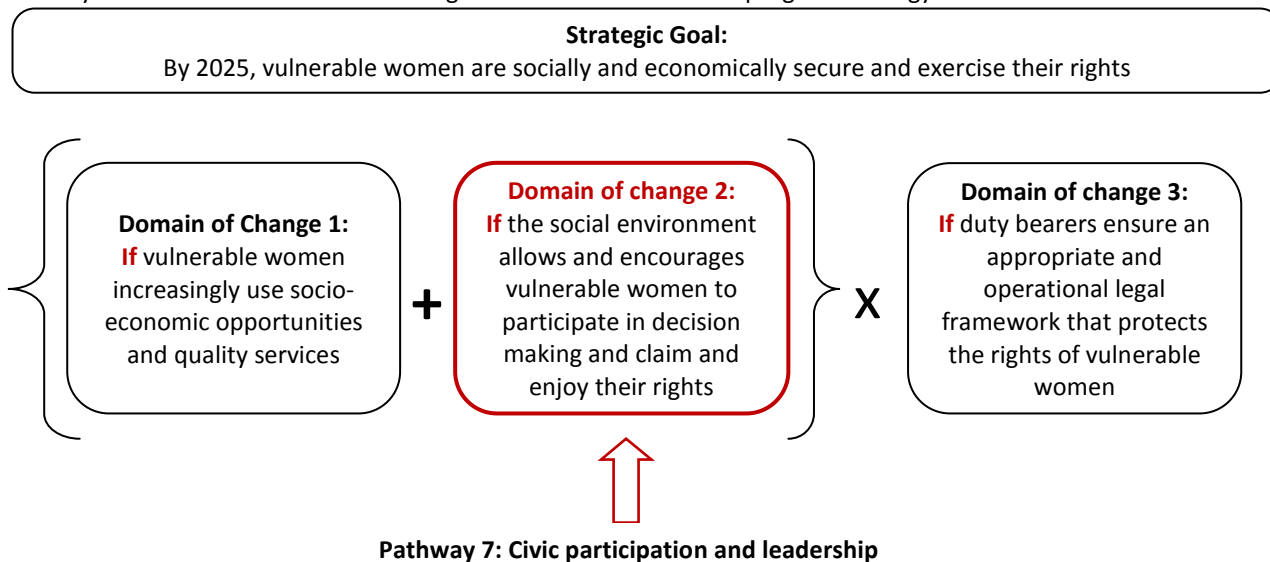


Pathway 7: Promote civic participation and leadership by vulnerable women, by creating spaces for dialogue and facilitating engagement with power holders and decision-makers

Pathway 7 contributes to domain of change 2 of CARE Rwanda’s VW program strategy:



VW & civic participation and leadership in Rwanda

- Rwanda now boasts the highest percentage of woman parliamentarians in the world (> 50%). Women parliamentarians played a critical role in ensuring the new constitution (4th June 2003) was highly gender responsive. (Source: Mutamba, Strategies for Women’s Participation in Government a case study of Rwanda, 2005)
- The constitution includes the obligation that women are awarded at least 30% of all elected positions, providing a great potential for women’s participation in public decision-making. (Source: The Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, 2003)
- Citizen participation is high within mandatory spaces such as Umuganda, but low and ineffective in others such as Imihigo, where citizens feel there is insufficient consultation and that their views are not fully considered in the final plans and performance contracts. (Source: NPA, A survey on citizen’s participation in local governance in 4 districts in Rwanda, 2008 & NPA, A national survey on youth concerns and needs, 2008)

Read the full situational analysis on VW in section A2 in ‘Why the Vulnerable Women Program?’.



Impact sub-groups

This pathway specifically aims to have an impact on:

- **Marginalized women**, specifically including Historically Marginalized women, as their social position in society does not allow them to participate in any community process to the same extent as others.
- **Women living in poverty**, whose poverty situation often does not allow them to attend any meetings, are hold back by low confidence and who are rarely elected to represent their community.
- **Women without (support from their) husbands**, who see their possibilities to participate limited by their high burden to take care of their families as well as the lack of an ‘entry point’ into a male-dominated society.

Read more about the impact group of CARE Rwanda’s VW program in section B1 in ‘Who the Program is for’.

Strategic partners

CARE Rwanda is committed to work in partnership. In this pathway, our strategic partners are:

- The **National Women's Council (CNF)** at both national and decentralized levels, whose main role is to advocate for women's leadership, empowerment and participation in decision making processes.
- The **Ministry of Local Government**, including the **Rwanda Governance Board** and **local authorities**, who assure implementation of the 30% quota of women in elected positions.
- The **Rwandan Women Parliamentarian Forum (FFRP)**, uniting all women parliamentarians and as such being a strong advocate for inclusion of women in decision making
- **Profemme**, being a network uniting 52 local NGOs who all aim at women's empowerment.
- The **National Platform of CSOs**, being a key platform of all Rwandan CSOs and playing an important role in promoting civic participation of women.

Apart from the strategic partners, many implementing partners contribute to this pathway. Please refer to our website for the descriptions of the projects under this pathway and get to know our implementing partners.

Our approach

This pathway recognizes the importance of vulnerable women to be able to influence decisions and processes that affect their lives, and to take up positions of leadership. The power holders and decision-makers that are referred to in the pathway above include local government, higher levels of government, service providers, civil society and private sector. In order to promote the opportunities for civic participation and leadership for vulnerable women, CARE Rwanda and its partners use a combination of well-tested models and innovative approaches, including the following:

Community Scorecard

The Community Scorecard (CSC) is an approach that facilitates dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers. It allows citizens to monitor and give feedback on the quality of a certain service provided. Through the process, they are enabled to advocate with the duty bearers (typically including service providers and local authorities) to solve certain problems or prioritize specific areas of service delivery. At the same time, duty bearers have the opportunity to explain their decisions and challenges, and engage citizens in service provision. The CSC aims to improve citizen participation in decision making, transparency and accountability, while at the same time improving the quality of the service delivered to the citizens.

CARE Rwanda uses the CSC with a specific focus on the inclusion of vulnerable women. The facilitation of the process addresses the specific need for building of capacities and self-esteem of these women to voice their opinions. Services to be discussed are identified together with the community, again with a focus on the participation of vulnerable women in this decision-making. Where local authorities are positive towards the approach, advocacy aims at the inclusion of the CSC in their performance contracts. The CSC has successfully been tested within the PPIMA project, but some further innovation is needed in order to make the process less time-consuming and as such more user-friendly before it is scaled up. CARE Rwanda also looks into the possible added value of the Citizen Report Card approach, and consider using it in addition to the CSC.

Read more about the Community Scorecard in section C2 in 'What the Program does'.

Capacity building on participation

In order to be able to participate effectively, people need certain information and capacities. These include:

- Awareness of one's right to participate in decision-making, to elect and be elected, to demand for accountability etc., including the awareness on existing opportunities to do so and where to find more information on them.
- Awareness of one's rights in general. The rationale behind participating in decision-making is to ensure that these

Policy context

CARE Rwanda's work on this pathway is informed by the Government of Rwanda's policy context. Of specific importance to this pathway are:

- The **constitution** specifies that women should hold at least 30% of all elected positions in the government.
- The **Decentralization Policy (MINALOC, 2013)** includes among its objectives: "To enable and reactivate local peoples' participation in initiating, making, implementing, and monitoring decisions and plans that concern them".

Besides the above mentioned policies, a number of laws, policies and strategies are relevant to the VW program as a whole. These are described in section A3 in 'Why the Vulnerable Women Program?'

decisions take into account your rights. So, in order to be able to participate meaningfully and effectively, a person needs to know his/her rights that s/he can advocate for.

- Awareness of one's responsibilities. Civic rights come also with civic responsibilities, such as the responsibility to participate in elections, to listen to others and take into account their opinions and needs, to demand accountability, etc. Democracy cannot work if people claim their rights but do not fulfill their responsibilities.
- Self-esteem and confidence to participate. Awareness alone does not lead to more participation if people, especially vulnerable women, do not feel that their opinion is important enough to be listened to, do not feel comfortable talking to a group, etc.

The above is addressed through a number of approaches, including trainings on relevant policies and human rights (targeting both citizens as well as power-holders and decision-makers), media campaigns, peer educators, messages or quizzes during social events such as football matches, street theatre, distribution of booklets with summaries of relevant policies, etc. The strengthening of women's self-esteem and confidence is in most cases linked to their membership of VSL groups, which has proven to have an impact not only on women's economic empowerment, but also their self-esteem, confidence and social position.

Support accountability days at sector, district and ministry level

These days, organized by the government, provide citizens with the opportunity to visit their government and know what is going on. Authorities explain how they are fulfilling their responsibilities, what their priorities are and which important decisions are being taken. CARE Rwanda and its partners promote these days by e.g. supporting local authorities in the organization and preparation of these days, raising awareness among our impact group members, making them enthusiastic to come and helping them prepare questions, and finally by being present ourselves.

Radio debates and public dialogues

Both approaches bring together local authorities and/or other power-holders and the wider community for question-and-answer sessions. Radio debates do so by inviting power-holders to join a radio broadcast, whereby citizens can call a free number to pose their questions or raise an issue they feel is important. Public dialogues bring together the power-holders and the citizens in the same physical space for the same type of discussion. Quality facilitation is needed to ensure that the discussion remains constructive and based on the sharing of information and to avoid blaming or any kind of conflict. For this same reason, these approaches are generally used in communities where a positive relationship between power-holders and citizens already exist, for example as a follow-up to the community scorecard in order to disseminate its results more widely.

Involvement in national budgeting & alternative budgeting

The Government of Rwanda provides its citizens the opportunity to attend certain key meetings where the national budget is explained, discussed, and voted for. CARE Rwanda raises awareness on this possibility and encourage citizens as well as civil society organizations to participate during these meetings, with a specific focus on the participation and representation of vulnerable women. Where deemed relevant, CARE Rwanda and its partners engage in these discussions themselves to advocate for the allocation of sufficient budget to the protection of and service delivery to vulnerable women. In addition, CARE Rwanda links up with other organizations that are engaged in alternative or participatory budgeting. This process allows citizens to voice their priorities and concerns regarding the national budget to the government, by presenting their proposed alternative to the government's budget. As this area is still relatively new to CARE Rwanda, it is an area that needs innovation.

Facilitation of inclusive committees for increased participation of the most marginalized

CARE Rwanda recognizes that sometimes, certain groups need extra stimulus to engage with duty bearers. In such cases, the set-up of committees that containing marginalized citizens as well as duty bearers, is facilitated. These committees serve as a platform for participation, consultation and joint decision making around a specific topic. It creates a safe space for marginalized citizens to voice their opinion, while it facilitates duty bearers to include those citizens that are often difficult to reach.

CARE Rwanda has experience in this with regards to Historically Marginalized People. This group generally benefits less from other possibilities to participate in decision making, such as those described above. CARE and its partners have facilitated set up of committees of around 6-10 members, including both duty bearers at the local level as well as representatives from the Historically Marginalized Community, with the objective to discuss how to improve access to health services for this specific group of citizens. As such, an environment for dialogue and advocacy is created, enabling HMP and duty bearers to discuss with each other. At the same time, it builds capacity and confidence of the committee's members to participate also in other forums. As CARE Rwanda and its partners have successfully piloted this approach, it is ready to be scaled-up.

Indicators

CARE expects this pathway to contribute to an improvement in vulnerable women's lives in combination with the other pathways of Domain of Change 2. Therefore, impact is measured at the level of the Domain of Change rather than at the level of this pathway. This pathway contributes to change on the following DoC-level indicator:

- % men and women reporting meaningful participation of women in the public sphere
- % of elected local authorities who are women at village and cell levels

Some key achievements so far

- In Gisagara and Nyaruguru Districts, women have provided feedback to and influenced decision making of their local authorities through their participation in the Community Scorecard. This has for example resulted in the decision to build a health clinic in Nyaruguru, as was recommended during the CSC process. When the CSC process was started, local authorities were afraid that they would be judged or evaluated in a negative way. Community members expected direct, tangible benefits from the process. These misunderstandings created a lack of participation. Intensive engagements with all actors and repeated explanations have now resulted in enthusiasm to continue with the process on both sides.
- 92 CSC animators (elected community volunteers) in 6 sectors have been trained in the facilitation of the Community Scorecard. With support from CARE and its partner organizations, they are responsible for the organization and facilitation of ongoing cycles of the CSC. In time, they will be able to do so independently. Community animators stated that they are proud to do this work, to have received the confidence of their communities and very interested in remaining to be involved in the work that they are currently doing.
- Gisagara District, one of the districts where CARE Rwanda initiated the CSC, ranked first in a national campaign to fight corruption, injustice and promote good governance, through its continued use of the CSC approach.
- Women participating in VSL groups have improved their self-esteem, confidence and social position in society. This is illustrated by the fact that they now aspire political positions and have been elected especially at the village, cell and sector level as well as for the conciliators committee at cell level.
- Through inclusive committees, bringing together Historically Marginalized people and local authorities around health issues, disaggregated data for HMP on reproductive health are now available in Nyaruguru. These data are used to advocate and strategize for improved access to health services for HMP. The discussions with their local authorities have visibly improved the self-esteem of the HMP in the committees, but also the way their communities look at them and the HMP community in general.

Current and recent projects

The following ongoing or recently closed projects contribute to this pathway:

- Policy Advocacy and Learning Initiative (PALI)
- Policy Engagement for Marginalized Inclusion (PEMI) Project
- Rwanda Integrated Water Security Program (RIWSP)
- Great Lakes Advocacy Initiative (GLAI)
- Umugore Arumwa (Kinyarwanda for 'A woman should be listened to')
- Public Policy Information Monitoring (PPIMA) Project
- Isaro (Kinyarwanda for 'pearl')

Learning agenda

CARE Rwanda is committed to learning, to continuously improve the relevance and quality of its work. In relation to this pathway, it poses itself the following questions:

- To what extent do women in decision-making positions actually make a change to the lives of other (vulnerable) women? Do they see it as their specific role to represent women? Do they have the capacities to do so, and do others give them the space to actually participate meaningfully rather than just being present?

How power-holders understand leadership and decision making hold by women? Do they see it as a risk to their losing power, or do they perceive it as an added value that contributes to better decisions and more inclusive development?