

# CARE's Humanitarian Women and Girls' Protection Framework

## Why Protection? Why CARE?

Across CARE, in line with the Centrality of Protection, we recognize that protection services are lifesaving humanitarian interventions.

- ▶ A unique lens and value add to protection work because of CARE's commitment to centering women and girls throughout our work
- ▶ Ongoing protection programming in multiple contexts that offer lessons learned
- ▶ Strong advocacy initiatives and work on Protection of Civilian concerns and Centrality of Protection
- ▶ A responsibility across sectors beyond Gender in Emergencies to engage in protection work

CARE understands that most humanitarian crises are protection crises and are often protracted conflicts. Humanitarian needs are driven by violations of international law, including violence, coercion, deliberate deprivation, exclusion, and exploitation. CARE understands that failure to address protection risks and needs prevents affected people from accessing and fully benefitting from other lifesaving interventions. Further, Some protection risks can be fatal. If we do not appropriately consider protection in humanitarian responses, we risk detrimental consequences to entire responses and affected populations.

As part of this understanding, CARE continues to articulate a unique lens around Women and Girls' Protection, including defining the role of Women and Girls' Protection work within the larger protection mandate.

## WOMEN & GIRLS PROTECTION KEY PRIORITIES



## SAFE PROGRAMMING AT CARE

Protecting and supporting the most vulnerable, marginalized and oppressed: women and girls.



All humanitarian actors have a responsibility to place protection at the center of humanitarian action across all levels. We do this through: Advocacy, Protection Mainstreaming and Integration, Specialized and Specific Protection Programming, and Women and Girls' Protection. The Women and Girls' Protection Approach is part of a larger safe programming approach which includes PSHEA and Safeguarding work, VAWGiE Work and Do No harm in Practice work. Advocacy is central to safer programming and protection work. Advocacy may be local, national, and/or global and is both a responsibility of CARE and inclusive of specific advocacy activities.

We believe that our women and girls' protection work is most effective when integrated across the existing streams of work and used to add depth of understanding and create better tailored programming for the most marginalized women and girls in communities as they are the most at risk of experiencing extreme protection violations and have the most complex protection needs. This work is most effective when focused on ensuring access to life-saving services and maintaining individual and groups of women and girls' dignity.

## Complementary but Distinct Areas of CARE's Work: How Women and Girls' Protection in Emergencies and VAWG in Emergencies Risk Mitigation Work Together at CARE

CARE's Women and Girls in Emergencies work includes two complementary areas of programming that together ensure that women and girls can access the services, environments, spaces and their rights to survive and thrive during crisis:

**Women and Girls' Protection in Emergencies** refers to the dedicated, specialized services and interventions that aim to prevent, reduce, and respond to the wide range of protection risks that women and girls face in emergencies. **VAWG Risk Mitigation in Emergencies**, on the other hand, refers to the responsibility of all sectors to take intentional actions to reduce the risk of VAWG within humanitarian assistance and services. VAWG risk mitigation is not a standalone service—it is a core element of safer programming and accountability, ensuring that all aspects of CARE's response are designed in ways that do not expose women, girls, or other at-risk groups to increased VAWG risks.

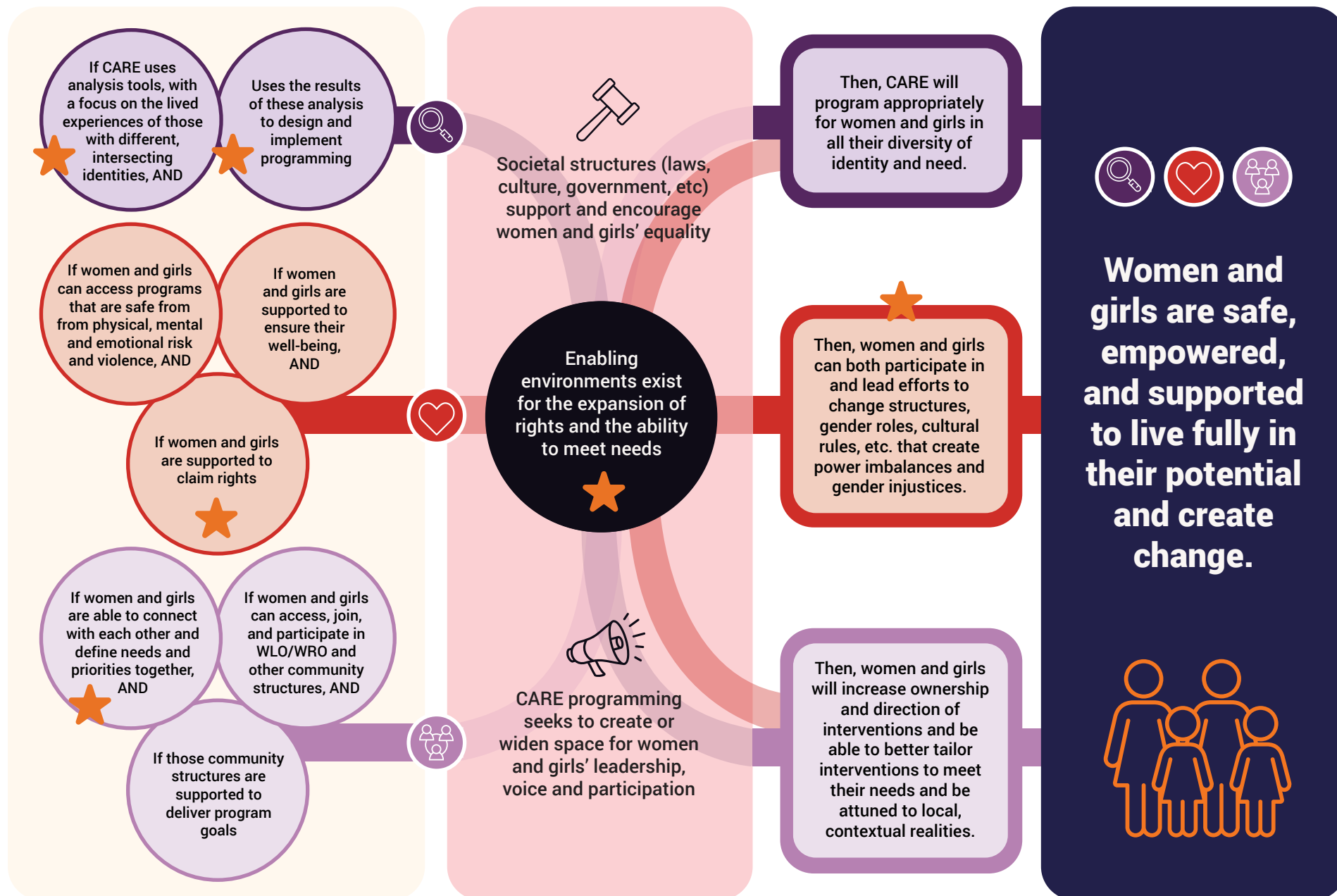
In complementarity, both work streams holistically address different risks faced by women and girls in emergencies.

- **Protection Risks** refer to any threats or harms that compromise the rights, safety, dignity, or well-being of individuals affected by crisis.
- **GBV Risks** are a specific type of protection risk, that contribute to VAWG happening as a result of poorly designed or implemented humanitarian programming, or due to pre-existing or crisis-aggravated gender inequalities, discrimination, and power imbalances.

*In short: If you are looking to identify and mitigate GBV risks in your programming, please visit [CARE's Safe Programming Toolkit on VAWGiE Risk Mitigation](#) for practical guidance and tools. Other protection risks identified through assessments can be addressed through specialized Women and Girls' Protection programming across multiple levels, as described in the section below. Together, Women and Girls' Protection in Emergencies and VAWG Risk Mitigation in Emergencies strengthen CARE's commitment to safe programming.*

## WOMEN & GIRLS' PROTECTION THEORY OF CHANGE

★ PROTECTION PRIORITIES



## CARE's Vision for Women & Girls Protection:

Women and girls affected by crisis **are safe** (physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually), have their **basic physical, emotional, and psychological needs met**, and have their **dignities, agency, choice and voice upheld**.

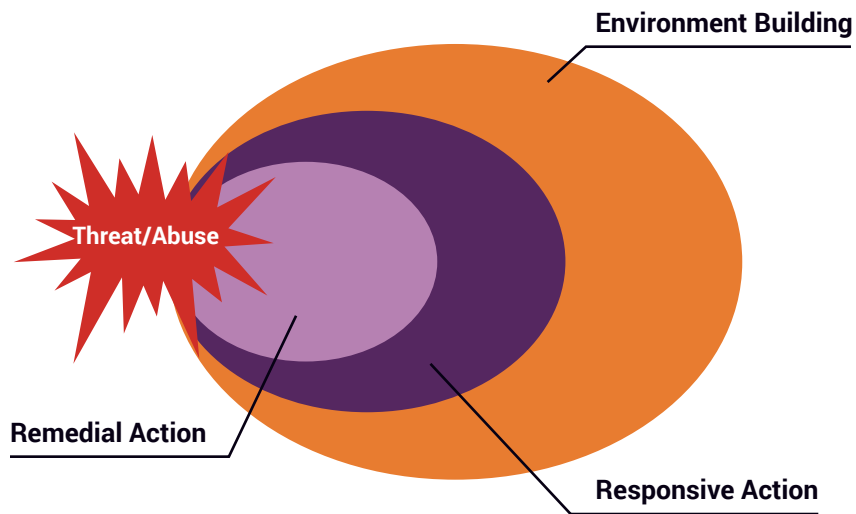
To address women and girls' protection needs, deep analysis and understanding of the variety of women and girls' experiences is key. Therefore, Women and Girls' Protection work starts with selecting the appropriate tools for contextual assessment and analysis and modifying or adjusting these tools as needed to better capture the diversity of women and girls' experiences and ensuring we are capturing the needs of the most marginalized women and girls in a given context. CARE's dedication to women and girls at the center must include those women and girls who are most difficult to reach and face the most barriers to accessing services. CARE focuses on increasing participation of most marginalized women and girls, meeting their protection needs, and building space and opportunity for women and girls to build connection, coalesce, and unite to create change.

CARE recognizes that in emergencies, more must be done to ensure that all women and girls, particularly the most vulnerable and most marginalized, have access to services, live within enabling household environments and relationships, and ensure that structural and social change moves forward. In emergencies, we recognize that extended and directed mental health and psychosocial support is critical to creating space for the mental well-being of women and girls. Without such, women and girls have very little space to engage in any movement building or structural change. A core function of this work focuses on ensuring life-saving needs and services, access to health and legal services, mental health and psychosocial support services are available from the onset of an emergency or crisis situations and they are accessible for all women and girls. Grounded in CARE's Agency, Relations, and Structures, the

Women and Girls' Protection work focuses on:

- Strengthening women's **individual and collective influence**, increase resilience and mental well-being, psychosocial coping skills and confidence and engage in programming that provides the space to access information, build connections and supports despite disruption, and engage across differing identities and experiences of marginalization. This increases women and girls ability to cope and meet their own needs, voice their concerns, and work toward change while being supported and maintaining their own well-being.
- Fostering more **equitable relationships and collective action** even when emergencies and crises often reverse progress on social norms change and result in more stringent and harmful gender practices. This means challenging barriers at family level and engaging men and boys to end gender-based violence; supporting women and girls' participation in solidarity groups, groups that encourage and support mental well-being and provide opportunity to increase their collective efficacy; improving women's access to decision making spaces and their engagement with power-holders within humanitarian response structures and collective, grassroots coalescing. This work increases opportunities for women to enact and push for change, care for each other, and become more engaged in decision making spheres.
- **Transforming unequal structures and social norms**, particularly those impacting the most marginalized women and girls who experience multiple exacerbating forms of oppression that commonly increase in frequency and/or severity in emergencies. This means ensuring that programming seeks to create space for more marginalized women in leadership, increasing meaningful participation of most marginalized women and girls and increasing their influence; ensuring more inclusive institutions and services; and that civil and political rights of women and marginalized groups are upheld. Programming, where possible, should also engage governments and those in leadership positions to ensure accountability for those who commit violations against civilians in conflict and mitigate further protection risks in times of crisis.

## PROTECTION ACTION: EGG MODEL



### Women & Girls' Protection works along different levels of Protection Interventions:

- **Remedial Action**, which is focused on restoring people's dignity and ensuring adequate living conditions after abuse experiences and addressing immediate barriers that block women and girls' access to any needed services. These are **life-saving services** aimed at ensuring women and girls affected by crisis are safe from immediate threats, including targeted Cash for Protection, safe temporary shelter, family reunification, Protection case management, legal aid, medical and psychosocial services and others. For example, if women from a diverse ethnic group or minority religion face similar threats or experiences of abuse upon arriving in a refugee or IDP camp, targeted group psychosocial support services (if analysis determines to be safe), can strengthen support networks between these women and increase their ability to meet their own needs and protect their own rights.
- **Responsive Action**, which alleviates the effects of threats, stops threats, or prevents threats in the future, includes

- case management, protection monitoring, community network strengthening and safe space creation. Responsive action also includes **analysis of protection risks** specific to women and girls and adaptation measures to ensure the opinions of most marginalized women, girls, and communities in emergency and humanitarian settings are captured. Women and Girls' Protection analysis and VAWG Risk Mitigation may identify similar risks but focus on different impacts. If you are already doing VAWG RM work, use the information on risks you've already gathered and then design additional analysis and assessment to fill gaps specific to other protection risks and/or specific to certain marginalized populations of women and girls. Women and Girls' Protection does not create new tools necessarily but helps adapt existing tools to ensure analysis captures information necessary to both increase access to critical, life-saving services and reduce overall vulnerabilities for these women and girls. For example, when assessing protection risks for women and girls with physical disabilities, if long distances and poor roads are barriers to food services, protection and food teams could create criteria for food delivery or transportation assistance.
- **Environment Building**, which focuses on building social, cultural, institutional and legal environments that respect human rights, includes community-based solution making, accountability to affected populations, efforts to uphold the rule of law, and others. Women and Girls' Protection are **services focused on the creation of essential psychological, emotional, and spiritually enabling environments** and is done primarily through specialized work on individual and collective agency building, increasing social networks and advancing social norms, and supporting women and girls to live in their full diversity and advance systemic change. For example, work with existing Women-Led Organizations or with groups of women to come together to address disaster preparedness needs in their community and to respond to disasters when they occur can be considered part of ongoing environment building efforts of Women and Girls' Protection work.



## Illustrative Examples:

### Protection Risk Assessments, RGA, RGA-P

Women and Girls TA support can help country teams to design protection risk assessments relevant to the context and focused on specific issues like understanding protection risks at the family and community levels, examining external environments, or focused on community groups facing multiple forms of marginalization and oppression. The TA works with the RGA advisors and country teams to focus an RGA on specific sub-groups of women and girls, adapt the RGA to meet their safety needs, assist in analysis and in implementation of Step 6 that is co-designed by the populations of concern.

### Integrated sectoral response

The aim of Women and Girls' Protection is to develop focused tools that can be integrated into existing sector tools aimed at better addressing women and girls' protection risks, provide TA support focused on access and removing barriers for most marginalized women and girls and assist in the development of protection mainstreaming actions focused on them. Finally, Women and girls' protection training modules will be available to add to GiE trainings based on country and region needs.

### VAWGiE

Women and Girls' Protection tools and programming approaches can be implemented within VAWGiE programs to increase the social engagement programming for most marginalized women and girls. Tools like the Expanded Women and Girls Safe Space Guidance (in development) can help offer programming that supports not only VAWG survivors but helps meet other protection needs of vulnerable women and girls.

### WVLiE

Dedicated W&G protection programming reduces barriers and strengthens the necessary support, security, joy, self-esteem

and empowerment of self for meaningful participation in community life and social action, collective advocacy and efforts that support the liberation of all women and girls. In addition, integration of tools and actions into existing WVLiE programming focused on increasing meaningful participation and access for most marginalized women and girls within these programs (individual and collective groups of marginalized women and girls).

## Key Programming Concerns:

### Adolescent Girls

Adolescent girls exist and move through a unique space of intersecting risk where they face both child protection and VAWG risks and experience both types of violence while being thrust into cultural adulthood, in many settings, well before emotional and mental maturity. Because of these unique experiences and risks, Women and Girls Protection programming focuses on developing interventions specific to increasing adolescent girls' ability to use their voice, advocate for their own rights, and strengthen their individual and collective coping skills and psychosocial resilience. Programs also engage in creating more space for social change through efforts to facilitate intergenerational dialogues, building community support for adolescent girls, and shifting power and gender dynamics.

### Women and Girls Living with Disabilities

People living with disabilities face extreme risk and vulnerability in humanitarian crises. Attitudinal, institutional and environmental barriers can make it nearly impossible to access services even while experiencing increased risks of violence, exploitation and discrimination. Women and girls with disabilities face even higher risks and may need different approaches to increase their participation and inclusion in critical services. Therefore, Women and Girls' Protection programming focuses on ensuring we appropriately assess their needs and adapt our programming interventions for gender and age specific vulnerabilities, needs, and capacities. This includes helping teams to establish reasonable accommodation procedures, increasing our ability to create meaningful access, and

processes to routinely monitor and address barriers affecting participation of women and girls living with disabilities.

**Coordinated MHPSS Services**

Given the intrinsically linked nature of protection risks and MHPSS issues, it is critical that Women and Girls’ Protection programming focuses on and integrates MHPSS interventions to the highest extent possible. In emergency contexts, those with pre-existing mental health conditions face greater risks, have their rights violated at higher rates, and face increased risks of neglect, abandonment, and inability to access treatment. Women and Girls’ Protection work focuses on tailored MHPSS services for women and girls with increased protection risks, coordinating with health providers to ensure women and girls with protection risks can access mental health services and medication (where possible) and establishing safe and effective referral pathways to access MHPSS services.

**Monitoring & Learning for Women & Girls’ Protection**

Women and Girls’ Protection work can be captured in the CARE 2030 Indicator 20.2. While this indicator is very broad, it will capture how many people we are reaching through protection services. Other indicators can be used to focus on and measure impact of programs. Recommended indicators include:

Protection	Child Protection
% of participants who attend 3 or more sessions who report being satisfied or very satisfied with services received.	% of children and caregivers who report increased well-being as a result of urgent protection needs being addressed.
% of participants/households who report increased well-being as a result of urgent protection needs being addressed.	% of children and caregivers who report satisfaction with direct services received through case management.

**Protection**

#/% of households who report improvement in xxx (based on specific intervention)

**Child Protection**

Others for CP RM, CP capacity strengthening, etc. management

For all programming, it is important to consider how your MEAL processes are set up and your ability to capture evidence and learning from those facing multiple forms of oppression and/or marginalization. If MEAL practices do not include reasonable accommodation processes for those who have mental and intellectual disabilities, older adults, and children, then programs should undertake a review and planning process to build in appropriate and manageable steps to increase participation of these groups. These steps can include a variety of different options, including low-literacy adapted tools and questions, adaptation of indicators and questions for children across developmental stages, and measures to increase understanding for those with intellectual and mental disabilities. Some aspects may be as simple as allowing for more time to explain questions and more time for participants to answer. Other aspects will require additional training and planning, which the Women and Girls’ Protection Working Group members can support teams to do.

For more information or support on protection capacity needs, resourcing and addressing key gaps, protection fundraising, or strengthening women and girls’ protection programming in your country program, contact Gretchen Emick, STA Women’s Protection and Partnerships at [Gretchen.emick@care.org](mailto:Gretchen.emick@care.org).

