

# CARE & climate change



## Empowerment for Local Action. Knowledge for Global Change.

The impacts of climate change are already destroying livelihoods and aggravating financial, political, social and environmental inequities. Without urgent action, this could make it impossible for poor and marginalised people to reach a wide range of development and justice goals.

There is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and prevent human suffering on an unprecedented scale, but we haven't a moment to lose.

CARE's response to climate change is rapidly growing to reflect the scope and severity of the challenge. Our overarching objectives are to empower poor and marginalised people to take action on climate change at all levels and to build knowledge for global change.



In 2007, Dama Godana (center) started a women's savings and credit group in Darara, Ethiopia. "Most pastoralist women depend on handouts from their husbands. They are not empowered," she says. "I formed this credit group so that we can work together, increase our household income, and improve our resilience to drought." CARE provides the group with financial support and training in haymaking as one way of building resilience to increasingly frequent and severe droughts in the Horn of Africa.

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In keeping with our core poverty-fighting mission, CARE is pursuing its objectives through the following strategic themes: global **policy engagement**, **adaptation**, making **carbon finance** work for the poor, and **organisational change**. We emphasise social justice, gender equality and empowerment in everything we do.

**Policy engagement:** *Our goal is the ratification of a scientifically sound and socially equitable post-2012 climate change Agreement and the creation of participatory, transparent and accountable processes to translate its promises into action.*

Policy choices made in the next few years will determine whether we can make poverty history despite climate change, or if climate change will make poverty permanent and even more pervasive than it is today.



Through our global campaign, CARE is advancing the rights of the world's most vulnerable people, especially with regards to adaptation finance and REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation); supporting southern civil society organisations to advocate for the rights and interests of the world's most vulnerable people; and building the capacity of southern governments to integrate gender and women's empowerment into their climate change policies and adaptation plans.

**Adaptation:** *Our goal is to empower the world's most vulnerable people to adapt to the impacts of climate change and to contribute our experiences to global learning about adaptation.*

Climate change poses an unprecedented threat to people in developing countries who are already struggling to sustain their livelihoods. We help the most vulnerable amongst them, especially women and other marginalised groups, to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

We are focusing on the implementation of high-quality Community-Based Adaptation projects; integrating climate change into development activities, particularly in the areas of agriculture, water and disaster risk reduction; and engaging in global learning networks on adaptation to climate change. We are also strengthening the capacity of our partners in developing countries by providing essential tools and practical training.

## Social justice, gender equality and empowerment

As a rights-based organisation, CARE's climate change strategy is geared towards the empowerment of poor and marginalised people. CARE is deeply concerned about constraints that the inequitable distribution of rights, resources and power as well as repressive cultural rules and norms, place on people's ability to take action on climate change. We believe that a wide range of development goals are achievable only if decision makers at all levels recognise the unique risks faced by poor and marginalised people and their essential roles in planning, implementing and evaluating action on climate change.

The majority of the world's poorest people today are women and girls. Climate change is making it even more difficult for them to realise their basic rights, and it is exacerbating inequalities since they are more vulnerable to its impacts than men. Moreover, many women are denied access to new information about climate change and participation in important decision-making processes despite having unique skills and knowledge – about low risk farming, sustainable water management, family health and community mobilisation, for example – vital to effective adaptation. For all these reasons, and because women are central to the food and livelihood security of their families, we place a special emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment.

**Carbon finance:** *Our goal is to enable carbon financed land-use and energy projects to support poor and marginalised people to reduce poverty, secure their rights, and adapt to climate change, while ensuring environmental integrity.*

For poor and marginalised people, the positive potential of carbon finance includes new sources of income as well as a range of co-benefits stemming from improved land- and energy-use (e.g. more diverse, productive ecosystems and lower household spending on fuel wood). CARE works to maximise these opportunities whilst minimising social and environmental risks.

CARE is promoting an explicitly “pro-poor” approach to carbon finance programming which delivers development benefits to poorer households, women and other marginalised people; avoids harm; and ensures the equitable sharing of benefits between stakeholders at local, national and international levels. Our afforestation/reforestation activities are also explicitly designed to support Community-Based Adaptation to the impacts of climate change through more robust agro-forestry systems, living storm barriers, etc.



**Organisational change:** *Our goal is to promote global responsibility for the causes of climate change, as well as solidarity with women and other especially vulnerable people by adapting CARE's policies, practices and plans to the realities of environmental change.*

Climate and other environmental changes pose significant challenges to the way that CARE and our development partners operate. We aim to become a change agent by modelling “climate smart” policies and practices at the highest levels of the CARE confederation. This includes progressively reducing CARE's environmental impacts and integrating a gendered perspective on climate change into our long-range organisational and operational plans.

In 2005, the lives of community members living along the coast of Dong Tan village, Vietnam, were shattered by a severe typhoon. Since then, they have worked closely with CARE in planting and maintaining mangrove forests to build a “living storm barrier” that can protect them from increasingly frequent and violent storms. The project has been successful because it has been squarely built on the active involvement of local people in all activities from planting to protection. This includes giving real decision-making and management powers to local mangrove boards. Women play key roles in all aspects of the initiative. “Women are not only housewives but also family communicators who inform their husbands and children,” says Vu Xuan Ngoc, Vice Chairman of Da Loc People's Committee. “Attending meetings helped them become more proactive and have a say, and also be more active in communicating with other family members.”





"Drought is very destructive - it is comparable to war. Drought has already leveled us all equal, and women are more vulnerable than men because they cannot trek long distances in search of water and work. There is a tradition of assisting each other, and we are still doing this. But it is not strong right now since we are all suffering and have nothing to give our fellow women. It is not because we are mean, but this is the problem these days. The weather keeps changing and we don't have any rain. And we don't know why this is happening. We all want to get out of poverty and lead a better life in the future." Elema Huka, age 40, Ethiopian pastoralist woman and mother of 8 children

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**About CARE:** CARE is a leading aid organisation with more than 60 years' experience fighting global poverty and delivering emergency assistance. In nearly 70 countries, CARE works with the poorest communities to improve basic health and education, enhance rural livelihoods and food security, increase access to clean water and sanitation, and expand economic opportunity. Our long-term development assistance and emergency relief initiatives are currently benefiting about 55 million people around the world. In response to the growing crisis, CARE is helping the most world's most vulnerable communities adapt to the impacts of climate change.

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