



HER VOICE: Listening to Women in Action

RAPID GENDER ANALYSIS: Women's Voices, Needs, and Leadership.

MARCH 2023

Introduction

Worldwide, COVID-19, climate change, and conflict pose an unprecedented challenge to nearly every aspect of our lives, affecting food, nutrition, health, education, the environment, and peace and security.¹ There are 260 million more people who need humanitarian assistance than did in 2019. Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the global health, social, and market system and continues to affect people in its third year.² “The world is also witnessing the largest number of violent conflicts, with one-quarter of the global population now living in conflict-affected countries.”³ The war in Ukraine also exacerbated the food, energy, humanitarian, and refugee crisis⁴, leading to soaring prices in food, fuel, and fertilizer.⁵

These global crises are widening inequalities everywhere. Women and girls, refugees, and internally displaced people are among those hardest hit.⁶ Women and girls face an increased risk of violence, a higher burden of care at home, limited access to services and livelihood opportunities, and are at increased risk of food insecurity than men.⁷ Women are also largely missing in positions of power, decision-making, and policies,^{8,9} which limits humanitarian responses and recovery measures from adequately reflecting and addressing women’s voices.

The best way to understand what is happening to crisis-affected populations—especially for people who often do not get a chance to inform the global conversation—is to listen to their voices and experiences. Since 2020, 28,173 women in 22 countries have shared their stories, needs, and experiences of leadership with CARE.

KEY FINDINGS

COVID-19, climate change, and conflict are exacerbating the resilience of the most vulnerable communities and groups, especially women and girls.

- **53% of women and 50% of men reported an impact on their livelihood;** since March 2022, women and men reported livelihood impact increased to 64% of women and 58% of men as the Ukraine crisis affected global prices.
- More women are taking livelihood responsibilities at home, often solely as more men lose their earnings or migrate to other locations. **Women face higher burdens** with increased engagement in livelihood and household chores.

- In some cases, men support women in household chores, but women and girls still take a bigger responsibility for household chores.
- Food insecurity is increasing; since March 2022, **52% of women and 29% of men reported an impact on food security.** Women are more likely to eat less and not eat at all.
- **Crises are intensifying insecurity and gender-based violence;** women and girls face forced and early marriage and violence at home and outside the home, while boys face forced labor.
- **Women are more likely to report stress and mental health issues** – 17% of women compared to 6% of men reported experiencing higher stress and mental health issues

since 2020. Unpaid work burdens, limited livelihood, food insecurity, and GBV are the main factors causing stress among women and girls. In conflicted affected areas, women, especially young girls, are more likely to attempt suicide.

Women are taking action to support their households and communities.

- **Women are more likely to focus on action to provide food for their households** - 64% of women and 50% of men said their efforts are focused on food security.
- 27% of women and 21% of men are trying to make ends meet by diversifying their income, using their savings, borrowing, and selling their assets. There needs to be more to address the

problems, and women and men are asking for support to rebuild their livelihoods.

- **27% of women and 30% of men in seven countries are leading at the community level:** adapting groups to crisis contexts, participating in community response, leading community groups to take action, and sharing information.
- **47% of women and 41% of men in savings groups are using some savings to support group members.** 15% of women and 14% of men also said they had used the social fund to buy food. 51% of VSLA respondents have continued to provide loans for members loans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Act now to address food insecurity and livelihood impacts through programs that put women and gender at the center of the response and support flexible modalities to build women’s and communities’ economic and financial recovery.

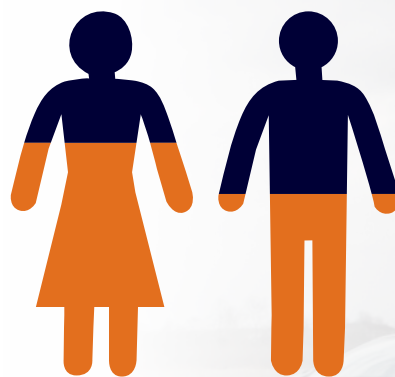
Prioritize protection and mental health support through programs integrating psychosocial support and GBV risk mitigation across interventions.

Promote and invest in women’s voice, leadership, and gender data through actions that engage women and women-led organizations meaningfully with clear accountability mechanisms to partner with women and address women’s voices, gender barriers, and needs.

This report represents 6,299 respondents (4,610 women) from nine countries* – Afghanistan, Burundi, Cambodia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Iraq, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda. The data includes survey findings from nine quantitative surveys and insights from 26 RGAs and assessments in 2022, providing insights into the gendered power dynamics and experiences of women and men, boys and girls in conflict, natural disasters, and other crises. The data collection focused on various crises and included responses from individuals, households, factory workers, refugees, and IDPs. The quantitative data shows the main challenges people face in their communities, their priority needs, and their actions and coping mechanisms. Insights from Sudan, Mozambique, Guatemala, northwest and northeast Syria, Jordan, and Ukraine (including Ukrainian refugees in Moldova, Romania, and Poland) are reflected in this brief, along with various case studies and conversations with women from Ghana, Sierra Leone, and other countries.

This brief builds on our previous She Told Us So reports from [2020](#) and [2022](#) and reflect on findings from quantitative and qualitative data from RGAs conducted between January to December 2022.

* Most of the people in these samples are participants of CARE's program, which implies that they are among the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. This data does not reflect national level representative surveys.



64% of women and 50% of men, said their actions are focused on food security.



“It is no longer very scary whether a rocket will arrive or not from the sea. But it is scary that we will die of starvation.”

— Woman in an occupied area, Ukraine.



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Ukrainian refugees cross the Polish boarder by foot, in Medyka, on the Ukraine-Poland border, March 2, 2022.



“I was able to overcome my silence and I was the first to mobilize the women. Our voices were heard by the authorities who agreed to patrol every night to prevent men from entering our houses. This was my greatest achievement, I was not afraid or slowed down by anyone. I spoke in public and in front of everyone in order to defend our rights”.

—Women Lead in Emergencies participant, Niger

Women are Taking Action

In 2022 the world saw many overlapping humanitarian crises and a growing humanitarian need with trends of increasing conflict, climate change, economic crisis, and displacement disrupting the lives of the most vulnerable.^{10,11} As crises continue to affect vulnerable groups disproportionately, women and girls face an increased risk of violence, a higher burden of care at home, limited access to services and livelihood opportunities, and are at increased risk of food insecurity than men.¹² Despite the multitude of impacts and barriers women face, they are also leaders and responders. CARE's findings show women and men are taking action to support their families and communities.

Coping mechanisms focus on livelihood and food security

Worsening livelihood and food security situations have strained women's and men's ability to provide for their households. **As a result, 64% of women and 50% of men said their actions are focused on addressing food security in their household.** Our data from the nine countries shows 32% of women and 16% of men are reporting food insecurity as one of the biggest impacts in their lives in 2022. When we analyze data collected after March 2022 from six countries,* that rises to 52% for women and 29% for men. This shows rising food insecurity and growing gender gaps, especially after the war in Ukraine. Women are twice as likely to report food insecurity as men are. Women are also more

* Afghanistan, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Iraq, Niger, and Nigeria.

likely to focus on ensuring food availability at home, as the primary responsibility of food preparation and distribution falls on them. 27% of women and 21% of men reported focusing on livelihoods as their main reaction to the crisis. Most people who reported focusing on livelihoods are diversifying their income, using savings, borrowing, and selling assets to provide for their households. They are also trying to cope with price shocks. In Sierra Leone, for example, some women have cut down on their travels to markets by selecting representatives from within their communities to purchase goods on their behalf while they contribute a minimal sum towards their transportation.¹³ Those actions are not enough to curb the crises in the long term—we need broader actions to keep up with women's leadership to shift the broader crises.

Women's space for leadership is shrinking

Women are helping to lead community response, but the space they have is shrinking

27% of women and 30% of men in seven countries** said they are leading at the community level: adapting groups to crisis contexts, participating in community response, leading groups to take action, and sharing information. 21% of women and 29% of men said they are involved in leading and adopting community groups to support group adaptation to crisis contexts. Although our current sample and surveys are not directly comparable with previous findings, our earlier results showed more women engaged in group activities and information dissemination in COVID-19 than in 2022. **The compounded effects of climate and conflict crisis may have further limited women's mobility, access, and engagement.** For example, CARE's RGA in Uganda observed that men are more aware of the public decision-making committees and their processes. For IDPs and refugees in Uganda, language and social barriers further prevent them from participating in community response mechanisms and limiting their ability to raise their concerns. In Ukraine, findings show greater mobilization by women volunteers to sustain critical services and humanitarian aid, and their leadership and roles in decision-making have increased in families and communities. However, in formal decision-making, women are less likely to be involved or have a space to influence decisions.¹⁴

** Afghanistan, Iraq, Uganda, Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Burundi – 5,237 survey respondents (3,865 women).



STORY BOX

Ardo runs a small store in her village, where she sells food, detergent, shoes and other small daily necessities. “It is hard. I don’t have enough customers. Now, most people buy on credit because they no longer have an income due to the current drought,” Ardo reports. “Every month, we get less to eat. It will only get better when it finally rains.” If things continue like this, Ardo will have to close her store because her customers won’t be able to pay. In fact, her dream is to expand her store and hire someone to help her. – Ardo Dhunkel, 60 – Somalia.

Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs) were adopted throughout the pandemic to support members and communities. Across five countries*, we surveyed VSLA members in 2022; 47% of women and 41% of men VSLA respondents said their group used the social fund** to support members financially. 15% of women and 14% of men also said they had used the social fund to buy food. Groups adapted quickly, especially in response to COVID-19, to help members access cash through social fund and help members cover expenses such as health, education, food, and hygiene materials. 51% of VSLA respondents have continued to provide loans for members, and 15% are providing a reduced amount of loans. While groups are still saving, financial pressures are forcing them to save less, which leaves less money for loans. Despite the challenges, most groups are still providing loans.

* Burundi, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda.

** VSLA members contribute to a social or emergency fund, which is like insurance used when members face emergencies such as health issues, funeral or for social events.

Women and men are working together on household chores

Although women still do much more work around the house, some men are taking on more household responsibilities. For instance, in Nigeria, Iraq, and Ethiopia, men and adolescent boys are starting to do more childcare, collecting water and firewood, and buying food. However, women and girls are still expected to do most of the household work, and respondents still highlight that it is unacceptable for men to do work traditionally considered a woman's role. For instance, in Ethiopia, a man said **“Most men do not believe in helping women at home, as they treat women in the old ways. This is not a good idea; I don't want to follow that trend. All men should support their wives in all household activities. It is not right to leave all the household activities to women”**.

People are running out of options

More and more, people have no choice but to pick options that hurt them in the long term in order to meet their urgent food and livelihood needs. They are eating less food, selling assets, arranging early marriages for daughters, child labor, and borrowing, all of which negatively affect health, mental health, and household debt, further destabilizing their future. Young girls are at risk of early and forced marriage, while young boys face pressure to find income generating activities or migrate for more opportunities which expose them

to labor exploitation and violence. For instance, CARE RGAs shows an increase in child and forced marriage in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Sudan. In Jordan, families are removing their children from school so that they can earn money – children are vulnerable to working in the informal sector with limited protection exposing them to unsafe working environment and longer working hours.¹⁵ In Mozambique, respondents reported incidents of transactional sex for food, which adult women primarily practice to provide food for children at home.¹⁶

In Taiz, Yemen, 89% VSLA members reported that they and their group had used money from the social fund to help households outside of the group to respond to crisis. They distributed social fund to support community members with various expenses such as, medical, and funeral expenses.¹⁷

Coping mechanisms people apply to meet urgent needs affect their wellbeing and future



eating less food



selling assets



arranging early marriages



borrowing money



child labor



migration



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Women's Top Concerns*

The top three impact areas women reported as key concerns and impact areas in the communities are loss of livelihood, food insecurity, and mental health—the same as in 2020 and 2021. Similar to the last two years, women are more likely to report impacts on food security and mental health. One key difference this year is that the gap between women and men reporting livelihood as a key impact is narrowing.

Losing livelihoods and income

53% of women and 50% of men respondents reported the loss of livelihood opportunities and reduced income. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted women's livelihood as women are more likely to be employed in the sectors most impacted by pandemic related mitigation efforts, including the informal and services sector.¹⁸ The crisis in Ukraine has further exacerbated this by affecting global market, increased prices of food and agricultural inputs. Data from six countries** collected starting in March 2022, shows 64% of women and 58% of men reported that their livelihoods had been impacted, showing an increase in the level of impact on livelihoods challenge women and men are facing since the war in Ukraine. Women and men indicated the lack of employment opportunities, increasing price of goods and services, and difficulty accessing markets and financial resources as the main challenges affecting their household income and livelihood. This corresponds with global trends in increases in extreme poverty, especially among women.

* CARE global data was collected in various contexts, using different tools. Due to such differences, the global data does not provide pure comparative results. However, such comparisons provide rough insight to assess responses between different groups and locations.

** Afghanistan, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Iraq, Niger, and Nigeria,

LIVELIHOOD IMPACT



According to UN Women, in 2022, around 383 million women and girls lived in extreme poverty compared to 368 million men and boys.¹⁹

The overall shift of livelihood responsibility to women and the lack of opportunities and protections for women's livelihoods is creating a significant challenge for women. Women and men in conflict settings, IDPs, refugees, people with disabilities, and female-headed households face higher impacts on their livelihood, limited opportunities, and greater risk of violence and exploitation.

Economic pressures continue to rise

The instability caused by conflict presents a persistent and significant challenges on livelihood for women and men living in conflict affected areas. In Afghanistan, 87.2% respondents reported a sharp decline in their earnings. Although men respondents are also experiencing reduced livelihood in Afghanistan, female-headed households and women are more likely to lose their income because of gender and social norms and the restricted mobility imposed on women.²⁰ In Jordan, despite the constraints both men and women refugees face in accessing formal

Data collected starting from March 2022 shows 64% of women and 58% of men reporting impact on livelihood.

employment, men are still more likely than women to have a work permit – 18% of male-headed households have work permits, compared to only 11% of female-headed households.²¹ In northeast Syria, 85% of women and 91% of men said their household incomes had dropped significantly since the pandemic; farmers reported significant income losses due to the water crisis, which mainly affected women, who are roughly 70% of farmers in Northeast Syria.²² In Morocco, farmers' ability to rely on agriculture for income is declining due to the drought.

Earning livelihoods is putting even more burdens on women's time

In Sudan, the conflict has left many women as the head of the household, and women have growing roles in agriculture and trade. Community leaders in Sudan said that because of this, communities view women's role in society more positively, especially their economic contribution and productivity. While women's increasing engagement in livelihood contributes to household resilience, it also doubles women's burden, as they continue to be responsible for household domestic and care work, while men have not similarly shifted their norms around housework.²³



© Laura Noel/CARE Ghana



“My husband died five years ago, and now I am the head of my family. I used to sew so I could provide for my family... recently I had to sell my sewing machine because we needed food.... I don’t know what we will do now.”

– Woman head of household, Herat, Afghanistan.

In northeast Nigeria, security issues, death, separation, and injury for many male heads of households, have pushed women to assume the role of breadwinner for the family. Boys and girls also spend more time participating in income-generating activities and domestic tasks. While all family members are taking additional income-generating activities, adolescent girls and adult women are twice as more likely to share all their income earning with their family member than men and adolescent boys.²⁴ Ukrainian women refugees are also becoming sole providers, sometimes for the first time. Women continue to be responsible for caring for children and sick or older family members.^{25,26}

Women still face many more barriers to employment than men

In Nigeria, women still participate in business activities at much lower rates than adult men because women and girls are not allowed to move outside of the

community. Despite their desire to work, Ukrainian refugees in Moldova and Romania are facing barriers to accessing employment, including language, lack of information, and, particularly for those outside of main cities, the location of the job that would require relocation and accommodation.^{27,28} In Iraq, women struggle to access livelihood opportunities and feel unsafe and unaccepted in the community when they do earn money.²⁹ The lack of employment opportunities and information places women in vulnerable situations and could lead to negative consequences by pushing women to accept informal jobs and, increasing their risk of exploitation and even trafficking.³⁰

Food Insecurity

COVID-19, climate change, and the war in Ukraine have intensified the hunger crisis.³¹ Current projections show an increasingly deteriorating situation. In September 2022, 205 million people worldwide urgently needed

humanitarian assistance, and the number is predicted to increase by another 621 million in six months.³² The trend shows that among those facing severe food insecurity, 332.8 million will be women.³³ In 2021, there were 150 million more women who were food insecure than men worldwide, a vast increase from the gap in 2018, when only 18 million more women than men were food insecure.³⁴

Food insecurity is a growing concern, especially among rural populations who depend mainly on agriculture. Our data from the nine countries shows 32% of women and 16% of men reported food insecurity. When we analyze data collected starting in March 2022 from six countries*, 52% of women and 29% of men reported impact on food security. This shows a rising food insecurity, especially after the war in Ukraine. In all cases, the findings indicate that women are twice as likely as men to report food insecurity.

* Afghanistan, Iraq, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, and Ecuador.



STORY BOX

“This winter, we couldn’t afford fuel or coal to warm the house, so we did without”, notes Zakieh, who lives in a region where in winter temperature drops to zero for long weeks. “We live with the minimum, and I do not intend to go into debt for food or heating. It is very difficult for me to ask for help but I have to do it for two things: to pay for my children’s transport to school or for their school supplies and to pay for ploughing the fields. When I go into debt, I give back the money I owe once I sell my crop,” she says, explaining that she “borrows money for irrigation, seeds and fertilizers”. – Zakieh, 55-year-old farmer – Baalbeck, Lebanon.

FOOD INSECURITY



Data collected starting from March 2022 shows 52% of women and 29% of men reporting impact on food security.

The prices of food and fuel are rising fast, which is driving down agricultural production. In addition to the loss of agricultural output due to drought and conflict, the rising cost of seed, fertilizer, and transportation limits how much food people can produce and sell. In Sierra Leone, for example, farmers reduced their farm size by 25-50% compared to 2021. Women respondents in Sierra Leone also said they had cut their trips to the market from once a week to once a month because they could not afford the cost of transportation, which prevents them from taking their agricultural products to the market for others to buy.³⁵ In Ghana, poor farmers have cut the size of their fields in half because they cannot afford seeds and other inputs.³⁶ In Morocco, people prioritized food security as the significant impact due to the drought.

They said that because women are responsible for fetching water, the drought hurts women most – causing them to travel ever father distances to find

water. Some farmers in Morocco are no longer growing food at all because of the drought, high energy costs, and agricultural inputs.³⁷ In Nigeria, women said they stopped farming because of security incidents and the lack of land. The higher rate of land rent, especially for IDPs, increasing prices of resources is limiting them from investing in their farming. Respondents also said there is no guarantee of harvesting due to the security situation.³⁸ This means food insecurity will continue to rise, as there is less food in the world, and as farmers have no way to recover from the growing season they lost. In the 2022 growing season alone, there could be 72 trillion fewer calories grown in the world—driving up the number of people missing meals by 621 million.³⁹

Increasing food prices make it harder to afford the same quantity and quality of food across countries. For example, in northwest Syria, food prices have increased by more than 120%⁴⁰ and in northeast Syria by 86%⁴¹ since 2021. When food is scarce, women and

girls are often the ones to eat last and least or not eat all.⁴² Right now, most adults in crisis situations are eating less so they can prioritize feeding their children, women even more likely to be skipping meals and eating smaller portions. In Sudan, for instance, women reported eating after men had finished.⁴³

In countries with extreme mobility restrictions for women, women struggle to access food because they are not allowed (or not safe) to travel to markets and humanitarian assistance. “In Afghanistan, women said they used to be comfortable going to the market, but now they send men to go for them instead.⁴⁴ As a result, women rely more on other male family members to buy food. In Northwest Syria, restricted movement has heightened women’s vulnerability and limited their access to basic services and humanitarian assistance packages. Increased dependency on men and lack of control over resources are reported to generate various protection risks for women and girls.⁴⁵



“Recently, some farmers were apprehended by members of the organized armed groups (OAGs) in their farms while they were preparing for this farming season. They were freed and sent back with a warning to discourage anyone who attempts to cultivate in those areas, and to make sure their message was visible as it was audible - they cut off the ears of some of the workers on the farms and amputated the hands of the owner of the farm.” Hearing of such reports, we cannot take the risk of going back to farm even if we want to.”

— VSLA Women, Mairi area, Nigeria

Voices from the Field

“A woman that eats before serving her husband is considered a bad woman, who does not care about her husband other than filling her stomach.”

—Women Focus Group Respondent, Amhara, Ethiopia.

“The food we used to eat compared to last years has reduced. I can say up to 30%. For example, Irish potatoes have reduced even though we grow them, the inputs (seeds and fertilizers) are costly. Have also reduced the amount of beans we eat. The meat consumption has reduced to almost two times a month from once a week.”

—Kampire Alphonsine, 34 years, Women Program Participant, Rwanda.

“I used to go to the market after work every day. I went to buy the vegetables and I knew the best places to buy flour and rice. But now, I’m just scared to go outside. I don’t know if someone is going to say something to me. I don’t want to get in trouble. So, I send my son or my husband now.”

—Woman, male-headed household, Kabul.

“There is still a difference between women and men; for example, traveling, a man can travel, but women cannot; this has a relation to responsibilities; a woman is responsible for livestock, taking care of the house and children, then she can do something if she has a free time.”

—Female Community Survey Respondent, Marrakech, Morocco

Food insecurity often creates ripple effects for women and girls, including increased health risks, gender-based violence (GBV) and safety concerns, and educational barriers. Despite the disproportionate impact women face, and their contribution to food production and preparation, a recent CARE review shows that global food policies continue to ignore women – out of 86 documents responding to food insecurity in 2022, 26% of them overlook women entirely, and 47% do not mention gender inequality.⁴⁶ The lack of women’s voice and gender equality focused responses will further limit the much-needed support women and girls need to address food insecurity.

Mental Health Challenges

The report also shows many countries where women’s lowest scores on emotional health reflected intense upheaval that engulfed their countries 2021. Trends from the 2021 Hologic global Women’s Health Index also show women are more stressed, worried, angry, and sad in 2021 than they were in 2020. The report also shows many countries where women’s lowest scores on emotional health reflected intense upheaval that engulfed their countries in 2021 – for example, Lebanon and Afghanistan.⁴⁷ In Afghanistan, around 80% of suicide attempts are done by women – the majority of the victims of self-immolation were female (95%) between the age of 14-19. The main factors for this are Gender Based Violence (GBV) against women, forced marriage, lack of awareness of women’s rights, the impact of the war, the custom practices around marriage, and family violence⁴⁸ CARE’s findings in 2022 indicate a continued trend in mental health impact, particularly for women and women living in contexts of conflict.

Most women in CARE surveys said their stress is due to their worry about household income, food, kids’ education, and safety.

Particularly for women in conflict and displacement situations, stress about overall safety, access to basic needs, including food, and worrying about relocation are among the main factors for stress. For instance, parents in Northeast Syria reported increased psychological stress about children’s food, and risk to their health and safety, while women fear domestic violence.⁴⁹ In Sudan, respondents said women who experience violence and trauma show depression, anger, shyness, anxiety, and isolation.⁵⁰ In Iraq, reports of psychosocial distress among both children and adults affected by conflict more than doubled, and out-of-camp IDPs and returnees face greater psychosocial distress.⁵¹ RGA conducted by CARE and UN women in Ukraine also shows 49% of women and 50% of men identified mental health as an area of their life most affected by the war.⁵² Men respondents also reported distress, mostly due to the lack of livelihood and the shifts in their traditional role as providers. For example, in Mozambique, men respondents said they felt loss of capacity and felling useless due to their dependency on humanitarian aid.⁵³

Increasing challenges of livelihoods, food security, and security situations are key challenges for mental health. For women, increased responsibility for livelihood, combined with caregiving responsibility and GBV, affects their emotional wellbeing. Despite the growing challenges, the results across RGAs show that support systems are lacking, and social and cultural stigma often limits women and men from seeking psychosocial support.

“We sometimes feel hopeless and angry that men aren’t doing anything to help.”

—Women Key Informant respondent, Oromia, Ethiopia.



“Three of my children have asthma, one is disabled and needs money for rehabilitative surgery. I think about the expenses I’m responsible for and it suffocates me. All I wanted was to provide for my children. Now I can’t even send them to school”

—Noura, single mother of six children, lives in a camp in Northeast Syria.



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STORY BOX

“We are struggling with food. My children often go to bed hungry. I’m the head of the family but don’t have regular income. My husband is sick and cannot work. Sometimes I wash clothes for other people and earn 150 Afghanis (\$1.60) but often they can’t afford to pay me. My 12-year-old son goes out on the streets begging. Six months ago, a 5-kilogram bag of potatoes was 110 Afghanis (\$1.20), not it’s 270 Afghanis (\$2.80)”

— Fatima, 32, Afghanistan.

Rising Violence and Insecurity:* In countries where we asked about overall safety concerns, respondents reported experiencing increased violence in the community and violence against women and girls. Across CARE RGAs, food insecurity, and declining livelihoods contribute to increasing safety concerns for women and girls. For instance, in Northeast Syria, the increased food insecurity and conflict affect women’s and girls’ safety.⁵⁴ In Syria, violence and protection concerns are likely to increase due to the impact of the recent earthquake and the impact on shelter. The impact of the earthquake will further affect women, girls, and children’s protection.⁵⁵ In Mozambique, respondents reported increased GBV and conflict in the household among IDP populations. Women and men FGD respondents reported fighting

over humanitarian aid; men blamed women for not being able to make food assistance last longer; and women accused men for inappropriately using food aid.⁵⁶ In Jordan, people cited factors such as increased cost of living and economic hardship increasing stress, tensions and domestic violence among both refugee and Jordanian families. An estimated 43% households in Jordan reported some form of violence in 2022, compared to 22% in 2021. Reported incidence of economic violence – defined as controlling an individual’s financial resources, employment, or school opportunities in attempt to make them financially dependent – increased from 10% to 22% of household from 2021 to 2022 in Jordan.⁵⁷

An estimated 43% households in Jordan reported some form of violence in 2022, compared to 22% in 2021.

* In order to ensure our Do No Harm commitments, we do not ask Security and Gender-Based Violence focused questions directly in all surveys and assessments; thus, the results reported here are country-specific and not aggregated findings from global data.



“...when food is distributed, my husband disappears from the house with the food and only comes back after the food is finished. When we try to talk, he turns to aggression...”

— female FGD participant, Nthokota Resettlement Centre, Metuge district, Mozambique.

Gender Based Violence is increasing: The growing safety and protection concern also puts women at risk in their homes and communities. Women and girls face GBV and increasing harmful practices such as forced marriage. The pandemic and the economic shocks it caused for households disrupted education, putting young women at a higher risk of facing early and forced marriage. In Nigeria, a quantitative survey shows that the pressure to get married is listed among the top safety and security concerns faced by girls and women.⁵⁸ In Somalia, reporting domestic violence as a key safety and security concern rose from 1 in 4 women to 1 in 3 between 2021 and 2022. The number of girls who reported parental pressure to marry early increased from 1 in 5 in 2021 to 1 in 3 in 2022 – with nearly 1 in 8 households surveyed indicating having to marry one of the girls under 18 due to the food crisis.⁵⁹ In Afghanistan, between February and August of 2022, the number of families who were turning to

child marriage as a coping mechanism increased from 4% to 12%.⁶⁰ Similar responses of increased violence and security risk are reported in Iraq and Uganda, particularly for those living in IDP and refugee contexts. In Ukraine, the war and displacement also intensified safety fears based on reports of rapes in the occupied territories and rising domestic violence cases.⁶¹ With the majority of refugees being women headed households, single women, adolescent girls, and older women, protection is of utmost concern for Ukrainian women.⁶² Due to the complex displacement situation, people fleeing Ukraine are also vulnerable to different forms of trafficking.⁶³ Across the countries with high reported security and GBV concern, report mechanisms and support services for GBV remain limited. Particularly for women, in most instances, accountability mechanisms to redress GBV are not socially acceptable.



The number of girls who reported parental pressure to marry early increased from 1 in 5 in 2021 to 1 in 3 in 2022 in Somalia.



Recommendations

Based on this brief's findings and learnings from CARE's work with women, we propose the following recommendations to all decision-makers to effectively address women and men's different impact, needs, and lived experiences.

Take Urgent Action to Address Food Insecurity, and Livelihood Impacts

- Livelihood and food security are the top impacts women face and are the two main areas where they are asking for support. Respondents in different contexts share their aspirations to recover their livelihoods. As the need for food is immediate, respondents are asking for food assistance from the development and humanitarian community. Government, donors, development, and humanitarian actors should seek consultation with local leaders and partners, particularly women, Women's Rights Organizations (WROs), Women-led Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), to identify the most appropriate modalities for the context and the community. Different actors, specifically donors, should promote more flexible modalities such as cash and voucher transfer and work with women groups such as VSLAs to support more adaptive management responses and interventions.
- Agriculture support is critical to address the food security crisis. Climate change and increasing prices of agriculture is halting farmers from food production. If this continues, the food security crisis can have a catastrophic impact, globally and propelling millions more into extreme poverty and hunger. Governments, development, and humanitarian actors should prioritize supporting farmers through climate-smart agricultural practices through interventions that focuses on local climate resiliency initiative. Women are often ignored as food producers, and it is critical to work with women farmers by engaging as active agents in the food production system through program designs that target women farmers and provide advocacy support to ensure women are adequately represented in decision-making and policies.
- Livelihood and agricultural support must identify interventions that address the economic, legal, and social conditions of migrants and refugees/IDPs that address the additional challenge they face, such as restriction on mobility, discrimination, and legal status to work.

Prioritize Protection and Mental Health Support

- Food insecurity and its impact on livelihood are burdening women, threatening their safety and access to health and education. The impacts are interlinked, so interventions must be multi-dimensional. Therefore, livelihood and food security programs should integrate GBV risk mitigation across responses to deliver safe and accessible programs, especially in contexts women's mobility and safety is restricted. Actors should consult with community leaders, women, WROs and CSO to facilitate service delivery, and coordinate with GBV and protection actors to ensure GBV referrals.
- All actors should prioritize the provision of psychosocial support, particularly in crisis settings. Crises are contributing to exacerbating women's burdens and responsibilities with little support. More women are left with the sole responsibility for household livelihoods, face a higher mental health risk, and increased violence. All actors should increase resources and system strengthening, including legal/accountability mechanisms and social service provision to amplify psychosocial support and GBV prevention and response.

Promote and Invest in Women's Voice, Leadership, and Gender Data

- Ensure policies and interventions address the different gender barriers, impacts, and needs that women and men are reporting with clear actions that address gender barriers and supports women's participation in decision-making.
- Partner with women's groups and local women's group's organizations. Women at the grassroots level often have power when they act as a collective. Government, development, and humanitarian actors should prioritize collaboration with grassroots women's groups such as VSLAs and women-led organizations and promote locally led action through meaningful local consultation and partnership with WROs and Women-led Organizations and adequate funding for local women led groups and organizations. Donors should prioritize funding for local women-led organizations and groups.
- Create a precise accountability mechanism to improve women's meaningful engagement and set a benchmark for the representation of women in decision-making mechanisms.
- Listen to women through a combined quantitative and qualitative regular data collection focusing on gendered impact in any crisis. All actors should collect and publish sex-and-age disaggregated data in all crises and invest in data collection, focusing on gendered impact in any crisis setting.



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“I want to see more women in community and around the world growing their influence. Imagine the impact if all women had the same opportunities as me!”

—Hawa Abdalnabi, VSLA member in Sudan.

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