CARE’s capacity statement on \textbf{Renewable Energy}
Despite progress being made on SDG 7 to ‘Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030’, approximately 1 billion people remain without access to electricity, and 2.8 billion still lack access to clean cooking solutions. Annually this results in 4 million1 premature deaths due to household air pollution via the use of inefficient fuels such as solid biomass and coal for cooking and kerosene for lighting. Lack of access to clean energy can lead to deforestation and desertification due to unregulated and often illegal charcoal making. The effects of underinvesting in SDG 7 go beyond the goal itself and hinder progress against ending poverty, good health and well-being, decent work and economic growth. Underinvesting also impedes on activities attempting to tackle gender equality, create income generating activities, and improve access to quality education, all the while exacerbating the effects of climate change.

For CARE, investing in renewable energy links to multiple elements of our mission and approach:

Eradicate poverty and fight social injustice: CARE’s ultimate goal is to eradicate poverty and fight injustice. Since globally it is women who are still mainly involved in cooking activities, when women (in particular) have access to renewable energy it contributes to poverty reduction and improved wellbeing. Access to improved cook stoves and clean energy such as solar energy, saves time and money, when it replaces the need to purchase fossil fuels or to search for firewood, a burden often carried by women and children. This allows more time for and investment in other pursuits. It leads to health benefits through reduced smoke inhalation and indoor air pollution, when it replaces dirty fuels such as wood and kerosene.

It improves education and access to information, as solar energy that has been stored up allows for study after dark and charging of mobile phones to access information. Lastly, renewable energy access creates new opportunities for income generating activities, as operational costs can be reduced, products/services improved, processes made more efficient, improved working conditions and working hours made more flexible. Entrepreneurial ventures along the value chains of renewable energy systems can also be established and run by women. This in turn can lead to more control over resources, increased confidence, aspirations and self-esteem.

Increasing Resilience: Improved access to renewable energy enhances resilience in multiple ways. It can result in higher income, as solar charging of cell phones leads to higher coverage, allowing for example to more readily available access to information on market prices. It also improves access to climate forecast and early warning information on droughts and floods, increasing the preparedness for disasters. It enhances agricultural production and processing and supports adaptation and mitigation activities in face of climate uncertainty, for instance pumping water for irrigation. It reduces women’s exposure to sexual violence, when it replaces the need for women to go out looking for firewood and provides public lighting at night. It reduces the degradation of vital ecosystems, preserving natural buffers against hazards such as floods, droughts and landslides. In humanitarian response contexts, access to solar light enhances safety and security for those in refugee settlements, while access to improved cook stoves and clean cooking fuels increases productivity and health for those affected by crises. Finally, renewable energy use can reduce the overall carbon emissions produced as it replaces the need to burn traditional fossil fuels and avoids deforestation due to a reduced demand for charcoal. Renewable energy therefore addresses a key cause of climate change.

**WHY RENEWABLE ENERGY?**

CARE’S RENEWABLE ENERGY WORK CONTRIBUTES TO A RANGE OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, IN PARTICULAR RESULTING IN:

- A route out of poverty
- Women’s empowerment and gender equality
- Access to affordable, reliable and clean energy
- Reduction of global greenhouse gas emission, climate change adaptation and resilience.

1 https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health
OUR APPROACH

CARE’s renewable energy approach establishes how we work to improve access to clean and affordable energy. CARE uses the following three key principles:

1. **Empowering women and shifting social norms**
   Lack of access to modern and sustainable forms of energy impact both men and women. However, gender-defined roles mean women often struggle to attain and control renewable energy sources in a disproportionate way. Although women are key users of energy products, cultural barriers such as lack of access to finance, knowledge & information and decision making power can hinder their ability to get physical access and have a say in how it is used.

   It is for this reason that CARE’s renewable energy programming has gender equality at its core, so that we ensure women benefit the most. CARE’s renewable energy programming, aims to shift the current paradigm from one where women are passive providers and users of energy, to one where they are agents of change in promoting sustainable energy technologies and their productive uses. To achieve this paradigm shift, and reach lasting improvements in women’s empowerment, change is needed in three areas. First, a women’s own aspirations and capabilities (agency). Second, the environment that influences and conditions her choices (structure) and third, the power relations that influence her ability to make and act on decisions (relations). To this end, CARE’s renewable energy programming goes beyond solely training women in business skills, the technical aspects of building a clean energy enterprise and including women in value chains. CARE works through partners to support the development of women’s leadership, self-confidence and decision-making power. Simultaneously, CARE and partners work with men and boys to challenge existing social norms and values.

   Through community-led dialogue, SHE schools and Social Analysis and Action, CARE facilitates conversations between women and men about their different (energy) needs, creating understanding on the difficulties that women face and the harmful gender norms that perpetuate gender equality. Through these methods we can achieve, for example, a shift in the realisation that cooking is not only a women’s task, motivate husbands to take on a greater share of domestic tasks, including cooking, and encourage community members to have more positive attitudes toward business women.

2. **Reaching scale through our VSLA network**
   CARE’s Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) provide a way for women in a community to save their money and access loans. Weekly contributions allow the group to launch income generating activities with the mobilised funds. Globally, CARE has a VSLA network with over seven million members and trains VSLA members as agents of change. Creating awareness of the opportunities that can arise from using and investing in renewable energy forms a catalyst for the uptake of clean cooking and decentralized electrification. Due to the financial literacy of men and women VSLA members, they can make informed decisions to invest in new products that reduce their costs, e.g. type of improved cook stove, saving money in the long run. Additionally, skills developed in the VSLA can help members set up micro-enterprises and create new income opportunities. Interactions in the VSLA groups inspire others and make VSLA members change agents for their communities.

3. **Working along the whole value chain**
   Sustainability and impact is maximized when the whole renewable energy value chain is taken into consideration. Reaching systemic change, means working on the production of traditional charcoal/fuel alternatives, such as green charcoal. It requires encouraging the uptake of clean cook stoves through awareness raising activities, supporting access to stoves and market development. It also requires working with producers, retailers and consumers and engaging in dialogue to support favourable policies that facilitate change.

   To reach scale and impact, CARE works to influence policy at the local and national level. By influencing the higher level enabling environment, CARE aims to initiate positive change in policy and within national plans. Both levels are important for stimulating (decentralized) electrification as well as stimulating the uptake of clean cooking and clean fuels. Advocacy plays a large role in market development and engagement, with experience showing that bad market conditions lead to project failure. To combat deforestation, the introduction of clean cooking fuels need to go hand in hand with legislation and enforcement of environmental policies.
CARE currently works to improve access and use of renewable energy in more than 15 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. CARE’s work ranges from programmes that facilitate the uptake and access to solar systems and biogas to the scaling of improved cook stoves and uptake of green charcoal as an alternative for traditional charcoal and firewood.

CARE’s renewable energy portfolio has been growing over the past years. It consists of some standalone renewable energy projects in addition to larger multi-mandate programmes of which renewable energy programming makes up a small component. Some of our most notable projects and programmes to date are:

**BACHAT programme**

**Location:** India  
**Donor:** European Commission  
**Value:** 2,000,000 EUR  
**Duration:** 2016-2019  
**Type:** Standalone renewable energy project  
**Renewable energy related aim:** Increase the uptake of improved cook stoves  

Using pre-existing VSLA networks, CARE’s BACHAT programme raised awareness of the ongoing heavy extent of deforestation in rural India. The programme influenced a steady increase in the adoption of improved cook stoves by communities. As a result, they now rely less on fuelwood and this has led to a reduction in deforestation and environmental degradation. Awareness raising was done through CARE’s SHE-Schools (Sustainable Household Energy Schools) where rural women learned about the benefits of improved cook stoves. Although primarily aimed at women since it is they who manage the household cooking and energy needs, men became more involved in the learning sessions. This has generated awareness among men of the difficulties women face, including that cooking is not only a women’s task. The programme has seen a shift in decision-making power to women in the households, a positive shift in the social environment due to changing informal rules.

**REDUCING VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE VARIABILITY AND EXTREMES WITH ALTERNATIVE FUELS:**

In **Niger**, a small component of CARE’s Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters (BRACED) project was to increase uptake of biogas to make women and men in the Sahel more resilient. CARE supported communities to install biodigesters to create biogas and compost. CARE supported the installation of 36 biodigesters (6 to 14m3) across 11 communities, enabling the households to cover their daily needs for cooking and lighting.

In **Sudan and Somalia**, the Resilience in the Horn project (2014-2017) aimed to increase the use and production of clean fuels such as green charcoal to strengthen the resilience of Internally Displaced Persons, returnees and host communities in the region, with special attention on women and youth. In Sudan, CARE worked with partners and trained 825 women in Darfur in how to make improved cook stoves and why it was important to use them to reduce pressure on the environment from tree felling. Several of the trained women have used these skills to establish an improved cook stove making business. In South Darfur 105 women were also trained in green charcoal production. This included training in how to produce green charcoal from environmentally friendly agricultural waste material such as groundnut shells and how to create small green charcoal making machines.

**OUR GLOBAL EXPERTISE**

CARE currently works to improve access and use of renewable energy in more than 15 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. CARE’s work ranges from programmes that facilitate the uptake and access to solar systems and biogas to the scaling of improved cook stoves and uptake of green charcoal as an alternative for traditional charcoal and firewood.
**WPOWER**

**Location:** Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda  
**Donor:** USAID  
**Value:** 1,000,000 USD  
**Duration:** 2012-2015 (extended till 2019 as Go Green project in Tanzania)  
**Type:** Standalone renewable energy project  
**Aim:** Improve use and distribution of Solar PV modules and clean cook stoves

Through the Partnership on Women’s Entrepreneurship in Renewables (wPOWER) project, CARE worked in Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda to increase the adoption of clean energy products. CARE provided training, access to clean products and microfinance to support women VSLA members to become involved in clean energy markets by establishing micro clean energy enterprises. CARE opened the doors to the sale of 66,260 solar lamps and 18,584 improved cook stoves across Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda. 80% of these sales were made by women entrepreneurs supported by the wPOWER project and resulted in the reduction of 30,418 tons of CO2 emissions along with the increased resilience of the communities. This project was extended till 2019 in Tanzania as Go Green and was funded by the Augustinus Foundation (450K EUR). To date, 30 women entrepreneurs have established clean energy businesses and are selling competitive quality products, increasing their disposable household income by 30 %. A total of 2,110 clean energy products have been distributed within Tanzania’s Kilimanjaro region (1,775 solar lamps and 335 cook stoves). This has indirectly contributed to reducing health problems from indoor pollution, reducing the workload of women, saving fuel costs for families and reducing forest degradation.

**Empower ME**

**Location:** Vietnam  
**Donor:** Women’s Empowerment Fund at the Global Alliance for Clean Cook Stoves  
**Value:** 75,000 USD  
**Duration:** 2017-2018  
**Type:** Standalone renewable energy project  
**Aim:** Increase adoption of improved cook stoves

In partnership with GreenGen, a private company in the Vietnamese clean cook stove market, CARE’s Empower ME project promoted the economic empowerment of ethnic minority women through micro-enterprises selling clean cook stoves. The project leveraged CARE’s well-established VSLA network, identifying ethnic minority female members who were trained to become clean cook stove sales agents, and formed a sales and distribution system to deliver GreenGeneration cook stoves to the last mile. CARE used its Social Analysis and Action approach with both clean cook stove agents and their husbands in order to overcome gender-based barriers preventing women from participating in, and benefiting from the project.

**LIVE WELL**

**Location:** Zambia  
**Donor:** BARCLAYS (until 2016) & GSK  
**Value:** 2,300,000 GBP  
**Duration:** 2015-ongoing (As a social enterprise there is no end date but the current funding from GSK ends August 2019)  
**Type:** Social business with renewable energy component  
**Renewable energy related aim:** Establish a sustainable business that improves access to clean energy to rural and peri-urban communities

**Live Well** is an impact-driven social business that promotes health and was established by CARE in partnership with Barclay’s and GlaxoSmithKline. Live Well is becoming a sustainable model that reliably provides rural and peri-urban Zambians with direct access to quality health products. It also supports livelihoods in under-served communities in a country where roughly 75% of the population earns less than USD $1.25 a day, almost 8% of children die before age 5, and only 11% of children aged 6 – 23 months are fed appropriately. The enterprise, through a network of trained Community Health Entrepreneurs, sells a range of clean energy products such as improved cook stoves and solar lamps as part of the health focused product basket. The improved cook stoves are highly popular products and Live Well is making it easier for hard to reach communities to gain access and have a better chance in improving their health.

**Adaptation Learning Programme (ALP)**

**Location:** Multiple countries (Ghana, Kenya, Niger)  
**Donor:** DFID; CISU; Danida; MFFA; ADA  
**Value:** Over 17,000,000 USD  
**Duration:** 2010-2017  
**Type:** Multi-mandate programme with renewable energy component  
**Renewable energy related aim:** Improve uptake of rechargeable solar energy kits  

Through this programme CARE has supported vulnerable households in sub-Saharan Africa adapt to climate variability and change. By incorporating community-based adaptation (CBA) approaches into development policies and programmes, vulnerable communities have been empowered to use their own knowledge and decision-making processes to act on climate change. Improving access and use of renewable energy was a key way this programme helped communities, especially women, adapt and maintain economic and social stability when faced shocks. CARE provided rechargeable solar kits to women’s groups identified through VSLA networks. Women were trained in how to use and maintain the solar kits so they could raise income through mobile phone charging services. As a result, the solar charging of mobile phones significantly boosted communities’ communication and access to information about market prices and weather forecasts which guided improved risk management actions.
ABOUT CARE

CARE is a global confederation that has been in existence since 1945, and active in 95 countries worldwide. CARE has been implementing programmes in the field of renewable energy since 2005, and has implemented a large variety of programmes around the world both in the realm of electrification and clean cooking.

CARE’s vision is of a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and all people live in dignity and security. One of the greatest inequalities and power imbalances of our time that is at the root of poverty, is reflected in the causes and consequences of climate change. This threatens the livelihoods of billions of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people. CARE’s Climate Change and Resilience Platform (CCRP) strengthens the ability of CARE’s country offices to increase the resilience of these people, especially women and girls, to absorb and adapt to the consequences of climate change and natural disasters, to manage the growing risks, address underlying causes of vulnerability and transform their lives in response to new hazards and opportunities. CARE does not believe that resilience building is possible without progressive improvements in gender equality and the empowerment of women. Therefore, in all program design and implementation, CARE’s climate change and resilience work seeks transformational change in gender and power relations.

CARE’S ADDED VALUE

CARE’s work goes beyond solely providing energy access and builds the supporting social, economic, and physical infrastructure required for success. CARE’s ability to deliver and disseminate renewable energy products via many routes lies in a number of our strengths:

- Well-established presence and network
- Use of social infrastructures, VSLAs, that help multiplying reach & impact
- Training of locals and dissemination of knowledge and skills to promote independent development
- Holistic approaches with multiple transversal goals
- Women’s empowerment and gender equality
- Innovations
- Good public-private partnerships and creation of local supply chains

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