



Case-study: CARE’s Uganda Accountability Practices with Partners

Research conducted between January, 29th and February, 3rd 2018.
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I. Introduction

After the development of the first CI-wide Accountability Report in 2016, one of the main lessons emerging from the analysis was to have a more systematic approach to CARE accountability with partners. Working in partnership is deeply embedded in CARE’s culture and ways of working. It is a key strategy to achieve our impact goals and to fight more effectively against global poverty and injustice. By endorsing global external commitments such as the [Charter for Change \(C4C\)](#), [the Grand Bargain](#) and [the Principles of Partnership](#), CARE is committed to working towards more effective partnering and locally-led disaster response which requires deep cultural and structural change at all levels of the organisation. Working with partners is also part of the newly adopted CI Accountability Framework where **Collaboration** stands as one of the main pillars of our approach to accountability. We are also aware of the fact that we need to explore how to put in place better quality partnerships if we want to work towards a ‘new partnership model’ that adds more value, scale and impact.



CARE Uganda has a long history partnering with civil society organisations and government partners in different programmatic areas such as Women and Youth Financial Inclusion, Natural Resources Governance and Women Empowerment. This one-week research through interviews aimed to improve learning on the types of partnerships implemented by CARE Uganda, with a specific focus on the accountability standards and mechanisms they are using. We believe that sharing the key dimensions of CARE Uganda’s experience with partners¹ (and more widely within CARE) would be an important first step in trying to build a more consistent approach to CARE’s accountability with partners and that this work could be replicated by other CARE Country Offices.

II. Five Dimensions to Accountability in Partnerships



¹ The detailed summary of interviews conducted with CARE Uganda partners is available in Annex.

Key Definitions:

Accountability: CARE defines accountability as explaining, being held responsible for and hearing the perspectives of others about how well we are meeting our commitments and how well we are performing as a partner - and then actively making changes and improvements based on what we've learned and heard.

Partnerships: CARE defines partnership as a relationship where risks and benefits are shared. It is the collective action of many actors to achieve a common impact; in saving lives in emergencies and overcoming poverty and injustice. CARE has endorsed the Principles of Partnerships and recognised that they are based on Complementarity, Equality, Transparency, Result Oriented Approach, and Responsibility.

III. Methodology

The information has been collected over one week through group and individual semi-structured interviews with:

- The Grants Team
- The Northern Uganda Women Empowerment Program Team (NUWEP)
- The Women and Youth Financial Inclusion Program Team (WAYFIP)
- The Women Empowerment in Natural Resource Governance Program Team (WENG)

Please refer to the Annexes at the end of the document to consult the list of CARE Uganda partners involved in this research.

IV. Main findings and suggestions for improvement

1. Communication, Openness and information-sharing

Good communication is at the heart of successful partnerships and should be taken very seriously. It can make or break the partnership. Communication challenges are often amplified in remote partnerships.

Communication is the first dimension in assessing how accountable we are to local partners. To what extent is communication open, transparent, and timely and how are concerns and complaints usually shared and handled? Overall, this is an area where CARE Uganda is performing very well and offers very good practices.

- Discussions with the Program Teams reveal that CARE Uganda perceives itself as a **good and transparent communicator** when working in partnership. For CARE teams, communication stands as a priority throughout the partnership, when designing the partnership agreement (using a Memorandum of Understanding), as they want to avoid adopting a top-down approach. CARE teams use the regular communication channels- emails, phone calls and formal meetings such as the monthly meeting and the Program Coordination Meeting to ensure open and transparent communication. Last year, in August 2017, CARE Uganda held an All Partner Reflection Meeting (*see the document in Annex*) which was a unique opportunity to promote transparent communication and information-sharing between partners. Yet, one of the challenges faced by CARE is the distance between Kampala and the other districts, which has sometimes brought additional constraints for effective communication (Problem of internet connection etc.).
- On the other hand, the partners are really satisfied by the current communication channels promoted by CARE, as well as by the quality and frequency of the communication. The Quarterly

“Good communication has been the model so far”

Onesmus Mugenyi - Deputy Executive Director at ACODE, local partner supporting research and advocacy on social justice, environment conversation and good governance in Uganda.

Examples of practical good practices:

- Program Coordination Committee
- Quarterly Reporting Feedback
- All Partners Reflection Meeting

reporting feedback that they need to fulfill helps them to raise concerns or complaints. They noted that ensuring good communication is also their priority when working with other partners.

- CARE partners highly appreciate CARE’s **availability, flexibility,** and support. Long-term partners have noted that direct, transparent and good communication over the years helped in building **stability and consistency** in their partnership with CARE.

If communication channels were extremely well established for long-standing partners, this is not the case for more recent partnerships (less than one year) which lacked clarity and consistency in their communication strategy. Previously, changes in leadership positions at CARE Uganda have triggered organisational challenges for partners who needed to constantly adapt. At the same time, it has ensured more scrutiny on partner’s expenses and report. Lastly, although the communication with CARE Uganda is very good, partners also wish to see more opportunities to communicate more directly and easily with other partners and like-minded organisations working with CARE.

2. Equity, Respect and Mutual Accountability

Equity in partnerships is critical and involves: being valued for what each party brings, enjoying equitable rights and responsibilities, having a fair say in decisions, benefiting equally from the partnership, creating mutually-beneficial value. Equity is built by truly respecting the views, attributes and contributions of all those involved.

Secondly, the discussions held with the different partners shed light on the type of relationship established between partners, and whether they achieved a good level of trust, confidence and mutual accountability.

- Local partners interviewed in the scope on this research recognised that CARE is bringing voice to local issues at the national level through advocacy platforms. Local CSOs have strong knowledge of local contexts, populations and issues. For instance, at **WEMNET-U**, funding received from CARE offered the opportunity to meet community-based reporters and also brought environmental issues to the mainstream media. **ACODE**, on the other hand, has been able to take advantage of the large international CARE network for advocacy.
- The values of equity, respect, and cooperation are taken very seriously and upheld by CARE Uganda staff in their work; they do make sure that CARE and their partners are sitting “at the same table”. The CARE Uganda partnership strategy even states that these values are “**universal and non-negotiable**”.
- Similarly, almost all partners have emphasised the high level of trust and equity they enjoy; they benefit from equitable rights and responsibilities and define their partnership with CARE as a “**partnership of equity**”. One of CARE Uganda partners, **WEMNET-U**, a network formed by journalists whose mission is to better inform the society on environment issue, highly value the ownership they have of the project. The team also noted that CARE often asked them to document cases, good practices, and stories beyond their formal agreement, which has proved the high level of confidence between both parties and the fact that CARE fully acknowledges **WEMNET-U**’s expertise.
- Partners have also noted that most of the time these values are also their own principles, beyond their partnership agreement with CARE. The network of **WEMNET-U** is based on Integrity, Equity, Equality, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Transparency, Commitment, and Teamwork. The coalition fighting against corruption in Uganda (**ACCU**) has also committed to being based on transparency, accountability, equity & inclusiveness, and rule of law.

Recognising each other’s value and contribution has helped build respect and trust, as is evident in long-term partnerships. However, we observed a difference between long-term partners and more recent alliances. **WoMena**, a locally-based organisation providing training on menstrual health in humanitarian contexts

reported that more is needed to achieve equity in their partnership with CARE. **WoMena** teams understand the need for CARE's internal procedures (e.g. Due Diligence Assessment Process) but had a limited time to get prepared correctly. They felt that these were imposed by CARE rather than jointly negotiated. **UMWA** also hope to take more ownership in the design phase of the joint project with CARE.

3. Shared capacity, organisational development, and learning

Competitiveness can easily break a partnership. Agreeing to explore and build on the added value of collaboration and understanding the right of all partners to gain from their engagement in the partnership is critical for building commitment to the joint initiative. An effective partnership should deliver mutual benefit.

Harnessing the unique contributions and capacities of each partner to a joint initiative constitutes another dimension of partnership accountability.

- Globally, CARE Uganda has done well at building partners' technical capacity in program aspects and models (e.g. VSLAs etc.) but has not done enough at real Institutional Development and Organisational Strengthening because the partnership model is still mainly donor and project based. CARE Uganda Office is now trying to be self-driven rather than donor-driven but this is still a work in progress. Usually, organisational plans are developed early in the partnership but are not regularly followed.
- In terms of capacity building, CARE's assessment and requirements have clearly helped in strengthening organisational systems that allow partners to appear robust and more credible for other partnership opportunities (finance, M&E, governance etc.). The organisational assessments have helped partners in identifying their gaps and in building stronger internal systems (HR, Finance, M&E), allowing them to attract new donors. For **JESE** for example, partnering with CARE has been an opportunity to build up financial strength while improving their capacity to write proposals independently. In return, **JESE** mentioned that CARE has become more knowledgeable on government processes.

"For us, CARE is a partner in development and we work together using our different strengths to reach the communities"

Bob Turyamwijuka - Head of Programmes at UWESO
- On sustainability, the capacities and new skills learned through the partnering experience with CARE are easily replicable in others initiatives and with others partners. **UWESO's** partnering with CARE for over 10 years has helped their VLSA model become sustainable beyond their partnership agreement. However, their internal organisational systems have remained rather weak. The Community-Based Monitoring system developed at **ACCU** is also considered a sustainable practice and will continue beyond the life of the project.

"The partners became themselves really powerful, even more than CARE"

WAYFIP team

Partners suggest that CARE could more effectively amplify the voices of local actors by giving them more international visibility and access to platforms for advocacy. CARE Uganda should also be ready to take more risks. **WEMNET-U** has shared that on occasion, they could not use the CARE logo. Partners also often have suggested the creations of formal places for diverse donors to meet in order to better coordinate their action towards partners, especially in harmonising their funds (the idea of basket funding arrangements).

CARE Uganda's experience shows that CARE is clearly moving away from a simple donor and grant manager role. All partners recognised CARE Uganda as a really powerful **capacity-builder**. It also already fulfills different roles as **convener, door-opener and advocate for civil society**, even if it still needs to hone its capacity in these different roles.

4. Shared vision, mission and goals for the joint initiative

Partnerships are often marked by real (or perceived) anxieties about working with organizations that are different from us. A commitment to exploring each other's' motivation, values and underlying interests will build understanding and appreciation of the added value that comes from diversity, quelling fears that differences may lead to conflict or relationship breakdown.

- For CARE, sharing the same vision and mission is almost a requirement. CARE is clearly putting *“Women and girls in the centre of its work because we know that we cannot overcome poverty until all people have equal rights and opportunities”*. CARE Uganda is fully aligned with this vision and is striving for better identify civil society organisations “niches” that would directly feed into that mission. It aims to work with more women-led organisations. **UMWA’s** mission, for example, is to empower Uganda Women through media. The focus of the most recent partner **WoMena** on reproductive & menstrual health issues in humanitarian contexts also directly contribute to CARE’s global impact to improve the lives of millions of women and girls and to address gender inequality.
- For most partners, having a shared vision or at least making sure that the partner’s mission is not at odds with their own objectives is a pre-condition to establishing the partnership. Partners always make sure that the objectives of the program implemented in partnership with CARE furthers their own global strategic objectives: the FOREST Program (*Accountability and Transparency in the Forest Resources Sector*) directly impacts and feeds into the strategic objectives of **ACCU**, **JESE** and **ACODE** for example
- Globally, one can observe that there are usually a lot of **similarities between partner’s missions** and the goals are also often **complementary**.

“You need to have a shared vision, shared values and shared responsibilities to work together”

Bob Turyamwijuka - Head of Programmes at UWESO

When talking about shared mission and goals, CARE partners repeatedly raised the idea that CARE could bring the partners working on the same issues and towards the same objectives closer together. This would create direct linkages between like-minded organisations without depending on CARE’s presence.

5. Existence of effective evaluation mechanisms for efficient feedback and participation

While it is common to assess the outcomes of the joint initiative, assessing the health of the partnership to deliver on these outcomes is as critical. This can also provide useful information on the effectiveness of the partnership and its value-add, and generate lessons learned on good partnering.

This review also revealed interesting practices between CARE Uganda and its partners to ensure good participation and feedback.

- CARE Uganda is intentional about learning how to improve its partnership with its different partners. It is committed to knowing more about the quality of the partnership in general and also asking how the partnership has helped the partners in conducting their different activities and projects.
- A good approach experienced by the CARE Uganda Office is also to have round tables with the partners of its partners. This practice has been initiated with **WORUDET** so that the general issues facing the partner can be discussed with their other partners (e.g. Oxfam) and solutions found jointly and better coordinated. At a smaller

Examples of practical good practices:

- Desk Reviews
- Due Diligence Process
- **Progress Marker Approach**
- Quarterly reports
- Quarterly meetings
- Mid-term assessments
- The All Implementing Partners Meeting Reflection in 2017; it was really appreciated by CARE Partners and they do wish to see it become an annual practice to improve cross-learning.

scale, CARE Uganda has also started to involve their Board when facing significant problems. This is a good practice that they wish to expand in the future.

- CARE Partners are satisfied by the existing M&E tools for assessing the joint project and mentioned that they usually utilise the communication channels that are available as effective monitoring tools. Moreover, several partners have noted that CARE significantly improved their own monitoring and evaluation capacities at the project level.

During the different discussions, it emerged that that CARE's team would like to see stronger and more robust M&E processes in place. CARE generally has basic M&E tools in place but needs to build up new ways to assess the overall quality, performance and effectiveness of the partnerships. Also, new partners would like to see more mentoring and follow-up activities after the training sessions for example (**UMWA**). The organisation **GWED-U** also wishes to strengthen the overall approach to evaluate the quality of the partnership.

V. Conclusions

- CARE Uganda's experience in working with different types of partners; projects partners, government's partners; is extremely rich and diverse. Promoting Accountability is above all about encouraging a culture of reflection, learning and adapting based on feedback from partners. CARE Uganda is definitely performing well in that regard.
- The experience of CARE Uganda proves that investing in long-term partners and building strong alliances has been a successful strategy and has significantly contributed to stronger civil society. Through partnering with CARE, civil society organisations really feel empowered.
- Almost all implementing partners have mentioned the All Partners Meeting as good practice, and emphasise that they wish to see CARE bring them together more systematically and be more involved and active as a space convener. The meeting of August 2017 is perceived as a good start, but more efforts should be made to really embed it in the institutional culture of the organisation. This may impact CARE's role in Uganda in the future as partners may meet, plan and coordinate independently from CARE. This begs the question whether CARE Uganda sees partnerships as a mean to strengthen and promote the autonomy of civil society or as a collaborative model (between local and international NGOs) to achieve more impact.
- Based on the outcomes of this significant meeting, CARE Uganda has also started to examine the duration of the relationships with its different partners: how long should they partner with the same organisation? What is the good duration of a partnership? After 15 years, is it time to put an end to the relationship and to start building capacities of other CSOs? How long should they work with partners who don't fully align with CARE's global mission? How could CARE Uganda partner more systematically with organisations led by women or addressing gender inequality? The experience of CARE Uganda is also raising some questions for CARE International as a confederation, as we also need to make sure that we are clearly intentional in jointly defining with our partners what success looks like for CARE and its partners, and when exiting is the right way forward.
- CARE Uganda is also aware that it needs to be more precise with its partners regarding their expectations when entering into a partnership. In the near future, they would like to propose a clearer classification of the types of partners and ways of evolving.
- Effective partnerships are not always easy to achieve but in Uganda CARE is faring very well on this front. However, CARE's Uganda experience with partners also clearly demonstrates the limits of our business model. Almost all partners have noted the limits of the current CARE's funding model, where

civil society organisation strengthening is essentially driven by donors, and felt that the budget they received is restrictive; it is sometimes considered insufficient to implement activities and keeps them dependent on international organisations funding.

- The new emergency response in northern Uganda is also bringing the localisation debate at the forefront: how to harness local capacities for humanitarian response.

VI. Annexes

- List of CARE Uganda partners interviewed in the scope of the research:

Civil Society Organisations	Objective and Mission	Person attending the meeting
Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda (ACCU)	<i>Bringing together 17 likeminded Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and activists in the fight against corruption in Uganda.</i>	Ephrance Nakiyingi - Project Officer
Advocate Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE)	<i>Conducting public policy research and advocacy to support social justice, environment conversation and good governance in Uganda.</i>	Anna Anumpiire - Research and Advocacy Officer Onesmus Mugenyi - Deputy Executive Director
Gulu Women's Economic Development & Globalisation (GWED-G)	<i>Working on peace building and human rights concerns of women and people who are returning or have returned to their local communities after displacement, especially in Northern Uganda.</i>	Angwech Pamela Judith - Executive Director
Uganda Media Women's Association & Mama FM (UMWA)	<i>Empowering Ugandan Women in helping them to make informed decisions by having access to the right information on rights</i>	Margaret Sentamu-Masagazi - Executive Director Clothilda Babirekere – Project Officer
Uganda Women's Efforts to Save Orphans (UWESO)	<i>Providing protection and relief aid to orphans affected by the conflict, especially through the implementation of Village Savings and Loans Associations</i>	Bob Turyamwijuka - Head of Programmes
Water & Environment Media Network Uganda (WEMNET- U)	<i>Acting as a network and center of information to inform society on issues related to environmental protection and conservation of natural resources.</i>	Geoffrey Twesigye - Project Officer John Tembo - Finance Administrator Venex Watebawa - Team Leader/Secretary
WoMena	<i>Promoting the use of evidence-based, effective reproductive health technologies and solutions such as menstrual cups through research, advocacy, and awareness raising and project implementation.</i>	Chloe Simpson - Project Officer Kristrun Svendsdottr -Training Coordinator Laura Hytti - Research Coordinator
Government Partners		
Joint Efforts to Save the Environment (JESE) Inter-District Forum	<i>Improving the livelihoods of poor communities in Western Uganda through sustainable agriculture and the management of natural resources.</i>	Justine Nantune - Assistant Policy Officer, District Patrick Baguma - Local Government Natural Resources Management, District Ronald Loteh - Senior Environment Officer, District Sam Nyakojoo - Project Manager, JESE

- [CI Accountability Framework](#)
- [CARE Uganda Partnership Strategy](#)

- [All Implementing Partners meeting –Summary Brief](#)
- [All CARE Partners Meeting Reflection Report](#): The All Implementing Partners meeting further examine the nature and substance of CARE Uganda’s partnership through sharing lessons, successes and challenges and further harness and shape a shared vision. The meeting, facilitated by the Program Director and the Partnership coordinator brought together 26 participants of which 17 were from the strategic partners and 9 were CARE staff. The event was based on the values of transparency; confidence and trust, as each partner were invited to speak about the positive and negative aspects of their partnering experience with CARE. Both CARE Teams and Partners staff could speak about their specific needs while highlighting and brainstorming on which type of partnership model they wish to build in the future. Participants could leave the meeting with a clear idea of why it was worthwhile working with CARE; of what must change or stop and of what needs to be maintained and kept. The different sessions address various topics: CARE’s partnership vision; the quality of partnerships; an analysis of partnership’s trends; a mapping of the current potential of both partners; an examination of the partnership's model; and how to build resilient and sustainable partnerships.
- [Detailed Interviews Summary of CARE Uganda Partners –February 2018](#)