



Using the CARE Markers as a Learning Opportunity A Case Study of CARE Sierra Leone

February 2019

Introduction

During the West Africa program quality workshop in Benin in September 2018, we realized that our programs were under-using the three markers used to measure mainstreaming of the CARE Approach: Increasing Resilience; Inclusive Governance and Gender Equality. The teams were mainly using the markers as an accountability tool (often in isolation), reporting the marker scores in CARE's global data system called Project and Program Information and Impact Reporting System (PIIRS). An opportunity was missed out to use it as a learning opportunity since it was just seen as forms to be filled out. After this meeting and fruitful discussions, CARE Sierra Leone decided to take action and change this. Read on to find out how.

The Approach

We organized a practice-oriented training session for the whole program team in October 2017. This gave all program staff an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the 3 markers. This workshop coincided with the Country Office MEL training for program staff.

During the sessions, we did the following for each marker:

- Handed-over the guidance notes and vetting form to all participants
- Gave a presentation of the marker (using videos when available)
- Divided into small groups to rank each project (one group per project team and if the group was too big - especially for large projects - we did 2 sub-groups)
- Asked the team to report back and present the grade they gave, why and the challenges and questions they had while using the forms
- Compared the new grades with the PIIRS forms done in FY18 (about a month ago earlier)

After the session on each marker, we discussed:

- Each project based on the 3 markers to eventually identify the changes needed
- The way forward to better use the markers
- Participants' feedback on the session

Background

In its 2020 program strategy, CARE has prioritized 3 approaches to address the underlying causes of poverty and social injustice: Gender Equality and Women's voice, Inclusive Governance, and Resilience. To help teams measure the integration of these 3 approaches into programming, CARE has developed 3 markers to be applied in both humanitarian and development programming. The markers are using a simple grading system from 0 to 4.



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Resilience marker grades:

Before the training, the ECRHS project graded 1 (poor resilience integration) in PIIRS, while the project was graded a 3 or 4 during the training.

Where are the differences coming from?

In PIIRS, the project scored 0 for question 1 (analysis of vulnerabilities against shocks or stresses), against a 4 during the exercise. Also questions 4, 5, and 6 were scored 0 during the PIIRS exercise, whereas the project team scored between 3 and 4 for questions 4 to 6 during the exercise.

Why?

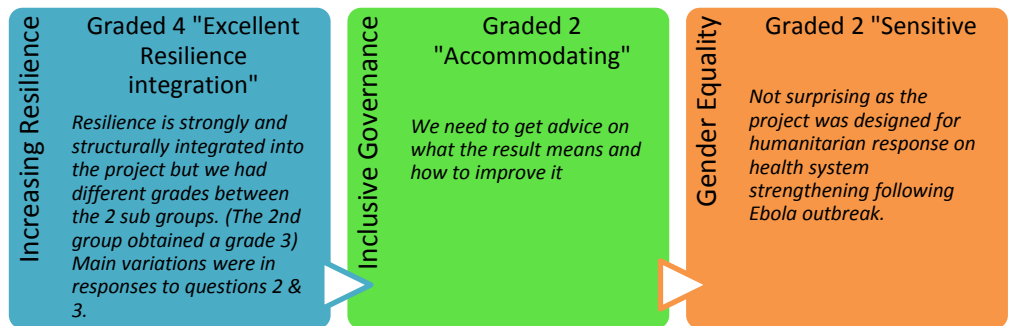
Those differences came from a misunderstanding of some of the questions. In addition, the lower scores on some of the questions can be explained by the fact that meteorological risks were considered on top of the other risks in PIIRS. As the project did not consider meteorological risks in its design or implementation, the team scored quite low in PIIRS.

Evaluating the Epidemic Control and Reinforcement of Health Services Project:

Marker scores in PIIRS (FY18) before the training session

Resilience Marker	Inclusive Governance Marker	Gender Marker
Score 1 "Poor Resilience integration"	Score 2 "Accommodating"	Score 1 "Neutral"

Marker scores after the training session



What we liked

- Having the session, as it was eye-opening for the whole team on CARE's three approach areas.
- Having the printed guidance and vetting forms at hand
- Working in sub project groups to apply the markers
- Facilitators using a short and concise video to present the gender marker
- Reflecting on the difference between PIIRS score and the assessment made during the session.
- The section of the resilience marker guidance note on the interpretation of results, with explanations and recommendations, making it easy for staff to understand the next steps.



What we wished we had

- Access to more documents to know how to improve our projects based on the markers
- More explanations on what to put in the lessons learnt part of the vetting forms and on what “Unaware, Tokenistic, Accommodating, Responsive, and Transformative or “Harmful, Neutral, Sensitive, Responsive, Transformational” exactly mean.
- Short video presentations for all 3 markers
- Understanding and awareness to see the tool earlier e.g. the Women in Enterprise project only ‘Works within existing gender roles and relations’ for now



What's next?

- We have designated a focal point for each marker
- We will hold regular marker sessions for the Country Office. This first one was a pilot exercise
- We have reached out to CARE Malawi to support us on the use of the Inclusive Governance marker
- We are already working on improving our projects. The first thing we are doing is to review all project strategies to understand how each aligns with the three approaches.

Moving forward

And you, what's your experience using the markers? Share it with us by answering this [short survey](#). It will help other Country Offices to use the markers and the approach teams to improve the markers and their supporting documents.