



CARE BANGLADESH PROGRAM STRATEGY 2023 → 2030

SAVE LIVES,
END GENDER INEQUALITY,
HARNESS THE POWER OF MARKETS
& BUILD RESILIENCE



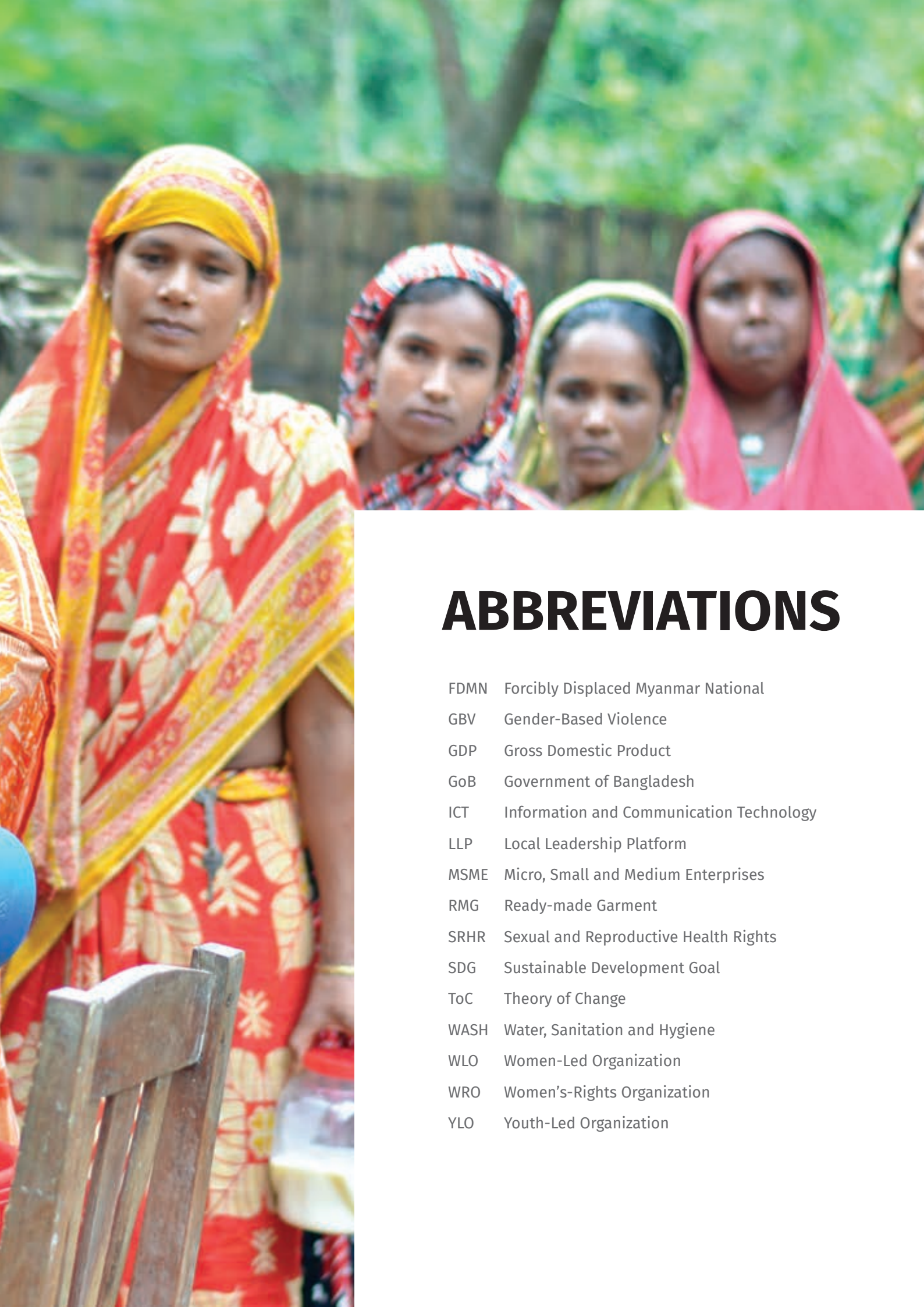


**SAVE LIVES,
END GENDER
INEQUALITY,
HARNESS
THE POWER
OF MARKETS
& BUILD
RESILIENCE**



CONTENTS

1.	ABOUT CARE	5
1.1	CARE's History, Global Presence and Reach	5
1.2	CARE USA Strategy, CARE Vision 2030, and the Asia Regional Roadmap	5
2.	CARE BANGLADESH STRATEGY	6
2.1	Current Context	6
2.2	The Overarching Theory of Change (ToC)	11
2.3	CARE's Programmatic Approach in Bangladesh	20
2.4	Impact Populations and Anticipated Reach	21
2.5	Strategy and Impact Drivers	22
2.6	Strategic Engagement	29
2.7	Resource Mobilization	29
2.8	People and Culture	30
2.9	Organizational Structure, Financial and Administrative Systems Efficiency	32



ABBREVIATIONS

FDMN	Forcibly Displaced Myanmar National
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LLP	Local Leadership Platform
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
RMG	Ready-made Garment
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToC	Theory of Change
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WLO	Women-Led Organization
WRO	Women's-Rights Organization
YLO	Youth-Led Organization

PREFACE

We are delighted to present to you the CARE Bangladesh strategy for the period 2023-30. This document represents the collective efforts of dedicated teams and individuals who have worked tirelessly to define our path forward.

In a rapidly evolving world, we recognize the need to adapt, innovate, and excel. This strategy is our compass, guiding us toward a future that is not just sustainable but thriving. It encapsulates our vision, our values, and our commitment to the highest standards of excellence. As you navigate this document, you will gain insights into our current landscape, the challenges we face, and the opportunities we aim to seize. We invite you to join us on this journey, to understand the significance of our strategic choices, and to share in our enthusiasm for what lies ahead.

This strategy document is structured to provide you with a clear understanding of our objectives, the initiatives we will undertake, and the metrics by which we will measure our progress. We believe that by aligning our efforts and leveraging our collective talents, we will not only meet our goals but exceed them.

I thank all those who supported us in shaping this strategy including our program participants, local partner organizations, government representatives - your dedication, and your partnership will be instrumental as we embark on this exciting chapter in our organization's history.

Ramesh Singh
Country Director
CARE Bangladesh

ABOUT CARE



1.1 CARE's History, Global Presence and Reach

Founded in 1945, CARE is one of the largest poverty-fighting organizations in the world, providing relief to people hit by emergencies, and contributing to economic empowerment that strengthens livelihoods globally. In fiscal year 2022, CARE International and its partners worked in 111 countries globally, implementing 1,631 poverty-fighting development and humanitarian aid projects and initiatives, that reached: 174,063,162 direct participants, 61% of which were women and girls.

CARE has been active in Bangladesh since 1949. Prior to Bangladesh's independence in 1971, CARE's efforts mainly focused on providing disaster relief and school feeding. In the 1990s, CARE Bangladesh introduced innovative agricultural interventions, health programs, and integrated food security programs to its portfolio. Throughout the 2000s, CARE focused on addressing extreme poverty, and supporting disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, as well as improving food security and nutrition, and promoting dignified work. In the 2010s, CARE Bangladesh scaled up long-term programming approaches centered on women's and girls' empowerment, advocacy, and accountability, and strategic partnerships. Through its long presence in Bangladesh, CARE has supported more than half of the country's population.

CARE's Vision 2030: CARE seeks a world of hope, inclusion, and social justice, where poverty has been overcome, and all people live in dignity and security.

CARE's Mission: CARE works around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice.

CARE's Focus: CARE puts women and girls in the center of its response because it cannot overcome poverty until all people have equal rights and opportunities.



1.2 CARE Vision 2030, CARE USA Strategy, and the Asia Regional Roadmap

CARE's Asia Regional Roadmap (2022-25) seeks to assist 35.3 million women and youth (17-35 years old), with a particular focus on refugees and displaced populations. The roadmap is aligned with CARE's 2030 Vision and CARE USA's Strategy and prioritizes four strategic pillars: gender equal, locally-led, globally-scaled and foundational. The 'CARE Bangladesh Strategy: 2023-2030' builds upon these three documents by aligning its goals and approaches with CARE's overall mission and vision and the regional roadmap's strategic pillars.

CARE BANGLADESH STRATEGY

2.1 Current Context



Macro-Economic Trends

With a population of 169 million, Bangladesh is South Asia's fifth most populous country and is expected to graduate to a middle-income country by 2026.¹ ² By 2030, the country's urban population will overtake the rural population, presenting a myriad of health and additional economic challenges. In the years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bangladesh enjoyed consistent gross domestic product (GDP) growth of over 7%, which is reflected in the growth of the country's per capita GDP from US\$ 3,119 in 2011 to US\$ 6,493 in 2021.³ **The country's poverty rate has declined to 18.7% (down from 24.3% in 2016) and the extreme poverty rate is 5.6% (down from 12.9% in 2016).** ⁴ The decrease in poverty levels and increase in the standard of living has been driven by a booming private sector and consistent growth in the Ready-Made Garment (RMG), pharmaceutical, leather goods, and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors. The RMG industry alone has created 4 million jobs for rural households, most filled by women. Development has also been enabled by a steady remittance flow. Bangladesh received a record remittance of US\$ 22 billion in 2021, up from US\$ 12 billion in 2011.⁵ To fast track its development, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) has launched several mega infrastructure projects, which are expected to grow the country's GDP by 4%.⁶ Agriculture plays a crucial role in the Bangladeshi economy. Although the direct contribution of this sector to Bangladesh's GDP has fallen from 51% at independence to 12% in 2021,⁷ 48% of Bangladesh's population is still primarily employed in agriculture.⁸ About 8.1 million micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) are active in Bangladesh with 5.8 million are in rural areas, playing a critical role in rural development and contributing 2% to the country's GDP.⁹ The GoB has placed MSMEs at the center of its 2016 National Industrial Policy.

- 1 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Bangladesh Population Census Report, 2022. Population & Housing Census 2022 (Preliminary Report), Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh
- 2 The World Bank in Bangladesh. Apr 06, 2023, Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bangladesh/overview>, April 06, 2023;
- 3 Bangladesh Economic Review (2023) (2023)., 2023. June 2023 Finance Division, Ministry of Finance Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh www.mof.gov.bd
- 4 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022). Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report, 2022. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh. Available at https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4_956b_45ca_872f_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2023-12-28-14-40-ac2b3d298f569f155a80871a49b7d-d9e.pdf
- 5 The World Bank, Data Bank, World Development Indicators, (2022) Personal Remittances, Received Bangladesh, Available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT&country>.
- 6 Kazi Mohammad Jamshed (2021), Bangladesh megaprojects can be economic game-changers, but cost and corruption are major challenges; South Asia Monitor, Powered By Society for Policy Studies. Available at <https://www.southasiamonitor.org/spotlight/bangladesh-megaprojects-can-be-economic-game-changers-cost-and-corruption>
- 7 World Bank. Agriculture, forestry, and fishing, value added (% of GDP) - Bangladesh. Available at World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data file, Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=BD>
- 8 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Bangladesh | FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Available at <http://www.fao.org/bangladesh/en/>
- 9 Holy, I. J., & Rozario, S. (2020, December 20). SME Clusters Mapping in Dhaka District. Light Castle Partners. Available at <https://www.lightcastlebd.com/insights/2020/12/20/sme-clusters-mapping-in-dhaka-district>



Digitization

Over the last 18 years, Bangladesh has seen a significant increase in its number of internet users, making it the 5th largest internet-using country in Asia.¹⁰ As of January 2022, the country had almost 53 million internet users, representing a penetration rate of 31.5% of the total population. The number of internet users in Bangladesh increased by 5.5 million, or 11.6%, between 2021 and 2022 alone.¹¹ Moreover, there were nearly **44.7 million Facebook users** in Bangladesh as of January 2022, making it the 10th largest country in terms of Facebook audience size.¹² Growth in connectivity can be attributed to the availability of cheaper smartphones, a rise in social networking, and an increasing number of digitally savvy consumers.

Bangladesh's remarkable progress in internet connectivity, mobile phone usage, and remote education should contribute to the spread of leveraging technology. More than 40% of firms in Bangladesh still use handwritten documents for business administration, while three-fourths practice manual quality inspections.¹³ As Bangladesh seeks to diversify its export base, transition to a middle-income country, and create better-paying jobs, it is important for businesses to adopt new technologies and for manufacturers to shift gears from competing on low labor-intensive productivity to competing on higher productivity activities. For this to happen, firms will need to adopt better technologies across business functions and production processes.

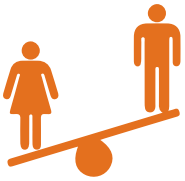


10 Data leads/ann. (2018, October 8). Bangladesh Asia's 5th top internet using country in 2017. Daily Star. Available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/data-enough/bangladesh-asias-5th-top-internet-using-country-2017-1648225>

11 Kemp, S. (2022, February 15). Digital 2022: Bangladesh — Data Report – Global Digital Insights. Available at <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2022-bangladesh>

12 Star Business Report. (2023, February 13). Number of Facebook users falls 21% in Bangladesh in last six months. Daily Star. Available at <https://www.thedailystar.net/business/news/number-facebook-users-falls-21-bangladesh-last-six-months-2975575>

13 World Bank. (2021, June 24). Bangladesh: Improving Productivity and Technology Adoption Key to a Globally Competitive Manufacturing Sector. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2021/06/24/bangladesh-improving-productivity-and-technology-adoption-key-to-a-globally-competitive-manufacturing-sector>



Gender Inequality

Bangladesh recently scored 0.714 in the World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap Report, making it one of the few countries in the region that is successfully closing the gender gap.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the benefits of Bangladesh's booming economy are still unevenly distributed with an alarming growth in the rate of inequality. The Gini Coefficient, an economic measure of inequality from the Household Income and Expenditure Survey, stood at 0.499 in 2022, up from 0.482 in 2016, and 0.458 in 2010.¹⁵ Women are more likely to live in poverty than men. Unemployment rates for women in Bangladesh are double those for men: 6.7% of women are unemployed, while only 3.3% of men are unemployed; and 7.2% of women in Bangladesh who have work still live below the poverty line.¹⁶ Rural to urban migration among residents of Bangladesh is increasingly forcing new arrivals in urban areas to accept work opportunities that are undignified and lack basic rights and protections.

Although Bangladesh's maternal mortality rate has continued to decline since 2000,¹⁷ cultural bias towards sons negatively impacts resources invested in adolescent girls' health, nutrition and well-being. Adolescent girls (aged 10-16 years) are at least twice as likely as boys to go to sleep hungry, skip meals and take smaller meals,¹⁸ thereby compromising their overall health. These factors will continue to trap women and families in extreme poverty, increasing their vulnerability to external shocks and stressors.

Harmful social norms also result in high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls and early marriage. According to UN Women, seven out of ten women (73%) have experienced domestic violence at least once in their life.¹⁹ More than half (59%) of adolescent girls are married before the age of 18 (the third highest rate globally), while 31% become mothers before age 18, robbing them of education and work opportunities.²⁰



14 World Economic Forum. Economy Profiles - Global Gender Gap Report 2022. Available at <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2022>

15 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. (2023, April 12). HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EXPENDITURE SURVEY HIES 2022.

16 Concern Worldwide. (2022, February 28). Gender inequality in Bangladesh: Engaging men and boys to close the gap.

17 U.S. Agency for International Development. (2023, April 5). Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment | Bangladesh. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/bangladesh/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

18 O'Leary, M., Dibaba, A., & Sarkar, J. Adolescent Girl Power Groups in Bangladesh: Placing gender equality at the center of nutrition interventions. ENN. Available at <https://www.ennonline.net/fex/59/adolescent-girl-power-groups-in-bangladesh>

19 Concern Worldwide. (2022, February 28). Gender inequality in Bangladesh: Engaging men and boys to close the gap.

20 O'Leary, M., Dibaba, A., & Sarkar, J. Adolescent Girl Power Groups in Bangladesh: Placing gender equality at the centre of nutrition interventions. ENN. Available at <https://www.ennonline.net/fex/59/adolescent-girl-power-groups-in-bangladesh>



Youth

Young people between the ages of 15-24 years make up nearly 20% of Bangladesh's population.²¹ Bangladesh can still transform this “demographic window of opportunity” into a “demographic dividend”; however, most young people are economically, socially, and politically disenfranchised. Youth unemployment stood at 10% in 2017, and about 62% of employed Bangladeshi youth are under-qualified for their chosen occupation. This lack of skills is a major constraint for the expansion of manufacturing in Bangladesh.²²



Shocks and Stressors

Bangladesh is located on a fragile delta formed by the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Meghna rivers, and is heavily exposed to tropical cyclones and storm surges every year. Bangladesh is the **seventh most vulnerable country to climate change**, according to the 2021 Global Climate Risk Index.²³ In 2017 alone, flooding affected over 8 million people and caused significant damage to infrastructure and crops.²⁴ In June 2022, Bangladesh faced yet another challenge as **record-breaking floods** wreaked havoc on the country's northeastern region, affecting an estimated 7.2 million people.²⁵

21 UNFPA Bangladesh. . Population trends.

22 Asian Development Bank & International Labour Organization. (2016). Bangladesh Looking Beyond Garments: Employment Diagnostic Study.

23 Amin, M. A. (2021, January 25). Bangladesh remains 7th most vulnerable to climate change. TBS News. Available at <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/climate-change/bangladesh-7th-most-vulnerable-climate-change-195862>

24 ACAPS Start Network. (2018, May 20). Bangladesh Flooding Disaster Summary Sheet - 20 May 2018 - Bangladesh. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-flooding-disaster-summary-sheet-20-may-2018>

25 ECHO Govt. UK UN RC Bangladesh. (2022, July 7). Bangladesh: Joint Press Statement on Flash Flood - July 2022 - Bangladesh. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-joint-press-statement-flash-flood-july-2022>

Humanitarian crises have created new challenges. **In 2017, Bangladesh became host to the largest refugee settlement in the world** and by September 2022, approximately 945,953 Rohingya refugees/Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) (more than half of whom are children) had been registered in Bangladesh.²⁶ These FDMNs reside in thirty-three camps in the Cox's Bazar District, as well as on the island of Bhasan Char. They remain stateless, without freedom of movement, the right to work, or access to basic services. The most reported needs for FDMNs include shelter materials, food, protection services, skills and capacity building opportunities, cooking items, and educational opportunities.²⁷

The **COVID-19** pandemic drove up the country's poverty rate from 21.6% in 2018 to 42% in 2020 while the extreme poverty rate rose from 9.4% in 2018 to 28.5% in 2020.²⁸ The pandemic affected various sectors of Bangladesh's economy, including the garment industry, which employs millions of people in the country. In response, the GoB formulated a comprehensive recovery strategy that benefited about 73 million people, prioritizing job creation and discouraging luxury spending; introducing credit facilities with low interest rates; and expanding the coverage of social safety net programs. As a result, by 2022 **Bangladesh's poverty rate and extreme poverty rate had declined to 18.7% and 5.6% respectively**²⁹



26 IOM ISCG UN RC Bangladesh. (2023, March 7). 2023 Joint Response Plan: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/2023-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-january-december-2023>

27 IOM ISCG UN RC Bangladesh. (2023, March 7). 2023 Joint Response Plan: Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis. Available at <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/2023-joint-response-plan-rohingya-humanitarian-crisis-january-december-2023>

28 Sanem's Nationwide Household Survey Report-2021: <https://sanemnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SANEM-HH-Survey-Report-2021.pdf>

29 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2022). Household Income and Expenditure Survey Report, 2022. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh. Available at https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4_956b_45ca_872f_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2023-12-28-14-40-ac2b3d298f-569f155a80871a49b7dd9e.pdf

2.2 The Overarching Theory of Change (ToC)



CARE Bangladesh Vision 2030 and Goal

In line with the government's SMART Bangladesh Vision 2041, Bangladesh's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) commitments, CARE International's Vision 2030, CARE USA's Strategy, and the CARE Asia Regional Roadmap, CARE Bangladesh and key local stakeholders have developed the vision, **'Women's engagement in political and economic activities is a key driver of transformation in Bangladesh'**. Based on this vision, CARE Bangladesh set its strategic goal, **'15 million people in Bangladesh, especially women and girls, are leading gender equal and resilient lives by 2030'**.



Key Impact Areas

An analysis of the current context in Bangladesh and the country's main socio-economic trends, as well as extensive consultations with community, national, government and international stakeholders lead CARE Bangladesh to believe that to achieve its strategic goal 1) people, especially women and girls, must be empowered to set and achieve their development goals and 2) socio-economic norms and institutions must support gender equality. The six impact areas needed for women and girls to achieve their full potential and for socio-economic norms and institutions to be transformed, include:

1. **Gender Equality**, whereby women and girls live a dignified life and experience greater gender equality.
2. **Economic Justice**, whereby all people, especially the economically disadvantaged, have equitable access to markets and control over productive resources and assets.
3. **Inclusive Humanitarian Assistance**, whereby people's lives, especially women's, are safe and protected during humanitarian crises.
4. **Climate Justice**, whereby socially excluded people, particularly women and girls, are resilient in the face of climate-related shocks and stressors.
5. **Food, Water and Nutrition Security**, whereby all people, especially poor and extremely poor households, and women, are food secure and enjoy good nutritional outcomes.
6. **Health, Sexual and Reproductive Rights**, whereby men and women and female and male adolescents have access to equitable, resilient, and comprehensive and appropriate SRH services, including in humanitarian and fragile settings.

Theory of Change

GOAL: 15 million people in Bangladesh, especially women and girls, are leading gender equal and resilient lives by 2030

Purposes: 1) People, especially women and girls, are empowered to set and achieve their development goals and 2) Socio-economic norms and institutions support gender equality

Impact Areas	Gender Equality	Economic Justice	Inclusive Humanitarian Assistance	Climate Justice	Food, Water, and Nutrition Security	Health, Sexual and Reproductive Rights
Outcomes	Women and girls live a dignified life and experience greater gender equality	All people, especially the economically disadvantaged, have equitable access to markets and control over productive resources and assets.	People's lives, especially women's, are safe and protected during humanitarian crises.	Socially excluded people, particularly women and girls, are resilient in the face of climate-related shocks and stressors.	All people, especially poor and extremely poor households, and women, are food secure and enjoy good nutritional outcomes.	Men and women and female and male adolescents have access to equitable, resilient, and comprehensive and appropriate SRH services, including in humanitarian and fragile settings
Key Interventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Build the capacities of women's platforms to advocate for the needs and desires of women and girls ii) Build leadership skills among women, female youth, and girls iii) Support local advocacy campaigns to change harmful norms such as GBV and child marriage iv) Lead dialogues to create more equitable gender relations at the HH and community levels v) Build the capacities of local governance bodies to provide gender sensitive services and support vi) Champion models of women-led and girl-led networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Develop financial service provider capacity to create products appropriate for economically disadvantaged groups ii) Build the skills of collectives and the economically disadvantaged to access financial, digital and information services, engage in business activities and participate in value chains iii) Transform markets so they are accessible and safe iv) Create social support for women's participation in productive activities, markets and value chains. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Facilitate collaboration between communities, governments, and local actors to prepare for and respond to shocks and crises ii) Build the capacities of government and civil society to engage in these efforts following an Area-Based Disaster Management Coordination Approach iii) Create women and girl-friendly safe spaces iv) Empower youth and women to engage in disaster planning and response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Support coordination within and between departments and ministries to tackle climate change ii) Support HH adoption of climate-resistant and nature-positive livelihood practices and energy solutions iii) Increase community capacity to prepare for and respond to climate-related shocks and stressors iv) Increase accessibility to climate-resilient homes, infrastructure and WASH facilities v) Establish climate and weather-related information services and early warning systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Support community uptake of SUPER (Sustainable, productive, equitable and resilient) agriculture practices and community-led WASH approaches ii) Support for the recognition of women's role in agriculture iii) Rehabilitate food and WASH-related infrastructure so it is accessible and safe for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Transform social norms to enable adolescents and young people to make choices that support SRH ii) Create feedback mechanisms to improve service delivery iii) Build the capacities of SRH service providers to appropriately respond to the SRH needs of women and female adolescents iv) Strengthen community voices and leadership to seek and advocate for services
Problems and Shocks	<p>Harmful social norms ; discriminatory laws, gender inequity in access to education; health & financial services; violence against women; high rates of child marriage & adolescent motherhood; gendered food insecurity; child stunting an maternal death; unemployment among women and youth; service gaps in MNCH and SRH; limited employment opportunities & skills development; workplace exploitation, participation in decision-making; loss of biodiversity; inadequate social safety nets; unequal gender power relations; exploitative market systems; social exclusion; inadequate investment in human development and economic capital</p> <p>Shocks - Climate change and climate-related displacement; Severe flooding; Influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar; COVID-19 pandemic; Inflation / Price Hikes</p>					



Gender Equality

In Bangladesh, multiple factors contribute to gender inequality. Bangladesh ranks 139th out of 146 countries in Economic Participation and Opportunity which is 8th lowest in the world.³⁰ Currently, more than half (53%) of all adults have a bank account, while only 43% of women have accounts.³¹ Seventeen percent fewer women have a mobile phone than men and 15% fewer women use digital payments.³¹ Although women make up 35.29% of the country's total labor force³², labor practices remain exploitative, and many women experience violence in the workplace. Less government assistance is available for vulnerable women than men; and only 27 of 120 social protection schemes (2016-2017) have women as their primary focus.³³

While Bangladesh has made huge strides in increasing the nutritional intake of women, with 89% of women of reproductive age consuming nutritionally diverse diets in 2021 (as compared to 39% in 2015),³⁴ one in ten married women is still moderately or severely food insecure.³⁵ In addition, 69% of women of reproductive age consume inadequately diverse diets (less than four food groups out of ten).³⁶

Women have little power to address the root causes of these inequities with poor representation in policy making bodies. In 2021, only 21% of representatives in parliament were women.³⁷ As a result, laws related to women often do not give them the same rights as men.

30 World Economic Forum (2023). Global Gender Gap Report-2023. World Economic Forum. Available at https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf

31 ADB (2022). Gender Equality And Social Inclusion Diagnostic For The Finance Sector Of Bangladesh-2022. Asian Development Bank. Available at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/849161/gender-equality-social-inclusion-finance-bangladesh.pdf>

32 BBS. Labour Force Survey Report, 2022. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh. Available at https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4_956b_45ca_872f_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2023-10-25-07-38-4304abd7a3f3d8799fbc59ff91007b1.pdf

33 UNICEF. Social policy. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/social-policy>

34 USAID. success story spotlight: Empowering Women Farmers in Bangladesh with Skills and Knowledge to Improve Nutrition. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/bangladesh/success-stories/empowering-women-farmers-bangladesh>

35 USAID. (2018, February). Bangladesh: Nutrition Profile. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/Nutrition-Profile-Feb2018.pdf>

36 Islam, M. H., Jubayer, A., Nowar, A., Nayan, M. M., & Islam, S. (2023). Dietary diversity and micronutrients adequacy among the women of reproductive age at St. Martin's Island in Bangladesh. *BMC Nutrition*, 9, 52. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40795-023-00528-0>

37 Statista. Bangladesh: proportion of seats held by women in national parliament 2011-2021. Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/730649/bangladesh-proportion-of-seats-held-by-women-in-national-parliament/>

In alignment with CARE International's Gender Equality Impact Growth Strategy, CARE Bangladesh places gender equality at the center of its work and is committed to empowering women and girls to live with dignity. To accomplish this goal, CARE will leverage its expertise and capacities to intervene where it can make the most significant impact, collaborating with other stakeholders to achieve transformative social change. Rather than placing the burden of achieving gender equality solely on women, CARE will engage both men and women as agents of change, utilizing gender transformative programming approaches to break down structural barriers and challenge gender norms. This approach is aligned with the Government of Bangladesh's Gender Policy. CARE Bangladesh believes that several pre-conditions are needed to achieve gender equality: social norms, policies, and practices must promote gender equality; effective social networks and movements must unite and empower women, youth, and girls in pursuit of gender equality; women and girls must live free from gender-based violence, in the community and in the workplace; and women and girls must have equal access to quality education, including basic education, skill-building, and soft skills.

Key CARE interventions to support gender equality may include building the capacities of women's platforms to advocate for the needs and desires of women and girls; building leadership skills among women, female youth, and girls; supporting local advocacy campaigns to change harmful norms such as GBV and child marriage; leading dialogues to create more equitable gender relations at the household and community levels; building the capacity of local governance bodies to provide gender sensitive services and support; and championing models of women-led and girl-led networks.



Economic Justice

Women in Bangladesh still have limited choices, control and decision-making power over their employment, finances and economic assets and face numerous barriers to economic participation, including limited access to credit, property, and markets. However, women 2022 labour force participation rate was only 43% (increased from 36% in 2016-17), which is lower than the global average of 47%.³⁸ Moreover, only 1.7% of enterprises in the country's formal sector are owned by women, which is among the lowest rates of women's enterprise ownership in the world.³⁹ Despite these challenges, when micro-credit is combined with social development services, this can have a powerful economic impact on women, supporting them to access to paid work and accumulate assets.⁴⁰ The Government of Bangladesh has taken steps to promote women's economic participation, including through the introduction of policies such as the National Women Development Policy and the Women Entrepreneurship Development Project.

Based on the results of a stakeholder analysis, contextual analysis and program evaluations, achieving economic justice requires the following pre-conditions: economically disadvantaged individuals, particularly women and young girls, must have access to appropriate financial, digital, and information services; collectives, especially those led by women, must flourish and support entrepreneurs and small-scale producers; economically disadvantaged individuals, especially women and young girls, must have the necessary skills to engage in business activities; and social norms must support the participation of women and female youth in the marketplace.

38 BBS. Labour Force Survey Report, 2022. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh. Available at https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b343a8b4_956b_45ca_872f_4cf9b2f1a6e0/2023-10-25-07-38-4304abd7a3f3d8799fcb59ff91007b1.pdf

39 World Bank. (2019, April 29). Bangladesh Can Prosper With More and Better Jobs for Women, Report Says. Dhaka Tribune. Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2019/04/29/bangladesh-can-prosper-with-more-and-better-jobs-for-women-report-says>

40 Jahan, N. (2021, August 24). Has Microcredit Empowered Women in Bangladesh? Yes, But Not by Itself. CGAP Blog. Available at <https://www.cgap.org/blog/has-microcredit-empowered-women-bangladesh-yes-not-itself>



In alignment with CARE’s Economic Justice Impact Growth Strategy, key interventions to support increased economic justice may include developing financial service provider capacity to create products appropriate for economically disadvantaged groups; building the skills of collectives and the economically disadvantaged to access financial, digital and information services, engage in business activities and participate in value chains; transforming markets so they are accessible and safe; and engaging with men and women to create social support for women’s participation in productive activities, markets and value-chains.



Inclusive Humanitarian Assistance

It is essential that disaster-affected people in Bangladesh, particularly women and youth, have the capacity to participate in and influence humanitarian response efforts. Communities play a critical role in raising awareness about the risks associated with disasters, helping to evacuate people from vulnerable areas, and providing emergency relief to those affected by disasters. Unfortunately, A 2021 study of participation and inclusion in the humanitarian response in Cox’s Bazar found little evidence to support the assumption that protracted displacements create space to deepen community participation over time.⁴¹ The Government of Bangladesh, along with the UN, and various national and international organizations, have been working to make humanitarian assistance in Bangladesh more inclusive and to build the capacities of communities, including women and youth, to participate in disaster preparedness and response efforts. To create humanitarian assistance processes which are inclusive, the following pre-conditions are needed: humanitarian policies, systems and processes must be locally-led, inclusive and gender-responsive; disaster-affected people and communities, especially women and youth, must have the capacities to participate in and influence humanitarian response efforts; and CARE’s refugee response must be aligned with the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis and relevant sector standards.

⁴¹ Lough, O., Spencer, A., Coyle, D., Jainul, M. A., & Barua, H. (2021, October 28). Participation and inclusion in the Rohingya refugee response in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh: ‘We never speak first’. Working papers. Available at <https://odi.org/en/publications/participation-and-inclusion-in-the-rohingya-refugee-response-in-coxs-bazar-bangladesh-we-never-speak-first/>



In alignment with CARE’s Humanitarian Strategy, key interventions for inclusive humanitarian assistance efforts may include facilitating collaboration between communities, governments, and local actors in preparing for and responding to shocks and crises; building the capacities of government and local civil society actors to effectively engage in these efforts following an Area-Based Disaster Management Coordination approach; creating women-friendly and girl-friendly safe spaces; and empowering youth and women to engage in disaster planning and response.



Climate Justice

An estimated 15-20 million people in Bangladesh will be displaced by climate change by 2050.⁴² Socially excluded people in Bangladesh, including women and girls, can still be highly resilient in the face of climate-related shocks and stressors. CARE’s contextual analysis and experiences successfully supporting communities in becoming climate resilient demonstrates that climate resilience stems from individuals’ abilities to use social networks for learning and information sharing, to anticipate and recover from climate-related shocks, as well as to uptake new climate and biodiversity-friendly technologies. Therefore, to achieve climate justice the following pre-conditions are needed: effective community-based systems to anticipate climate-related shocks and stressors must be in place; vulnerable households must use transformative capacities to adapt to climate-related shocks and stressors; and both urban and rural communities must adopt new technologies that support low emissions development. These pathways align with the Government of Bangladesh’s focus on adaptation as well as its new efforts to reduce the country’s emissions as it transitions to a middle-income country.⁴³

⁴² International Organization for Migration. (2009, November 16). Climate Change and Displacement in Bangladesh - A Silent Crisis?. Migrant Stories. Available at <https://www.iom.int/migrant-stories/climate-change-and-displacement-bangladesh-silent-crisis>

⁴³ USAID. (2021, April 23). Fact sheet , Bangladesh Climate Change Country Profile. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/documents/1820/bangladesh-climate-change-country-profile>



In alignment with CARE's Climate Justice Strategy, key interventions to support climate justice may include supporting coordination within and between government departments and ministries to tackle climate change; supporting household adoption of climate resilient and nature-positive livelihood practices and energy solutions (both on-farm and off-farm livelihood practices focusing on low emission practices); increasing community capacity to prepare for and recover from climate-related shocks and stressors; increasing accessibility to climate-resilient homes, infrastructure, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities; and establishing climate and weather information services and forecast-based early warning systems.

Food, Water and Nutritional Security



A large portion of Bangladesh's population lives in poverty, which hinders their access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and clean water, and leads to food insecurity and poor nutrition. The cost of providing for a family's basic needs rose by 13% between November 2022 and April 2023 with the highest cost increase being the price of food.⁴⁴ As a result, 90% of households have been forced to change their food consumption habits and 74% have had to borrow money.⁴⁵ Slightly more than one quarter (24%) of children under 5 are stunted while 11% suffer from wasting. Just 55% of children under six months are exclusively breastfed, and only 29% of children older than six months receive an appropriate diet.⁴⁶ Poor hygiene and sanitation as well as unsafe water exacerbate malnutrition. The WHO estimates that 60% percent of people living in Bangladesh do not have access to proper sanitation or

⁴⁴ SANEM. (2023, April). Effects of inflation on the livelihoods of poor households in Bangladesh: South Asian Network on Economic Modeling.

⁴⁵ SANEM. (2023, April). Effects of inflation on the livelihoods of poor households in Bangladesh: South Asian Network on Economic Modeling.

⁴⁶ NIPORT (2022). Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey Report, 2022. National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT). Available at https://niport.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/niport.portal.gov.bd/miscellaneous_info/5585841a_d4fe_405c_b235_fbc4873ae742/2023-04-17-03-16-9833e31b63e1944d5796a1e4ec40d708.pdf



safe drinking water.⁴⁷ Much of the country's groundwater, which is used by nearly 90% of the population, is contaminated with arsenic, which Arsenic has been shown to be the cause of death for 1 out of every 5 people in Bangladesh.⁴⁸

To achieve food, water and nutritional security the following pre-conditions are needed: people, especially poor and extremely poor households, and women, must utilize and have control over sustainable resources and assets for food production; high-quality food, nutrition and WASH services and infrastructure must meet the needs of all people, especially women and girls; and household and individual behaviors must support food security. These pathways align with Bangladesh's 2020 National Food and Nutrition Security Policy, which prioritizes increased food production, the empowerment of women, and social norms change to support equal control of resources and inclusive decision-making.⁴⁹

In alignment with CARE USA's Food Security, Water and Nutrition Strategy, key CARE interventions to support increased food, water and nutrition security may include supporting community uptake of SuPER (Sustainable, Productive, Equitable and Resilient) agriculture practices and community-led WASH approaches; supporting the recognition of women's role in agriculture; and rehabilitating WASH infrastructure so it is accessible and safe for all.



Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)

Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in the last 20 years in improving the lives of women and girls. The maternal mortality rate has decreased by more than two-thirds since 2000 and continues to fall.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, SRHR is still a taboo subject and Bangladesh has

47 NIPORT (2022). Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey Report, 2022. National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT). Available at https://niport.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/niport.portal.gov.bd/miscellaneous_info/5585841a_d4fe_405c_b235_fbc4873ae742/2023-04-17-03-16-9833e31b63e1944d5796a1e4ec40d708.pdf

48 The Water Project. Water In Crisis - Spotlight Bangladesh. Available at <https://thewaterproject.org/water-crisis/water-in-crisis-bangladesh>

49 Government of Bangladesh. (2021). Feed the Future National Food and Nutrition Security Policy Plan of Action (2021-2030).

50 USAID. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment | Bangladesh. Available at <https://www.usaid.gov/bangladesh/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>



the second highest rate of child and early marriage in South Asia. **More than half (50.1%)** of girls in Bangladesh are married before their 18th birthday and 26.7% are married before the age of 15.⁵¹ As a result, rates of child pregnancy are also high.⁵² Early pregnancy often leads to low birth weight, which is still as high as 15%.⁵³ In its National Health Policy of 2011, the Government of Bangladesh has prioritized health equity and in its National Youth Policy,⁵⁴ the government has prioritized building awareness among youth about reproductive health and their right to reproductive health services. Empowering women and youth to exercise their SRH rights can lead to improvements in overall health outcomes, reduced maternal and infant mortality rates, and a better quality of life. To achieve SRHR for people in Bangladesh, especially women and adolescent girls, the following pre-conditions are needed: local health systems must be accountable and responsive to the needs of community members, especially women and girls, even during emergencies; social norms must empower women and youth to freely access needed SRH services; and community health systems must support awareness of SRHR and service utilization, especially among women and female youth.

In alignment with CARE USA's SRHR Strategy, key CARE interventions to support SRHRs may include transforming social norms to enable adolescents and young people to make choices that support SRH; creating feedback mechanisms to improve service delivery; building the capacities of SRH service providers to appropriately respond to the SRH needs of women and female adolescents; and strengthening community voices and leadership to seek and advocate for services.

51 NIPORT (2022). Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey Report, 2022. National Institute of Population Research and Training (NIPORT). Available at https://niport.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/niport.portal.gov.bd/miscellaneous_info/5585841a_d4fe_405c_b235_fbc4873ae742/2023-04-17-03-16-9833e31b63e1944d5796a1e4ec40d708.pdf

52 UNICEF Bangladesh. Promoting and Protecting Youth's SRHR in achieving SDGs. This publication is the youth consultation report in relation to Bangladesh's participation at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) 2020, and the development of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) report.

53 UNICEF. Nutrition. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/nutrition>

54 Government of Bangladesh. (2017). Draft English Version of National Youth Policy 2017

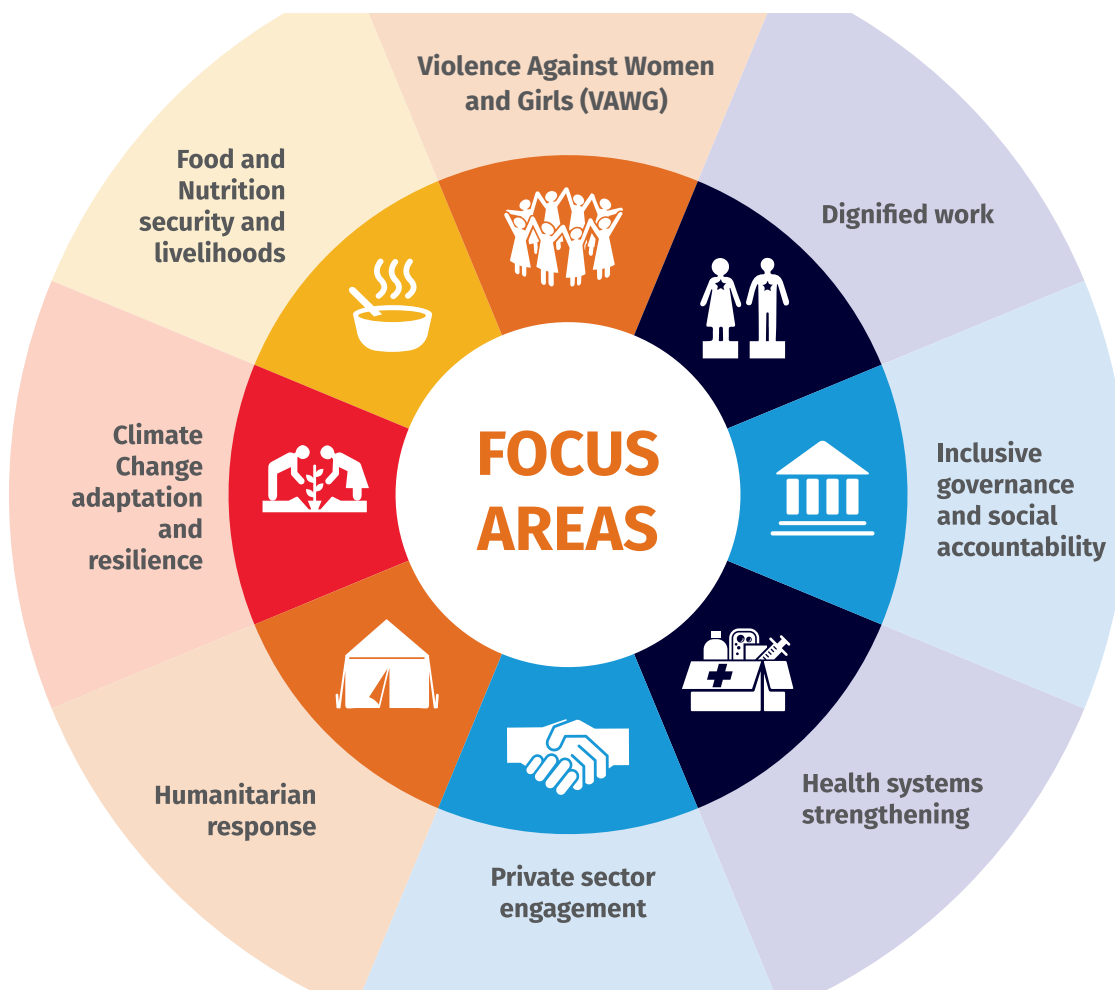
2.3 CARE's Programmatic Approach in Bangladesh

What Has Been Done

Since 2017, CARE has provided **humanitarian assistance** to 451,902 refugees (of which 52% were children) with food, shelter, non-food items, water access, disaster risk reduction planning, and gender-based violence prevention in 26 Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar district. CARE has also delivered **integrated food security programming** to over 6 million people in 20 districts of Bangladesh through large-scale projects such as the Strengthening Household Ability to Respond to Development Opportunities (SHOUHARDO) project (2004-2022), Strengthening Training and Empowerment of Women in Urban Bangladesh (SETU) project, and multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition through the Joint Assistance for New Outcomes (JANO) project as well as multiple small-scale initiatives. By **scaling up innovative approaches**, CARE has changed social norms to reduce child marriage (Tipping Point Project, 2022) among project participants by 63%; established a 15-day flood early warning system for communities in 3 districts of Northwest between by installing two new river gauges and strengthening government capacity to manage the system; and linked 25,000 agro-producer households with buyers.

Programmatic Focus Areas and Emerging Thematic Areas

Building upon these achievements, CARE Bangladesh has undergone a radical shift towards a longer-term programmatic approach and has identified focus areas that address the root causes of poverty and social injustice. These eight areas have been chosen based on CARE's mission and vision, programmatic expertise, organizational capabilities, competitive advantages, relationships and networks, and added value in comparison to other stakeholders.





Looking forward into the future and taking into consideration anticipated changes in the country context, CARE Bangladesh has identified nine emerging focus areas that align with CARE Bangladesh’s theory of change. Pursuing programming in these emerging focus areas will allow the organization to stay ahead of the curve in terms of its programming and to continue to differentiate itself from other organizations and remain relevant and effective. Through the emerging focus areas, CARE will position itself to be a leader in addressing new developmental challenges such as climate change, the youth bulge, and gender equality and to make a greater impact on the communities it serves. CARE Bangladesh also believes that the emerging focus areas identified have the potential to attract new funding and partnerships and to position CARE to stay competitive and responsive to changing contexts and needs.



2.4 Impact Populations and Anticipated Reach

In Bangladesh, women and girls represent a critical demographic group that can transform the country’s society and economy, paving the way for a more sustainable future. Over the past five years alone, CARE has positively impacted the lives of 36 million people in Bangladesh, 60% of them women. This achievement has been made possible through our tested approaches, valuable partnerships, and long-term relationships with communities.



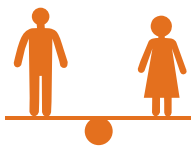
CARE will continue to promote gender equality by placing women and girls at the forefront of its work, thereby eradicating poverty until 50 million people in Bangladesh are leading gender equal and resilient lives. CARE Bangladesh will integrate a special focus on two groups:

- 1) The most socially, economically, politically marginalized women and girls in rural and urban settings (with a special focus on pregnant women; lactating mothers; female garments workers; sex workers; adolescent girls and youth; women at risk of or survivors of GBV and IPV; migrant women; slum dwellers; day-laborers; women traders/entrepreneurs; women in agri-value chains; frontline women service providers; and indigenous women) and
- 2) women disproportionately impacted by climate change, shocks, social and political conflict (with a special focus on refugees; IDPs; religious and ethnic minority groups; and people impacted by humanitarian crisis/disaster). Both groups face a range of challenges, including overcrowded and unsafe living conditions, limited access to safe water, food, and healthcare, gender-based violence, trauma, and discrimination.

2.5 Strategy and Impact Drivers

Based on its experience and in alignment with CARE International's Vision 2030 and CARE USA's Global Strategy, CARE will focus on strategies and four cross-cutting impact drivers, which will accelerate transformation and programmatic impact. These drivers will also help create the pre-conditions needed to achieve CARE Bangladesh's strategic goal for 2030.

15 million people in Bangladesh, especially women and girls, are leading gender equal and resilient lives by 2030



Gender Equal:

The benefits of Bangladesh’s booming economy are unevenly distributed with growing rates of inequality in the economic status of men and women. Between 2010 and 2016 the Gini coefficient for Bangladesh increased, reflecting this growing inequality. As Bangladesh transitions to a middle-income country, it is critical to build a more equal society that will lift women and girls out of poverty. CARE Bangladesh will integrate CARE’s gender-transformative approaches into country office projects, supporting impact at scale and accelerating progress towards the achievement of CARE Bangladesh’s 2030 strategic goal, CARE USA’s 2030 strategy, and the Government of Bangladesh’s Vision 2041 priorities, and SDG commitments (SDG 4 & 5).



This strategy is closely aligned with the **gender equality outcome area** of CARE Bangladesh's Theory of Change and will accelerate progress towards a Bangladesh where women and girls live a dignified life and experience gender equality. CARE Bangladesh will use CARE International's Gender Marker to track, improve upon and support gender transformative programming. Building upon proven CARE approaches, CARE will work in collaboration with women-led and youth-led networks and other social movements to pursue gender equality; promote CARE's champion model (a culture and network that shifts power to raise the voices of women and girls); and address harmful gender norms in the economic, social, and political spheres, through norms-shifting interventions.

The Gender Equal strategy will also contribute to the Theory of Change's **economic justice outcome area** by accelerating the pace at which economically disadvantaged women and female youth secure equitable access to markets and control over productive resources and assets. Increased gender equality will also speed **climate justice** and the resilience of women and girls to climate-related shocks and stressors by supporting women's and girls' adoption of climate-resistant and nature-positive livelihood practices and energy solutions. A focus on gender equality will also make infrastructure and services more accessible for women and girls and speed the transformation of social norms and individual behaviors for improved **food, water and nutritional security, and SRH outcomes** among women and girls, thereby creating the pre-conditions needed for a balanced team with strong technical capacity, underpinned by processes, structures and approaches which promote gender equality will also contribute to achieving CARE Bangladesh's strategic goal. CARE Bangladesh will consistently prioritize and reflect on how each project and team member is contributing to the strategic goal of gender equality by ensuring the Country Office has the right balance of demographics, skills, experience, and technical assistance to adequately address the needs of the women and girls.



Locally-Led:

Because of the multiplicity of vulnerabilities and geographical differences within Bangladesh, locally-led development is the best way to ensure that interventions are appropriate for local contexts and needs, promote gender equality and lift families out of poverty. Bangladesh has made huge investments in community resilience, and community-led early warning and emergency management systems to prepare the country for future climate-related challenges. By involving communities in the design and implementation of projects, initiatives build upon the positive coping mechanisms already used by local communities and are more relevant to local needs and priorities, increasing effectiveness and sustainability. When communities



are empowered to take the lead, they can help mobilize resources and capacities to achieve their goals, driving impact at scale by creating a ripple effect that reaches beyond the initial project. In alignment with the Government of Bangladesh’s Vision 2041, CARE Bangladesh will support local actors (especially women-led organizations [WLOs] and youth-led organizations [YLOs]), women and youth-led networks, partners, and the government to set agendas, develop locally-led solutions, and apply their capacities, leadership, and resources to make these solutions a reality through collective actions. CARE Bangladesh will act as a convener in generating support for locally-led solutions that can drive Bangladesh’s transition to a middle income country. This approach aligns with CARE USA’s 2030 strategy, which supports underprivileged groups in developing the knowledge, skills, and capabilities needed to design and implement locally-led solutions.

This strategy will also contribute to the **gender equality; inclusive humanitarian assistance; and climate justice impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change. By creating community buy-in, locally-led solutions will accelerate the speed with which social norms, practices and services can be transformed to support gender equality. Locally-led processes also more quickly transform humanitarian systems so that they are genuinely inclusive, build community capacities through doing, and support communities in adopting new technologies and implementing community-based systems for climate resilience.



Market-Based Approaches:

Aid alone cannot end global poverty. Market-based approaches leverage business models and market forces to address development and humanitarian challenges sustainably and at scale. Market-based approaches will address not only the market push (supply-side interventions) but also the market pull, by creating demand for goods and services offered by the most marginalized groups. In alignment with CARE USA’s Vision 2030 and the Government of Bangladesh’s Vision 2041 and commitments to SDGs 5&8, CARE Bangladesh will work with market actors, including the more than 12 million MSMEs that make up the largest segment of



Bangladesh's economy,⁵⁵ to use aid to catalyze commercial capital for developing countries. This approach requires a shift away from 'business as usual'. Rather than responding to the challenges people face directly through the provision of in-kind products and services, CARE Bangladesh will adopt a facilitation role. We will consider which market actors could or should provide solutions to emerging challenges and why this is not already happening. Then we will consider how we can change this dynamic by working in partnership with market actors and supporting the uptake of new technologies. When combined with gender transformative programming, market-based approaches lift women out of poverty, build resilience, and enhance gender equality.

Market-based approaches will also contribute to the **gender equality, climate justice, and economic justice impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change. Market-based approaches will support women and female youth to acquire the market-relevant skills needed, including the adoption of new technologies that support low emissions development, and to live a dignified life and enjoy economic equality. By championing market-based approaches, CARE will also accelerate women's access to markets and control over productive resources and assets.



Building Resilience:

While Bangladesh has achieved considerable progress in poverty reduction, the increasing frequency and intensity of climate shocks and stresses such as floods, riverbank erosion, temperature rise, and increased salinity, as well as an over exploitation of natural resources are hindering development and harming the lives and livelihoods of marginalized communities. The loss and damage associated with climate change could cost Bangladesh 2% of GDP by mid-century and potentially rising to a loss of 9% of GDP by the end of the century.⁵⁶ A 'business-as-usual' development approach will not work as the pace and impact of global warming induced climate change is overwhelming development efforts.



⁵⁵ The Daily Star. (2022, September 12). Digital lending for small businesses, merchants.

⁵⁶ The Financial Express. (2022, March 1). Climate change to cause 2-9% GDP loss for Bangladesh: IPCC report.

To contribute to its **2030 strategic goal** and build resilience at scale, CARE will promote the absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities of individuals, households, communities, and address underlying systemic issues, such as poverty, gender inequality, and environmental degradation as the country transitions to a middle-income country. CARE will complement investments of more than US\$ 10 billion by the Government of Bangladesh to enhance community resilience and establish early warning and emergency management systems. A focus on resilience aligns with Bangladesh's commitments to SDGs 1, 5, 11, and 13 as well as CARE USA's Vision 2030, which prioritizes building resilience and social cohesion in communities before, during, and after an emergency.

By building resilience, CARE will also contribute to the **gender equality; economic justice; and climate justice impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change. Resilient women will have the capacities and leadership skills to contribute to gender equality by advocating for their own needs and leading local campaigns to change harmful norms such as GBV and child marriage. They will also be able to draw upon positive coping strategies to absorb, adapt and transform in the face of climate-related shocks and stressors, and will be able to exercise control over productive resources and assets.



Cross-Cutting Impact Drivers

Impact and Innovation: In Bangladesh, more than 120 companies export information and communications technology (ICT) products worth nearly \$1.4 billion in 2022. Despite a global economic slowdown, this number continues to increase.⁵⁷ Innovation can help to promote adaptation by developing new technologies and practices that reduce environmental impact, conserve natural resources, solve social and economic challenges, support last mile service delivery, and support climate change mitigation and adaptation. Innovation and the adoption of new technology in firms can also accelerate the country's transition to a middle-income country, providing businesses with fast and easy access to information. In alignment with CARE USA's Vision 2030 and the Government of Bangladesh's Vision 2041, which prioritize innovation, CARE will support market actors to create new industries, products, and services with the potential to generate employment opportunities, contribute to inclusive and sustainable economic growth and increase household resilience. To create opportunities for women and youth to contribute to these industries, CARE will support training so women and youth can develop new skills and break down social norms that limit the participation of women in the workplace and women's access to technology.

Innovation will accelerate progress towards the **gender equality; economic justice; inclusive humanitarian assistance; climate justice; food, water and nutritional security; and SRHR impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change by creating new opportunities for women, female youth and girls to participate in markets, increasing their access to needed WASH and SRH services, supporting the use of new technologies to make humanitarian assistance more inclusive, and creating early warning systems that increase community preparedness in the face of climate change.

Systems Strengthening: Surveys of urban slum areas in Bangladesh show that more than half of all families (57%) encounter difficulties accessing water services, 89% only have access to a common or shared toilet, and about 31% of families are unable to send their children to primary school.⁵⁸ These challenges will only grow as Bangladesh transitions to a middle-income country and an increasing number of urban residents compete for limited services.

⁵⁷ Dhaka Tribune. Envoy: E-governance a shared priority for EU, Bangladesh in coming years.

⁵⁸ Haque, M. N., Saroar, M., Fattah, M. A., Morshed, S. R., & Fatema, N. (2020, December 14). Access to basic services during the transition from MDGs to SDGs: more rhetoric than reality in a Bangladesh slum. *Journal of Humanities and Applied Social Sciences*, 1(1). ISSN: 2632-279X. Article publication date: December 14, 2020. Issue publication date: January 20, 2022.

Systems strengthening can help Bangladesh through this transition, support improved health and nutrition outcomes among women and youth, reduce poverty, and create impact at scale by building more effective, efficient, and sustainable systems for delivering essential services. In alignment with CARE USA's Vision 2030, which prioritizes systems strengthening and social accountability to achieve impact at scale, CARE Bangladesh will strengthen the capacity of government institutions and civil society organizations to design and implement policies and programs that deliver high-quality, accountable and accessible services at scale, especially for vulnerable and marginalized populations. Systems strengthening will also support Bangladesh's commitments to the Right to Health (SDGs 3 and 5) and the Right to Food, Water and Nutrition (SDGs 2, 5 and 6). Strengthened service delivery systems that meet women's and girls' needs will **contribute to CARE's strategic goal**, support gender equality and women's and girls' ability to absorb and recover from shocks and stress.

Systems strengthening will also contribute to the **gender equality; food, water and nutritional security; and SRHR impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change by ensuring that service delivery systems give women and girls equal access to quality education; that high-quality food, nutrition and WASH services and infrastructure meet the needs of all people, especially women and girls; and that local health systems are accountable and responsive to the needs of community members even during emergencies.

Funding4Impacts and Digital Solutions: Investments by the telecoms sector have expanded 4G mobile broadband coverage in Bangladesh, which now reaches 95% of the country's population. However, 4G is yet to emerge as the dominant form of mobile technology and accounts for only 28% of total mobile connections, suggesting a lag between 4G coverage rollout and the usage of 4G services due to affordability, low levels of knowledge and digital skills, and a perceived lack of relevance.⁵⁹ Digital solutions such as e-commerce platforms, mobile banking, and digital marketplaces can help women and youth to access new markets and customers, which can increase their income and promote entrepreneurship in alignment with SDGs 5 and 8, CARE USA's Vision 2030 and the Government of Bangladesh's Vision 2041. Digital early warning systems can also help communities prepare for and respond to natural disasters, which can have a significant impact on poverty reduction and resilience building. CARE will seek out and promote digital solutions that can help create impact at scale.

Funding4Impacts and Digital Solutions will also contribute to the **gender equality; economic justice; climate justice; food, water and nutritional security; and SRHR impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change by improving access to information and services (especially women and girls), improving communication and collaboration, increasing financial inclusion, boosting productivity and income, and improving nutritional and SRH outcomes.

Knowledge Management and Learning (KML) and Advocacy: Globally, CARE seeks to become a learning organization. To support KML and advocacy, CARE Bangladesh will develop a learning agenda with key learning questions. In alignment with the CARE Regional Roadmap, CARE Bangladesh will prioritize learning about 'what works' in effectively supporting localization processes and fostering locally-led models of resilience and development, particularly as they relate to partnerships with WLOs and WROs. Other learning questions will seek to understand the approaches, which are most effective in supporting CARE Bangladesh's 2030 strategic outcomes. In partnership with universities, CARE Bangladesh will generate convincing evidence of the impact of our work. Evidence of program effectiveness will be shared with current and potential donors for the purpose of resource mobilization. Proven models will be scaled up with local partners and in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh. Together with its partners, CARE will also use the evidence, learning and innovation from our programs to influence broader social change. KML will enable CARE and its partners

⁵⁹ GSMA. (2021, March). Achieving mobile-enabled digital inclusion in Bangladesh.

to document successful models, leverage knowledge, and advocate for replication and expansion of proven approaches. CARE will use evidence and learning to influence power holders, including donors, at all levels to change their policies and practices.

KML will also contribute to the **gender equality; economic justice; inclusive humanitarian assistance; climate justice; food, water and nutritional security; and SRHR impact areas** of the CARE Bangladesh Theory of Change. Knowledge management will contribute to gender equality, economic justice, and inclusive humanitarian assistance by facilitating the sharing of best practices, lessons learned, and research findings to inform policy and programmatic interventions that address systemic barriers, promote equal opportunities, and empower marginalized groups (especially women and girls). In the context of climate justice and improved health, knowledge management will support evidence-based decision-making, promote knowledge sharing on sustainable practices and innovations, and enhance the dissemination of critical health information, ultimately leading to more informed policies, resilient communities, and improved health outcomes.

2.6 Strategic Engagement

Who Are CARE's Stakeholders

CARE's strategic engagement approach will build upon the connections and relationships that it already maintains, while also seeking out new partnerships. By 2036, 41% of the population of Bangladesh will be between 15 and 39 years of age. Therefore, CARE Bangladesh will work with YLOs and Women's Rights Organizations (WROs) / WLOs and strengthen women, girl and youth-led networks, while also engaging the government and private sector. CARE will also engage with program participants and vulnerable groups at the community level; local administration, private sector leaders, and local NGOs at the sub-national level; and ministries, national NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies, media, fora and networks at the national level.

How CARE Will Engage with Key Stakeholders

CARE will shift from standalone activities to working with stakeholders to generate collective influence with the potential to change relevant government policies and social norms for sustained, lasting change, including: **reinforcing engagement with existing** networks and platforms⁶⁰; **piloting Local Leadership Platforms (LLP)** that promote solidarity and leadership among WLOs/WROs, YLOs, local service providers, and other CARE partners; and **Initiating bi-lateral collaboration with identified ministries and government departments**.

2.7 Resource Mobilization

The overall funding landscape in Bangladesh is changing fast with the country's expected graduation to a middle-income country in 2026. With this growth, CARE Bangladesh remains committed to pursuing its program vision with rigor, determination, collaboration, and excellence in program quality. **CARE Bangladesh** is developing a robust resource mobilization

⁶⁰ CARE leads the Civil Society Alliance for Scaling Up Nutrition, co-chairs the National Alliance of Women's Groups (NAWG) and Start Hub Bangladesh, and is a member of Non-partisan Initiative for a Responsive Agriculture Sector Program (NIRAPAD), National Association for the Advancement of the Haor Basin (NAHAB), Start Network, STI/AIDS network, Bangladesh Country Coordination Mechanism, Humanitarian Coordination Task Team, Char & Haor Alliance, Girls Not Brides, Loss & Damage Working Group, and JANO.



strategy to provide an aspirational and comprehensive roadmap for effectively mobilizing and managing resources to achieve the organization’s strategic objectives. The resource mobilization strategy will outline the specific actions, bold moves, and targets that the Resource Mobilization Team will undertake and achieve to attract and secure funding from various sources, including governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies, private foundations, and individual donors.

CARE Bangladesh will hold monthly calls to review CARE Country Management Plans. CARE will also explore more bi-lateral, multi-lateral, private and foundation donors that align with its priority areas. Additionally, CARE will explore new opportunities such as diaspora/ remittance funding, private sector funding, and philanthropic funding. To expand its circles of influence, CARE will organize various events, such as roundtable discussions, webinars, learning sessions, and collaborate with LLPs, think tanks, academia, and print, electronic, and social media, to expand its current circle of influence.

2.8 People and Culture

For CARE Bangladesh to remain competitive among its peers, it will create a more streamlined and agile **organizational structure** that is adaptable and aligned with its strategic priorities. To position itself as the partner of choice for the Government of Bangladesh as well as local organizations, CARE Bangladesh will pro-actively solve collaboration, communication, decision-making, and performance problems; undertake regular context monitoring to keep up with the fast pace of contextual change; and align success metrics with organization goals, roles, and scope.

To realign functions, people and related resources to new strategic directions, each Program Support Team will identify a core structure that is able to meet the required deliverables and functions of the country office. CARE Bangladesh will also integrate and enhance matrix



management; synergize systems; encourage multi-tasking capabilities; and outsource tasks. CARE will also seek to reinforce risk mitigation measures.

Talent retention is a key focus area for CARE Bangladesh. CARE Bangladesh will hire and retain talent by considering new contract modalities, considering pooled resources for talent retention purposes, putting in place more targeted hiring practices, and building second line women leadership. Additional talent retention strategies may include capacity building, exploring learning and development exchanges with other CARE Country Offices, leveraging technology to develop a smarter workforce, and creating competitive compensation and benefits structures.

As part of our key commitments to the localization agenda, we will work with a single-minded focus on **developing partner capacity** in key program areas. Building an understanding of Safeguarding across all local partners remains a priority for CARE Bangladesh. Additionally, CARE Bangladesh will support government and partners in strengthening their Financial, Donor Compliance, Administrative, and Procurement systems. By aligning its digital training platform with the digitization initiatives of Government of Bangladesh, CARE will reach broader audiences with its capacity building initiatives.

CARE Bangladesh prides itself in building a workplace environment and **organizational values and culture** that fosters innovation, excellence, and high-quality programmatic interventions. This ethos and value-based organizational culture has positioned the country office as a market leader. A commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity binds our staff together through high levels of engagement, be it in the daily collaboration among teams, or in partnership with the communities we serve. This commitment draws staff back to CARE Bangladesh even after they have departed for other organizations. To build CARE Bangladesh as a partner of choice for all stakeholders, CARE Bangladesh management will continue to foster this spirit of inclusion and equity.

2.9 Organizational Structure, Financial and Administrative Systems Efficiency

CARE has established a global ORACLE based financial system supported by defined financial rules, regulations and process that encompasses all country offices. A Shared Service Center based in Manila, Phillipines provides technical assistance and oversight of all Country Office financial processes. In the future, CARE Bangladesh aims to digitize financial records to retain financial information in case of destruction, to create a back-up for hard copy records, and to facilitate external audits. INSPIRE is an in-house human resources information services and payroll software tool developed in Financial Year 2022 that we will use to improve efficiency in the coming years.

In addition, CARE Bangladesh will focus on value for money across all sectors, including asset procurement, systems development, cost of events, workshops, consultancies, and program activities, developing systems and processes to ensure efficiency in these areas. We will also continue our efforts to balance overhead costs proportionate to the program portfolio while ensuring quality programming.

Care Bangladesh will continuously strive to be an agile, adaptive and efficient organization with its roots deeply embedded in its organizational values and culture.

Acknowledgement

Photographers:

Cesar Lopez
Cyril le Tourneur d'Ison
Jorja Currington
Josh Estey
Mohammad Hasan Zobayer
Parvez Ahmad
Tapash Paul

Writer & Editor:

Juliet Stein

Contributors:

Esther Watts
Fatima Jahan Seema
Ikhtiar Uddin
Jay Goulden
Kaiser Rejve
Lona Stoll
Marc Nosbach
Mehrul Islam
Mrityunjoy Das
Muhsin Siddiquey
Musa Muhammad
Nusrat Daud Pritha
Ramesh Singh
Ram Das
Rawnak Jahan
Sajia Tareen
Toufique Ahmed
Zehra Simeen Islam Rahim

Back inner

