

## **POLICY ON EVANGELISM, WELFARE AND PARTISAN POLITICS**

### **BACKGROUND:**

CARE Australia was established in 1987 as a non-sectarian, non-partisan development assistance and humanitarian relief organisation. CARE Australia's Mission and Focus is to work "around the globe to save lives, defeat poverty and achieve social justice. We put women and girls in the center because we know that we cannot overcome poverty until all people have equal rights and opportunities". In our programs and offices we embrace diversity and oppose discrimination based on sex, race, nationality, ethnicity, class, religion, age, physical ability, caste, or sexual orientation.

CARE Australia's development philosophy is reflected in our approach, which supports working towards social justice, and empowerment of marginalised people in a manner which is practical, brings tangible results, opposes discrimination and values partnership and strengthened communities. CARE Australia's approach is both implicitly and explicitly reflected in a range of governance statutes and policies, including the CARE International Code and the CARE 2020 Program Strategy.

CARE International's 2020 Program Strategy<sup>1</sup> describes the "changes in the world we want to see and our role in bringing about those changes. The purpose of the Strategy is to focus our programs to clarify – both internally and externally – how we will contribute to eliminating poverty and social injustice".

CARE Australia adheres to the CARE International Code<sup>2</sup>, which explicitly states that CARE "shall remain independent of any political, religious or other affiliation. Its activities shall be conducted without regard to political or religious considerations".

CARE Australia is a signatory to the Red Cross Movement and NGO Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief<sup>3</sup>. The Principles which underpin the Code of Conduct reaffirm that aid is driven by the humanitarian imperative, and will be given regardless of race, creed or nationality and will not be used to further political or religious views.

CARE Australia is also a signatory to the Australian Council for International Development's Code of Conduct<sup>4</sup>. Whilst the Code of Conduct does not specifically reference evangelism, welfare and partisan politics, the values outlined in the Code align with CARE's way of working, including with integrity, accountability, transparency and respect.

This policy articulates CARE Australia's differentiation between development objectives, and the objectives of welfare, evangelism and partisan politics.

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<sup>1</sup> Working for Poverty Reduction and Social Justice: The CARE 2020 Program Strategy, 2014

<sup>2</sup> The CARE International Code, June 2013

<sup>3</sup> The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief

<sup>4</sup> Australian Council for International Development Code of Conduct, June 2017

## **POLICY**

CARE Australia is committed to the CARE International Code and will not engage in evangelism, partisan politics or the provision of long-term welfare.

### **Evangelism and Partisan Politics**

CARE Australia is non-sectarian and does not engage in activities intended to promote evangelism, missionary outreach or promote any religious tradition.

CARE Australia is non-partisan and does not engage in or support activities which promote political parties or candidates or particular political philosophies.

#### *Non-Partisan Advocacy:*

CARE Australia is a non-partisan organisation and as such we are neutral. We do not have a position on any political parties anywhere, however we do have positions on issues, we have deep principles that drive our work, and we are not neutral on human rights. These are issues and principles we advocate for consistently, regardless of which political parties come and go.<sup>5</sup>

### **Welfare**

CARE Australia programs emphasise emergency relief after disasters and activities to promote sustainable development, and support the efforts of vulnerable and marginalized people to lift themselves out of poverty.

However, CARE Australia is not a provider of traditional, long-term welfare activities which are defined by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as:

Care and maintenance, other than in refugee and emergency situations, which aims to maintain people in a particular condition on a longer-term basis. Substantial and broad impact on social and economic conditions in the community is not normally expected from welfare programs. Welfare is typically provided on an individual or family basis including home-based and institutional care programs, such as those provided by orphanages, homes for the elderly, hospices, support to the disabled, and the provision of food for destitutes.

## **CARE AUSTRALIA'S PROGRAM FRAMEWORK**

Recognising that development interventions do not happen in isolation from the general conditions of the community, region or nation in which they are undertaken, CARE Australia aims to inform changes in practices and policies of local, regional and national authorities through drawing on direct field based learning.

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<sup>5</sup> CARE Australia Advocacy Principles, July 2016 (see Annex 1)

## **Annex 1: CARE Australia Advocacy Principles, July 2016**

This short paper outlines how CARE Australia approaches advocacy in the Australian context, to Australian policy makers and those that influence them. It also outlines how we approach the opportunities and risks involved.

### **Introduction**

CARE International (CI) defines advocacy as ‘the deliberate process of influencing those who make decisions about developing, changing and implementing policies (in CI’s case: to reduce poverty and achieve social justice).’ The CI Program Strategy approved in 2014 recognises advocacy as a key element of “multiplying our impact” above and beyond the numbers of people who benefit directly from a project, and ensuring our impact continues after CI’s local involvement has ceased.

This follows recognition across the international aid community that addressing the root causes of poverty and social injustice requires reforming or better implementing the policies, practices or attitudes that influence this. To create sustainable and self-sustaining progress – that is, improvements to peoples’ lives that will outlive the relatively short life-cycle of development projects, it is necessary to advocate for policy improvements, and support the implementation of good policy and practice.

In recent years, CI has grown increasingly active in advocacy as a part of its global approach. CI established a formal global advocacy coordination function and strategy in 2010. CI also developed a Global Advocacy Handbook in 2014 to guide the advocacy work of CI staff.

### **Why Advocate**

For decades, humanitarian organisations have sought public and government attention to situations where on-the-ground relief efforts need the support of national or international intervention or political action. Since the Biafran war of the 1960s humanitarian organisations sought both increased humanitarian assistance and significant engagement and intervention by the international community to address the causes of the crisis.

Today, organisations are speaking out strongly on practices they see as fundamentally undermining their humanitarian mandate and driving the social injustice and environmental degradation that impoverishes people. In some instances this may be in response to systematic human rights abuse by a government, or the impact of unjust trade practices on coffee growers, or the failure of the international community to deliver security and real change in Afghanistan or effective action on climate change. In the most credible advocacy campaigns, the message is derived from experience on the ground and can show where a different policy at a national or international level would bring very specific benefits to people. In Australia, government decisions about aid and foreign policy have direct impact on development work, and the poor communities whose lives and well-being are affected. As a result, many of CARE Australia’s peers have substantial advocacy or government relations teams.

As stated in the CI Program Strategy, CI believes that poverty cannot be overcome without addressing the underlying power imbalances that result in the inequitable distribution of

resources and opportunities between women and men, and between mainstream and marginalised communities. Advocacy therefore seeks to reform policies that keep people impoverished, or support the implementation of good policies that are being ignored or misunderstood – which is often the case in many developing countries, particularly in rural areas. As always, there are different ways to engage in such sensitive work. For CI’s approach to advocacy, which seeks to build on rigorous evidence and be respectful to the people we work with on the ground, good relationships with power-holders are paramount. CI aims to be the partner of choice for governments, civil society organisations, social movements, the private sector and donors who seek long-term solutions for fighting poverty and social injustice.

CARE International’s approach to advocacy is to bring the local to the global – to act as facilitators to communicate to policy makers at all levels the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in the world – those who are often left out of policy development or not reached in policy implementation. CI’s approach shares the knowledge derived from decades of practice and relationships with local communities and local civil society groups. CI has successfully advocated from the local to global levels – including advocating to local governments for improved health services, to national governments for stronger laws against gender-based violence, to businesses for better workplace policies against sexual harassment, and at the international level, such as to the United Nations and its member states for agreed language in the Sustainable Development Goals that reflects the needs of people we work with on the ground. This language in turn helps hold national governments accountable to their international commitments.

The primary purpose of such advocacy is of course to improve people’s lives and well-being. A secondary outcome of advocacy work, especially public-facing advocacy campaigns, is raising the profile of CI as a credible and expert organisation, and educating the public on issues we are working on. This can lead to further recognition and fundraising. The growth in social media and online petitions also give supporters an important and tangible means to connect and engage with CI in a non-financial way.

### **Risks in Advocacy**

While there are recognizable benefits, there are also identifiable risks in public advocacy. Some of these are described below.

#### **Domestic Risks in Australia**

**Our Relationship with DFAT and the Australian Government.** DFAT is one of our most important development partners. Each year we receive significant funding for our work in developing countries. Because DFAT is a government agency, there is a risk that if a CARE Australia advocacy campaign is critical of Australian Government policy, it will harm our relations with DFAT, and possibly diminish the flow of funding. The evidence suggests, however, that the risk to our funding is small. DFAT continues to fund both Oxfam and World Vision, whose advocacy campaigns have been far more inflammatory than anything CARE Australia considers. The greater risk is to the access CARE Australia enjoys to the policy-makers in DFAT and elsewhere in the Government. This access is based on our reputation for prudence and objectivity. This risk can be minimised by a balanced selection of advocacy issues, a pragmatic choice of words in our campaigns, and the careful maintenance of key relationships.

**Our relationships with our donors:** Another possibility is that a CARE Australia advocacy campaign will alienate donors who have traditionally supported CARE Australia because we are non-political. Our advocacy message needs to therefore skillfully avoid party-political agendas and demonstrate the connection between our advocacy message and the demonstrated experience from our work on the ground and community needs. While we do not have a position on any political parties anywhere, we do have positions on issues, we have deep principles that drive our work, and we are not neutral on human rights. It is these issues and principles we advocate for, and we argue for these consistently, regardless of which political parties come and go. Some political parties do take stances that are opposed to our values – such as climate change where the debate can be politicised and heated. Part of being non-partisan means remaining committed to these issues regardless of a government’s position.

**Our profile as a target for groups opposed to civil society advocacy.** From time to time, some groups have criticised NGOs based on the view that charities should stick to their core charitable work and not make comments about the policy settings that affect their work or their beneficiaries’ wellbeing. The Institute of Public Affairs has been a critic of development and environment NGOs for many years. This thinking can also extend into government views. For example, in 2015 the Environment Minister raised issues whether environmental organisations that engaged in advocacy should continue to receive tax-deductibility status. This followed similar moves in the UK, where conservative MPs criticised Oxfam’s domestic advocacy suggesting that: ‘Charities should be sticking to their knitting and stay out of politics’. As advocacy work seeks to change the status quo, it is to be expected that those who benefit from this status quo will resist. However, the risk of such targeting can be mitigated by ensuring that advocacy is solidly grounded in CI and CARE Australia’s own experience, and is based on our concern for the welfare of the poor and disadvantaged, rather than for political point-scoring or cheap publicity.

## **International Risks**

**Safety and security of our staff.** In the era of the internet and social media, with fast flows of accurate information (and sometimes disinformation), advocacy campaigns can have implications well beyond those intended. A particular concern is the safety and security of our staff. In the case of Sudan, for example, a public advocacy campaign may endanger our staff in the country. We minimize this risk by ensuring that no advocacy activity is undertaken without the consent of the relevant Country Office, as required by CI policy. This can be cumbersome and tiresome, but it is the only way in which a reasonable security assessment can be made of communications messages. This has happened effectively in countries experiencing conflict, where CI communications have been approved and driven by the Country Office. Conversely, when country level staff do want to speak out on controversial issues, for example sexual rights, they need the CARE family to support them and ensure their voice is not alone.

**CI Campaigns harmful to CARE Australia’s interests.** There is a risk that the advocacy efforts of other CI Members or of CI could adversely affect CARE Australia’s interests. One example was a CARE UK initiative which misleadingly appeared to be a CI initiative, in which donor countries, including Australia, were criticised in a “Report Card” for inadequate aid funding. The internet and newswires are interlinked, and there are inherent risks that messages which CARE Australia would not endorse might reach the Australian press or our government partners as CARE

Australia's view". This risk can be minimised, but never entirely eliminated, through vigilance and discussion within CI, and ensuring protocols are observed which require formal CI positions to be shared with members in draft for clearance.

**Risks to Country Offices.** The primary risk to Country Offices exists if the advocacy message is contrary to governmental or factional political positions within the country. In situations where public advocacy messages in Australia are contrary to government policy within the host country, CARE could face difficulties with the host country government which, at minimum, may be limited access to government staff or hampered ability to operate and, at worst, could result in the termination of CARE's agreements and expulsion from the country. If advocacy activities in Australia sufficiently antagonized government or factional actors, staff safety and security could be placed in jeopardy. As outlined above, this risk can be mitigated by thorough consultation and engagement of Country Office staff in selecting and shaping advocacy messages and approaches to be used. We would also require CO to consult with us prior to embarking on an advocacy campaign that carried these sorts of risks.

One approach for advocacy is to be targeted directly to decision-makers, without seeking a public profile. In the case of the disadvantaged Rohingya minority in Myanmar, the Country Office has maintained that public advocacy would endanger our operations on the ground in Myanmar. However, we have been able to arrange for the Country Director to give private briefings for parliamentarians in Canberra, to share the insights from our work on the ground

#### **Risks in not engaging in advocacy?**

There is a risk to *not* engaging in advocacy. We risk failing the people we seek to serve, and wasting precious and limited resources by trying to fix symptoms while leaving the causes unchecked. There is a risk to CARE Australia's image, which rests so heavily on moral principles, of appearing inconsistent and self-serving. This risks losing the favour of our supporters, who will see other organisations taking a stand and wondering why CARE Australia is silent. With the growth in social media, there is also a heightened expectation that organisations, especially NGOs, are clear on what they stand for. Giving supporters the chance to understand and 'share' our advocacy messages allows them to see our values. Staying silent on some issues creates a risk in causing confusion in the minds of some of our current and potential supporters.

NGOs such as CARE Australia are privileged in their access to people in positions of power – whether they be local authorities, national governments, businesses or international institutions. With that privileged access comes power, and with that power comes the duty to use that power to best deliver our mission to serve the individuals and communities in the poorest communities in the world.

#### **Proposed Principles for CARE Australia advocacy**

If we are to undertake advocacy or public information campaigns, the following principles should inform the approach we propose to take as an organisation:

- Any advocacy or public information campaign should responsibly draw from experience CI or CARE Australia has on the ground.
- Advocacy campaigns may be designed for humanitarian or development benefits.

- Advocacy campaigns may be designed to include initiatives to raise public profile and fundraising, but topics should still be derived from our Vision and Mission statements and from our experience.
- Advocacy should not be party political, and any campaign should not be designed as an attack on a government or government department. CARE Australia is a non-partisan organisation and as such we are neutral. We do not have a position on any political parties anywhere, however we do have positions on *issues*, we have deep principles that drive our work, and we are not neutral on human rights. These are issues and principles we advocate for consistently, regardless of which political parties come and go.
- Advocacy should be designed to avoid alienating our donors, either institutional or domestic.
- Advocacy should be designed to avoid alienating or disrespecting our beneficiaries – their needs must always be at the heart of what we advocate for.
- Advocacy should not compromise any work that is done by the Country Offices – whether that be revealing sensitive information or compromising the principles or messages that underlie that work on the ground.

### Advocacy Topics

CARE Australia's advocacy work in recent years has included:

- Communicating our approach to addressing **gender inequality** – including through submissions to parliamentary, presentations to DFAT, meetings with parliamentarians and letters to Ministers
- An increasing focus on **Women's Economic Empowerment**, with an initial emphasis on ensuring decent work for marginalised women.
- **Sexual, reproductive and maternal health**, with funding from UNFPA that has enabled us to act as Secretariat for the Australian Parliamentary Group on Population and Development, supporting MPs' advocacy efforts. This advocacy also includes **gender-based violence and women's empowerment**.
- **Humanitarian** advocacy, primarily promoting the case for urgent and substantial response to emergencies, and communicating best practice from our experience to government and institutional donors
- **Climate change**, consistent with CARE Australia's Climate Change policy agreed by the Board in 2009
- Partnering with major initiatives to promote the **value of Australian aid**, such as ACFID, the Campaign for Australian Aid and the Save the Children's political study tours.

Looking forward, we will continue to develop our strong focus on Women's Economic Empowerment, consistent with CARE Australia's role of joint leadership in this area for CARE International. We will also continue to respond where appropriate to other opportunities in areas consistent with CI's strategic directions.

With the Board's endorsement, we will rely on the approach and principles described in this paper to guide our approach to advocacy and to manage the risks that may emerge.