

CARE Inclusive Governance Marker Guidance

Why inclusive governance matters

CARE identifies poor governance as an underlying cause of poverty and social injustice. CARE recognises that poverty is created and sustained through unequal power relations and the resulting unjust distribution of resources and opportunities, often with a damaging and disproportionate effect on women and girls. For this reason, the CARE 2020 Program Strategy argues that poverty is injustice. Challenging the root causes of poverty and social injustice, at all levels, therefore requires efforts to promote good governance; that is, the effective, participatory, transparent, equitable and accountable management of public affairs.

The CARE 2020 Program Strategy outlines three elements of CARE's core approach: strengthening gender equality and women's voice; promoting inclusive governance; and increasing resilience. The promotion of inclusive governance is a core part of how CARE works everywhere, in fragile and conflict-affected states and least developed countries, as well as in middle income countries and the global North.

What is CARE's Inclusive Governance Marker?

CARE's Inclusive Governance Marker is a tool that allows teams to self-assess the integration of inclusive governance into programming, and aims to support country teams at project level to assess where they are on a continuum of governance integration. This process aims to encourage engagement with, and particularly learning around, ways to improve and support more effective integration of governance into all our programming, in accordance with contextual constraints and opportunities. It is not meant to be a top-down judgment on the project, but rather an opportunity to reflect and learn about how the Inclusive Governance component of the CARE approach can be best incorporated into the intervention, in the way that is most appropriate for the specific context and type of development or humanitarian programming.

How to apply the Inclusive Governance Marker

The CARE Inclusive Governance Marker is applied in 3 stages. Firstly, assess the intervention's overall approach to power relations. Following this, assess whether inclusive governance is integrated into the analysis, activities, levels of working, and accountability systems of the intervention. Finally, use the grading guidance to receive your "mark" and position on the Inclusive Governance Continuum. When undertaking this assessment, graders should also consider whether the intervention has the capacity and budget to support anything graded as YES.

- To "mark" proposals and projects accurately, and consistently, COs and CMPs (and partners, as appropriate) are encouraged to use the Inclusive Governance Marker Vetting Form.
- Member Partners are responsible for supporting the COs they work with to understand and apply the Inclusive Governance Marker.
- "Marks" are allocated based on a set of questions in the Vetting Flowchart, for which guidance is provided below.

Projects are awarded a "mark" ranging from 0 to 4, positioning them directly onto CARE's Inclusive Governance Continuum. The aim of the marking is not to simply assign a grade, but rather to foster accountability, and encourage engagement and learning around how to improve effectiveness, outcomes, and accountability towards populations being served.

The marker can be used to grade a proposal at concept note stage, to highlight areas to further develop as the proposal is written, in order to more fully integrate Inclusive Governance. It can also be applied once the proposal is finalized, or at project start-up, to identify areas to add on to planned activities to better incorporate Inclusive Governance. The marker can also be applied prior to annual operational planning for a project, to review progress over the last year and identify opportunities for better integration over the coming period. Finally, the marker can be used as part of project evaluations or reviews, to identify lessons and actions to incorporate into other programme activities or future phases of the project.

1. INTERVENTION'S APPROACH TO POWER RELATIONS		
A. Is NOT considering governance or power relations Certain projects may not require an inclusive governance lens (for example, a logistics project), or may completely ignore governance. In such cases, Column A would be chosen, and the reason for this explained. Grade is 0.	B. WORKS WITHIN existing institutions, structures and power relations An intervention that works within the institutions and power relations that exist, without significantly changing the dynamics of participation. The intervention may take advantage of existing power relations to achieve project results, or introduce some elements of participation of excluded groups into structures that exist already.	C. CHALLENGES institutions, structures and power relations An intervention that specifically seeks to challenge the power relations between excluded citizens and power-holders, opening up new spaces for participation and claiming of rights, changing policies, programs and institutions in ways that make power-holders more accountable, and working at multiple levels.

2. GOVERNANCE ANALYSIS

GOVERNANCE ANALYSIS: The project should be informed by some form of power, political economy, policy, and stakeholder analysis prior to writing the proposal, either specifically for the project or as part of analysis work in the design of a long-term program the project is part of. This may be based on previous assessments and may be thematic, sectoral or territorial. The analysis should cover all three domains of the CARE [Governance Programming Framework](#) (GPF): 1. organized & empowered citizens; 2. responsive power-holders; & 3. inclusive & effective spaces for negotiation. Some analysis might be only carried out during the inception phase of an intervention, in which case this element of the scoring might change from proposal to implementation stage.

We recommend consulting the [Governance Context Analysis](#) Guidance note for support. However, depending on the programming area, you may also consider looking at conflict analysis tools (including Do No Harm), CARE's Civil Society Resource, Social Analysis and Action (SAA), CARE's Gender Toolkit, policy analysis tools (e.g. CARE Advocacy Handbook) and the Climate and Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment handbook (CVCA).

3. INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES ACROSS DOMAINS OF GOVERNANCE PROGRAMMING FRAMEWORK (citizens, power-holders, negotiation spaces): The project design (or the Long-Term Program it is part of) should include strategies and activities across all three Domains of the GPF, or deliberately coordinate with other stakeholders who can cover these:

- **Organized & empowered citizens:** enabling the poor and marginalised, particularly women and girls, to be aware of their rights and to have a stronger voice to demand change, by organising and acting collectively;
- **Responsive power-holders:** working with a range of power-holders, such as the state, the private sector and traditional leaders, to improve their ability to fulfil their obligations and be more responsive and accountable to marginalised citizens. This includes working not only with formal institutions and structures, but also engaging with informal institutions that are shaped and influenced by non-formal power and authority;
- **Inclusive & effective spaces for negotiation:** facilitating the opening up or strengthening of spaces for engagement and negotiation between citizens and their organisations and power-holders, at all levels.

Please refer to [CARE's Governance Programming Framework](#) and [Inclusive Governance guidance note](#) for more information.

4. HORIZONTAL & VERTICAL INTEGRATION

MULTIPLE STAKEHOLDERS: Projects should be working with all critical stakeholders who can influence greater inclusivity of relations between organized citizens and power-holders, from across all relevant sectors (civil society, government and private sector). This should include actors from informal community spaces (traditional leaders, community gatekeepers), as well as from formal spaces.

WORKING AT DIFFERENT LEVELS: CARE and partners often effectively link actions at community level to structures and decisions at local government levels (such as districts) or with the private sector. [Research](#) suggests that greater effectiveness and sustainability can be achieved when such processes are fed into and linked up with actions at higher levels (provincial/state/regional or national level).

4. CARE's OWN ACCOUNTABILITY

CARE's framework for organizational accountability highlights four main elements of an effective organizational accountability system:

- **Transparent information sharing:** Share relevant information with impact and/or target groups in a clear, honest and accessible manner. Ensure that women, men, boys, and girls have safe and equal access to this information.
- **Participation in decision making:** Give women, men, boys, and girls of different ages and backgrounds an equal and meaningful opportunity to be involved in decision-making at various stages of the programme and project cycles. Pay particular attention to the engagement and involvement of women and girls in community consultation.
- **Feedback mechanisms:** Provide women, men, boys and girls equal access to safe and reliable mechanisms for receiving, managing, and responding to complaints, dissatisfaction, and other forms of feedback. Pay attention that such mechanisms are transparent, with standard procedures for responding and learning from feedback.
- **Organizational systems:** Accountability further requires an organisational environment which is conducive to accountable practices, through its values, spaces for dialogue, and quality management related to data systems, monitoring practices, learning and research. These systems could be project-specific, or ones that apply across a whole country program (e.g. an overall participant feedback mechanism).

Please see the [Inclusive Governance guidance note](#) for more information.