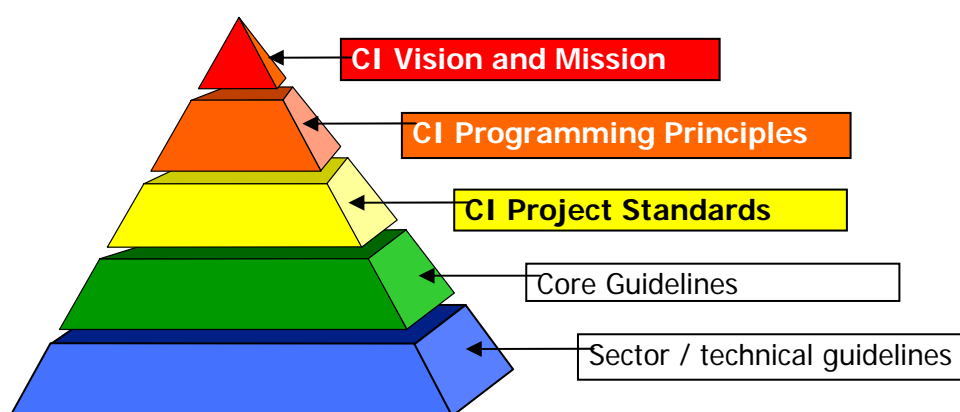




CARE International

## PROGRAMME STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

*The CARE International Programme Standards Framework relates the CI Vision and Mission to selected Principles, Standards and guidelines that CI Members agree should inform and shape all CARE programmes and projects. Its component parts are shown graphically in this pyramid, and then presented in abbreviated fashion below.<sup>1</sup>*



### VISION AND MISSION

*CARE programmes and projects should propose strategies that lead to lasting impact on the lives of poor people and communities. They should do so in a way that conforms with the purpose CI describes for itself in its vision and mission.*

### VISION STATEMENT

**We seek a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security.**

**CARE International will be a global force and partner of choice within a world-wide movement dedicated to ending poverty. We will be known everywhere for our unshakeable commitment to the dignity of people.**

<sup>1</sup> Only the vision, mission, principles and standards are included in this brief summary. The *Impact Guidelines* (Feb. 2000) still serve as the core DME guidelines, though they will be updated during FY05. The many sectoral/technical guidelines will soon be accessible through the Internet (those related to DME are already available at [www.globaldev.org/m&e](http://www.globaldev.org/m&e) or [www.kcenter.com/care/dme](http://www.kcenter.com/care/dme).)

# MISSION STATEMENT

CARE International's mission is to serve individuals and families in the poorest communities in the world. Drawing strength from our global diversity, resources and experience, we promote innovative solutions and are advocates for global responsibility. We facilitate lasting change by:

- Strengthening capacity for self-help
- Providing economic opportunity
- Delivering relief in emergencies
- Influencing policy decisions at all levels
- Addressing discrimination in all its forms

Guided by the aspirations of local communities, we pursue our mission with both excellence and compassion because the people whom we serve deserve nothing less.

## PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES

*In order to fulfil CARE's vision and mission, all of CARE's programming should conform with the following Programming Principles, contained within the CI Code. These Principles are characteristics that should inform and guide, at a fundamental level, the way we work. They are not optional. These Programming Principles are as follows:<sup>2</sup>*

### **Principle 1: Promote Empowerment**

**We stand in solidarity with poor and marginalized people, and support their efforts to take control of their own lives and fulfil their rights, responsibilities and aspirations. We ensure that key participants and organisations representing affected people are partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of our programmes.**

### **Principle 2: Work with partners**

**We work with others to maximise the impact of our programs, building alliances and partnerships with those who offer complementary approaches, are able to adopt effective programming approaches on a larger scale, and/or who have responsibility to fulfil rights and reduce poverty through policy change and enforcement.**

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<sup>2</sup> Principles as approved by the CI Board, November 2003.

**Principle 3: Ensure Accountability and Promote Responsibility**

We seek ways to be held accountable to poor and marginalized people whose rights are denied. We identify individuals and institutions with an obligation toward poor and marginalized people, and support and encourage their efforts to fulfil their responsibilities.

**Principle 4: Address Discrimination**

In our programs and offices we address discrimination and the denial of rights based on sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, physical ability, caste, opinion or sexual orientation.

**Principle 5: Promote the non-violent resolution of conflicts**

We promote just and non-violent means for preventing and resolving conflicts at all levels, noting that such conflicts contribute to poverty and the denial of rights.

**Principle 6: Seek Sustainable Results**

As we address underlying causes of poverty and rights denial, we develop and use approaches that ensure our programmes result in lasting and fundamental improvements in the lives of the poor and marginalized with whom we work.

***We hold ourselves accountable for enacting behaviours consistent with these principles, and ask others to help us do so, not only in our programming, but in all that we do.***

## PROJECT STANDARDS

*These CARE standards apply to all CARE programming (including emergencies, rehabilitation and development) and all forms of interventions (direct service delivery, working with or through partners, and policy advocacy).<sup>3</sup>*

*These standards, as well as accompanying guidelines, should be used to guide the work of project designers; as a checklist for approval of project proposals; as a tool for periodic project self-appraisal; and as a part of project evaluation. The emphasis should not be only on enforcement but also on the strengthening of capacity to be able to meet these standards for programme quality. At the time of initial approval, if a project can not meet one or more standards, allow for explanation of why, and what will be done about it. More than a “passed/failed” checklist, these call for a description of how well a project meets each standard, and an action plan for how it will better meet these standards going forward.*

<sup>3</sup> These can also be referred to as the “Programme Quality Standards.” The PSMI (Project Standards Measurement Instrument) is available for use as a guideline for understanding these standards more thoroughly, and for assessing how well a project currently complies with each of these standards. Accessible at [www.kcenter.com/care/dme](http://www.kcenter.com/care/dme).

Each CARE project<sup>4</sup> should:

**1. *Be consistent with the CARE International Vision and Mission, and Programming Principles.***

<u>Technical description</u> <sup>5</sup>	<u>"Plain English" translation</u> <sup>6</sup>
<p>Projects and programmes should fit comfortably within the spirit and content of the CARE International (CI) Vision and Mission statements. In other words, CARE projects should show how they will contribute, ultimately, towards lasting improvements in human well-being, hope, tolerance, social justice, reduction in poverty, and enhanced dignity and security of people. They should be guided by CI Programming Principles that synthesize and integrate with central elements of CARE's evolving programme approaches, including livelihoods, basic rights, gender and diversity, partnerships and civil society.</p>	<p>It must be clear how a project contributes to social justice, the eradication of poverty and the dignity and security of people.</p> <p>The revised CI Programming Principles are: <b>Promote empowerment</b> (support people's own efforts); <b>work in partnership with others</b> (collaborate with other institutions); <b>ensure accountability</b> (to the marginalized) <b>and promote responsibility</b> (by those who should support them); <b>oppose discrimination</b> (based on sex, class, etc.) <b>and violence</b> (by preventing and managing conflict); and <b>seek sustainable results</b> (i.e. long-lasting impact).</p>

**2. *Be clearly linked to a Country Office strategy and/or long term programme goals.***

<p>Projects should not be isolated, but clearly embedded in long term multi-project programmes and strategic frameworks that address the underlying conditions and root causes of poverty and social injustice. Doing so provides a larger framework in which project decisions are made, but does not preclude strategic innovation and experimentation. CARE's strategies should be clearly linked to the development efforts of others (e.g. government, multilaterals, NGOs).</p>	<p><b><i>Be part of a wider strategic plan</i></b></p> <p>Projects should not stand on their own, but fit in with other things that either CARE or other agencies are doing. That makes it possible for several different projects, each of them unique in their own right, to reinforce each other and contribute to a larger outcome. This is most likely to be captured in a Country Office Long Range Strategic Plan.</p>
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<sup>4</sup> These standards refer specifically to CARE **projects** (whether implemented directly or through partners). However, where there are specific longer-term **programmes** these standards should apply to them as well.

<sup>5</sup> These technical descriptions were defined by the participants in the IEI-II conference in Wood Norton, UK, August 2001.

<sup>6</sup> The "Plain Language" descriptions were written by Raja Jarrah and Liza Tong, CARE UK.

**3. *Ensure the active participation and influence of stakeholders in its analysis, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation processes.***

<p>Every project should be explicit about its process of participation and consultation, aiming for openness and transparency. "Stakeholders" will be understood to include target communities, partner organizations, governments, and CARE staff. The interventions of the various actors should be coordinated and reinforcing and, individually and together, work together to achieve sustainable impact.</p>	<p><b>Involve participation of stakeholders</b>          Every project should explain clearly how people affected will be involved and consulted. "Stakeholders" include target communities, partner organizations, governments, and CARE staff. The project should show how their opinions have been taken into consideration at all stages of the process. However, not all stakeholders will be involved to the same extent.</p>
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**4. *Have a design that is based on a holistic analysis of the needs and rights of the target population and the underlying causes of their conditions of poverty and social injustice. It should also examine the opportunities and risks inherent in the potential interventions.***

<p>The diagnostic assessment and subsequent analysis should be based upon a clear frame of reference and include an analysis of problems and their causes from a range of perspectives including institutional as well as opportunity analysis. Social analyses could examine how needs and rights are related to gender, social class, ethnicity, religion, etc. The analysis should lead to an understanding of institutional capacity, power relationships, and the exercise of rights and responsibilities, as well as household level conditions.</p>	<p><b><i>Be based on an understanding of issues beyond the immediate problem</i></b>          When deciding what to do and how to do it, the project should try to understand all aspects of peoples' lives, rather than look at only one issue. Some problems are visible at the household level, but have their roots in wider issues such as culture or laws or environmental constraints. Remember that not all poor people are the same and there are differences in needs between men and women, different religions or tribes or castes, old and young people, and so on. You should be able to understand who has power over whom, and what existing organisations are doing to improve the situation. Look not only at problems, but also things that are going well that might be</p>
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	strengthened. Also, try to guess what might go wrong with the project and how that may affect vulnerable groups.
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**5. Use a logical framework that explains how the project will contribute to an ultimate impact upon the lives of members of a defined target population.**

<p>The project plan should be clearly summarized in a logical framework that shows how proposed interventions and anticipated outputs will result in defined effects and impact. It should specify level of intervention (household, community, institutional, societal) and how the project will ultimately contribute to sustainable impact for a specific target population. It should identify key assumptions and provide validation for its central hypothesis.</p>	<p><b><i>Be summarized in a logical framework</i></b></p> <p>The project plan should show what you intend to do, to achieve what results, and how those results will improve people's lives. The Logical Framework grid, or "logframe", is a good way of doing this, because it forces you to set things out in a clear way and can be used to communicate to others what your project is about . It also reminds you to check your assumptions, to make sure that your expectations are realistic.</p>
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**6. Set a significant, yet achievable and measurable final goal.**

<p>A project final goal must be achievable and measurable during the life of the project. This calls for project designers to clearly define what the project will be held accountable for achieving. It should be practical and do-able, yet be at the outcome level (intermediary impact or at least effect) rather than output level.</p> <p>A project final goal must also be clearly and explicitly linked to, and significantly contribute to, "higher level" programme or strategic goals. Programme goals should address underlying causes of poverty and social injustice, but their <i>impact – "equitable and durable improvements in human wellbeing and social justice"</i> – should be ultimately manifest at the household or individual level.</p>	<p><b><i>Have a significant objective that can be achieved.</i></b></p> <p>A project must state what difference it is expecting to make to people's lives by the time the project ends. That is not enough on its own though; it should also contribute to solving the cause of the problem, so that when the project ends there is a clear and lasting improvement to the situation.</p>
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**7. *Be technically, environmentally, and socially appropriate. Interventions should be based upon best current practice and on an understanding of the social context and the needs, rights and responsibilities of the stakeholders.***

<p>The project must be designed in a way that is likely to make a significant and positive difference, with minimal undesired social or environmental consequences. Interventions must make reference to technical or sectoral experience or standards, developed by CARE or others, to demonstrate the viability of their approach. Environmental analysis could include assessment of current status, analysis of potential impact, and regional environmental issues. These may require technical appraisal by those with expertise in the relevant professions.</p>	<p><b>Be as good as the best in current practice</b>          Very few projects are trying ideas for the very first time. Usually there have been other projects in other places that have tried the same thing. All projects should learn from the successes and mistakes of others. CARE and other organizations, through their years of experience, have developed standards and guidelines that can help design a project well. Sometimes you need an expert in that subject to be aware of all the technical information you need to do this, and minimize the undesired side-effects.</p>
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**8. *Indicate the appropriateness of project costs, in light of the selected project strategies and expected outputs and outcomes.***

<p>Programme designers must be able to defend the budget of a project relative to its outputs, scale and anticipated impact. Also, the M&amp;E plan should include methods for measuring cost effectiveness, i.e. to demonstrate that the costs of project interventions are reasonable and commensurate with the outputs and outcomes achieved.</p>	<p><b>Be cost-effective</b>          The cost of the project must be reasonable bearing in mind what you are trying to achieve and the difficulty of the circumstances you are working in. You must be sure that you are providing value for money.</p>
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**9. *Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation plan and system based on the logical framework that ensures the collection of baseline, monitoring, and final evaluation data, and anticipates how the information will be used for decision making; with a budget that includes adequate amounts for implementing the monitoring and evaluation plan.***

<p>M&amp;E plans should provide sufficient detail to clearly identify evaluation design, sources of data, means of</p>	<p><b>Have a monitoring and evaluation plan</b></p>
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<p>measurement, schedule for measurement, data processing and analysis, dissemination of information to and utilization by key stakeholders, and responsibilities for each of these processes. Sufficient budget should be allocated for designated tasks, and planning should ensure that CARE staff and partners have the capacity required for their implementation. Monitoring information should be useful and timely to promote reflective practice, for management decision-making, and for adapting project approaches and strategies. M&amp;E plans should incorporate methods to measure risks and assumptions and to track unintended effects.</p>	<p>The project must be able to measure its progress and its final results, and should decide how it is going to do this from the start. The level of detail required will vary from project to project, but at the very least it should state who will measure what, when and how this will happen, and what will be done with the information afterwards. Always provide enough money in the project budget to make sure this is done properly, and include costs of sharing this M&amp;E information with others involved, including managers, partners, authorities and beneficiaries. Information should include any unintended or even harmful impacts your project may have.</p>
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**10. *Establish a baseline for measuring change in indicators of impact and effect, by conducting a study or survey prior to implementation of project activities.***

<p>There needs to be a distinction between a diagnostic assessment and a baseline study. The former gathers a little information about many conditions and is used to inform project design. A baseline study, on the other hand, should focus on measuring indicators of effect and impact with a level of rigor required for a “before-and-after” comparison with evaluation. Baseline studies can use qualitative as well as quantitative data, as long as they describe the initial situation with sufficient precision to be able to clearly measure changes over the life of the project.</p>	<p><b>Conduct a baseline at the start</b>  The word “baseline” is sometimes incorrectly used to refer to a study that is done before a project has been designed. The baseline study should be done at the start of a project to collect information that you want to measure during the course of the project in order to be able to answer the question “what difference are we making?” Baseline indicators can be numbers (quantitative) or descriptive (qualitative), as long as they describe the initial situation clearly enough to be able to measure changes over the life of the project.</p>
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**11. Use indicators that are relevant, measurable, verifiable and reliable.**

<p>Indicators should be capable of yielding data that can be disaggregated to the individual level according to criteria that reveal vulnerabilities, such as gender, age and social class. Both qualitative and quantitative measures are acceptable as long as they can illustrate discernible and significant change. For indicators to be reliable denotes that they are robust and will be useful and credible throughout the life of the project. CARE should draw upon the international development community's great wealth of experience with indicators.</p>	<p><b>Use meaningful indicators</b>          There is an art to choosing indicators for monitoring and evaluation to make them meaningful and easy to use. You don't have to always invent your own - there is a big catalogue of indicators developed over the years. <i>Relevant</i> means that they actually refer to the thing you are interested in; <i>measurable</i> means you can actually collect the information; <i>verifiable</i> means that someone else should be able to check it and get the same result; and <i>reliable</i> means that what they tell you is clear and does not change over time. Indicators should be collected separately for different groups of people who may experience the project differently, such as men and women, poor and very poor, different social classes, etc.</p>
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**12. Employ a balance of evaluation methodologies, assure an appropriate level of rigor, and adhere to recognized ethical standards.**

<p>Evaluation should be incorporated as standard practice as a basis for accountability and for documented, institutionalised learning. Although various forms of evaluation should be planned, such as internal or external, formative (mid-term) or summative (final) or even ex post (to evaluate sustainability), the minimum is that there should be at least a final evaluation that summarizes the achievements and lessons learned by the project. Diagnostic assessments, baseline studies, monitoring, and evaluations should utilize a balance of methodological approaches to ensure triangulation, a richness of</p>	<p><b>Employ suitable evaluation methods</b>          Evaluation can be done in different ways: surveys, participatory assessments, consultant studies, and statistical analysis are just some examples. It is best to use a mix of these techniques at different points in the life of the project so that you can spot and investigate any contradictions. Remember that the strength of a chain is measured by its weakest link, so do not plan for a very detailed or accurate analysis if the information you are comparing it with is vague or imprecise. At the very least, however, in all projects there should be a final evaluation that</p>
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<p>data, and mutual modifications. Evaluations should assure appropriate levels of rigor and precision in their designs and selection of methodologies. Informant confidentiality should be protected. Each evaluation event should draw upon previous ones and anticipate subsequent events. Evaluation processes must be documented and carefully archived, allowing subsequent project phases to replicate methods and draw upon comparative data.</p>	<p><i>summarizes</i> the achievements and lessons learned. Always remember that we are dealing with people, not numbers, and treat the information you get from people about their lives with the same respect as if it were about you.</p>
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**13. *Be informed by and contribute to ongoing learning within and outside CARE.***

<p>It is critical that relevant research and previous project evaluations inform the initial proposal preparation stage. More than that, learning should also apply throughout the life of a project and beyond. The lessons learned from a project should be adequately documented for utilization in the design of other projects. Project management should support the documentation of project processes, including re-designs. Reflective practice, such as the regular use of monitoring data, should be built into every project. Learning should be an organization-wide priority supported by frequent meta-evaluations.</p>	<p><b><i>Add to learning about development</i></b>  We get better at what we do by learning from the past and from others. A project must try to use existing knowledge as much as possible. We must also process, present and store the information we collect in a way that will be useful to us and others later. This will improve the design of future projects, but will also contribute to wider studies that draw together lessons from a range of different projects, both within and outside CARE.</p>
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