



# Gender Justice

## in Nigeria



In line with CARE's dual mandate, CARE Nigeria employs a combination of proven and innovative approaches to address gender-based violence (GBV) in both humanitarian and development settings. CARE Nigeria also implements gender projects while layering gender-transformative approaches onto other sectors, including Health Equity and Rights (HER), Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihoods, and Women's Economic Empowerment which contributes to Sustainable Development Goals three and five. In fiscal year 2023, our projects directly reached 56,000 women, girls, men, and boys with interventions such as GBV in Emergencies/ Gender in Emergencies (GBViE/GiE), Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS), Social Analysis and Action, and Women Lead in Emergencies (WLiE). CARE Nigeria addresses the root causes and effects of gender-related violence by promoting the prevention of and strengthening systems for response to GBV. Our holistic approach to addressing GBV includes:

### → Prevention

We work with women, men, adolescents, and youth, girls, boys, communities, and local organizations to transform harmful gender norms and attitudes that perpetuate GBV, and promote healthy, equitable, and non-violent relationships.

### → Risk Mitigation

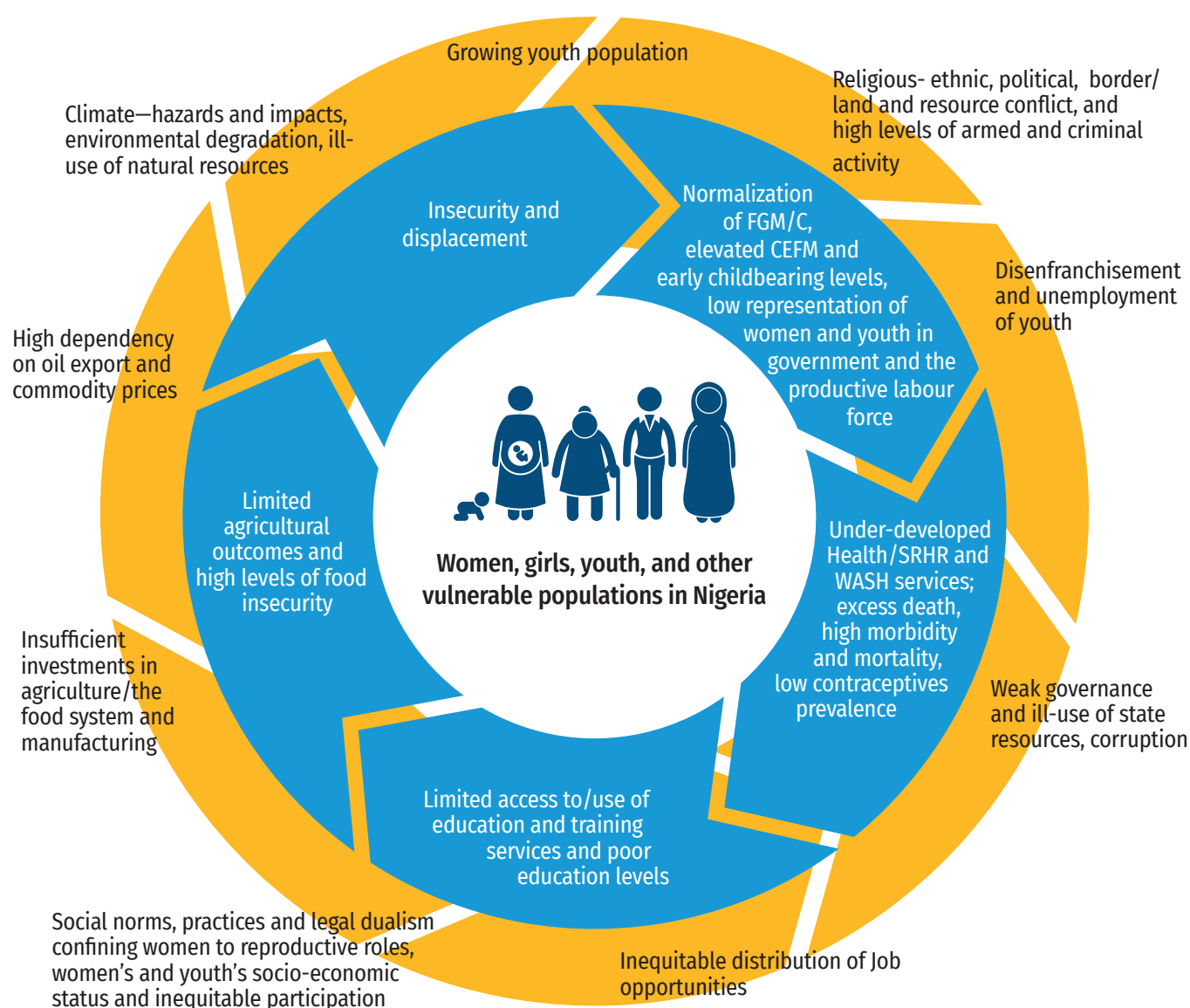
CARE works to ensure that our projects take steps to reduce the risk of GBV and establish appropriate systems to respond if cases are brought forward. This means being deliberate about reducing risks, raising awareness, and responding to survivors no matter the program. CARE aims to ensure that women and girls are safe, respected, and valued.

### → Response

CARE provides services to GBV survivors directly and through partners: first-line support (empathetic counselling, safety planning, and referrals); health care (clinical management of rape and sexual and reproductive health and rights); legal support; psychosocial support; economic opportunities; and referral system strengthening.

### → Advocacy

We work to develop and strengthen the passage and implementation of policies, laws, and systems that prevent GBV and uphold survivors' rights.



## Gender Impacts for Women and Girls in Nigeria

Nigeria is ranked 168<sup>th</sup> out of 191 countries on the 2021 Gender Inequality Index, due to its very high rates of maternal mortality and adolescent birth rates, low political participation, and education levels of women, reinforced by negative gender and social norms.<sup>1</sup>

Social norms define gender roles, and women's value in society is largely determined by fulfilling the perceived obligation to marry, bear children, and contribute to the household, while men are expected to be decision-makers and breadwinners. Consequently, Child, Early and Forced Marriages (CEFM) and women's lack of decision-making power is commonplace.

### GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS

CARE recognizes that when emergencies happen, women and girls are often the most affected but their needs are prioritized the least. Critical services including security, health, and courts are disrupted or reduced as resources are diverted to respond to the emergency. As a coping strategy, many girls are taken out of school and married off at an early age. There is also increased trafficking, sexual exploitation, abuse, and violence with limited recourse to justice and other services for women and girls. Widespread illiteracy of women and girls, negative social norms, and a lack of awareness also reinforces inequalities in opportunities for wealth creation, marginalizing women and girls, making them more vulnerable.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report" and UN Women, Rapid Gender Analysis.

## OUR APPROACH TO GENDER JUSTICE

Physical, sexual, and psychological violence against girls and women (and boys and men) is largely under-reported in Nigeria. Nearly a third of all women aged 15–49 have experienced physical violence, and a quarter of all girls have been subject to sexual violence—half of them within their own families. Two out of three girls and women experience inter-partner violence and 16 per cent of these cases are sexual violence.<sup>2</sup> In addition, sexual abuse by family members is widespread in Nigeria and often goes unreported because family relationships present barriers to reporting for the victims.

### Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

GBV in Emergencies promotes GBV prevention and response (including psychosocial support) to at-risk/vulnerable populations, including internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities in crisis contexts. Key issues addressed include:

- Intimate partner violence
- Sexual violence, harassment, exploitation, and abuse
- CEFM and other harmful traditional practices
- Gender norms and toxic masculinities
- Economic exploitation and exclusion of women and girls

CARE Nigeria is a member of the Nigeria Call to Action to End GBV.<sup>3</sup> CTA is a ground-breaking initiative to fundamentally transform the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian settings. The aim is to drive change and foster accountability so that every humanitarian effort, from the earliest phases of a crisis, includes the policies, systems, and mechanisms necessary to prevent, mitigate, and respond to GBV, especially violence against women and girls.

### Women and Girls Safe Spaces

WGSS are an entry point to providing GBV education and services, including case management, psychosocial support, livelihood skills, and training. So far, CARE has established 10 WGSS in its various sites of implementation.

Following broad consultations with various stakeholders, including women and girls, and local government authorities, CARE Nigeria identifies suitable locations for WGSS. The majority of women and girls who regularly attend WGSS rated the impact on their psychosocial well-being as positive, with older women appreciating the WGSS services more than adolescent girls. In 2023, CARE also distributed dignity kits to 1,850 vulnerable women and girls at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse in the safe spaces.

### Social Analysis and Action

CARE integrates the SAA<sup>4</sup> approach to challenge harmful social norms and practices by facilitating community dialogues that challenge negative social norms, beliefs, and practices around gender and sexuality. Dialogues lead to community-led actions and social change. The SAA approach is used in all our programming areas (Health, GBV, and Food Security and Nutrition). The approach begins by strengthening CARE and partner-staff capacity to reflect on their own biases and beliefs. This enhances their ability and comfort to talk about sensitive issues. CARE uses SAA to address issues

## Strategic Partnerships

Federal and States Ministries of Women Affairs and Justice

Nigeria Women Rights Organizations

Nigeria Call to Action to End GBV and Child Marriage (e.g., Girls Not Brides)

Social Norms Research Institutions

United Nations Organizations

## Donors

US Department of State

Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)

United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO)

Global Affairs Canada (GAC)

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Private donors

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, [www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/6696/file/16%20facts%20document.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/6696/file/16%20facts%20document.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> UNFPA, <https://nigeria.unfpa.org/en/publications/call-action-protection-gender-based-violence-emergencies-northeast-nigeria-road-map>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.care.org/our-work/health/strengthening-healthcare/social-analysis-and-action-saa/>

## 2024–2030 Strategic Plan



## Gender Justice

Contribute to ending causes and consequences of Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) by:

- Improving SGBV prevention and response systems
- Increasing education opportunities for out-of-school girls
- Supporting women- and youth-led advocacy and governance engagement
- Promoting gender-transformative approaches and social-norm transformation
- Provide girls and women with skills in climate adaptive practices

**Impact Target:**  
**1.2 million people**

such as cultural and religious motivated Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and other harmful practices that create barriers to women's accessibility to resources and services.

### Rapid Gender Analysis

Our Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA)<sup>5</sup> tool and other more in-depth tools are used to systematically identify existing gender inequalities and pre-existing vulnerabilities as well as sectoral response gaps. These emphasize the gendered impact of emerging issues and rising conflict in order to inform a response. In addition to the RGA, all CARE's projects are assessed against our widely-used Gender Marker tool<sup>6</sup>, which scores projects on a gender continuum from harmful to transformative.

In 2023, CARE Nigeria conducted two RGAs to understand the specific vulnerabilities, needs, capacities, and coping strategies of vulnerable populations (internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees, and host communities) and the differential impact on women, girls, boys, and men.

### Women Lead in Emergencies

CARE Nigeria prioritizes the leadership of women and girls and uses the WLiE7 approach to strategically engage key groups to enhance women and girls' participation in decision-making and other leadership platforms. Stakeholders engaged in the approach include women and girls, men and boys, people with disabilities, women-led and women's rights organizations, and traditional and religious leaders. This aligns with and supports CARE's GBV advocacy in Nigeria, which promotes the leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls in influencing policies and decisions that affect them.

### Gender Advocacy

In collaboration with the Yobe State Advocacy Working Group, CARE, and its partners, through the Martawa Zuromaye-GBV-Advocacy project<sup>8</sup>, advocated for the state's assent of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act. The Act aims to eliminate all forms of violence and includes the right to assistance for victims of violence. It is a key legal framework that also aims to strengthen states' efforts to address violence against women and girls.

### LOOKING AHEAD

By 2030, CARE Nigeria will reach 1.2 million people with our Gender Justice program. The focus of the strategy is strengthening systems and policies for protection (from SGBV and other religious, social, and cultural practices) and building capacities of women-led organizations and youth to engage in Advocacy and Governance processes. A major focus of our strategy is educating out-of-school girls and reducing vulnerabilities of women and girls by addressing widespread CEFM.

<sup>5</sup> <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/in-practice/rapid-gender-analysis>

<sup>6</sup> <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/in-practice/care-gender-marker>

<sup>7</sup> <https://care.org/our-work/disaster-response/womens-leadership-in-emergencies/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://careinternational-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/ruth\\_dede\\_care\\_org/EVo04uwGdrpNqHJSh0dsN4UB2jtZThyG5zZlfjs8pyb4uA?e=mroYPN](https://careinternational-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/ruth_dede_care_org/EVo04uwGdrpNqHJSh0dsN4UB2jtZThyG5zZlfjs8pyb4uA?e=mroYPN)