



# CARE's Role in Supporting Social Movements: A Feminist Perspective



## Executive Summary

“CARE can be a bolder, effective, creative, rights-based voice supporting the most exciting cutting edge feminist work. It can do that.”

Cynthia Rothschild

Over the past few years, CARE has had internal conversations about how it can engage more and better with social movements to more effectively further the goal of gender justice in national, regional and global contexts. The [CIGN Position Paper and Guidance Note on Supporting Women's Social Movements and Collective Actions](#) (2019), which builds on [CARE's Gender Equality Policy](#) (2018) notes that “major social change only occurs when those who have been excluded from power organise collectively in the form of social movements to challenge existing systems and their impact. In addition, there is growing [evidence](#) globally that feminist social movements are driving gender justice. This is an important consideration for CARE because CARE places gender justice at the heart of its work.” The CIGN Guidance Note also points out that “CARE recognises that this work requires an internal organisational shift which will include reframing its narrative - from one that Centralises CARE as the sole proprietor of impact to a new one that positions it as a supporting actor in a larger movement.”

This paper is based on a series of ‘conversations with feminists’ - one-hour long discussions with ten feminist allies and friends conducted between August and November 2019 – to gain insights on how CARE can be a better supporter of feminist social movements<sup>2</sup>. It seeks to inform internal efforts and push for the internal structural changes that are required within CARE to enable more meaningful partnerships with collectives, organisations and groups engaged in social justice work. With those changes in mind, this paper is also meant to inform the ongoing Agenda 2030 process where CARE's programmatic future over the next decade is being shaped.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is authored by Zainab Ibrahim and Jayanthi Kuru-Utumpala, Chrysalis (Sri Lanka), Co-Leads of the Life Free From Violence (LFFV) Global Outcome on behalf of CARE International. The authors are deeply grateful to the support of all of those who agreed to give their time to these conversations, as well as the support of colleagues from CARE - Allison Burden, Head of Gender Equality, CI; Claudine Awute, Regional Director, WARMU; Hilary Mathews, Senior Director, Gender Justice Team, CARE USA; Reshma Khan, Regional Organisational Development and Culture Specialist, ECSA and Sebastien Fomerod, Programme Officer, CARE Norway. This paper was also submitted to CARE's Agenda 2030 Taskforce on 4th March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Except for two young activists doing new and exciting work in collectives, each of the others had decades of experience in mobilising, organising, movement building, teaching, being advisers to large NGOs and INGOs, and some were feminist funders or had experience with feminist and traditional funders. Their work spanned a mix of local, regional and global contexts, from the global south and north and all of them are well recognised and respected activists and academics.

We chose friends and allies so that the conversations would be open, frank and honest. Their feedback was in parts challenging, provocative, critical and encouraging.

See page 9 for a full list of feminist activists who took part in these discussions.

**The most important recommendations emerging from this effort are the following:**

**1. CARE needs to acknowledge that feminist social movements are its most strategic ally in achieving transformative change in gender equality and commit to a process of internal change that allows it to partner effectively with these movements.**

This includes words and actions and means that the leadership of CARE articulates a consistent commitment to supporting movement work. It would require reflection on some fundamental questions by the leadership and teams at CARE. These include: Is CARE serious about shifting the way it is approaching the whole process of development and social change? Is CARE willing to give up some of its power at the table and be guided by the leadership of feminist movements?

**2. CARE needs to transform and update its model of working and working with others.**

Many were of the view that CARE's current model is "40 years out of date and antiquated." As one person said, "it feels like an old style of organising that still hasn't worked out how to deal with issues of north and south and how to deal with neo-colonial ideas about 'saviour' and 'saved.' Tulika Srivastava critiqued CARE's 'implementer' role: "Where should CARE back-off from? Back-off from implementation - grassroots implementation is not your job. Bring the experts or hire the experts. Support in capturing their data because that is something frontline organisations are not able to do. Support with how the data is captured. That should be the level of the work. Don't be the one in the movements or the campaigns, that's not your role. That has to be owned locally for them to sustain and bring about any kind of impact."

**3. CARE has to make strategic decisions supporting this transition and create strong incentives to have these implemented.**

Strong individuals with the right politics in positions of power across the organisation matter, as do allies within the organisation who find ways to do the work that is needed. Feminist allies within CARE can support the transition by helping to facilitate the conversation and advising on organisational development that supports this change or linking to external advisers who could guide CARE through a transition.

**4. CARE needs to clarify the concepts and values that guide this transformation if the organisation is to pull together toward the same social justice goals.** Clarifying what it means to work within a feminist frame for instance, is essential.

"Supporting feminist conceptual frames, feminist organisations, feminist social movements, is not the same as supporting women's issues or women's organisations. There's a difference and that difference needs to be discerned, distinguished and clarified for the organisation. You may do work on women's issues which is not feminist. A lot of work on gender based violence in the world today builds up on a feminist agenda, has developed out of feminist research and political work around the meaning of gender based violence but it's not programmed, implemented or developed within a feminist frame. And this needs to be taken into account"

**Sonia Corrêa**

**5. CARE will need to get serious about the deep internal structural changes that are needed if the organisation wants to effectively support social movements.**

These include changes to internal culture and practice (around partnerships, ownership of change, recognising the leadership of movements, risk-management among others); the human resources, skills and experiences needed – the work needs to be staffed by people who are sensitive to movement politics and bring a feminist perspective to that work; changes to processes and systems particularly around reporting and compliance, including CARE's own accountability to local, national and regional standards and, of course, the types and sources of funding that will support a deeper engagement with movements. These changes are already in motion but need to be accelerated and deepened.

## Summary of Key Themes and Recommendations to CARE

No.	Thematic Areas	Key Recommendations to CARE	Audio Clips
1	Have minimum criteria for partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Support partnerships that challenge the root causes of social injustice.</li> <li>★ Expand CARE's partnership criteria. A few suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise partners with a clear human rights based agenda;</li> <li>• Assess whether partners fall into conservative positions on critical issues of sexuality, abortion, sex-work, etc;</li> <li>• Assess the coalitions the partners work with, and their efficiency in furthering the issue they work on;</li> <li>• Have a partnership selection process that enables non-English speaking partners to participate and negotiate in the process;</li> <li>• Consider partnering with collectives / organisations doing cutting edge, critical work but are not in the mainstream of women's organising.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Srilatha Batliwala on key aspects of a genuine partnership</a>
2	Have a clear definition of social movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Have a clear definition of social movements with criteria to help identify social movements that work on women's human rights, gender equality and social justice.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Charlotte Bunch on the importance of following the leadership of feminist movements</a>
3	Be bolder in sharing risks with feminist social movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ CARE can provide legal support and resources for organisations doing risky political / activist work - for example, human rights defenders. Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a series of budget lines to support individuals and organisations within movements who may be at risk.</li> <li>• Support organisations to do a risk assessment and to have proper security plans, media plans, physical security plans.</li> <li>• Strengthen internal education so that CARE staff are better equipped to understand risks from a partner's / grantees point of view.</li> <li>• Have clear internal plans and resources to address a situation where CARE comes under fire for the support it extends to any movements engaged in high-risk human rights work. This includes internal education about risks for partners, grantees.</li> </ul> </li> <li>★ Develop multiple and varied strategies for engagement with feminist social movements in different contexts - from politically more open to politically regressive.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Cynthia Rothschild on Taking Risks</a>  <a href="#">Listen to Roshmi Goswami on how to support social movements even in challenging contexts</a>

4	Leverage power to be a positive ally to feminist movements	<p>★ CARE could leverage its power by tapping into its own networks and mainstream access, to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convince other more conservative actors (including governments) to address issues highlighted by feminist movements, especially when they are under fire by conservative, right-wing governments.</li> <li>• Ensure access (through invitations &amp;/or resourcing) to local grass-roots feminist activists to actively participate at global and regional ministry level / official meetings.</li> <li>• Negotiate flexible funding from mainstream donors that allows the movements themselves to set the agenda of work, meets operational costs of keeping the movement or collective, running.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Cynthia Rothschild talk about how CARE needs to support feminist movements with respect and humility</a>
5	Be aware of the dangers of CARE's branding	<p>★ Be aware that INGO branding could compromise a cause or co-opt the work of many actors. Be willing to give up your visibility as CARE when part of a bigger movement for social change.</p>	
6	Support emerging feminist organisations and collectives	<p>★ Fund and support the building of the type of collectives that are driving social movements. Avoid and dismantle any funding model (by CARE or its donors) that hamper movement building by pitting organisations against each other to compete for funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CARE can share its own spaces (including office space) to facilitate emerging women's rights collectives to meet with each other.</li> <li>• Provide core, flexible funding to feminist organisations, that allow them flexibility in programming, as well as to meet operational costs to sustain their existence.</li> <li>• Support non-mainstream voices at key regional and global platforms and meetings.</li> <li>• Cultivate organisations and collectives over time by investing in their capacity. For eg. through donor funded mentorship programs.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Tulika Srivastava talk about lifting up local leadership</a>



7	Support a formal facilitated process of internal organisational change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Work with feminist organisational change experts to guide CARE through a process of internal change across the organisation.</li> <li>★ Have an external advisory board that can provide a feminist perspective and input on the nature of work that CARE is supporting.</li> <li>★ Use data and evidence to advocate with senior leadership for the transformation of CARE's business model.</li> <li>★ Create and support spaces to push this dialogue on partnering with social movements, with decision-makers within the organisation. This could be an open forum or dialogue with a range of social movement leaders for instance.</li> <li>★ Connect with activists to advise CARE on how to bring a feminist analysis into development and humanitarian work.</li> <li>★ CARE needs to build in accountability criteria for itself for all its work that is in line with local, national and regional standards.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Sonia Corrêa talk about the need for CARE to have conceptual clarity on engaging with feminist social movements.</a>
8	Simplify CARE's reporting and compliance /accountability mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Adopt a joint reporting format with peer INGOs and donors so that partners can follow the same reporting format for multiple donors.</li> <li>★ Learn from 'friendly funders' who are trying to streamline reporting and other requirements across donors (ie: Mama Cash, Foundation for Just Society, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund and Women's Fund Asia) so that CARE can also introduce lighter, more flexible reporting mechanisms.</li> <li>★ Adopt the principle of trust-based funding: Reaching a level of trust between organisation and funder, such that reporting requirements are made minimal, less linear, and explores qualitative change aspects each year.</li> <li>★ Adopt the 'Traffic Light Assessment' Reporting format: The 'Green' to denote what is going well; the 'Orange' to denote what needs more effort and the 'Red' to determine what needs to stop. This format ensures that there are no unrealistic expectations to do everything that was proposed - instead a mutual understanding that the partner organisation is making the best decisions based on the context and the challenges at hand.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Listen to Cynthia Rothschild talk about accountability and reporting requirements</a>  <a href="#">Listen to Noelene Nabulivou on the Philosophy of Trust-based Funding</a>  <a href="#">Listen to Noelene Nabulivou as she explains the 'Traffic Light Assessment'</a>
9	Develop rights-based and feminist measurement indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Develop / use existing rights-based indicators so that CARE can go beyond donor reporting and feed into a broader narrative and accountability.</li> <li>★ CARE MEL colleagues to connect with existing Communities of Practice on feminist evaluation methods so as to collectively build a body of evidence to push donors and philanthropists towards supporting social movements.</li> </ul>	

## Introduction

Over the past few years, CARE has had internal conversations about how it can engage more and better with social movements to more effectively further the goal of gender justice in national, regional and global contexts. The [CIGN Position Paper and Guidance Note on Supporting Women's Social Movements and Collective Actions](#) (2019), which builds on [CARE's Gender Equality Policy](#) (2018) notes that “major social change only occurs when those who have been excluded from power organise collectively in the form of social movements to challenge existing systems and their impact. In addition, there is growing [evidence](#) globally that feminist social movements are driving gender justice. This is an important consideration for CARE because CARE places gender justice at the heart of its work.” The CIGN Guidance Note also points out that “CARE recognises that this work requires an internal organisational shift which will include reframing its narrative - from one that centralises CARE as the sole proprietor of impact to a new one that positions it as a supporting actor in a larger movement.”

This paper is based on a series of ‘conversations with feminists’ - one-hour long discussions with ten feminist allies and friends conducted between August and November 2019 – to gain insights on how CARE can be a better supporter of feminist social movements. Except for two young activists doing new and exciting work in collectives, each of the others had decades of experience in mobilising, organising, movement building, teaching, being advisers to large NGOs and INGOs, and some were feminist funders or had experience with feminist and traditional funders. Their work spanned a mix of local, regional and global contexts, from the global south and north and all of them are well recognised and respected activists and academics. We chose friends and allies so that the conversations would be open, frank and honest. Their feedback was in parts challenging, provocative, critical and encouraging.

This paper seeks to inform internal efforts and push for the internal structural changes that are required within CARE to enable more meaningful partnerships with collectives, organisations and groups engaged in social justice work. With those changes in mind, this paper is also meant to inform the ongoing Agenda 2030 process where CARE's programmatic future over the next decade is being shaped.



## Methodology

Ten feminist activists were selected based on prior personal and/or professional relationships, so that the conversations could be frank and open. A semi-structured interview guide<sup>3</sup> was developed with input from a smaller team working on engaging with social movements within CARE. Except for one interview that was done in person, all the interviews were conducted over phone, Skype or Zoom between August and November 2019. Each interview was approximately an hour long. These conversations were not intended to be a comprehensive mapping exercise and therefore is not representative of all regions. It was limited by time, access and available links to activists.

The ten selected feminist activists whose views are reflected in this paper are:



**1. Charlotte Bunch,**

Founding Director & Senior Scholar,  
Centre for Women's Global Leadership,  
Rutgers University, New York



**2. Cynthia Rothschild,**

Independent Activist and Consultant, New York



**3. Jasmine George,**

Founder, Hidden Pockets Collective, India



**4. Kamla Bhasin,**

Founder Member & Advisor,  
SANGAT South Asian Feminist Network



**5. Noelene Nabulivou,**

Political Advisor, DIVA for Equality, Pacific  
Feminist Organiser, Activist, Analyst & Advocate, Fiji



**6. Ritambhara Mehta,**

Co-Founder and Co-Director of Nazariya,  
A Queer Feminist Resource Group, India



**7. Roshmi Goswami,**

Board Member, Urgent Action Fund



**8. Sonia Corrêa,**

Co-Chair, Sexuality Policy Watch Programme,  
Brazilian Interdisciplinary Association for AIDS, Brazil



**9. Srilatha Batliwala,**

Senior Advisor, Knowledge Building - CREA  
& Senior Associate, Gender at Work



**10. Tulika Srivastava,**

Executive Director, Women's Fund Asia and  
Human Rights Lawyer

3. See Annexure I for Interview Guide

The full conversations were conducted with the assurance of confidentiality and therefore cannot be shared in full. Consent has been obtained for all quotations and audio clips in this paper.

In November 2019, brief audio clips of each person responding to one question - 'What should CARE do or change in order to be a better supporter to social movements?' - was shared over the 16 Days of Activism.



**Listen to nine brief audio clips by these feminist activists responding to the question: 'What should CARE do or change in order to be a better supporter of social movements?'**



This paper pulls together themes that emerged from the conversations, as well as specific recommendations to CARE from the people interviewed. Each interview was analysed for key recommendations and these were then grouped together thematically. Some of the recommendations were echoed by multiple interviewees, while a few spoke to more specific themes. Interestingly, none of the views in the ten interviews contradicted each other. The conversations were often challenging and provocative, urging CARE to have internal reflections on what it may mean to partner with feminist social movements so all parts of CARE pull together to the same ends, in addition to more specific suggestions on what may be useful for the social movements themselves.

## **Is CARE committed to working with feminist social movements?**

"The first step that CARE should do is to really engage in a self-reflective exercise to clarify for itself, for its team, its staff, higher levels of the organisation, what exactly it means to engage with feminists or feminist movements or organisations? What are the implications of that? Because this work is necessarily political." **Sonia Corrêa**



**Listen to Sonia Corrêa talk about the need for CARE to have conceptual clarity on engaging with feminist social movements**



As CARE embarks on a process of working with feminist social movements, the organisations and activists we spoke to for this paper suggested that CARE reflect on some fundamental questions:

### **1. Is CARE serious about this work and the associated changes it would require?**

To engage effectively and meaningfully with feminist social movements may require some deep structural changes at CARE - from agreement on concept and purpose, to changes in operating systems to allow for movements to partner. Advice from Srilatha Batliwala is to, "start with what you are committed to doing and then decide what you should look like, and how you should work towards this purpose."

"How do you view these partnerships? Why do you want these partnerships? This for me is a very fundamental question. Is it to make yourselves look better – like you're more sensitive, collaborative, less didactic? Or is it because you really want to shift the way you're designing and doing things, and the way you are approaching the whole process of development and social change?" **Srilatha Batliwala**

There are three types of partnerships according to Srilatha Batliwala: a) Instrumental partnerships b) Strategic or political partnerships and c) Ideological or discursive partnerships. These three types could offer useful lenses through which CARE can examine the nature of its partnerships.



**Listen to Srilatha Batliwala as she explains the three types of partnerships**



## **2. Does the whole organisation have the same clarity of purpose?**

There needs to be an internal clarity and consensus on what it means to work with feminist principles, because work on social justice is political work. Therefore, it is important to build commitment across CARE through words and actions on what working in this way means, and what the implications of that are, and what needs to be done.

"There's a definition that the author bell hooks - an African American feminist author - had offered years ago. She said 'feminism is a commitment to ending sexist oppression.' So from that simple definition I think that any movement or any organisation ought to be able to do this. Internally what that means is that the commitment has to come from the top - including at the Board level. This includes words and actions and that means that the leadership has got to articulate a consistent commitment to supporting movement work."

**Cynthia Rothschild**

## **3. Is CARE willing to acknowledge and follow the leadership of feminist social movements?**

As Charlotte Bunch says, "it sounds simple, but it's the most profound point." To partner with feminist social movements would mean accepting that leadership would come from feminist women's rights groups on the ground, and this might mean that power dynamics between CARE and local groups are reversed.



**Listen to Charlotte Bunch on the importance of following the leadership of feminist movements**



**Listen to Cynthia Rothschild on supporting feminist movements with respect and humility**



## Key Themes and Recommendations for CARE

The following section of this document summarises the key highlights of the conversations with feminist activists, funders and local organisations, together with some key recommendations for CARE. Brief audio clips have been interspersed throughout the document in an effort to provide more clarification and detail on a point being made, through the voices of the feminist leaders we spoke with.

### I. Have minimum criteria for partnerships

Suggested criteria for partnerships below suggest moving beyond simply short-term project approaches built on contractual deliverables by sub-grantees, to considering the political agendas of organisations, finding ways to prioritise collective work and moving away from 'the usual suspects' to include collectives and organisations doing cutting edge work. A general critique that was raised was the way the term 'partnerships' is used by many organisations, for instrumental linkages designed to meet an organisation's self-interests, such as to advance their credibility and legitimacy by showing work with grassroots groups, or as a resourcing compulsion to build credibility with donors.



**Listen to Srilatha Batliwala as she explains key aspects of a genuine partnership**



## Recommendations to CARE

"Across the world there are such high levels and an almost unashamed blatant kind of misogyny which is on display and an organisation which addresses violence against women has to address that misogyny head on. There are no two ways about it... I think an organisation like CARE has to understand that it has to do this otherwise you are not going to bring about any change. You have to get to the root, you have to get to patriarchy, you have to get to structural causes and enable that to make a transformative change. It's not just a head count of how many households and so on"

**Roshmi Goswami**



*Support partnerships that engage in structural change that challenge the root causes of social injustice, particularly against women and girls.*



*Expand CARE's partnership criteria beyond limited contractual deliverables.*

*Some suggestions include:*

- Prioritise partners with a clear human rights based agenda.
- Assess whether partners fall into conservative positions on critical issues of sexuality, abortion, sex-work, etc.
- Assess the coalitions the partners work with, and their efficiency in furthering the issue they work on.
- Have a partnership selection process that enables non-English speaking partners to participate and negotiate in the process.
- Consider partnering with collectives / organisations doing cutting edge, critical work but are not in the mainstream of women's organising.

## 2. Have a clear definition of Social Movements

The rise of right-wing social movements, and conservative religious social movements makes it imperative that CARE defines what it means by 'social movements' and which movements it wants to partner with. Not all social movements necessarily function on principles of democracy, justice and human rights, and on feminist principles that attempts to break down power hierarchies. What does this mean for whom CARE is willing to partner with?

### Recommendation to CARE



*Have a clear definition of social movements with criteria to help identify social movements that work on women's human rights, gender equality and social justice.*

## 3. Be bolder in sharing risks with feminist social movements

Social movements by their nature are political and often deal with moments of social upheaval and risk. As CARE considers the ways in which it partners with social movements, it may need to also consider how it shares the risks and dilemmas that the movements face, or how it can support movements to face those risks and dilemmas. But in doing so, CARE in turn needs politically conscious leadership that can support and stand up against any potential backlash.

"It is really important for CARE to be taking that risk on its own and supporting the groups that take that risk because that's how change happens and CARE ought to be able to be more on those cutting edge lines. And it [CARE] has the global footprint that it can handle challenges. So then it becomes its responsibility to do it" **Cynthia Rothschild**



**Listen to Cynthia Rothschild on Taking Risks**



There may however be contexts in which it is easier for CARE to collaborate and network with social movements and others where it is not so easy - for example, it may not be so easy to collaborate where social movements are being perceived as anti-state, which may carry the real risk of sedition for activists and others involved in these movements. However, even in these contexts, it may be possible to adopt different strategies of support.



**Listen to Roshmi Goswami on how best to support social movements even in challenging contexts**



## Recommendations to CARE



*CARE can provide legal support and resources for organisations doing risky political / activist work - for example, human rights defenders. Some suggested ways include:*

- Have a series of budget lines to support individuals and organisations within movements who may be at risk.
- Support organisations to do a risk assessment and to have proper security plans, media plans, physical security plans.
- Strengthen internal education so that CARE staff are better equipped to understand risks from a partner's / grantees point of view.
- Have clear internal plans and resources to address a situation where CARE comes under fire for the support it extends to any movements engaged in high-risk human rights work. This includes internal education about risks for partners and grantees.



*Develop multiple and varied strategies for engagement with feminist social movements in different types of contexts - from politically more open to politically regressive.*

### 4. Leverage power to be a positive ally to feminist movements

CARE is a large and powerful organisation with well-established networks and mainstream access in 100 countries around the world. How can CARE as an organisation, use its well established networks and mainstream access to support feminist movements?

Charlotte Bunch talked to us about how CARE could do this at two levels. At one level, CARE can support feminist movements through funding. At another level "they [CARE] can move some mainstream support towards feminist movements and activists. We don't want to just be martyred and have to be defenders - we want the world to change. So if CARE has a slightly more mainstream access, they could play an important role in kind of bringing more mainstream voices to the support of the feminist perspective. That's another way of supporting that leadership."

"It is not our experience that funders are not interested in gender equality and GBV related work. Our experience is the exact opposite. But for us, gender equality is an outcome, a goal and when we get it, we will get it. What we support is feminist organising - our political role is to put money into the hands of activists who are feminist and are organising for human rights. So that is our goal and we are not confused about it. We will not put resources in the hands of those who work on gender equality or GBV in a project manner without a feminist approach or understanding." **Tulika Srivastava**

## Recommendations to CARE



*CARE could leverage its power by tapping into its own well-established networks and mainstream access*

- To convince other more conservative actors (including governments) to address issues being highlighted by feminist movements, especially when they are under fire by conservative, right-wing governments.

- To ensure access (through invitations & / or resourcing) to local grass-roots feminist activists to actively participate at global and regional ministry level / official meetings.
- To negotiate flexible funding from mainstream donors that allows the movements themselves to set the agenda of work and meet operational costs of keeping the movement or collective, running.

## 5. Be aware of the dangers of CARE's branding

Some of the activists we spoke to raised concerns over how movement work may get 'branded' or marketed by large organisations. As Noelene Nabulivou said quite candidly "if INGOs really want to work with us, then they have to listen to us. Because a lot of us, over the years, are really pissed over the branding issues - it's a particular kind of organising that can seem very patriarchal and co-optive." Echoing the same point, Kamla Bhasin also pointed out that "women's groups and movements have been in the field for so long. Just because you have the cheque, does not mean you own everything; the labelling and ownership is a big issue." Branding can also take credit for work by multiple actors, thus making invisible the work of the movement.

Noelene also spoke about how they had to "negotiate the branding to the absolute minimum and being very clear about the red lines. So there were certain sets of work, for instance from the very beginning we refused to let them (the donors) anywhere near the issue as that could comprise the cause."

## Recommendations to CARE



*Be aware that INGO branding could compromise a cause or co-opt the work of many actors.*

*Be willing to give up your visibility as CARE when part of a bigger movement for social change.*

## 6. Support emerging feminist organisations and collectives

It is not uncommon that funds keep going year on year to the same well-established organisations, that can often meet the lengthy requirements that are asked for. This approach often leaves out emerging feminist organisations doing good work with the capacity to grow.

## Recommendations to CARE



*Fund collectives and support the building of collectives, since they drive social movements. Avoid and dismantle any existing funding model that can hamper movement building by pitting organisations against each other to compete for funding and setting up hierarchies.*



*CARE can share its own spaces to facilitate smaller women's rights collectives to meet. This can happen in all the countries and regions that CARE works in.*



*Provide core, flexible funding to feminist organisations. Examples from Noelene Nabulivou from Diva for Equality in Fiji included funding that allowed them to experiment with different approaches to their programming, and funding that paid for operational costs such as rent and utilities, which sustains a small organisation or collective so they can keep doing the work.*





*Support non-mainstream voices at key regional and global platforms and meetings.*



*Cultivate organisations and collectives over time by investing in their capacity. One way to do this could be through mentorship programs, where small organisations and collectives are matched with feminist leadership, sometimes of their own choosing. Costs of mentorship are met by separate budget lines from the funder, and not through the funds of the small group or organisation. Women's Fund Asia for example, has a separate capacity building budget through which they support the mentoring of grantees.*

"Build local leadership - problem of some large INGOs is that they want to be funders and they also want to say they have done the work. And that is the most anti-feminist thing that any large INGO can do - when it invisibilises the layers of work that other small organisations have done. Be honest - what is the problem in saying you are supporting the work at a national or local level? Your role is that of building local leadership, not claiming it."

**Tulika Srivastava**

## 7. Support a formal facilitated process of internal organisational change

If partnerships with social movements has been identified as a critical way for CARE to achieve social change, then an understanding of how movements work and their needs has to go beyond just the program teams and beyond commitment to a collection of policies and best-practice guidance only. There needs to be a commitment to the feminist politics at multiple levels so the whole organisation is pulling together towards a goal. A few starting points include:

### Building the organisation's understanding of feminist approaches

"Work needs to be staffed by people who are really sensitive to movement politics and who come from a feminist perspective in that work. They [CARE] can't just hire anyone. CARE needs to make sure that the people in-house who are doing that work have a sensitivity to movement politics, to coalition politics, and to the struggles that smaller groups have around working with donors."

- **Cynthia Rothschild**

### Building flexibility and agility into the organisation

"The other thing about social movements is that we often have to be very very fast - because we only hear about something late and so you have to be very flexible and quick." - **Noelene Nabulivou**

"Just considering the eco side and the kind of climate - if we have scientists and governments who are saying that we are in a climate crisis - they are usually the last ones to say that - then we already know where we are. Things are moving faster because they must. And if that's the case we have to be able to flexibly make these decisions politically and be able to push."

- **Noelene Nabulivou**

### Being ready to stand in solidarity with feminist movements

"It can be really frustrating because you can have really good people with you in the room for months and then all of a sudden you can't take a joint public stance on something. And it might be something that feels like 'Oh but we already have an understanding on this...'

But because of the hierarchies of consent within the organisation, it just makes it too slow and then by the time you've gone through it the opportunity has already closed."

- **Noelene Nabulivou**

### Ensuring CARE's accountability to communities for the work it does

"Aid organisations have also been asking questions (of INGOs) because we (Women's Fund Asia and other feminist funders) have also been pushing them and raising questions of the 'white saviour' and who are these International NGOs – why are they playing in our backgrounds, and why are they there, and they need to hold themselves accountable to more local, national or regional standards."

- **Tulika Srivastava**

### Recommendations to CARE

★ *Work with feminist organisational change experts to guide CARE through a process of internal change across the organisation. The first phase of this process will surface the questions and changes needed, followed by accompaniment for CARE over time to bring about the necessary changes in systems.*

★ *Have an external advisory board that can provide input and a feminist perspective on the nature of work that CARE is supporting.*

"The people who are brought into this advisory group matters. It needs people who can speak their mind and say what is needed. If this Advisory Board can provide the rationale of why they should support a particular kind of intervention, then there is a way you can shift the thinking on how programming is done on the ground." **Roshmi Goswami**

★ *Use data and evidence to advocate with senior leadership for the transformation of CARE's business model.*

★ *Create spaces to push this dialogue on partnering with social movements, with powerful decision-makers within the organisation. This could be an open forum or dialogue with a range of social movement leaders for instance.*

★ *Connect with activists who could be a good resource to advise CARE on how to bring a feminist analysis to its development and humanitarian work.*

★ *CARE needs to build in accountability criteria for itself for all its work that is in line with local, national and regional standards.*

## 8. Simplify CARE's reporting and compliance mechanisms

Often, the reporting and compliance requirements of large organisations can be difficult and time-consuming, particularly for smaller groups and collectives.

“CARE has to recognise that the bureaucratic and reporting systems it has in place might be crushing for smaller groups to receive money. CARE has to be flexible enough to create different kinds of accountability - and those different sorts of accountability - they exist. CARE will not have to invent them, but they need to do the work to get the advice about other kinds of systems and lightening that load for those groups receiving support.” **Cynthia Rothschild**



**Listen to Cynthia Rothschild on Accountability and Reporting Mechanisms**



In addition to being accountable to donors, organisations are also accountable to the regions that they work in. For Women's Fund Asia (WFA) - a feminist funder that works across 18 countries in South, Southeast and East Asia - a feminist perspective on accountability means that the resources that WFA have received from multiple donors belongs to the region and WFA holds these funds in trust, on behalf of the region. Therefore, they also report back to grantees as to how funds and their data is used in the course of WFA's work.

## Recommendations to CARE

- ★ *Adopt a joint reporting format between peer organisations so that partners can follow the same reporting format for multiple donors. Some donors are already collaborating on systems whereby groups can use one software system and one set of reports for different donors.*
- ★ *Learn from 'friendly funders' who are currently looking at a way to streamline reporting and accountability requirements across donors (ie: Mama Cash, Foundation for Just Society, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund and Women's Fund Asia) so that CARE can also introduce lighter, more flexible reporting mechanisms with simplified templates.*
- ★ *Adopt the principle of trust-based funding.*

“There is a lot of care to make sure that if you've reached a certain level of trust between the funder and the organisation, then there's not a need for a whole lot of those horrible Gantt charts and the rest of that ugliness. Instead, the reporting tends to be a narrative - with maybe eight sets of questions which are consistent year after year - and they range from not just the what happened but the kind of deeper questions not just about lessons learned but really what's the major change element within this year? What is happening to move the work to another level?”

**Noelene Nabulivou**



### Listen to Noeline Nabulivou on the Philosophy of 'Trust Based Funding'



*Adopt the Traffic Light Assessment Reporting format. The 'Green' to denote what is going well; the 'Orange' to denote what needs more effort and the 'Red' to determine what needs to stop. This format ensures that there are no unrealistic expectations to do everything that was proposed - instead a mutual understanding that the partner organisation is making the best decisions based on the context and the challenges at hand.*



### Listen to Noeline Nabulivou as she explains the Traffic Light Assessment



## 9. Develop rights-based measurement indicators

Over the past 20 years or so, the universe of donor funding has changed drastically, from a system that was based on trust and risk-taking to one that has been "penetrated by the logic of neoliberalism" as noted by Sonia Corrêa. The focus on 'results based management' does not always measure success that is appropriate to social movements. As Charlotte Bunch points out, "If you are working on violence against women for example, sometimes your success is that there is backlash against what you are doing. And how do you measure that?"

"There's such hysteria about donor reporting being a numbers game and not always useful in terms of what groups can benefit from. I think it behooves CARE to strengthen its rights based indicators. And there has been some really good work done on that and that can just be adapted to CARE's specific work and the work of the organisations you are trying to support. Because you know, movement indicators are not always the ones that the M&E people immediately think about for an organisation the size of CARE." **Cynthia Rothschild**



Srilatha Batliwala points out that the internal measurement systems that many INGOs use, are often designed in such a way to be a "a self-fulfilling prophecy," to tell us that the work we have done is good.

"The problem lies in that INGO's internal data systems which are set up as a self-fulfilling prophecy. They are set up to say 'oh you know our projects are highly successful. There's been very high 'uptake' - it's designed to tell you that the way you are working is right. And at the most they point out some minor gaps and shortcomings here and there. They are not designed to make you say 'hey wait a second, is this the best way of reaching our goal?' "

**Srilatha Batliwala**

In order to address these shortcomings in existing measurement indicators, ongoing efforts are currently underway by feminist funders (including Prospera and others) to identify and develop ways of measuring success that are appropriate to social movements and also include longer term measurement.

## Recommendations to CARE

-  *Develop and draw on existing rights-based indicators so that CARE can go beyond donor reporting and feed into a broader narrative and accountability.*
-  *CARE Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning colleagues to connect with existing Communities of Practice on feminist evaluation methods, in order to collectively build a body of data and evidence that can push donors and philanthropists towards supporting social movements.*

"It is not our experience that funders are not interested in gender equality and GBV related work. Our experience is the exact opposite. But for us, gender equality is an outcome, a goal and when we get it, we will get it. What we support is feminist organising - our political role is to put money into the hands of activists who are feminist and are organising for human rights. So that is our goal and we are not confused about it. We will not put resources in the hands of those who work on gender equality or GBV in a project manner without a feminist approach or understanding." **Tulika Srivastava**

## Conclusion

In all of the interviews that were held, there was an interest in CARE's desire to engage with feminist social movements, and a confirmation that without working with feminist movements, organisations and collectives, the transformative social justice gains CARE hopes for cannot be achieved. However, the view across the board by everyone spoken to was that this engagement needs to be done thoughtfully, with intent and commitment in its words and actions across the organisation, including from its board members and senior leadership.

This commitment would need to be accompanied by deep structural changes - from building a common understanding of what it means to work within a feminist framework to changing time-consuming, inflexible and hierarchical reporting and compliance mechanisms, that often do not include an INGO's own accountability requirements to local and national standards in the locations and contexts it works in. The interviewees drew parallels with other peer INGOs who have embarked on similar journeys of change, some more successfully than others, but all responding to a growing realisation that this change is becoming more and more critical if their work is to have meaning to the people it wants to work with and for.

Respect for and acknowledgement of the knowledge, deep experience and leadership of feminist social movements, organisations and collectives came up repeatedly as a non-negotiable starting point. CARE will need to grapple with what this means in the contexts it works in, but at its crux, it was the caveat that CARE would need to come to the table accepting that the movement actors would lead and shape the agenda because it is owned by the movement itself, and CARE can find the best ways to bring its own expertise and skills within that framework of leadership. How can CARE support in a way that leverages and lifts without claiming the gains as its own?

Efforts to engage meaningfully with feminist organisations, collectives and movements is already happening in pockets at CARE, led by committed people with a feminist politics, in multiple spaces, countries and regions. Some of the recommendations in this paper can be picked up and pushed forward already by different forums and spaces at CARE - gender networks and teams, measurement and learning networks, program teams, country office teams, communications teams for example - anyone with the power to change ways of working.

The challenge this paper presents to CARE however is bigger and is this: unless the whole organisation puts its commitment and its actions behind this approach and politics to work, pockets of change, while important, will be small and limited. CARE has an opportunity as it shapes its agenda for the next ten years, to re-examine itself and its work on gender equality and support feminist organising, which is and will continue to be the main vanguard of change on issues of social justice.

So as Srilatha Batliwala referenced earlier says, "start with what you are committed to doing and then decide what you should look like, and how you should work towards this purpose."

## Annexure I

### Guiding Questions - For Feminist INGOs / Funding Organisations:

1. Does your organisation refer to itself as a feminist organisation?
  - a. If so, what are the ways your organisation demonstrates that?
  - b. Did you go through a deliberate process to make that determination?
  - c. What did that process look like for your organisation?
2. For funding, what are the types of groups / organisations you prioritise for partnerships?
3. Do you have a minimum set of criteria you follow for selecting organisations / grantees?
  - a. If so, what are they?
4. Do you or your organisation grant funds to feminist activists or feminist movements?
  - a. Who are the donors?
  - b. What types of checks and balances do you have in place as an organisation to ensure that donated funds are used in pursuit of agreed objectives?
  - c. How much do you disburse per year?
  - d. What are the size of individual grants?
5. In order to enable small, local organisations or informal groups to partner with you, what kinds of financial and procurement systems do you have?
  - a. List out the details please?
6. What has your experience been in partnering with feminist organisations / groups / activists?
7. As a feminist organisation, how do you facilitate movement building / engaging with movements in the countries or regions or contexts you support?
8. Do you think that large INGOs like CARE have a role in supporting feminist movements?  
If yes, what type of role and what advice do you have for CARE as they seek to work with feminist movements?
9. Large INGOs can be risk averse, how do you manage risk associated with supporting those who may be breaking national laws and/or putting their own lives or the lives of others at risk in their activism?
10. What is the single most important change funders or implementers could make to meet local movement actors' expectations and needs?
11. Have you seen examples of good/innovative partnerships that could be a model for us?
12. Do you anticipate the 'evolution' of the traditional development sector actors to more effectively support local orgs, or does something more disruptive need to happen (new paradigm) and what might that look like?
13. Wrapping up our discussion, in one word/one sentence, what is the most important thing CARE should do or change in order to become a better supporter to feminist movements?



**Guiding Questions - For Feminist Organisations / groups/ networks / individual activists****RECEIVING support:**

1. Does your organisation refer to itself as a feminist organisation?
  - a. If so, what are the ways your organisation demonstrates that?
  - b. Did you go through a deliberate process to make that determination?
  - c. What did that look like for your organisation?
2. We are trying to get a sense of the size and scale of your organisation ?
  - a. How big is your group or network? (I.e: members / full-time staff)
  - b. What's the total size of funds you manage each year?
3. Who funds you?
  - a. What do they ask of you in terms of accountability mechanisms?
  - b. Do feminist donors have different financial and procurement systems?
  - c. How efficient or harmful are these procurement systems to your work?
4. What is your approach / criteria to selecting and partnering donors / INGOs?
5. What has your experience been in partnering with feminist donors?
6. As a feminist organisation, how do you facilitate movement building / engaging with movements in the countries or regions or contexts you support?
7. What is your experience of working with large INGOs, what went well and what went less well?
8. Based on your experience, what advice do you have for CARE to work better with people like you?
9. What is the single most important change funders or implementers could make to meet local movement actors' expectations and needs?
10. Have you seen examples of good/innovative partnerships that could be a model for us?
11. How do you see the future of support for local feminist groups/actors?
12. Do you anticipate the 'evolution' of the traditional development sector actors to more effectively support local orgs, or does something more disruptive need to happen (new paradigm) and what might that look like?
13. Wrapping up our discussion, in one word/one sentence, what is the most important thing CARE should do or change in order to become a better supporter to feminist movements?