

RBA REFERENCE GROUP MEETING Ain Soukhna, Egypt, 19 – 21 May 2004 MEETING REPORT

MEETING OVERVIEW

Forty-seven CARE staff members¹ participated in the 2004 RBA Reference Group Meeting. The meeting began by debating nothing less than the fundamental theory that drives CARE'S work. Participants **reviewed and provided input to two strategic documents**: CARE'S (Unifying) Framework for Poverty Eradication & Social Injustice and A Conceptual Overview of Underlying Causes of Poverty (UCP)². The meeting's second objective was to **promote learning** from CARE field experiences **in the analysis of UCP**. Through four case studies, the participants explored methodologies, risks, and organizational implications.

EMERGING SIGNS OF CHANGE

During the period, 10 – 27 May CARE held three important international gatherings: the GED workshop in Addis Ababa, the RBA Reference Group Meeting and the DM&E Senior Cadre Meeting in Ain Soukhna, Egypt.¹ A consistent set of themes emerged from all three events.

- ❖ CARE must understand and address **power relations** in its program contexts
- ❖ CARE's program **processes should be consistent with its program principles**
- ❖ RBA and addressing the underlying causes of poverty will entail considerable **organizational change**
- ❖ We need to **recognize and mitigate** the **risks** inherent in our new approaches
- ❖ **Passion, commitment, and clear values** must support our new approaches
- ❖ Participation in **analysis** and DM&E can **transform the perspectives** and values of both stakeholders and staff
- ❖ CARE can take risks and explore sensitive topics because it has established **legitimacy and credibility** in its program contexts

Several key themes emerged from the meeting concerning the application of the Rights Based Approach in actual program settings:

- 1) We must anticipate and do a better job of **managing** the internal and external **risks** inherent in promoting rights and changes in power relations. We have used low risk entry points, hired and developed staff with risk management skills, and worked with partners and coalitions. However, we need to do much more in giving staff time to improve their capacities and develop approaches to risk, and work with communities to identify sensitive topics and safeguard stakeholders
- 2) We must build upon positive organizational experiences and a clear understanding of the **organizational implications** of RBA: introduce new ideas as part of a learning process, support staff development, and move

¹ The majority of participants were from Country Offices; for 60% it was the first RBA Meeting.

² The documents are available on the Livelink intranet portal

<http://www.kcenter.com/livelink8/livelink.exe?func=ll&objId=2179330&objAction=browse&sort=name>

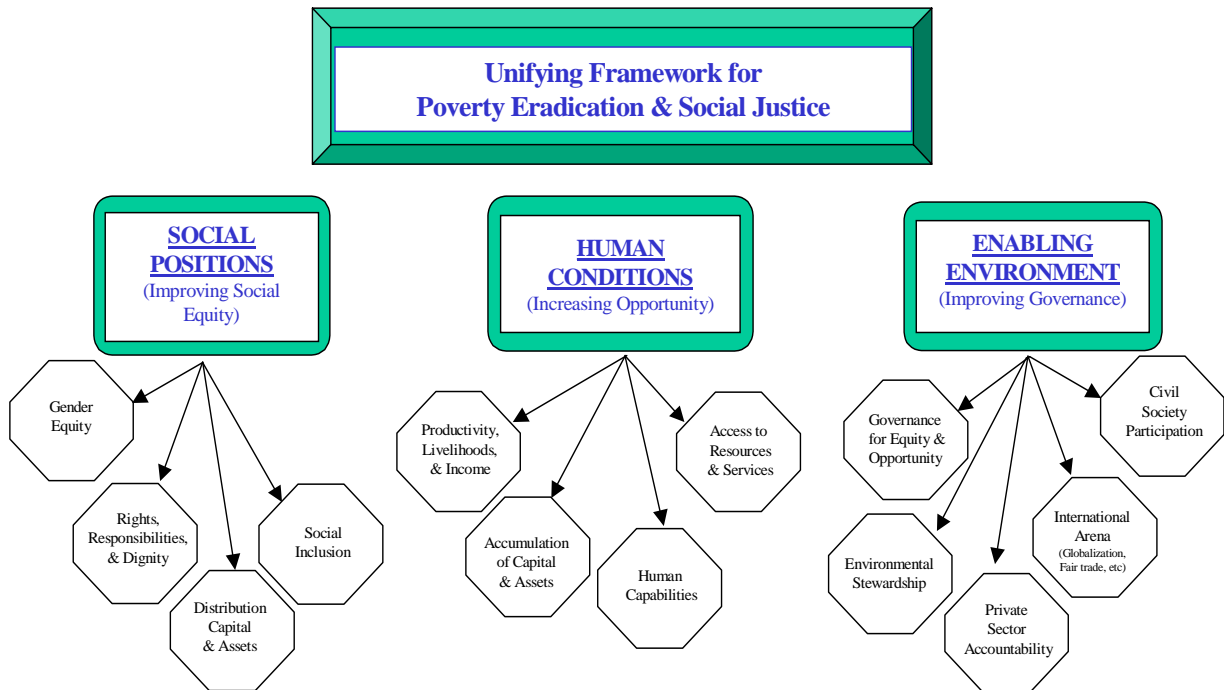
toward conceptual clarity. We also need to do much more in building global alliances and linking micro to macro analysis. The organization must assure staff at all levels of its support as the use RBA in situations of risk and challenge.

- 3) As CARE’s role changes, we must ensure it retains the **legitimacy and credibility** traditionally established through years of community-level interventions. However, as we take on new approaches, we may need to establish legitimacy and credibility in new areas. We should continue to ground our meso and macro advocacy in our local level presence. We also need to improve our ability to cede power in partnerships and to improve how we measure and communicate regarding the impact of our work.

MOVING TOWARD CONCEPTUAL CLARITY

In two draft papers, Kathy McCaston and the CARE Integration Team have sought to pull the organization’s myriad frameworks and lenses – sometimes viewed as “a mixed bag of apples & oranges” – into **a single coherent framework**. “**The Unifying Framework**” relates the evolution of CARE’s development approach to the major shifts in global development theory that have taken place over the last 50 years.

Diagram 1



Furthermore it argues that by bringing together the HLS Framework, RBA, GED, Advocacy, etc., “CARE has made an important **shift** in its approach to development.” The organization has moved beyond its traditional focus upon a single outcome category -Human and Material Conditions - and must now place equal emphasis upon addressing Social Positions and the Enabling Environment (see Diagram 1).

“The Unifying Framework“ is developed around three upper-level outcome categories to ensure that CARE analyzes and addresses underlying causes from both needs- and rights-based perspectives. Importantly, “The Unifying Framework” does not replace our HLS Framework or our other approaches and lenses, rather “The Unifying Framework” is designed to explain how our approaches fit together and complement each other.

This requires a holistic approach to the multidimensional processes of impoverishment and disempowerment and it highlights:

- ❑ A view of poverty as a political process and the need to address power relations, social marginalization, and inequality in all its forms
- ❑ The importance of civil action and of responsible institutions
- ❑ The international arena and link of micro to macro factors
- ❑ The importance of private sector accountability

“**A Conceptual Overview of Underlying Causes of Poverty**” goes beyond “The Unifying Framework” to explore the causal hierarchy of poverty. Immediate causes – disease, and natural disaster – are directly related to life and death situations. Intermediate causes, targeted by the majority of current development interventions, generally point to people’s needs – lack of access to basic services, lack of skills. Underlying causes focus our attention on why intermediate causes exist. They relate to the structural underpinnings – the systems or rules – that govern a society, that include and exclude, that legitimize injustice.

To address UCP, CARE will adopt both “technical” and “political” roles; its work “will include a mix of direct service delivery, capacity building, facilitation, and advocacy.” It will have to deal with “the complex web of institutions, motivations, and agendas that govern relationships among interest groups.” We must take on a political role within the limits of constructive engagement.

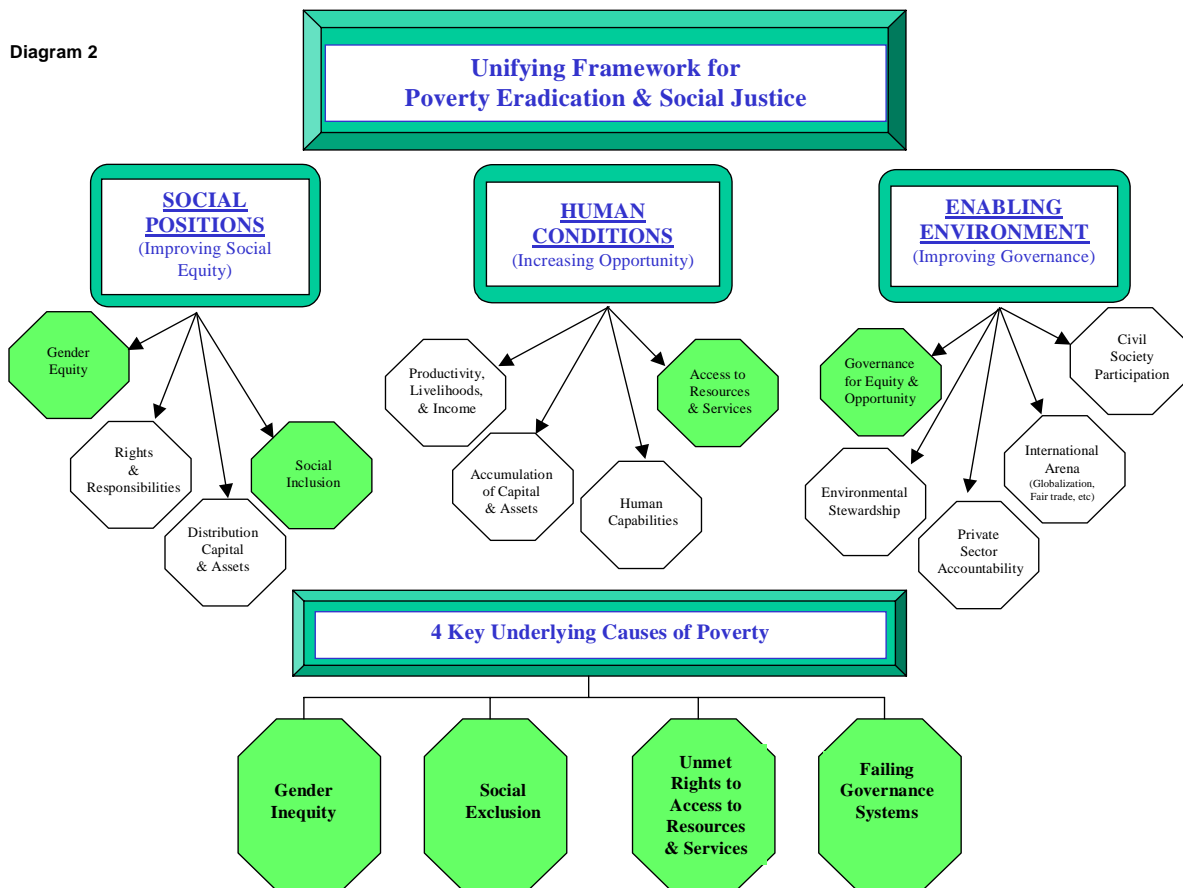
“Rights-based approaches have broadened our theories of development to include issues of inequality and marginalization...(and) forced us to recognize the critical importance of politics and power, and that of power relations.”

Four important underlying causes of poverty (see Diagram 2) have been identified **as points of departure** in order to expand our understanding, improve our analytic capacity, and broaden our UCP development options. The four UCP areas chosen are:

- ❖ Gender Inequity
- ❖ Social Exclusion

- ❖ Unequal Rights to Access to Resources and Services
- ❖ Poor Governance

Diagram 2



The underlying causes of poverty are very context specific. All four of these may apply in some areas, while elsewhere none may be critical. We have chosen these as a starting point for inquiry and experimentation. However, holistic analysis should be conducted to determine the critical UCP in each CO context.

FEEDBACK & COMMENTS ON THE FRAMEWORK & THE UCP OVERVIEW

In small groups, plenary discussions, and poster sessions, the Meeting participants provided extensive **feedback and input** to the two conceptual papers. These are **summarized** below:³

³ Detailed reports on the comments are available in the RBA Meeting Proceedings Report and its appendices.

WHAT PEOPLE LIKED

1. The Unifying Framework (UF) takes a holistic approach and provides continuity and integration with:
 - CARE's existing frameworks such as the HLS
 - The CI Program Principles
 - CARE's newer program lenses and concepts: GED, RBA, advocacy, etc..
2. The UF paper builds on CARE's work and does not throw out the old, which provides legitimacy by building on the past (human conditions).
3. The papers address both functional and structural levels (needs & rights). They combine social and political with technical orientations.
4. The emphasis upon power relations and the political arena constitutes an important shift, and a bold new role for CARE.
5. The papers are well presented: reader-friendly, with clear definitions and helpful graphics.
6. The papers are non-prescriptive and recognize that problems and their solutions are context specific
7. The papers show the linkages of different levels (local, meso, macro) and explain why CARE needs to work at all levels
8. The papers clearly show how CARE is changing and adapting to meet new challenges

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT/CONCERNS

Points on Process

1. Clarify the purpose of the papers and the audience for the papers.
2. Ensure full CARE International (CI) participation in their development
3. Need a formal process for managing feedback and vetting and validating the final position papers
4. The papers' connection to the COs is not adequate and the application of their concepts will require (rapid) internal alignment within COs.
5. Treat the four UCP as illustrative and allow space and time for CO and partner validation. Provide project cycle examples.

Points for Conceptual Clarity

1. We need to expand upon the development and social science theory explored in the papers.
2. We need to provide more clarification on the linkages across the three outcome categories in the UF
3. The political and cultural dimensions deserve deeper discussion
4. Incorporate a nuanced approach to power relations; unequal power is inevitable in every society and not always bad.
5. We need to more strongly emphasize the need for local contextual analysis.
6. Consider hierarchies of personal identify, e.g. gender is treated as primary.
7. Expand social exclusion as a broader category.
8. Accountability and attribution: how do we decide who should be having an impact on each outcome area described in the Framework?
9. Define poverty and differentiate it from vulnerability.
10. Not enough attention is given to individual choices and actions.
11. The UCP elements should include 'power relations' as key element – class, caste, political, structural, formal, informal. Expand on the relational aspects

12. What is the justification for choosing four key UCP? They appear to be compartmentalized. What lies beyond their identification?
13. Define rights: normative vs. constitutional, universal vs. contextual
14. More depth is needed on the environment and disaster mitigation & UCP.

Points on Practical Application

1. How do we apply the Framework & UCP in practical ways in the field?
2. We should learn from the field first by applying them using participatory methods and involving multiple stakeholders. People themselves should define reality.
3. How do we apply RBA in emergencies? How is “relief” covered in the Framework?
4. What are the implications for operations: a) funding b) relations with host governments? How do we adopt this beyond lip service?
5. Risk assessment is needed.

Points on Reputation and Credibility

1. CARE’s has built a reputation on HLS; how do we build a new reputation?
2. There will be skepticism due to CARE’s past history with USAID & governments.
3. Will COs receive backing when they take political stands?
4. We need to articulate CARE’s role as a duty bearer.
5. An exclusive focus upon the marginalized may alienate others.

ANALYSIS OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF POVERTY – LESSONS FROM FOUR CASES STUDIES

“A **rights-based program** consists of a set of focused and mutually reinforcing activities – some project-based, some non-project-based, some carried out by CARE, many carried out by others – that are **based on strong social analysis of underlying causes of poverty and social justice** and that over time lead toward the sustainable achievement of a common rights goal.”⁴

Four case studies of recent field experiences in UCP analysis were presented to the Meeting. Their range of characteristics provided a basis for the consideration of analysis guidelines – the upcoming third paper from the Integration Unit:

□ **Bangladesh - Rural Livelihood Program study of power relations**

Beginning in 2002, CARE’s Go-Interfish project sought to introduce new rights-oriented interventions with the potential to challenge existing practices of powerful local actors. In order to anticipate and minimize staff and participant risk, it became clear that staff needed to systematically understand how elites invest in social, political, and economic institutions. The Study was conducted by CARE’s own staff at the union (smallest political unit) level. Local residents mapped concentrations of power around social resources (mosques, schools) and economic resources (deep tube wells). Project participants then identified

⁴ Rwanda Case Study Annex A: Guidelines for the Development of Rights-Based Programs, CARE Rwanda, January 2004.

members of the elite and kin groups associated with institutions. They also conducted critical incident analysis re: historical events, resource conflicts, and arbitration cases. The results of the study have helped CARE better understand the power dynamics in the communities in which it works, and program strategies and activities have changed accordingly.

□ **Burundi - Use of interactive theatre to improve analysis of UCP**

Subsequent to its 2001 strategic planning process, CARE initiated a Peace Education Project along with its emergency and rehabilitation programs. A rights-based assessment indicated that communities and staff were reluctant to deeply explore causes of poverty. It was concluded that indirect methods of raising sensitive issues were required. Drawing upon CARE's work in the Balkans, CARE Burundi partnered with Tubiyage, a local theatre group. Performance audiences included all age groups, males and females, local government authorities, and even members of rebel groups. The post-performance discussions led to an identification of control of and access to land as the key source of conflict. This led to important subsequent activities by CARE and its partners around the land issue: clarification of laws, a survey of land allocation practices, recommendations to government authorities.

□ **India - RACHNA Program – Understanding gender and other UCP**

RACHNA encompasses two projects, working respectively in 70 (in 8 states) and 45 (in 5 states) districts to improve the health and nutrition of women and children. The Program recently carried out two major studies – one to understand the underlying causes of malnutrition status, poor reproductive and child health, and the other using a gender analysis framework to examine community level factors impacting women's nutrition and reproductive health status. With external support, CARE staff carried out the studies employing a variety of techniques including surveys, focus groups, mapping exercises, institutional assessments, and key informant interviews. The underlying cause analysis identified: gender and caste exclusion, poor governance, cultural practices, income poverty and the role of natural disasters. The gender analysis identified: gender differences in resource access and decision-making, high level control over women's mobility, rampant public and private violations, and the critical period of adolescence for establishing gender differences. The studies have helped to begin to transform CARE's India's organizational culture.

□ **Rwanda – an RB analysis of the root causes of economic insecurity**

As part of its strategic planning process, CARE Rwanda decided to employ the Causal-Responsibility tool to examine the underlying causes of poverty in the country's poorest and most food insecure province – Gikongoro. The target groups for the analysis were vulnerable groups whose rights had been violated or denied: widows and other women, members of the Batwa ethnic group, child-headed households & street children, landless people, and youth, particularly girls. CARE engaged in a number of pre-analysis activities including use of secondary sources, orientation of stakeholders. Orientation teams were made up of authorities, civil society representatives, and CARE facilitators. A smaller facilitation team led the process and reported back to the orientation team. The CRA tool proved to be an effective instrument by creating opportunities for communities and decision makers to interact. It is best used as both an analysis and planning tool. The process took place during a very sensitive pre-election period and consequently the government monitored its sessions.

Comparison of Case Study Elements

Element	Bangladesh	Burundi	India	Rwanda
Scale	SMALLEST UNIT	PROVINCE	10 STATES	PROVINCE
New or existing Program	EXISTING	NEW	EXISTING	NEW
CARE staff pivotal role	YES	YES	YES	YES
Consultant	YES	NO	YES	NO
Key Partners	NO	YES	YES	NO
Tool or Method	Power Relations Analysis	Community Theatre	Gender Analysis Framework Benefits-Harms	Causal Responsibility Analysis
Off/on stage concept	YES	YES	NO	NO
Reported risk	YES	NO	YES	YES

WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THE ANALYSIS CASE STUDIES?

SHARED INSIGHTS/LESSONS	IMPLICATIONS
Comprehensive analysis needs to be well thought out and planned	It is necessary to allow adequate time and resources for proper preparation and staff training. Draw upon external expertise.
Different stakeholders bring different strengths/contributions to the analysis process and the wider the variety of people involved (different levels of staff, partners, community members, political authorities, consultants, donors etc.) the more comprehensive the analysis will be.	It is important to include a good mix of people in the analysis exercise and to value the input of all contributors, no matter the level of education. The inclusion of political authorities can reduce risk.
Staff often already has a good understanding of what is happening in the communities in which they work and UCP.	Be sure to capture existing staff knowledge and use that as a starting point.
Not all staff automatically buys in to this type of analysis, and some are even threatened by it. This can lead to internal resistance among staff.	Be sensitive to the fears of staff and management. Provide staff the opportunity to participate in the study design and the development of contextual tools. Identify and deal with differences in perception among CARE staff.

SHARED INSIGHTS/LESSONS	IMPLICATIONS
A number of stakeholders – including donors, authorities, and CARE managers and staff - may feel threatened by the challenges posed by RBA	Involve all stakeholders in the process and find ways of capitalizing upon their unique potential contributions. The inclusion of donors helps gain their buy-in for these types of processes.
CARE’s credibility can be increased through its analytical work and CARE can be asked to take on new roles because of this.	CARE needs to share the results of its analysis with others and use the results for more than just project design.
By participating in the analysis exercise staff increase their understanding of RBA and underlying causes of poverty and the experience can have a profound personal effect upon staff.	Including different staff members (not only “experts”) in an analysis exercise is a good way to improve their understanding of, and increase their commitment to, RBA and UCP.
Analysis and subsequent actions are not linear – rather programs/projects need to be iterative.	Analysis shouldn’t be seen as a one-time activity but needs to be continued as part of the ongoing program.
Effective holistic analysis will lead can result in to major programmatic transformations.	Be prepared to deal with the full implications of the analysis results: revision of LRSP and project approaches. Also be prepared for the eventuality that CARE cannot realistically address an UCP
It is difficult to anticipate the sensitive issues that can result in staff and other stakeholders finding themselves in difficult situations. Inquiring about sensitive issues (e.g. sexuality) may provoke violence and/or put individuals at risk.	Ensure that there are adequate preparations with the community. Obtain social sanctions to conduct the analysis. Periodically review what works and what doesn’t. Be flexible enough to change methodologies where necessary. Be aware of on stage/off stage behavioral contexts. Facilitate dialogue. Build capacity among staff to deal with unintended outcomes. Partner with groups who have local credibility.
Different environments and situations require different tools and techniques. Not all tools and techniques are appropriate in all situations.	Adjust tools and techniques to the context, but ensure that techniques are appropriate to a context before introducing them

RBA & UCP: IDENTIFYING SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES AND LEARNING PRIORITIES

During the meeting, numerous themes began to surface, and three were identified as the ones that needed priority attention. They were:

- How do we manage (internal and external) risks?
- What are the implications of our shift to RBA and a focus on addressing underlying causes of poverty for organizational change?
- How do we ensure organizational credibility and legitimacy?

On the final Meeting day, the participants split into “constituency” groups: a) a Headquarters groups, b) a group made up of CI members and those for RMUs, and c) three groups from Country Offices. They reviewed the previous work conducted on the conceptual papers and the analysis of UCP. For each of the following themes, they were asked to identify successful strategies and work that needs to be done:

1. How Do We Manage (Internal And External) Risks?

CARE’s successful strategies in managing risks have included:
➤ CARE’s organizational credibility, due to its size and sectoral expertise, can be a positive factor in dealing with risk; by entering communities using non-controversial topics (e.g. right to education) and maintaining a low profile leads to early “wins”
➤ We are starting to hire and develop staff with more appropriate competencies and skills for risk management, including analytical thinking, leading change, coaching and mentoring.
➤ We are improving in the field of contextual analysis and to adapt rights language to local contexts so it is not seen as inflammatory or inappropriate
➤ We are working more with partners and within coalitions, which can help mitigate risk, both internally and externally
However, much more work needs to be done in order to better analyze and manage risk.
➤ Give space and time to staff to manage risk, including building relationships, doing analysis and reflecting. Improve capacity of staff in areas of negotiation, conflict resolution, risk assessment, power relations, trust building, etc.
➤ Instead of focusing only on risk aversion, we need to become better at quantifying and managing risk.
➤ Define spaces and boundaries based on input from the community; make sure sensitive information stays within the community. Start with non-contentious issues and develop trust and credibility before moving in to more risky areas.
➤ Use partners and alliances to help assess and address risks at all stages – recognize that even research can be risky and use local expertise as much as possible.

2. What Are The Implications Of Our Shift To RBA And A Focus On Addressing Underlying Causes Of Poverty For Organizational Change?

Notable progress in organizational change required for the adoption of RBA
➤ We are learning to introduce new ideas so that they become part of the learning process and build on existing knowledge, so they aren't such a shock to staff.
➤ There are efforts within the organization to understand the implications of our new programming approach for the way the organization operates (e.g. Bangkok meeting, AWWV).
➤ Recent staff development initiatives (e.g. leading change, coaching and mentoring, etc.) are a step in the right direction, as well as hiring based on appropriate competencies
➤ We are beginning to get clarity on how all the different programming approaches/initiatives fit together.
➤ The Gap analysis helped to enact CARE's values and leverage diversity within CARE.
➤ Improved CI coordination (e.g. MERMU)
There is still a need for considerable organizational change:
➤ There is a need to build alliances at the global level and link micro-macro analysis into global social movements; we need to see advocacy as a program tool, something separate from what we do on the ground.
➤ While most CDs support the shift to RBA, there is a concern that if mistakes are made, staff won't be supported by other parts of the organization. If organizational change is to happen, there have to be clearer messages and support mechanisms coming from senior leadership.
➤ We need to get better at maximizing the use of flexible funding mechanisms for innovation.
➤ There is need to clarify the role of the RMU, particularly in the area of risk management; increase resources (human and financial) to regional analysis and programming.
➤ We need to develop better and more relevant ways to share learning throughout the organization; ensure the new Learning and Impact Measurement Team focuses on learning and not just quantitative measurement
➤ We need to recognize that moving RBA forward is an issue of attitude as much (or more) than skills. We should not be investing in staff that is not committed to the approach; the organization needs to acknowledge that there is still a fear within the organization to raise sensitive issues and work to resolve that issue.

3. How Do We Ensure Organizational Credibility And Legitimacy?

CARE's presence at the community level and its reputation and history has allowed it to take on rights issues, but as CARE's role changes, the basis for its credibility and legitimacy also needed to change in order to reflect the realities on the ground. Successes have included:
➤ Our local presence, participatory approaches, and sectoral expertise have been the basis for our credibility and legitimacy.
➤ Knowledgeable people on the ground (e.g. Sudan Advocacy point person) and focused initiatives such as Afghanistan increase our credibility.
Areas for Improvement:
➤ We cannot forget that our legitimacy comes from our experience at the local level – we need to ground our meso and macro level advocacy in local presence; we need to make sure that organizational priorities and issues take into account the operational realities in the countries we work in.
➤ We need to stop formulating everything in CARE terms and with CARE at the center; we need to improve our ability to cede power if we are to be credible with our partners.
➤ We need to identify/explore new forms of legitimacy and credibility for CARE (not only size, scope, systems, etc.)
➤ Use regions to distill common analysis and engage CI more coherently and systematically
➤ We need to improve in measuring and talking about the impact of our work

RBA ACTIONS ITEMS FOR FY '05

At the end of the meeting, various action items for the coming year were identified. The action items that were prioritized as the most important:

- **Build alliances at global level – link micro / macro analysis into global social movements**
- **Give space and time to staff to manage risk, build relationships, do analysis, reflect**
- **Develop better partnership between CO and HQ – commitment, negotiation of positions, technical support, improve dialogue, address funding implications**
- **Develop coherent approaches to risk management (e.g. Oxfam – CIUK)**
- **Build capacity for negotiation skills, conflict resolution, power relations, trust building**
- **Partner with others who have more experience**
- **Share learning in a way that is relevant to COs**

WHAT MESSAGES DID PARTICIPANTS WANT TO SEND TO THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION?

As part of the wrap up, people were asked what messages coming out of the meeting they would like to convey to the wider organization. Some of those key messages are:

- ***Addressing rights is not academic, but key to poverty eradication; it's not a technical problem, but a process***
- ***We need to work with others; build connectors, not dividers; gain perspectives; start small***
- ***Work from the ground up, trust; poor people have the solutions, just ask them***
- ***Diversity enriches our organization***
- ***Don't be afraid of the Framework; listen, learn, but act; energize***
- ***Talk to each other, tap our knowledge; inform self, be responsible; understand your own biases and values; ask questions, ask questions***
- ***Solution analysis, not just problem analysis; be part of the solution***

For full RBA meeting proceedings, “The Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication”, “A Conceptual Overview of Underlying Causes of Poverty” (papers and PowerPoint) the four analysis case studies (papers and PowerPoint), go to:

<http://www.kcenter.com/livelink8/livelink.exe?func=ll&objId=2179330&objAction=browse&sort=name>