

The Monthly Digest

CARE'S REGIONAL DIRECTOR, KATE MAINA-VORLEY, STRENGTHENS PARTNERSHIPS DURING HER VISIT TO UGANDA



At the Head Office: Kate Maina-Vorley (Positioned on the fourth left side) with some of the Kampala based staff.

In a recent visit to Gulu City, CARE's Regional Director for East and Central Africa, Mrs. Kate Maina-Vorley, engaged with local leaders, government officials, and community representatives to strengthen collaboration and explore avenues for further impact. The visit was marked by insightful discussions, warm receptions, and a genuine commitment to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

One of the key highlights of Mrs. Maina-Vorley's visit was a meeting with the Deputy Mayor of Gulu City, where they discussed the ongoing collaboration between CARE and the local government. The Deputy Mayor expressed gratitude for CARE's support in areas such as gender-based violence (GBV), economic empowerment, and the implementation of the Local Action Plan (LAP).

During the meeting, the Deputy Mayor acknowledged the positive impact of CARE's interventions but emphasized the importance of extending efforts to involve men and their families.

// We appreciate CARE collaborating with the government, supporting the vulnerable women and girls. There is improvement however, there is need to work with the family and bring the men on board," she noted.

Mrs. Maina-Vorley, in response, highlighted the crosscutting nature of gender issues, extending beyond specific sectors. The Deputy Mayor pledged to continue fostering a strong relationship with CARE and affirmed her commitment to championing the cause of women in the community.

// It's always nice to see a woman in such a position. We appreciate you taking on this role," she shared.

Mrs. Maina-Vorley's visit also included interactions with various stakeholders, including the Mayor, Gulu District officials,

Gulu District Family and Child Protection Unit, and a visit to CARE's sub office in Gulu and Kampala. She engaged with local leaders, cultural representatives, and project participants.

The vibrant community showcased their achievements through dance and exhibited materials, providing Mrs. Maina-Vorley with a firsthand look at the impact of CARE's programs. The visit served as a testament to CARE's commitment to building strong partnerships and making a lasting difference in the lives of those they serve.



In the Deputy Mayor's office: From right Apollo Gabazira (Country Director), Kate Maina-Vorley (Regional Director), Christine Olok (Deputy Mayor) and Naomi Acara (WAYREP Project Manager).

THE PROGRAM QUALITY, LEARNING AND REFLECTING ON CARE'S JOURNEY

In a testament to CARE's commitment to continuous improvement, the Program Quality and Learning (PQL) unit held a five-day workshop for the senior team in Gulu from 20th to 24th November with a specific focus on CARE's culture, the Program Information and Impact Reporting System (PIIRS), program performance, and project management reports spanning from FY20 to FY23.



Firstly, Emily Babirye led the first session on CARE's Culture, Evolution, and Adaptation from 2020 to the present, highlighting significant milestones like new leadership at the Country office.

// The program implemented large support structures, short-term donor contracts, and remote assistance in Kampala. Staff left to ensure partners received the support they needed, leading to increased presence. Additionally there was a lean structure, and a new Business Plan was crafted to chart the organization's course. By FY23, women were 61/39, up from 43% in 2019. The adherence to values also meant making tough decisions, including letting go of staff whose values did not align with the organization's culture". Reported Emily.

Some of the Staff Voices on CARE's Culture.

Sam Karuhanga said; "in CARE, we opened sub-offices and closed them. Again, we reopened, and it worked. Things can work in any way you handle them. We did not have a humanitarian sector but today, we have it".

David Walugunga said; "to us, locally led is not a new thing, we had about 50 staff in total and things were moving. As Sam said, things changed: the numbers grew, and even where we are going things will work.

Jimmy emphasized the assurance that the number of years working with CARE brings, indicating that CARE provides a stable environment for professional development.

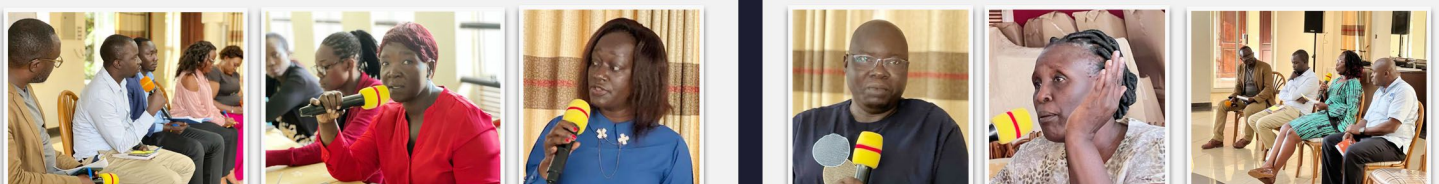
Ogal reflected on the journey, recalling a project which had seven partners in 2020. The emphasis on partnership

principles and consolidation was evident. The learning culture within CARE was praised, acknowledging that it's deeply ingrained and contributes to the organization's resilience.

Rose Amulen emphasized that CARE is a learning organization offering an opportunity for those who choose to learn. "The strategic shift from conflict programming to development programming and the enduring focus on women and girls remained central to CARE's identity". She noted

Daphen Amanyana humorously reminisced about the 'Kalamu' days, highlighting the drastic changes in the use of technology, the shift from paper-intensive processes to streamlined workflows, and the recognition that CARE has come a long way.

// For those who found glass, that is how far we have come. I remember Apollo calling it an office at Nasser. We used to have a stack of paper. It was hard to envision a finance office without paper. Nowadays, I feel uneasy when given a paper to sign. The other is the awards during the Monday meetings: you could hear a staff announce how we had won an award but most of these were around USD 30,000 and the biggest was USD 60,000 so hearing the USD 4,000,000 is a drastic change. For me it's pride to see what CARE has become. We have evolved and indeed everything has worked".





Michael Opio makes his remarks during one of the sessions.

As CARE continues to evolve, Michael Opio passionately urged everyone to be dogmatic in exiting spoilers from CARE. He emphasized the importance of consistently reporting issues, taking courageous steps to address challenges, and bringing the best value to the table.

“For those who work with me, you will realize that I struggled when I had just joined but had to recalibrate. The pressure to stabilize the country office was too much. I would constantly think about CARE because the responsibility was on our shoulders as the new leadership. However, the moment we got to the tipping point, the plane stabilized, and this agency is in a good place now. Let us keep our hands on the plow”. Said, Michael

The PQL team led by Jimmy Toko, Sam Okello, and Teddy Nakubulwa, discussed program quality, CARE markers, and the 10 PQL drivers for realizing resilience. Despite efforts to improve MEL systems, gaps in knowledge management, feedback, and accountability mechanisms were identified, highlighting the need for improved decision-making.

Sam Okello, reflected on the PQL review, stating that it was the first of its kind for this generation in the CARE Uganda office. Discussions revolved around defining quality and learning issues, with a focus on achieving impactful change.

“The data has come but the question is: what are we doing with it? Our team will focus on utilizing this for Knowledge Management products, as information is a crucial component in their development”. Reported Jimmy.

The team emphasized the importance of strengthening project planning, tracking, and reporting, understanding the 10 PQL drivers, acknowledging partners and donors, and focusing on the impact. Some of the key highlights here included sharing a consolidated work plan for all CARE projects, strategically addressing the impact and the location of national actors, and strengthening relationships with CARE Member Partners (CMPs).

There was also a session on stocktaking of what's working and not and sharing experiences across projects with a panel discussion featuring Ronald Ogal, Charles Otema, Gloria Letio, and Evelyn Aguti. They shared what worked well in their projects, emphasizing adaptations during the COVID-19 pandemic, early planning, and effective partnerships.

“Planning early has helped to achieve what was initially planned. We met 60% of the target including our burn rate”. Reported Charles Otema

Evelyn Frances Aguti said, “We don't have any direct implementation. We walk with the implementing partners as partners and not as donors. The partners are free and give us feedback easily. Our Feedback and Accountability Mechanism (FAM) is working well and our partnership has improved a lot.”

The panel also discussed areas that require change, including the need for partners to be based in the districts for proximity in enhancing local engagement. Naomi emphasized the importance of case conferencing platforms, while Edton highlighted the challenges and opportunities in engaging with the private sector and government.

“Have we documented the lessons on teleconferencing and counseling, cash transfer using third parties, and working with women-led and the private sector? These are crucial aspects that contribute to our knowledge management and innovation efforts. Unfortunately, there is a gap in our documentation of the lessons learned”. Micheal Tugyetwena noted.

Meanwhile, the Finance and Administration unit, led by Daphen, and the Grants team led by Dorothy Rutazaana supported by John Kigwana and Betty Nakitandwe also shared their journey from cumbersome paperwork, chaotic grants department to a centralized and leaner function. The shift towards digitalization has increased efficiency and trust within the team, marking a departure from working in silos.

“There was a lot of paper and filing was a menace. Pulling out documents for audit was challenging. There was a lot of blame game when documents got lost and this is how far we have come”. Daphen said

As CARE aligns itself with the locally-led initiatives, Lillian and Edton unveiled the need for Advocacy and Systems Strengthening. The focus is not just on reaching numbers but on creating systems-level change, impact, and transformation. The organization aims to be a systems orchestrator rather than a mere implementer.



Some of the participants during the workshop.

// Systems-level change is about the things we do on a daily to have an impact. It means altering the underlying structures and support to have impact and sustainable change. If we don't deal with the process issues, we won't have an impact". Emphasized Edton.

Participants observed that although advocacy and systems change are closely linked, the former is currently not in a favorable position to exert influence. Therefore, there is a pressing need to expedite its progress.

In a forward-looking approach, Emily highlighted the future skills required for success. She emphasized maintaining relationships, adapting to the locally-led approach, and fostering innovation. Informed participants that Artificial Intelligence (AI) has influenced global trends hence a reconfiguration of the soft skills to remain relevant.

// By 2025, you need to add more skills to what you are currently doing. While AI won't replace you by 100%, you will need to add atleast two more skills but if you remain with one, AI will scrap you".

Lastly, Cotilda Nakyeyune clarified what the new dawn of locally-led entails. She said,

// About 10 or 20 years ago, we had enough resources but this time round, we have few resources with the expectation to deliver more and, there is no big brother. We are now at the same level with the partners and this will require us to transform the way we are doing business".



Participants in a group discussion during one of the sessions.

Jimmy Toko acknowledged the challenges ahead in aligning with the locally-led vision.

// I want to thank everyone for accepting to be here. A lot has been said. The biggest mistake we shall make as individuals is to sit and live in denial. The vision has been cast and the next thing is to align with the vision."

Michael Opio concluded the session with key takeaways, urging participants to document their learnings and be intentional about sharing them. He emphasized optimizing resources, cutting excesses, and fostering a cultural shift towards efficiency.

The PQL workshop served as a platform for CARE's dedicated staff to celebrate achievements, reflect on the journey, and collectively steer the organization toward a future of sustained growth, resilience, and impactful change. The hands remain firmly on the plow, cultivating a path toward greater success. A detailed report is available.

A detailed report is available with the PQL team.

BOOSTING NUTRITION: PRIVATE SECTOR JOINS FORCES WITH CARE AND GAIN IN SBN ORIENTATION

From October 31st to November 10th 2023, CARE and GAIN, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives and the Sun Business Network Secretariat (SBN), took a significant step in improving nutrition in Uganda. A comprehensive orientation was conducted, gathering more than 300 prospective participants from various regions including Karamoja, Acholi, Lango, Tooro, and Busoga.

By Isaac Abwa

The orientation sessions aimed to teach these private sector players about the principles of the Sun Business Network and explain the positive impact their commitments could have on nutrition. The event emphasized the importance of collaboration, sustainability, and innovation in working towards better nutrition.

The private sector, represented by various industries like food processing, retail, and agriculture, learned about the benefits of investing in nutrition. The goal is to not only improve community well-being but also ensure the long-term growth of their businesses.

// Through the Sun Business Network, the private sector will tap into more Nutrition Value Chain opportunities and have a unified voice on policy issues affecting the regional Food and Nutrition value chain. Additionally, they should invest in good nutrition practices and technologies to deliver affordable and accessible nutrition products and services to the last mile woman and child in this country to facilitate consumption of healthy diets locally". Ambrose Onoria RDC Kotido District.



Participants during the orientation sessions.

The private sector's involvement in initiatives like Sun Business Network aims to tackle nutrition challenges in Uganda, promoting united efforts for positive changes and increased access to nutritious foods. The collaboration between CARE, GAIN, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and Cooperatives, and the Sun Business Network Secretariat sets an example for future partnerships focused on building a healthier and more resilient nation. The Ugandan government launched the Scaling Up Nutrition Business Networks (SBN) in June 2023, with CARE and GAIN aiming to expand the network to all regions, strengthening its private sector role and contributing to the nutrition situation.

LAUNCHING THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

On November 24th, the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, in collaboration with partners such as UNWomen, UNICEF, CARE International Uganda, UNFPA, and TPO, launched the 16 days of Activism event under the campaign's overarching theme: "UNITE! Invest to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Women and Girls." Representatives from CARE International in Uganda, including two male Youth Councillors from Arua, were present to contribute to this important cause.

By **Hellene Alobo**

While presiding over the event, Hon Peace Mutuuzo, the Minister of State for Gender and Culture, highlighted government's efforts to empower women through initiatives like UWEP, PDM, and GROW. She urged participants to mobilize women to seize opportunities in the market and cautioned parents about the potential dangers their children may face.

“Despite government’s commitment to end GBV, a study by UBOS shows 52% of the women have faced violence by intimate partners which is quite high for the country. I call up all partners to join the struggle in ending GBV by uniting and working together to create a harmonious society.”

The Permanent Secretary MGLSD Mr Aggrey Kibenge, emphasized government's commitment to implementing the National Gender Policy and GBV Policy. He stressed the importance of involving men and boys in discussions on GBV and acknowledged the support from medical and legal groups in providing services to survivors.

Edith Aliguma Adyeri, the LCV Chairperson for Kiryandongo district expressed gratitude for choosing Kiryandongo as the launch site and emphasized the importance of supporting families and challenging the misconception that violence equals love.

“We need to support families- communities still believe that beating a wife is showing love yet these cause harm such as psychological, physical or economic which increases poverty.” She said

Adyeri identified several crucial needs in addressing GBV issues, including the provision of appropriate spaces for

survivors of rape, shelters for GBV survivors, and separate facilities for the rehabilitation of juvenile perpetrators.

“We also have interest in bringing men and boys into the discussions on GBV since this is a critical component in ending violence against women and girls.”



Minister of State for Gender and Culture launching 16 days of activism against GBV in Kiryandongo on the 24th November.

The "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" is an annual international campaign that aims to raise awareness about and advocate for the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence (GBV). The campaign begins on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until December 10th, Human Rights Day. This period symbolically links these two significant dates to emphasize that violence against women is a violation of human rights.

EMPOWERING CARE STAFF: SECURITY AND RISK TRAINING

In a commitment to enhance the safety and preparedness among staff, Amina Nazma, CARE's East and Central Africa Safety and Security Officer conducted a Security and Risk Training in the Southwest region from 1st to 3rd November. This comprehensive training aimed at equipping CARE staff with the skills and knowledge needed to identify, assess, and mitigate security risks effectively.

By **David Walugunga**

The training emphasized a holistic approach to risk management recognizing the importance of understanding the local context, cultural nuances, and potential hazards. Participants gained insights that go beyond theoretical knowledge, ensuring they are better prepared to make informed decisions in challenging situations.

Ibona Joseph, one of the participants said, "We are to remain calm when attacked and also study the behavior of people when we get to a new place".



Participants display their certificates after the training.

The training featured the Team Up security initiative, a vital component providing staff with crucial insights into responding effectively to critical security incidents. A key highlight of the training was the introduction of the 1-5 approach, offering staff a deeper understanding of personal safety both in the workplace and wherever they may find themselves.

The 1-5 approach comprises a multifaceted strategy, addressing various aspects of personal safety from situational awareness to preventive measures: crisis management, emergency response, and recovery which ensures a well-rounded understanding of security dynamics. Participants engaged in practical scenarios, enabling them to apply these principles in real-world situations.

“The Team Up sessions were practical and made me understand how to respond to an emergency in a humanitarian setting or any environment. The emphasis on personal security has made me always do the flower check which involves checking everything on the car before traveling, we were leaving it to only the drivers yet it’s important to all of us”. Reported Zahara Nakibuule

CARE invests in Security and Risk Training to enhance staff safety, resilience, and confidence in diverse environments, ensuring the organization's ability to navigate challenges effectively.

CARE'S DREAMS PROJECT ELEVATES VSLA INITIATIVES

CARE USA is actively working towards empowering communities by strengthening the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) manual through its Global VSLA department.

By Charlene Kanyali

As part of this initiative, a Training of Trainers (ToT) program was recently conducted in Uganda for the CARE DREAMS team, along with key partners like Uganda Micro Finance Regulatory Authority (UMRA), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MofPED), Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD), Uganda Women Entrepreneur Association Limited (UWEAL) from 26th November to 1st December 2023 in Fort Portal and Gulu.

“ CARE global is looking at DREAMS to come up with a documented approach for transitioning women into the business space through the VSLA model. We are interested in learning how to do things more innovatively using VSLA scaled to women entrepreneurs”. Said Vidhya Sriram CARE-USA VSLA Director

Experienced trainers actively contributed to the development of the manual with a joint review ensuring model adaptability and effectiveness in the DREAMS project's operational areas before the official rollout.

“ Digitizing VSLA records will not only guarantee safety or records and prevent fraud but also provides transaction history than can help women entrepreneurs acquire loans from banks”. Traxier Komutahla Community Resource Person - UWEAL

Participants engaged in group discussions, simulations, presentations, and feedback sessions, emphasizing the commitment to diverse perspectives shaping the future of these initiatives.



Lenard Oundo (centre) takes participants through a training session.

CARE and partners are enhancing community empowerment through sustainable financial solutions, focusing on enduring quality of VSLAs through ongoing community engagement.

“ VSLA does not only provide financial solutions but also social cohesion, the social fabric of VSLA should not be underrated. Financial inclusion for all explains the reason behind the simplicity and informalities of VSLA modalities. The government has appreciation for this methodology evidenced by the issuance of SG operation guidelines so that VSLAs can have legal protection.” Edton Babu, DREAMs project Manager.

The DREAMS project in Uganda supports women's transition to the money economy through VSLAs, which undergo continuous enhancements, including digital resources, training modules, and database reviews.



CARE’s Country Director Apollo B. Gabazira (positioned second left) was part of the Humanitarian International NGO (HINGO) mission in Europe between 7th and 15th November. The HINGO forum plays a crucial role in facilitating communication and cooperation between the different organizations, helping to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively in response to humanitarian crises and emergencies.