



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Founded in 1945, CARE's programming extends around the globe—working to save lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice. One of the largest poverty-fighting organizations in the world, CARE works in over 100 countries, directly reaching more than 69 million people (73% women and girls) annually. Globally, CARE has more than 160 education projects reaching more than 10 million people.

WOMEN'S VOICE IN TIMOR-LESTE

Since Timor-Leste gained independence in 2002, gender equality has been an important national development goal. Considerable progress has already been made in addressing inequalities through legislation, policy development, institutional mechanisms and increased public awareness.

Timor-Leste has a mixed legal and justice system where formal and customary laws are combined, and formal and informal justice institutions exist. While the constitution guarantees equal rights for men and women, customary laws and justice systems often embrace sexist norms and practices such as discrimination against women when it comes to property rights. Local government budget restraints and lack of rules and regulation to facilitate national laws and policies, means women's rights are often not upheld at the community level.

Patriarchal sociocultural norms exist in Timor-Leste where men are usually the household heads, decision-makers and breadwinners working in the formal economy, while women are viewed as the caregivers responsible for household chores who must obey their husbands. The burden of caregiving responsibilities limits women's ability to engage in income-generating activities, business and skills development. Evidence shows gender inequality and women's limited involvement in decision-making influences and intensifies all other underlying causes of rural poverty.

Gender-based violence is widespread, impacting more than half the adult female population. Women are disempowered in the economy as even though 80% of women work in agriculture, they have far less access than men to resources, services and livelihood opportunities.



CARE International in Timor-Leste

CARE has been operating in Timor-Leste since 1994. CARE works in all 13 municipalities and reaches 47% of Timorese households – 102,000 people – with our nationwide disaster preparedness and assistance, education, sexual, reproductive and maternal health and rights, and rural livelihoods programming.

In Timor Leste, CARE's goal is to improve the wellbeing and voice of women and girls in rural disadvantaged areas as we know they are the most disadvantaged members of society. We achieve this through our thematic priority areas of sexual reproductive and maternal health and rights, education, women's economic empowerment and women's voice.

CARE'S APPROACH

Women and Girls in Rural Disadvantaged Areas are the Impact Group for CARE's long term program strategy, which aims to bring about a significant and lasting improvement in their wellbeing and voice. This strategy focuses on:

AGENCY

Building leadership, decision making and technical skills, knowledge and confidence of women through:

- Improving women's awareness, knowledge, access and influence in governance issues, rights, laws policies and systems
- Building the capacity of government gender focal points and key network members at local levels.

RELATIONS

Working with key relationship groups to break down barriers to women's empowerment through:

- Working with men and boys, families, community and government leaders to promote support for women and girls' engagement in leadership and decision-making
- Training, Social Analysis and Action and awareness raising to build support for gender equality and women's empowerment
- Working with key groups to reduce gender-based violence.

STRUCTURE

Working with community leaders to address social norms that hold women back through:

- Supporting opportunities for women and girls to engage in leadership and decision-making roles
- Advocating for the development and implementation of laws, policy and practice addressing gender equity, women's participation, women's empowerment and gender-based violence
- Building the capacity of Civil Society Organisations to influence service providers, government and communities at local levels
- Working with local CSOs, government, service providers, police, suco councils and others to reduce gender-based violence.

PROGRAMS SUPPORTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

HAMORIS PROJECT

The HAMORIS Project empowers women to voice their feelings about their reproductive health. The midterm study found 59% of support group members report joint household decision making. It also reported 76% of women were making their own decision on sexual relations. The project also provides grants for members to start an income generating group activity.

HARFOSA PROJECTS

Haforsa 1 and 2 projects strengthen women's participation in farming through seed distribution, production and harvesting support, commercialisation training and capacity-building. Haforsa also supports women's development of and increased access to markets, helping to diversify agricultural products, develop supply chains and share information on markets, price and demand.

HATUTAN PROJECT

This project supports local farmers to increase their access to critical climate-smart and nutrition-sensitive farming inputs, training support, and financial services through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). 123 VSLAs are active with 2,101 members (59% female).

WATER FOR WOMEN PROJECT

Water for Women works to increase the agency of women, girls and other at-risk groups in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and coping with climate change. Some women are trained in technical skills and promoted as technicians in the WASH committees.

CARE'S WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

CARE defines women's empowerment as the combined effect of changes in:

- Agency: a woman's own knowledge, skills and abilities
- Relations: the power relationships through which she negotiates her path
- Structures: the societal norms, customs, institutions and policies that shape her choices in life.

CARE's Women's Empowerment Framework requires holistic changes across these three areas in order to achieve sustainable improvements in Women's Voice.





