Towards Better Governance

A Governance Programming Framework for CARE

August 2011

1. Objectives

CARE’s work on governance has grown considerably in the last ten years. Indicators of its growing importance include: a) the identification of governance as an underlying cause of poverty, b) its central place in the theories of change of most CARE country offices, c) the increase in efforts to document and define the portfolio at all levels of CARE, d) the appointment of more governance advisors, and e) the creation of more spaces for discussion and promotion of governance programming. Yet CARE has lacked a common understanding of governance concepts and of strategies for addressing challenges in this area. This Governance Programming Framework (GPF) seeks to address this gap and its primary purpose is to provide a framework that will assist CARE staff in conceptualizing and planning governance work. It builds on and complements existing CARE frameworks such as the Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication and Social Justice, and the Women’s Empowerment Framework.

The GPF presents a broad picture of ideal possibilities; what is actually possible differs widely according to the context. The GPF is not meant to be a prescriptive nor rigid tool, rather it is intended to be used in a flexible way, adapting it to the complex and diverse realities on the ground. This means that the GPF needs to be used in conjunction with a thorough analysis of the governance context. This should include, a) understanding the formal and informal structures and norms that govern how power is exercised b) consideration of the most effective and legitimate way of engaging within the context, and c) an assessment of the risks involved in intervening.

Overall, the GPF aims to:

- Establish a common governance language within CARE
- Offer a simple, adaptable model which is flexible enough for use in programme planning, design, and impact assessment in the diverse contexts in which CARE operates
- Promote learning by focusing reflection and research on the theoretical/hypothetical underpinnings of our governance work
- Provide a basis for coordinating governance work across CARE
- Encourage a more structured discussion on the role that CARE can legitimately play in addressing weak governance.

The present document sets out the main elements of the GPF for easy reference.

2. The GPF theory of change

The GPF indicates the “domains of change” which we believe are required to achieve equitable and sustainable development. The theory of change (TOC) embodied by the GPF is:

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1 This document was developed through a participatory process involving 14 CARE offices. It was written primarily by the CARE UK Governance Team (Gaia Gozzo, Douglas Orr, Roopa Hinton, Muhamed Bizimana, Simon O’Meally, Bianca Suyama) with particular support from Naomi Hossain at the Institute of Development Studies and Michael Drinkwater, Elissa Martinez and Dianu Wu at WayFair. It is accompanied by two additional documents: a 15 page reference document, for people that have an interest in getting a more in depth understanding of governance and a 2 page summary document containing the core elements of the GPF, to be used as a quick reference.

2 Theories of Change: What are they, why do we need them and how do we develop and test them over time? http://p-shift.care2share.wikispaces.net/Theory+of+Change+Guidance
If citizens\(^3\) are empowered, if power-holders are effective, accountable and responsive, if spaces for negotiation are expanded, effective and inclusive, then sustainable and equitable development can be achieved. Change needs to take place and be sustained in all three domains to achieve this impact.

CARE’s governance work should aim to achieve the following general changes, referred to as “domains of change”:

- Marginalised citizens are empowered
- Public authorities and other power-holders are effective and accountable to marginalised citizens
- Spaces for negotiation between power-holders and marginalised citizens are expanded, inclusive and effective.

The ‘GPF pyramid’

The GPF is represented in the figure below as a pyramid with three building blocks or domains of change at the base. The arrows represent the real-world interactions between the three domains. The fourth building block (capstone) represents impact achieved as a result of change in these domains. For details of how this framework was constructed, refer to the accompanying reference document.

![Figure 1: The Governance Programming Framework Pyramid](image)

**Important notes on the GPF:**

“What”, not “how”. The GPF describes the changes aimed for, but not how these changes will be achieved\(^4\). The three triangular building blocks or domains of change at the base of the pyramid provide programme designers and planners with a framework in which to conceptualise what might be possible within a specific context, as set out by the context governance analysis. They can then combine the different domains and dimensions of change in ways that respond to the context analysis, theories of change that are relevant to the specific context can be formulated, and operational strategies can be developed.

**Interactive domains, not static.** The diagram presents a static image in which the three domains are bounded and separate. However, real world interactions will be more complex, as these domains will be overlapping, interdependent, and dynamic. Some actors may inhabit multiple domains (e.g. civil society leaders can be both power-holders and citizens’ representatives); the domains can have different weights (e.g. the state, the private sector, media and civil society have very differing levels of influence in different contexts), and the central domain will shrink and expand depending on negotiations between the other two domains. While changes need to take place in the three domains in order to achieve equitable and sustainable impact, the interaction between the domains is key to that. The three domains are mutually constitutive, and

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\(^3\) Among poor and marginalised people, CARE is increasingly working to support women and girls, as in many societies they are among the people that face the greatest challenges in exercising their rights.

\(^4\) Examples of strategies used by CARE to promote these changes can be found in the paper: Clarke, P, 2011, *Towards Better Governance? A reflection on CARE’s Governance work in six countries*, CARE International UK
change in one can trigger change in the other: the kind of citizen action that emerges depends on the nature of the regime and the political spaces that are available, while the kinds of political space that emerge depend on prior collective action.

**Interlinking levels of governance.** Equally important as the horizontal linkages between the domains are the vertical linkages across the multiple levels (local, national, regional, global): how effectively governance work operates across levels as well as across the domains is a key factor of success.

**Heterogeneous social groups, not monolithic.** The diagram does not reflect the complexity of power dynamics within each domain. Citizens, CSOs, the state and other power-holders are diverse groups characterised by differential power and interests, divided along axes of class, social inequalities, gender, caste, ethnicity, geography and others. Citizens include powerless groups (e.g. landless, indigenous, rural women) as well as highly influential groups (landowners, the educated, businessmen), while power-holders may include progressive champions of change as well as reactionary groups strongly opposed to reform.

**Power, domination, and resistance in context.** It is important to bear in mind that any challenge to the prevailing patterns of governance is likely to trigger resistance by those with something to lose, and can activate conflict. It is critical in all domains to think through the possibilities for backlash in private and public spheres. In a conflict context, particular attention will need to be paid to: considering which citizens will gain and lose power through governance interventions, ensuring that ethnic, religious, gender and class/caste structures are not reinforced, and considering the extent to which the responsibility for holding power-holders to account is placed on those vulnerable to retaliation.

### 3. The domains of change

The statements of change at the domain level (e.g. “Marginalised citizens are empowered”) are only shorthand for the desired changes; they do not capture the richness of the changes within each domain. For greater clarity about these changes, the GPF breaks down the domains of change into 14 more specific components or “dimensions of change” (see Figure 3).

**Domain One: Marginalised citizens are empowered**

This domain is concerned with enabling the poor and marginalised, particularly women and girls, to be aware of their rights and to have a stronger voice to demand change. In short, the aim is to enable poor people to become active and empowered citizens.

The **hypothesis** for this domain is:

*If poor and marginalised people increase their political and civic consciousness and undertake collective action, then they will be able to engage more effectively in governance spaces and influence decisions that affect their lives.*

The five dimensions of change to work towards are set out in Figures 2 and 3.

In conceptualizing and planning this work, the following require attention:

**Not all individuals have equal capacities to participate as citizens**

- Some lack awareness of their rights and responsibilities, and have limited capacity to articulate and act on their needs and aspirations (agency)
- Others are affected by discriminatory social structures—such as gender, ethnicity, class and caste—which prevent them from achieving such awareness and agency
- The barriers and costs to participation may be particularly high for women.
- Barriers to participation may be rooted in the private sphere, particularly in the case of women.
- Participation is associated with costs of time, money, reputation, and relationships.

**Figure 3. GPF Domains and Dimensions of Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1</th>
<th>Domain 2</th>
<th>Domain 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marginalised citizens are empowered</td>
<td>Public authorities and other power-holders are effective and accountable to marginalised citizens</td>
<td>Spaces for negotiation between power-holders and marginalised citizens are expanded, inclusive and effective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Dimensions of Change**

1. Citizens are aware of their rights and duties, and exercise agency
2. Citizens participate in and organise collective actions
3. Citizens hold public authorities and other power-holders to account
4. Citizens influence public policy effectively
5. CSOs are representative of and accountable to marginalised citizens

**Dimensions of Change**

1. Public authorities and power-holders have the capacity to uphold rights and deliver public goods
2. Public authorities and power-holders are responsive to impact groups, designing and implementing pro-poor and inclusive policies, programmes and budgets.
3. Public authorities and power-holders are transparent, providing accessible and relevant information
4. Public authorities and power-holders are accountable to impact groups
5. The rule of law is effective and justice is administered equitably and impartially

**Dimensions of Change**

1. Institutionalised spaces are expanded, inclusive and effective
2. Informal spaces are claimed and created
3. Inclusive political settlements are achieved at multiple levels
4. Alliances and coalitions for progressive social change are formed

- Citizen organising and collective action are a key aspect of this domain. Poor and marginalised people can engage with power holders in formal spaces (e.g. local participatory development planning and budgeting) and informal spaces (campaigns, demonstrations, etc.)
- Strengthening horizontal and vertical links so that local community groups can work on common agendas and link to national level debates is critical.

**Representation of poor and marginalized people within civil society is a challenge**

- Civil society representatives in developing countries are typically highly skilled, well-connected and resourced, and civil society organizations (CSOs) are mostly led by men
- Women’s and grassroots organizations representing disadvantaged social groups face severe constraints against entering historically male spaces and placing women’s needs on the agenda.
Change in this domain requires that CARE ensures that the CSOs it works with are representative of and accountable to the groups they work for. This also has implications for CARE’s own governance and accountability arrangements.5

Accountability interventions shift power relations in favour of the poor and marginalized

This domain also encompasses building civil society’s capacity to hold power-holders to account. Accountability operates through horizontal mechanisms (checks and balances on the state through the high courts, ombudspersons, auditor general, anti-corruption bodies, etc), vertical mechanisms (e.g., elections) and diagonal mechanisms. Diagonal mechanisms refer to the direct engagement of citizens with horizontal accountability institutions, and include processes such as budget monitoring, public hearings, scorecards for public services, etc.

This also means influencing policies, laws, programmes, budgets, development plans and other decision-making processes to make them more pro-poor and responsive to the demands and needs of our target groups.

Processes of empowerment can cause conflict as powerful groups resist challenges to their control. The possibility of a backlash requires attention to which citizens are to be supported, their vulnerability to retaliation, and safeguarding against reinforcing inequitable social structures (e.g. ethnic, religious, gender, class and caste). Judging which actor groups in society are best placed to challenge unequal power relations will require extensive risk analysis.

Domain Two: Public authorities and other power-holders are effective and accountable to marginalised citizens

This domain entails working with a range of power holders, including the state, to improve their ability to fulfil their obligations and be more responsive, transparent, and accountable, especially to our impact groups.

The hypothesis for this domain is:
If public authorities and other power-holders are capable, accountable and responsive to poor and marginalised people, then public resources will be more transparently and equitably allocated and the poor will have access to better quality services and other public goods.

The five dimensions of change to work towards are set out in Figures 3 and 4.

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5 This has clear implications for CARE itself, as a power holder and member of global civil society. While CARE has developed a Humanitarian Accountability Framework setting out its own accountability commitments to stakeholders, it does not yet have a well-developed accountability framework covering its broader (non-humanitarian) commitments. Some CI members and COs are taking steps to share more information with the public and are proactively involving beneficiaries in the design, monitoring and evaluation of programming. This is an area in which CARE needs to improve as a whole, and should be looked at especially closely in country offices working on governance issues.
In conceptualizing and planning this work, the following require attention:

**Capability, responsiveness and accountability of public authorities and power holders**

- Governments and other public bodies will be unable to fulfil their duties if they lack the **institutional capabilities** to do so. Governance failures not only result from corruption and venal behaviour: state actors may be willing but unable to meet their obligations due to lack of skills, limited human or financial resources, or poor infrastructure.
- Governments and other public bodies are **responsive to poor people** if they make efforts to identify and meet the needs or wants of the poor. Responsiveness increases when public authorities and other powerholders have stronger capabilities as well as stronger incentives to act in these ways. A responsive approach leads to more pro-poor and inclusive planning and policy design, programmes implementation and resource allocation.
- Power holders are **accountable** when they have the obligation to reveal, explain and justify their actions (answerability), be responsive to the views of stakeholders when making decisions (responsiveness) and face the threat of sanction for any failures in fulfilling their duties (enforceability).

**Gender accountability and fragile contexts**

- While most countries’ constitutions acknowledge that women have the same status and rights as men, institutions still fail to be accountable to women due to a combination of political, fiscal, administrative and legal failures. Accountability mechanisms are very rarely scrutinized in terms of gender.
- In fragile contexts the state often has little or no legitimacy and/or capacities, and other actors (e.g. donors, INGOs, the private sector etc) may be as or more influential. Understanding the complex layers and relations between different power-holders is essential to avoid reinforcing unequal power relations or being perceived as aligned with the system needing reform.

**Domain Three: Spaces for negotiation between power-holders and marginalised citizens are expanded, inclusive and effective**

This domain is the product of interactions between the other two. The nature and quality of these spaces for negotiation is the focus of this domain, and the aim is to expand and strengthen them in order to aggregate and channel demands,
identify and negotiate competing interests, and enable public authorities to build consensus and legitimacy. The **hypothesis** for this domain is:

*If formal and informal spaces are expanded, inclusive and effective, and if cross-domain coalitions for change are built, then decisions will better reflect the interests of the poor and marginalised and resources will be allocated on a more equitable basis.*

The four dimensions of change to work towards are set out in Figure 3 and 5.

Programmatic work under this domain can range from collaborative engagement to more confrontational activities, such as non-violent protests and campaigns. Much depends on the capacity and willingness of public authorities and civil society to engage with one another, and the level of institutionalisation of civil society participation, including that of women’s organizations.

**In conceptualizing and planning this work, the following require attention:**

**Formal and informal spaces.** This domain is concerned not only with creating and strengthening formal spaces of engagement and in institutionalising existing informal spaces, but also in supporting informal spaces and processes. Informal spaces are important for channelling the demands of actors that are less capable (or willing) to enter formal spaces, holding informal negotiations before entering formal spaces and ensuring diversity and autonomy of civil society.

**Inclusiveness and effectiveness of spaces.** A key concern here is to address the obstacles to effective participation by marginalised, poor and excluded groups, particularly women and girls. A particular concern regards the inclusiveness and the effectiveness of these spaces: can marginalised people challenge unequal power relations within such spaces? Formal and informal spaces can be co-opted by public authorities or dominated by those with power or technical knowledge at the expense of the less educated and confident. The effectiveness of these spaces is another concern: to avoid costly “ornamental” participation by poor people, these will need to be spaces in which decisions are taken, agreements achieved and those agreements adhered to.

**Effective changes in governance can be driven by pro-reform state and civil society coalitions that cut across different actors/groupings.** Such alliances can be very effective in pushing pro-reform agendas, putting pressure on and negotiating with anti-reform actors. These alliances and coalitions can be formal or informal.

Such coalitions may be the best means for achieving inclusive political settlements that reflect the needs and aspirations not only of contending elites—who may well benefit from their positions and have limited incentives to share power—but also of marginalised groups.

This is particularly relevant in post conflict and fragile contexts where power is often maintained through violence and repression. In engaging with conflict resolution and peace building types of initiatives, a proper conflict analysis will need to be done, including a stakeholder analysis, so that our activities do not exacerbate the problem.

**4. The role of CARE**

The political nature of governance work raises many questions about the different roles that CARE could or should adopt. Historically, constructive engagement is CARE’s preferred mode of working with
governments; however, looking forward, CARE’s 2020 vision calls for an organization that works for transformational change through many means, including work with activists and social networks. This necessitates an assessment of whether constructive engagement is always the most strategic approach. The organisation will need to find an appropriate place on the continuum from constructive engagement to confrontation and adapt its position to changing factors over time. This will require an organization that is sharply attuned to changing contexts, and that engages in continual reflection on emerging opportunities and challenges.

Deciding what role CARE will play will vary according to factors such as: 1) the country context, 2) the nature of the programme (e.g. whether there is a specific governance programme, or whether governance cuts across other programmes), 3) the nature of CARE’s relationships with the state, power holders, CSOs, partners, etc., 4) CARE’s legitimacy and level of embeddedness in the country, 5) CARE’s capacity in terms of skills and experience, 6) CARE’s appetite for risk – with respect to risks to staff, reputation, credibility and image, and 7) CARE’s commitment to a particular mode of engagement and willingness to sustain this commitment.

Answers to these questions will shape what positions CARE can take and what roles it will play in relation to governance. The possible different types of roles that CARE can assume in engaging in governance work include:

- **Capacity building** including technical support to CSOs and public authorities/power-holders from the local up to the national level
- **Developing models and scaling them up**: piloting new models, assessing their impact, and using this evidence base to lobby for their uptake by public authorities
- **Undertaking applied and participatory research**: supporting and/or funding research, promoting the dissemination of innovative and best practices
- **Influencing policy**: promoting evidence based advocacy (directly or indirectly, through partners and/or joining policy influencing initiatives and coalitions)
- **Facilitating interactions** between citizens and public authorities/power holders, and supporting the creation of mechanisms for dialogue
- **Brokering relations between multiple stakeholders**, bringing different actors together, and making sure that the “right people” and decision-makers are seated at the table.