harmonious family life and support from men lead to women's economic prosperity.

Personal and social empowerment are the foundation for economic empowerment of women.



¹ The following conclusions are the result of data analysis of the endline survey of Roco Kwo, which gathered surveys from 807 men and women groups. Additional regression analyses using propensity score matching was conducted to explore correlations between women's participation in certain activities and their empowerment outcomes. Questions on the survey explored issues such as women's reports of participation in village level community groups, their reported levels of confidence, their ownership of certain assets, their decision-making on assets, etc.

² We even used socio-demographic variables to control for potential differences among the CARE and the non-CARE groups.

³ This one is surprising as it is not a key outcome indicator of the program, nor did the program target children. Interestingly, there were no reports of differences in abilities to pay school fees, but the difference was related to school attendance, suggesting that women in the programming area perhaps have better access to the factors that facilitate school attendance: nutrition for their children, clothing, transportation, and alternative labor for tasks for which children



Brief 2:

Using psychosocial well-being indicators to measure the effectiveness of CARE Uganda's Women's Empowerment Program, Roco Kwo

Written by Janine Wurzer, Elizabeth Brezovich, Brigitte Holzner, Pablo Torija and Martha Bragin

Background

In this brief we present the impact of Roco Kwo, CARE's Northern Ugandan Women's Empowerment Program, on a selection of psychosocial well-being indicators. These indicators were developed as part of a multi-stage qualitative research⁴ (also referred to as "the study"), in which conflict-affected women were asked what elements were important for their psychosocial well-being.

This research asked conflict-affected women themselves what elements are important for them to have a good life. It generated a new way of looking at the success of development programming based on women's priorities.

The participatory methodology of the study provided women with the space to share their vision and definition of psychosocial well-being—women who were themselves survivors and had been affected by the consequences of the conflict could clearly explain what they considered important for well-being and appreciated that they were given the space to do so. "They defined psychosocial well-being not as an absence of suffering but as the affirmative presence of those capabilities required to live a good life in the present and in the future."⁵ Women in the Acholi sub-region of Northern Uganda did not perceive themselves as victims but as agents who think in positive terms and want to be given support to create good living conditions and enabling environments for their children and future generations.

Psychosocial well-being indicators

Overall, the participatory, multi-stage study in Northern Uganda⁶ arrived at 14 **overarching well-being elements** and for each of them, **two to 10 psychosocial indicators**. As much as possible, the psychosocial indicators represent the literal statements of the women who participated in the study. The most relevant statements of the 652 study participants were selected, validated and clustered into the overarching 14 elements. Altogether, the women came up with **80 well-being indicators** which are culture and context specific but, which also reflect more generic concepts of psychosocial well-being. Hobfoll's essential elements (I-VI) for surviving mass trauma are widely used in the Great Lakes region and were therefore used thematically:

(I) Freedom from anxiety, worry and fear

- (1) Peace and security in my home, in my community and in my country
- (2) Access the resources needed to be able to provide for myself and my children

(II) Sustaining human connections

- (3) Loving home and family
- (4) Children growing well
- (5) Belonging to the VSLA, clan, church, or other formal group

(III) Connections to transcendent belief systems

- (6) Religion and spirituality

(IV) Self and community efficacy

- (7) Education and information
- (8) Participation and advocacy

(V) Self and community esteem

- (9) Helpfulness
- (10) Being "smart"⁷
- (11) Having a clean home

(VI) Hopefulness

- (12) Children who are able to go beyond where I am in life
- (13) The garden⁸
- (14) Time to rest and relax

Purpose

The team used psychosocial indicators along with traditional indicators in the Roco Kwo endline survey as an opportunity to:

- measure the impact of the program on women's psychosocial well-being based on their own priorities
- pilot the use of psychosocial indicators in a quantitative survey
- find out if the psychosocial well-being indicators that were defined by the conflict-affected women would help tell a more comprehensive story about the effectiveness of the Roco Kwo Program than the other indicators that CARE had defined.

Process

A selection of 41 out of the 80 well-being indicators was included as a separate section in the endline questionnaire for women. This was done because the other indicators were mostly covered in the original questions of the baseline survey. The new psychosocial indicator questions were answered using a Likert scale, in which 1 = not at all, 2 = some of the time, 3 = most of the time, 4 = all of the time.

⁴ Bragin, M., Onta, K., Taaka, J., Eibs, T.: "The SEE_PET Methodology – A Participatory Method for Developing and Measuring Psychosocial Programs for Women"; CARE Österreich, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College – 2013 <http://new.care.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PsychosocialIndicatorDevelopmentMethod.pdf>

⁵ Bragin, M., Onta, K., Taaka, J., Nzeyimana, G., Eibs, T. (2013). To be well at heart: Conflict-affected women's perceptions of psychosocial well-being: A participatory study in Burundi, Nepal and Northern Uganda. Vienna: CARE Österreich - <http://new.care.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/WellbeingIndicatorStudy.pdf>

⁶ Bragin, M. Taaka, J. & Eibs, T. (2013): Conflict-affected Women's Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-Being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. Vienna and Kampala : CARE Österreich (page 44-46) – <http://new.care.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/carepsychosocialwellbeingstudyacholisubregion.pdf>

⁷ For Acholi women, "smart" means dressing well, looking good and having a clean home. Therefore, positive self-perception is coupled with positive perception by others. Ibid (page 86)

⁸ In Acholi culture the connection with the garden (family land) is crucial for the family's well-being and harmony. Women and men traditionally work together in the garden and "participate together at the fireplace in the evening, where family issues are ironed out, the couples' peace is restored and children are taught their cultural traditions." Ibid (pages 58, 59)

For the analysis of the endline data (both from the traditional indicators and the psychosocial indicators), we used refined statistical analysis (propensity score matching) and compared women who participated in Roco Kwo activities with those who had not participated in the program's activities but who shared similar characteristics (participated in an income generating/savings and loans group; were also from resource-poor communities). Additionally, we compared women who participated in Roco Kwo activities who were supported by a role model man or couple⁹ with women who participated in the program but had not received similar support from a role model man or couple.

Findings

Looking primarily at the psychosocial indicators, the positive effect of Roco Kwo program is clear, in some areas clearer than when using indicators the conflict-affected women had not designed. For example, responses of women to the question of how safe they

feel at home (one psychosocial indicator under the well-being element "Peace and security") showed that women who benefitted from Roco Kwo did much better than women who had not been part of the program. Reviewing the responses of women to the more traditional indicator question, "Have you experienced any form of gender-based violence in the last five years?"

there were no differences between the women who had participated in Roco Kwo activities and women who had participated in other similar but less comprehensive economic empowerment activities.

The results of the psychosocial well-being element show many positive, statistically significant differences between women who participated in Roco Kwo and those who were not part of the program. The following specific psychosocial indicators showed significant positive differences for the Roco Kwo participants, confirming the effectiveness of the activities and the validity of the indicators:

Freedom from anxiety, worry and fear:

- Peace and security in my home, in my community and in my country (well-being element)
- I feel safe in my home

Sustaining human connections

- Having a loving home and family (well-being element):
- My husband sits with me at the evening fireplace and teaches the children (the fireplace is very important in Acholi culture; traditionally it is the place where helpful stories are told to children and husbands and wives reach understandings about problems before going to sleep.)
- Children growing well (well-being element):
- I am able to send the children in my care to school
- Others praise me for the good behaviour of my children (90%)

Connections to transcendent belief systems (well-being element)

- Now that I am back on my land, I feel that I can have hope (90%)

Self and community efficacy (well-being element)

- I am seen and heard in clan or other family meetings
- I can represent myself at meetings
- I can represent others at meetings
- I can advocate for my ideas
- I try to respect and protect the rights of others (90%)

Hopefulness (well-being element)

- Children who are able to go beyond where I am in life:
 - When my children are grown they will care for me (90%)
- The garden:
 - I enjoy working in the garden (90%)

⁹ Roco Kwo-trained role model men and couples exemplify gender-transformed behaviour in their daily lives and support the ten closest households in their neighbourhood to challenge gender stereotypes and test more gender equal behaviours



The results of the role model man or couple program are similarly positive.

The results of the role model man or couple program are similarly positive. Well-being indicators related to children, religion, hope in children and the garden show a positive impact of the project in general and an added positive impact after visits from a role model man or couple.

For example, all psychosocial indicators under the well-being element of “Hope in children” show the positive impact of the role model man or couple intervention. This intervention seems to be especially effective with regard to creating a positive relationship between family members. There are other psychosocial indicators that also show positive differences that confirm this conclusion, namely “I am able to send the children in my care to school,” “The children in my care show love and affection to me,” “My children’s behaviour mirrors my good parenting when they are out,” and “Others praise me for the good behaviour of my children”.

The garden is also a well-being category that has been significantly influenced by role model men or couples. The garden is a symbol for a wider cultural concept. It includes the nearby fields of the family, and it is considered Acholi custom that women and men work together in the garden. It symbolizes good productivity, prosperity and good marriage and faith.

Conclusions

The psychosocial indicators developed based on the SEE_PET Methodology (a participatory multi stage research methodology developed within the program)¹⁰ by conflict-affected women in Northern Uganda – primarily qualitative descriptions of 14 well-being elements – can be used in a quantitative survey to measure the effectiveness of development interventions. They have proven to even deliver more reliable information about the participants’ reality and about the effectiveness of development interventions and the contribution of development interventions to change. The standard indicators of development agencies did not reveal any contribution of development interventions, for instance, to the safety situation of women in the family, while the self-defined psychosocial indicators did.

This means when using indicators formulated by the target group themselves, monitoring and evaluation become more meaningful to the participants and also to the development actors. In CARE’s example, the endline survey questions, which were developed based on psychosocial indicators and defined by the participants themselves, were fully understood because the wording used spoke the women’s language and reflected their views. The participants could easily answer to endline survey questions and considered them relevant and as speaking to their reality. The results based on these indicators were in return more relevant and meaningful to CARE. This led to real ownership of the change process by the participants and a strong relationship and mutual accountability between the participants and CARE.

¹⁰ Bragin, M., Onta, K., Taaka, J., Eibs, T.: “The SEE_PET Methodology – A Participatory Method for Developing and Measuring Psychosocial Programs for Women”; CARE Österreich, Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College - 2013 <http://new.care.at/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/PsychosocialIndicatorDevelopmentMethod.pdf>



Brief 3:

Evaluation of Roco Kwo's Contribution to Women's Political Empowerment in Uganda

Written by Elizabeth Brezovich, Brigitte Holzner and Pablo Torija

Purpose

Many consider women's savings groups a key tool for women's empowerment. Some even hypothesize that women can increase their representation in local and national leadership by participating in a savings group. In contrast, the Roco Kwo team felt that joining a savings group was not enough to enable women to participate meaningfully in previously male-dominated spaces, especially given women's lower confidence levels and stereotypes about women's roles. Stories from the program participants suggest that a combination of activities is crucial for women's leadership, and the team wanted to explore if quantitative data would demonstrate this.¹¹

Contributions to women's leadership and voice

Women in both types of savings groups – those who were supported by CARE and those who were not – faced a similar situation five years ago. However, women in CARE-supported groups now see their situation much more favourably in terms of their ability to lead and advocate:¹²

- There is big difference in terms of a woman's sense of her influence on the decision-making of local groups of which she is a member (for example, water committees, school committees, agriculture cooperatives, political parties, etc.)

Also, women report:

- I am seen and heard in clan or other family meetings
- I can represent myself at meetings
- I can represent others at meetings
- I can advocate for my ideas
- I try to respect and protect the rights of others

This package of activities clearly enhances women's self-confidence, their voicing of concerns and ideas and their ability to influence community-level decision-making. Using a holistic approach also enhances not only the participation of more vulnerable or stigmatized women, but also the commitment of other women to advocate against such discrimination.

Role model men's contribution to women's leadership

It is evident that promoting women's leadership within a VSLA and supporting women's leadership at a larger level in the community (through training, for example) will have a positive impact on women's voice and leadership. However, few studies have looked at the links between the engagement of men and boys in gender equality and women's leadership or political participation. Therefore, we examined this issue more closely by comparing women whose households were visited by a role model man or couple with women who did not receive this service. This provided a good opportunity to assess the extra value of the role model man approach on women's leadership.

We saw that women who received the additional support of a role model man:

- were less likely to agree that only men should make important decisions at home.
- participated in a larger number of community groups and organizations (for example, water committees, school committees, agriculture cooperatives, political parties, etc.).

- reported a much higher level of influence on the decisions that these groups made.
- were more likely to lead one of these community groups.

Therefore, we see that a holistic approach already has a positive effect on various aspects of women's leadership, as compared to only joining a savings group. Meanwhile, adding on the support of a role model man has additional benefits to women's leadership. Having a male figure in the village who actively supports his own wife and other women's equal rights, can help overcome the barriers to women's leadership by modelling and being a good example for gender equality. This shows the importance of having male support for gender equality, and that such support can be relatively easily added to development programming.

However, with or without this role model man approach, the decision-making power of women often stops at the community level. These women are prevented from entering even low-level official village councils, because of their illiteracy. A younger, better-educated generation will in the future benefit even more from this approach.

Conclusions and way forward

Simply supporting village savings groups will not automatically grant women access to leadership positions in the community. Roco Kwo offered activities to promote the transformation of gender norms and roles, to involve men for gender justice and promote women's psychosocial well-being and women's leadership. The barriers to women's leadership in post-conflict contexts are numerous; hence the approach to promote women's leadership must also be broad and holistic.

¹¹ The following conclusions are the result of data analysis of the end line survey of Roco Kwo, which gathered 807 surveys from men and women groups. Additional regression analyses using propensity score matching was conducted to explore correlations between women's participation in certain activities and their empowerment outcomes. Questions on the survey explored issues like women's reports of participation in village-level community groups, their reported confidence, their ownership of certain assets, their decision-making on assets, etc.

¹² When we looked at indicators designed by women members of CARE-supported VSLAs themselves, and compare the outcomes to those in other VSLAs, there were statistically significant differences at 95% confidence.

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