

CARE Austria Final report

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List of Acronyms

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative
DNU	Diocese of Northern Uganda
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDFA	Gulu District Farmers Association
GLAI	Great Lakes Advocacy Initiative
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
ILPI	International Law and Policy Institute
IPOs	Implementing Partners Organization
KIWEPI	Kitgum Women's Peace Initiative
LCs	Local Councils
MSC	Most Significant Change
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NUPS	Northern Uganda Programme Strategy
PRDP	Peace Recovery and Development Plan
RocoKwo	CARE Uganda Women's Empowerment Programme: Transforming lives
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UGX	Ugandan Shilling
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VISO	Voluntary Initiative Support Organisation
VSLAs	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WEP	Women Empowerment Programme
WFP	World Food Programme
WORUDET	Women and Rural Development Networks

Executive Summary

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) funded activities under Roco Kwo program have been streamlined together with the NORAD funded activities under the same program. The cross-country programme of CARE Austria is called claiming rights – promoting peace. The expected result of the psychosocial component of the Roco Kwo programme is enhanced psychosocial wellbeing to people affected by conflict especially those experiencing stigmatization and rejection in Northern Uganda.

The programme approach for the psychosocial component is a holistic one – addressing agency, structural and relational aspects of women’s empowerment and through mainstreaming the strategic engagement of men to transform the gender power relations. CARE Austria defines a psychosocial approach as one that emphasizes the indivisibility of the individual with culture and community.¹ This psychosocial approach focuses on increasing the protective factors and reducing the risks to enhanced resilience (the capacity to survive and to even thrive in the presence of many risk factors) of individuals and looks in depth at those protective factors (factors which enable people to survive and thrive despite the effects of severe stress).

The theory of change for WEP is that women’s agency in and after conflict is strengthened through enhanced psychosocial wellbeing and active integration into solidarity groups (with special emphasis on economic empowerment) and through locally determined psychosocial activities. The rationale is that VSLAs create space and time for women to share information, experiences and get advice from their peers. The programme design builds on this by including training for members of the VSLA groups in psychosocial support skills and information on existing referral services including health, justice, and security. The theory is that peer support and information sharing has a healing effect on women who have experienced violence in one form or the other.

Impact: Women’s leadership and political participation

At end line, CARE staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries were in broad agreement that the space for women’s political participation has expanded since the programme began (in terms of agency, access, space to participate, achieved in part through engagement with local leaders) which has enabled CARE to leverage and advance this agenda from above (top down). Part of this approach was focused on capacity building sessions and training to **shift negative attitudes** that women are not able to lead. RocoKwo has helped women to acknowledge the importance of their rights to participation in leadership and governance of the society they live in, and the practical benefits if they engage.

The qualitative results show broadly that the work of engaging men in using role model men to change attitudes and make the space for participation for women safer, giving them the confidence to put themselves forward or speak up. End line results from the qualitative interviews show that RocoKwo and WEP have achieved some gains in supporting the impact group in raising issues, which affect them - for example service delivery or community infrastructure. Women who have joined advocacy forums have had success in influencing rights or local service delivery; key areas of influence had been in relation to girl’s education and in relation to access to quality services.

Impact: psychosocial wellbeing activities

¹ Bragin, M., Taaka, J. & Eibs, T. (2013). Conflict-Affected Women’s Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. Vienna and Kampala: CARE Österreich

Women felt that the project has used innovative approaches to support psychosocial wellbeing within the wider framework for empowerment. Formalized support through service provider (IPOs) varied; for example Para-legal FSKAPAWA and CPC provided psychosocial support in case of land wrangles or in cases of gender based violence. Other IPOs such as FOKAPAWA provided psychosocial support in GBV or in cases of child abuse. The use of Community theatre was felt to be very helpful in helping people understand a concept and helping to change attitudes regarding sensitive issues. Women recommended that for future programming, CARE spread the training and sensitization to other women in the community who did not benefit in the previous project. There was also felt to be a need for additional training for local leaders and structures for referral of psychosocial cases; and an increase coverage and volume of counselors trained in the community to ensure efficient and adequate psychosocial support provision.

The thematic areas of psychosocial wellbeing, which the pre study identified, include the following elements identified by the impact group themselves, as key elements of their own psychosocial wellbeing:

1.1.1 Access to resources

Women identified that knowing one can provide for one's self and one's children is important for their psychosocial wellbeing. The hypothesis is that economic empowerment is synonymous with improved access to decision making processes affecting their lives as well as improving their self-confidence and respect.

At the end of RocoKwo, the results indicate shifting perceptions and the ability of impact groups to deal with risk and economic shocks. At endline 88% of women have the capacity to cope with economic shocks, compared to 76.9% of women at baseline in 2009. VSLAs provide a positive coping mechanism for members, enabling them to save, access loans or emergency funding via their VSLA, meet new people and build their social and economic networks. The majority of women interviewed for the qualitative research feel that their vulnerability to shocks has reduced, as they are able to rely on the social safety net through emergency funds for example, which the VSLAs provide. By improving income security through diversification, income smoothing, improving agricultural production and greater control of their IGAs and involvement in economic decision making women report that they feel better able to cope with minor economic shocks. Stakeholders interviewed for the qualitative end line felt that the Roco Kwo programme was able to challenge the structural barriers, which allowed for example discrimination or denial of **economic rights**. In practical terms this meant that there was a rise for example in the acceptance and ability of women to be elected as chairpersons and secretaries in VSLA and advocacy groups for example so that they could advocate on and for the economic rights of women in their VSLA and community.

In terms of obtaining support when it is needed or having others to turn to - Only 12.4% of men (n=78) reported accessing counseling units for psychosocial support, all of whom were CARE VSL members. 17.7% (n=143) of women report that they have used a counseling centre, all of which were CARE VSL members. The sense from the results are that that clan leaders are relatively selective about whom to support – for example widows or women who are facing serious illness or loss family members are often supported. Usually the support is only available to women who are fully married in the clan.

1.1.2 Religion and spirituality

Women who responded to the survey feeling strongly that faith helps them to feel stronger and survive, with over 80% of women reporting that when all else fails they know that god is there. However, less than half of women go regularly to religious or cultural leaders for help. Women in CARE VSLs feel their context and situation in relation to religion and spirituality has improved

marginally, and 25% report that this change is down to the program activities, and a quarter of women feel that the program contributed significantly to this change.

1.1.3 Raising children well

Women in CARE VSL groups the majority of women rank their situation in relation to raising their children as very good or good, compared to five years ago when 58.5% gave the same assessment, and non CARE VSLA members also ranked their situation 5 years ago less positively (49.4%). There is a sense amongst the impact group that if income increased, then the focus is on ensuring all children stay in school. Some women report that they are now better able to pay school fees for both boys and girls through borrowing from the VSLA, which had not been the case before the Rocokwo program. They report that this has eliminated and reduced violence in many households because finance, and school fees in particular were felt to be a significant cause of domestic violence.

A higher proportion of women in CARE VSLAs report that their children are in school all or most of the time (82.8%) than non CARE VSLA members (64.4%). It seems this may be linked to the subsequent statement, where women in CARE VSLAs are more likely to report that they are able to find a way to pay school fees all or most of the time (72.3%) compared to non CARE VSLA members (63.8%). 18.7% of CARE VSLA members are confident that Roco Kwo activities contributed significantly (and 76.9% felt that Roco Kwo made a moderate contribution) to the changes they have experienced in relation to keeping their children in school and paying school fees.

1.1.4 Good home and marriage

In terms of happy marriage indicators, women in the pre study felt that key indicators were the ability to solve problems through discussion; Love; mutual understanding and trust; good sex; working together and freedom from alcoholism. The endline shows that mutual decision-making has increased in some cases, women's voices are increasingly heard in household matters, and they also have control over resources in their household. However when interviewers asked women if men and women take equal responsibility for the wellbeing of the family, most women report that they feel they have a bigger share of the responsibility for the wellbeing of their family. A number of women comment on the lack of respect for their sexual rights in their marriage or partnership.

In relation to a loving home and family, around two thirds of women report that they solve their problems through discussion. Over 78% of women feel that the community recognizes their marriage. Women in CARE VSLA were more likely to agree that their husband understands them and when he is there they do not feel alone. In relation to having a loving home and family, CARE VSLA members (76.9 %) were more likely to rank their situation now as better than non CARE VSLA members (69.3 %). 54.9 % of CARE VLSA members ranked their situation five years ago to be OK or not good, compared to 50% of women in CARE VSLA groups.

1.1.5 Education

Some of the qualitative research findings suggested that even if there were opportunities, women would not have the time to attend any training because they cannot leave the family alone to go and study, other than when attending VSLA meetings. Literacy was reported to be a key barrier to accessing and benefitting from learning opportunities. There is a sense that men have better access to information because they usually attend meetings compared to women and move with their radios when they leave home; however they often share the information they hear with women and children.

1.1.6 Participation and advocacy

Women in focus group discussions report that as a result of the Roco Kwo WEP programme community sensitizations and the trainings, women have become very confident in speaking in public about their concerns and stand for leadership positions. Women have built confidence in speaking in

public gatherings and meetings and their views are considered important in planning process and helped informed some policy makers.

Women in CARE VSLA groups are more likely (71%) to report that they are seen and heard in clan or other family meetings, compared to women in non CARE VSLA (57.8%). 69% of CARE VSL members, compared to 55.3% of non CARE VSL members report that they feel able to represent themselves at meeting all or most of the time; a higher proportion of CARE VSL members also report that they feel able to represent others at meetings, compared to non CARE VSL members. Over half (54.5%) of CARE VSL members feel able to advocate for their ideas all or most of the time, compared to 39.7% of non CARE VSL members. The majority of women agree that all or most of the time they respect and protect the rights of others.

Women at endline perceive that their current situation in relation to self and community efficacy is overall more positive (86.3% CARE VSL members, 62 % non CARE VSL members) compared to five years ago when only 41.2 % (CARE) and 41.3% ranked their situation to be good or very good. Of the CARE VSL members, 77.7% perceive that the program activities contributed to this change – made it happen or contributed “quite a bit.”

1.1.7 Being able to help others

The qualitative results show that women have become very much involved in groups and organizations outside the family. Some of these include drama groups, which sensitize people on non-violence in the community; plus dance and VSLA groups. Involvement in these groups has reportedly increased the level of solidarity of women as they start to take part in activities, and see progress when working together as a group. Membership of various groups has enabled women to support each other financially and emotionally. Women are able to help others by counseling and any farming activities, and they use the VSLA meetings as a platform to share their problems and find solutions hence they do not feel isolated anymore.

1.1.8 The garden

The “garden” or land is considered the major source of livelihood for women by many of the women interviewed; as one lady commented, “Everyone is supposed to have a garden in her home as you cannot stay in the village without one.” It means having enough food items for the family; the ability to send children to school; staying together and working together as a family.

Interviews with women suggest that there is a perception now that women cultivate for consumption and sale differently. This has improved planning for other things like school fees and it has also ensured relative food security in their homes. Interviewers asked women if men and women take equal responsibility for the wellbeing of the family, and the garden. There is a sense that this is a joint responsibility for husband and wife to take care of, “Yes, work in the garden is together.” A higher proportion of CARE VSLA members (62.7%) also reported that their husband and sons participate in the garden activities with them and their daughters compared to 48.1 % of non CARE VSLA members. In relation to climate change, over 50% of women report that they are learning how to grow crops that resist climate change and gardening methods to address climate change. Over 20% of CARE VSLA members feel that the Roco Kwo Program activities strongly contributed to the changes they have experienced in relation to the enjoyment, support in their gardening and also using and applying new techniques for climate change adaptation.

1.1.9 Dressing well, and looking good

Women strive hard to look smart despite their workloads, when asked how they managed to do so the sense was that this is essential, “Smartness is not a choice but a must. “Women try to take a bath after gardening, before cooking and change into clean clothes and attend to their hair. Women ensure that their homes are clean and tidy. They believe that they need to look smart and have a

nice home despite the workload that they have. The majority of women, both in CARE VSLA and non CARE VSLAs report that their children and houses are clean all or most of the time.

Women were asked to rank how they felt about their self and community esteem now - 88.6% of CARE VSLA women and 72.8% of non CARE VSLA women ranked themselves now as very good or good. This represents an increase in self perception regarding self and community esteem compared to the ranking they gave themselves for 5 years ago when only 44.9 % of CARE VSLA women ranked themselves very good or good five years ago and 44.5 % of non CARE VSLA women. 75.7% of women in CARE VSLAs felt that the program activities contributed to this change.

1.1.10 Time to rest and relax

We asked women if they ever had any time to relax. They commented that women hardly ever find time to relax because they are busy the entire day. They usually rest at night when going to sleep and on Sunday because they don't do garden work on Sunday. Women were more likely to rank their situation now as more positive if they were in a CARE VSLA (77.8%) compared to non-CARE supported VSLA (57.8%). Over 70% of women (In CARE supported VSLAs) felt that the positive change in relation to their time to rest and relax was strongly linked to the Roco Kwo programme activities.

2 Introduction

The purpose of this initial brief qualitative report to CARE Austria is:

- To integrate the psychosocial dimension of Roco Kwo into the overall end line and analyze its contribution to the overall program objective.
- To analyze (to which extent) Roco Kwo's activities have contributed to increased psychosocial wellbeing of conflict-affected women.

The report is based on analysis of qualitative focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted in the WEP program areas by CARE Uganda staff. It was agreed with CARE Uganda that the qualitative research be conducted in all the programme districts. The sample was split into district, then parish, and village level. It was proposed that CARE Uganda and each Implementing Partner Organization (IPO) select the geographical sample for the study by ensuring each district sample covers:

- Both the central and outlier villages in each Parish;
- Villages where functionality of existing structures (networks, groups, programmes is represented;
- Capacity of local structures to mobilize various stakeholders in dealing with local level advocacy topics.

The key questions for analysis are

- What is the added value of the integration of the psychosocial dimension/ psychosocial activities for women's empowerment?
- The phase III of the program includes a learning component on the synergies between the different programmatic elements of our holistic women's empowerment program. Key areas of interest are
 - What are the impacts of having created a psychosocial support system for women's leadership and political participation
 - What are the impacts of having created a psychosocial support system for women's economic empowerment
- Which activities are considered most relevant by the program participants to improve psychosocial wellbeing of conflict-affected women?
 - Do they lead to what women themselves defined as psychosocial wellbeing in the program research study?
- How sustainable is the approach of working with community-based facilitators? (Acceptance by the community, willingness of the local authorities to financially support ps activities, is the program promoting social work?)

2.1 Overview of the WEP programme of support

The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) funded activities under Roco Kwo program have been streamlined together with the NORAD funded activities under the same program. The cross-country programme of CARE Austria is called claiming rights – promoting peace. Women's empowerment in conflict affected areas (Nepal, Burundi and Uganda). Roco Kwo program with funding from ADA focused on building capacities of the self-selected VSLA groups in psychosocial support, strengthening the psychosocial referral networks and lobbying Government and other service providers for provision of psychosocial services at the sub-county and district levels.

The expected result of the psychosocial component of the Roco Kwo programme is enhanced psychosocial wellbeing to people affected by conflict especially those experiencing stigmatization and rejection in Northern Uganda.

The results framework is set out below:

WEP II Expected results and activities

Results

1. People recovering from conflict especially women will have improved and sustained their economic livelihoods through village savings and loans associations (VSLA)
2. Enhanced psychosocial wellbeing to people affected by the conflict especially those experiencing stigmatization and rejection in northern Uganda
3. Women affected by conflict will have worked in partnership with women at the national level to advocate for implementation of UN SCR 1325
4. CARE and partners have documented and disseminated lessons learnt on women empowerment from the integrated program approach to enhance in-country and regional programming

Activities

1. Assess local psychosocial protective measures and psychosocial wellbeing in the local context.
2. Revise existing psychosocial support training curriculum according to findings and guidelines and make it user friendly.
3. Develop and share comprehensive training plans for community volunteers and mentors (identified trusted older, who will support a small group of assigned) women in psychosocial activities and emotional support.
4. Support all persons working at the frontline by training and other measures of maintaining their psycho-hygiene.
5. Support cultural leaders in promoting and encouraging truth telling and reconciliation
6. Making accessible a regularly updated map of mental, social medical or other specialized services and train them in referral mechanisms
7. Develop and conduct psycho-education sessions on reactions to stress, first interventions, and mental health for different audiences by using different means (drama, song, poems, media etc.)
8. Active integration of marginalized, persons suffering from mental symptoms related to the conflict or discrimination to join/form livelihood activity groups.
9. Assessing, and in coordination with other actors in the field, lobbying for effective measures to address the existing gap in mental health provision in Northern Uganda.

The programme approach for the psychosocial component is a holistic one – addressing agency, structural and relational aspects of women’s empowerment and through mainstreaming the strategic engagement of men to transform the gender power relations. CARE Austria defines a psychosocial approach as one that emphasizes the indivisibility of the individual with culture and community.² This psychosocial approach focuses on increasing the protective factors and reducing the risks to enhanced resilience (the capacity to survive and to even thrive in the presence of many risk factors) of individuals and looks in depth at those protective factors (factors which enable people to survive and thrive despite the effects of severe stress) such as:

- Ability to access whatever resources are available
- Ability to connect to other people and to form and maintain caring relationships over time
- Sense of self worth

² Bragin, M., Taaka, J. & Eibs, T. (2013). Conflict-Affected Women’s Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. Vienna and Kampala: CARE Österreich

- Sense of self efficacy
- Connection to community and culture
- Ability to think flexibly and or creatively
- Transcendent spiritual belief (religious political or other)
- Empathy
- Altruism

The psychosocial elements of Roco Kwo address women's empowerment to enable them to form relationships, exercise agency and work together with men to change those structural arrangements that are necessary to achieve power.³

In addition to war crimes committed against women in northern Uganda during the LRA conflict, women also endure SGBV and conflict in their daily lives. As CARE Austria describe in the project planning, "The conflict has had deep effects in the social fabric and produced a variety of additional stressors. The challenge is to cope with all these stressors and to be able to take up agency despite adverse conditions, in particular social connection"⁴. Roco Kwo and WEP II focus on providing traditionally anchored coping mechanisms to enable women to regain hope, self-worth and self-esteem. The project will also work on psychosocial reactions to stress with the aim to normalize reactions and to create a supportive environment. Persons in need for specialized services will be linked to respective institutions of support.

Research conducted by CARE in Northern Uganda in 2013⁵ was designed in order to establish the meaning of "psychosocial well-being" for conflict-affected Acholi women in the Acholi Sub-region of Uganda by Acholi women themselves. The research also identified culture-sensitive indicators for use in measuring the concept of psychosocial well being for conflict-affected women in the defined areas. The thematic areas of psychosocial wellbeing, which the study identified, include the following:

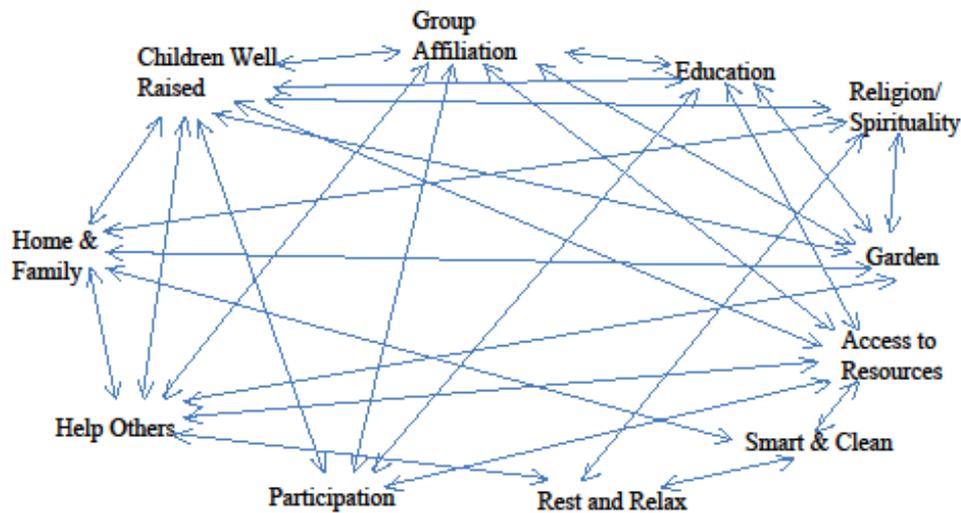
- Access to resources
- Religion and spirituality
- Raising children well
- Women's associations / VSLAs and clans / churches, others
- Good home and marriage
- Education
- Participation and advocacy
- Being able to help others
- The garden
- Dressing well, smart and looking good
- Time to rest and relax

These elements are set out below in **Figure 1**

³ Wurzer J., Martha Bragin: "Integrating a psychosocial dimension in Women's Empowerment Programs: A Guide for CARE Country Offices", Vienna 2009

⁴ CARE Austria, Roco Kwo ADA WEP II Final Proposal

⁵ Conflict-Affected Women's Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda



Source: Bragin, M., Taaka, J. & Eibs, T. (2013). Conflict-Affected Women's Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. Vienna and Kampala: CARE Österreich

2.2 Theory of Change and Mid Term Review

2.2.1 Peer support and information sharing

The theory of change for WEP is that women's **agency** in and after conflict is strengthened through enhanced psychosocial wellbeing and active integration into solidarity groups (with special emphasis on economic empowerment) and through locally determined psychosocial activities. The rationale is that VSLAs create space and time for women to **share information, experiences and get advice from their peers**. The programme design builds on this by including training for members of the VSLA groups in psychosocial support skills and information on existing referral services including health, justice, and security. The theory is that **peer support and information sharing** has a healing effect on women who have experienced violence in one form or the other. The MTR reported that psychosocial support interventions have been important in drawing out the strengths of impact group members and returnees and re-integrating them within the community, while also creating an environment of acceptance for them. While it is not easy to measure achievement in this area, observations from interaction and support that individuals provide to each other, openness in discussing traumatic situations and social tolerance is continuously demonstrated through the willingness to share and learn from others. The MTR also found that the emergence of informal counselling/mediation committee within each VSLA group (being led by women) has also played a key role in **reducing domestic violence** not only within impact group households but the entire community.

The MTR reported that the implementation of psychosocial support mechanisms, incorporating the community coping mechanism and drawing from their belief systems was found to be powerful in promoting community psychosocial wellbeing. The recommendation was made to continue identifying and strengthening **the traditional psychosocial support mechanisms** which go hand-in-hand with the **professional management of psychosocial issues** within communities.

Some gaps in implementation were also identified in the MTR, particularly due to the lack of adequate referral services, which means that community members with psychosocial issues are shunned, stigmatized and rejected. Sometimes it is difficult to find support for this nature of cases.

2.2.2 Economic empowerment: easing the psychological burden of poverty

Another pathway in the programme design is the assumption that **economic empowerment** of the victims of violence through VSLAs reduces the psychological burden which poverty creates. The mid-term review for WEP suggested that realizing the economic empowerment of survivors of SGBV **reduces the psychological burden associated with poverty** enabling women to address broader societal issues. The hypothesis being that economic empowerment is synonymous with **improved access to decision making processes** affecting their lives as well as improving their self-confidence and respect.

At the end point in the wider Roco Kwo evaluation, stakeholders interviewed felt that the theory of change has been realistic by ensuring a holistic approach to women's empowerment in Northern Uganda, and that the objectives remain valid and were achievable. They also felt that the ToC pathways have shown some breakthroughs, particularly through the engaging men element and the advocacy teams, with evidence of significant positive change in people's attitudes with regards to previously well-established cultural norms and values.

2.2.3 Engagement in Advocacy

The hypothesis also suggests that **women's human rights awareness raising** will be achieved through training, linkage of grassroots women's voices and needs to national and international level advocacy initiatives which will enable women over time to negotiate the **relational aspects of empowerment**, the structures around them and speak out for themselves. As the MTR highlights Government direct investment and support to GBV and psychosocial programming remains low. Services at points of referral are often not available or are inadequate. The structural support for referral needs to be addressed. The creation of new districts has compounded the need for administrative, operational and coordination needs and led to increased costs and a need to review program reach by the partners, further stretching the available support from CARE.

The programme encourages members of VSLAs to form **Common Interest Groups (Kacel)** as sub-groups that will be given support on a continuous basis and equipped with skills to **address issues of prevention and response to SGBV, women's participation in peace building, and psychosocial support**. Members of Kacel groups will conduct advocacy at the local and district levels, and they will be supported in some cases to do advocacy at the national level

3 Results

3.1 Impact: Women's leadership and political participation

The aim of the research is to reflect on the impacts of having created a psychosocial support system on women's leadership and political participation. In particular, how and to what extent do the psychosocial wellbeing activities affect women's political participation and leadership? The hypothesis suggests that **women's human rights awareness raising** will be achieved through training, linkage of grassroots women's voices and needs to national and international level advocacy initiatives which will enable women over time to negotiate the **relational aspects of empowerment**, the structures around them and speak out for themselves.

RocoKwo has a multi level approach to addressing issues of rights protection and involvement of women in decision-making at various levels. The program aims to strengthen the capacity of community groups at the grassroots level to have a voice and demand for bottom up consultation and accountability in all decision-making processes.⁶ RocoKwo's role has been to raise awareness, helping people understand their roles and how they can hold individuals responsible, creating avenues for individuals to practice lobby/advocacy - owning the issues and directing the agenda to cause change.

3.2 Political participation and leadership

At end line, CARE staff, stakeholders and beneficiaries were in broad agreement that the space for women's political participation has expanded since the programme began (in terms of agency, access, space to participate, achieved in part through engagement with local leaders) which has enabled CARE to leverage and advance this agenda from above (top down). Part of this approach was focused on capacity building sessions and training to **shift negative attitudes** that women are not able to lead. RocoKwo has helped women to acknowledge the importance of their rights to participation in leadership and governance of the society they live in, and the practical benefits if they engage.

At baseline, the qualitative results revealed mixed attitudes of men towards women's civic rights and participation. Women participation in the public sphere was perceived to challenge the normative status quo of women's subordinate position under patriarchy. It was also observed that there was a perception from male respondents that women's participation in public spheres may result into women neglecting their gender roles. Results from the baseline survey also showed that less than half of women who participated in decision-making bodies in their communities would suggest and advocate for inclusion of ideas during committee/group meetings. This was reported to be largely due to a lack of agency - lack of self-confidence in particular, among study respondents.

Part of the Roco Kwo approach was focused on capacity building sessions and training to shift negative attitudes that women are not able to lead. Stakeholders also highlight the work of engaging men in using role model men to change attitudes and make the space for participation for women safer, giving them the confidence to put themselves forward or speak up. Because of this, many women are able to openly and effectively participate in public events and activities and openly share views on important community activities. This has encouraged many women to have political aspirations and some are already in political leadership. IPOs also highlighted the benefits of community dialogues and couple seminars in breaking down barriers, changing attitudes and allowing women to join, speak up and take on leadership roles. Lastly, simply by sharing knowledge on, for example government policy on decision-

⁶ Care International in Uganda (2009) Roco Kwo (Transforming life) Program for the socio economic transformation of communities affected by conflict in Acholi sub-region.

making and leadership (e.g. 1/3 of the women to be in any committee structure), RocoKwo is felt by stakeholders to be working effectively in helping women to claim their rights.

The advocacy forums have had success in influencing rights or local service delivery, local councils felt that key areas of influence had been in relation to girl's education and in relation to access to quality services; for example the forums were also able raise quality of services following monitoring of service delivery at the health centre in Namukora, by identifying gaps such as understaffing and inadequacy of drugs. Stakeholders report concrete outcomes from the RocoKwo programme, including community participation in monitoring the implementation of newly passed laws, policies, or court decisions. Similarly the Local Council report that if there is an anomaly in the implementation of government projects such as construction of health Centre's, schools or other service delivery then the community members are keen to report this to the authorities. In relation to GBV the forums also had some success in in mapping areas where GBV is high and carried out sensitization activities in the area. Good practice elements, which may be replicated, include the formation of advocacy teams through which women are able to practice and model their leadership skills; in addition to exposure of the leaders and linking them to leadership institutions to advocate for issues that affect them.

Local councils report that the Roco Kwo programme has successfully mobilized key stakeholders on core topics, *"the Roco Kwo programme has mobilized the church, cultural leaders to advocate for gender equality - this has eased out work and we have become a louder voice in the community"*; similarly knowledge and behavior, with one local councilor commenting, ". There is now a bi-law for example that ensures that all children of school going age are sent to school."

CARE staffs recognize that the advocacy networks have mostly attracted those women with leadership positions in the community. These women are able to share the issues raised by members in the community, for discussion and debate in policy decision forums in the districts and sub-counties.

3.3 Engaging men

The research is also focused on how and to what extent do the activities under Engaging Men for gender equality, and other activities targeted at changing norms around gender, affect women's political participation and leadership?

A Role Model man

With the RocoKwo Program in 2009, there have been some positive changes especially in attitudes and perception of the men who had very negative attitudes towards women empowerment, power relations and issues of women's rights; because of the different capacity building through trainings under the different components;

Levels of conflict and SGBV have reduced, especially in the households subsequently leading to shared responsibilities at the household level and joint decision making by couples. Because of the VSLA methodology, there has been improvement in the level of unity among couples in the households and at community levels because there are a lot of other issues that group members discuss at their weekly meetings apart from savings, this allows them to share a lot about issues that concerns at individual, group and community level.

At personal level, the most significant for me has been the ability to help support other people in need of emotional and psychosocial support that I have gained because of the capacity building received under the RocoKwo; with my knowledge of Counselling, I was able to help one man in the community who wanted to commit suicide because of a domestic problem and saved his life. I gave him first aid and counselled him and because of the trust the community has in me as a Role Model Man, he was able to recollect himself and he was able to apologize to his family and started to live a normal life.

The qualitative results show broadly that the work of engaging men in using role model men to change attitudes and make the space for participation for women safer, giving them the confidence to put themselves forward or speak up. End line results from the qualitative interviews show that RocoKwo and WEP have achieved some gains in supporting the impact group in raising issues, which affect them - for example service delivery or community infrastructure. Women who have joined advocacy forums have had success in influencing rights or local service delivery; key areas of influence had been in relation to girl's education and in relation to access to quality services.

CARE staff also felt that their investment in specific male initiatives has helped to build men's agency – in terms of their own self-confidence and via the community recognition of their involvements and achievements as role models in the communities. Men who participate were felt to be more responsive and supportive of their spouses when talking about GBV and taking action via programmes or within the household. Religious leaders noted a reduction in “economic violence” as men are now the ones supporting their spouses to encourage them to save. There is the concept of indirect psychosocial support – some activities are not directly targeted to the actual person with a psychosocial problem but to her surrounding; by influencing the environment psychosocial wellbeing is strengthened, therefore engaging men and boy was considered crucial as women have raised particularly during the research study 2012 2013 that without men their situation would not change.

Respondents and stakeholders were largely positive that a shift in attitudes towards reporting on GBV cases of rape, sexual or physical assault has taken place since the Roco Kwo programme began; through the spirit of voluntarism against GBV, through advocacy, role model men, and also at a structural level whereby local councils and police have received training on GBV which means leaders are sensitized and more empathetic to those who report.

3.4 Impact: Economic empowerment

The research is also focused on

- How and to what extent do the psychosocial wellbeing activities affect women's access to and control over resources (i.e. economic empowerment)?
- What are the impacts of having created a psychosocial support system for women's economic empowerment?

The hypothesis being that economic empowerment is synonymous with **improved access to decision making processes** affecting their lives as well as improving their self-confidence and respect.

Example

A friend visited me and shared the importance of being in a group as build team spirit and provides psychosocial support through counselling and experience sharing. I was encouraged and joined but my worries continued on how to raise money in order to save in VSLA.

Through the initial imitative, I continued with quarry works, selling firewood and could raise sh.10.000/= a day could safe some in VSLA. My life changed after sharing the first cycle of which I raised sh. 230,000/=. I used part of it to when I pay school fees of my son in Senior One (S.I) Lec Secondary School who had stayed home for a year.

Through groups I learnt different skills in enterprise selection, resilient, how to support others through counselling, information sharing and communication skills. I have gained confidence in sharing my experiences with other women who are undergoing similar situations by encouraging them to believe in themselves in changing economic, social and psychological wellbeing. Rockwo has helped me acquire knowledge and skills on good farming practice like planting in lines, how to save money and build good relationship with others.

The qualitative end line results for the Roco Kwo programme reveal that the Roco Kwo programme, and the men engage programme in particular, has been effective in challenging the structural barriers, which allowed for example discrimination or denial of economic rights. The endline shows that shifts in perception and attitude have anecdotally taken place since baseline in understanding of household responsibilities and decision making, in the sense that women now negotiate from the point of view (which shows greater self esteem) that they are focused on achieving their aspirations, and, men see the need to contribute or else they find themselves, *“not relevant to the growth of their families.”*

3.5 Ability to cope with economic shocks

At the end of RocoKwo, the results indicate shifting perceptions and the ability of impact groups to deal with risk and economic shocks. At endline 88% of women have the capacity to cope with economic shocks, compared to 76.9% of women at baseline in 2009. VSLAs provide a positive coping mechanism for members, enabling them to save, access loans or emergency funding via their VSLA, meet new people and build their social and economic networks. The majority of women interviewed for the qualitative research feel that their vulnerability to shocks has reduced, as they are able to rely on the social safety net through emergency funds for example, which the VSLAs provide. By improving income security through diversification, income smoothing, improving agricultural production and greater control of their IGAs and involvement in economic decision making women report that they feel better able to cope with minor economic shocks. This includes some of the more vulnerable groups such as child headed households, widows and women affected by SGBV. For the majority, the main coping mechanisms in response to economic shocks are to borrow from their VSLA first. Over 65% of women have taken out loans with their VSLA, less than 2 % of women report that they have used other loan service providers such as SACCO, MFIs or formal banks.

The majority of women we interviewed for the qualitative element of the evaluation report some shifts in reducing their income vulnerability, for example through access to higher incomes and the social safety net which the VSLAs offer through insurance schemes and emergency funds for example. Some refer to the training they have received to improve their agricultural productivity as important in reducing their sense of vulnerability to economic shocks. Most women report that their main coping mechanisms in response to economic shocks is to borrow from their VSLA first, and then in many cases selling of assets.

There seems to be evidence, that increases in income leads to shift in decision-making power or at least intentions to participate in decision making, as women report a change in their understanding of their own abilities to generate income to meet basic needs, and changes in the way they are perceived in the household by other members now that they can generate income. Women report that the VSLA approach has given them the opportunity to save and access financial resources, which have contributed significantly to the economic wellbeing and food security within their households.

3.6 Engaging men and economic empowerment

The research is also interested in how and to what extent do the activities on Engaging Men for gender equality, as well as other activities targeting at changing norms around gender, affect women’s access to and control over resources (i.e. economic empowerment)?

Stakeholders interviewed for the qualitative end line felt that the Roco Kwo programme was able to challenge the structural barriers, which allowed for example discrimination or denial of **economic rights**. In practical terms this meant that there was a rise for example in the acceptance and ability of women to be elected as chairpersons and secretaries in VSLA and advocacy groups for example so that they could advocate on and for the economic rights of women in their VSLA and community.

Stakeholders also feel that the CARE added value also lies within the Male Engagement Initiative which has contributed in **breaking down some of the structural and cultural barriers** preventing realization of economic rights, *“because their spouses have been able to understand and appreciate the importance of*

joint decision making and information sharing in the households because of the work of the Role Model Men in the communities." This also helped to reduce negative consequences or fallout from the changes in decision-making and gender roles related to IGAs, savings and loans that can sometimes be an unintended consequence when decision making roles and balance of powers shift.

Stakeholders also comment that the changes in the economic power of women and the perceived successes of VSLAs has **inspired men to join VSLA groups**. The approach of the engaging men initiative has been effective both in terms of building and raising the status of the male role models, as CARE staff commented, "*their social status alludes to their success,*" in other words, they are respected and socially accepted; both fundamental elements in changing attitudes and bringing about change. In some cases it seems that work of the role model men is envied by other men in the community resulting in some **modeling behavior**, "compelling them to share responsibilities, information with their wives"; this has also reportedly increased the space in which women find freedom to interact with colleagues and other groups. IPOs report evidence that men have started involving their spouses in major household decision making because women also have a stake in the ownership of household resources such as livestock, agricultural produce, and household income. The men have also started respecting women's right to ownership of resources (previously woman's property would automatically belong to the husband). Stakeholders also report that there has been a noticeable shift in terms of attitudes towards livestock production, one local council officer commented, "*The perception that livestock rearing is for men has gradually died out and both men and women now own livestock.*"

It is clear that challenging gender roles and enhancing the economic power of women in the 7 districts in Northern Uganda is a sensitive area of programming. When asked if women should be able to own and control the same assets as men (land, harvest for example), women comment that yes, they should but they have to share decisions with their husbands or partners in order to prevent violence. As one lady commented, "*Yes, women can own productive assets provided the husband listens and respects her view. However in household where the husband is alcoholic, the woman has no voice or power.*" The majority of women we interviewed report that they are not able to make decisions about household assets without consulting anyone else in the household, with one qualifying that she couldn't otherwise it would cause violence in the family.

In another example, stakeholders report that there have been cases where men do not fully understand and therefore trust the role model men, and their work in the community which has resulted in household level conflict and in some cases violence against women in these households. There is a sense that this was during the early stages of the programme, as religious leaders report, "At the beginning of the programme men were left out as they targeted women of reproductive age only and was the main cause of GBV at household level within the community." There is also evidence that where male engagement has not been successful, VSLA money has created conflict in some households especially where a man is not in VSLA- with reports from IPOs that they simply "grab away money".

3.7 Relevance of the psychosocial wellbeing activities

The research also aims

- To reflect on which activities are considered most relevant by the program participants to improve psychosocial wellbeing of conflict-affected women?
- Do they lead to what women themselves defined as psychosocial wellbeing in the program research study?

As CARE Austria's psychosocial guidelines set out, researchers have recommended that in order to evaluate the effectiveness of psychosocial programs, we need to evaluate on three domains:

1) Skills and knowledge

- 2) Emotional well-being and
- 3) Psychological well-being as perceived by program participants and their communities⁷

At an individual level psychosocial wellbeing was originally planned to be assessed by **self-esteem** and on the social level, psychosocial wellbeing will be measured as **social connectedness**. The thematic areas of psychosocial wellbeing, which the study then identified, include the following:

1. Access to resources
2. Religion and spirituality
3. Raising children well
4. Women's associations / VSLAs and clans / churches, others
5. Good home and marriage
6. Education
7. Participation and advocacy
8. Being able to help others
9. The garden
10. Dressing well, smart and looking good
11. Time to rest and relax

3.7.1 Access to resources

In the CARE Austria research women identified within this area the following elements:

- Knowing one can provide for one's self and one's children
- Obtaining support when it is needed: having others to turn to
- Clan support
- Women's VSLA group support
- The garden: being able to obtain a good crop

Men were asked as part of the survey if they had visited the counseling unit of the program in the community for any psychosocial support. Only 12.4% of men (n= 78) reported accessing this service, all of whom were CARE VSL members. 17.7% (n=143) of women report that they have used a counseling centre, all of whom were CARE VSL members, with n = 125 or over 87% of these women reporting that they felt that they had been able to build up trust with the case managers at the centre, and 86.7% reporting that the counselor was able to find answers to some of their concerns.

In terms of signposting to counseling services, not all women responded, but of those who did, women reported that they had been linked to the counseling service largely through either VSL Group members or through friends, a few - less than 5% reported that role model men had recommended the counseling centre, and approximately 8% were linked via the CBF.

28.7% of men (n =180) reported that they were part of a psychosocial support group; again the majority (78%, n = 141) were also members of CARE VSL groups. Very few women surveyed reported membership of psychosocial groups (2.6%, n = 21).

The focus group discussions suggest that women have access to loans to start IGAs and access to social safety nets through emergency funds. Additionally, they have gained knowledge on savings and establishing Income Generating Activities (IGAs). In terms of access to resources and assets; the majority of women we interviewed report that they are not able to make decisions about household assets without consulting anyone else in the household, with most qualifying that they couldn't otherwise it would cause violence in the family. It seems that the threat of violence if women claim their economic

⁷ Bragin, M., Taaka, J. & Eibs, T. (2013). Conflict-Affected Women's Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. Vienna and Kampala: CARE Österreich

rights without permission remains a very real challenge for CARE. This is an important consideration and balance to strike in the programming for GEWEP, to ensure that there are no unintended negative consequences when economic power shifts within households.

In terms of clan support, the sense from the results are that that clan leaders are relatively selective about whom to support – for example widows or women who are facing serious illness or loss family members are often supported. Usually the support is only available to women who are fully married in the clan. The clan is seen as important, and playing an important role in the happiness of the women in the community. Support available from clans might include the offer of other clan member’s to help dig gardens; access to land, food or settling land disputes for example. One woman commented that support is available, but she was concerned that, “the constant is that there will never be a woman clan leader.”

3.7.2 Religion and spirituality

Religion and spirituality is seen as important. Women are very close to God as they pray to him for spiritual support. Women are very religious, they always pray on Sundays and do not do garden work on Sundays as a respect to God. One focus group commented that there are many religions (Women have now turned to God at different Christian dominations like the protestant, Catholics and the Born again) but on Sundays that all their fellow women first go to church before doing anything else regardless of what religion they subscribe to. One commented, “I think I can attribute this change to the knowledge women acquire especially from each other within the VSLA meetings”.

As Table 1 shows, women who responded to the survey feeling strongly that faith helps them to feel stronger and survive, with over 80% of women reporting that when all else fails they know that god is there. However, less than half of women go to religious or cultural leader for help. Less than half of women report that their sense of hope or belief in the future is linked to being able to have access to their land.

Table 1 Connections to transcendent belief systems

		As %			
		All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)				
Connections to transcendent belief systems					
CARE VSLA	My faith helps me to survive	35.5	50.6	13.2	0.6
Non CARE VSLA		35.5	48.4	7.2	0.1
CARE VSLA	When I think about my faith I feel stronger	38.9	51.0	9.7	0
Non CARE VSLA		36.1	48.7	14.4	0.6
CARE VSLA	I can go to my religious or cultural leaders for help any time	14.1	31	34.9	19.8
Non CARE VSLA		13.2	30.1	29.5	26.5
CARE VSLA	When all else fails me I know that God is there	44.3	45.5	9.9	0
Non CARE VSLA		37.9	41.5	20.4	0
CARE VSLA	Now that I am back on my land, I feel that I can have hope	14.1	31.0	34.9	19.8
Non CARE VSLA		13.2	30.1	29.5	26.5
CARE VSLA	My husband sits with me at the evening fireplace and	11.2	39.3	29	5.3

Non CARE VSLA	teaches the children	4.2	31.9	39.7	10.8
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50.5 % of women in CARE VSL groups report their current situation is very good or good, compared to the same group of women (49.3 %)who ranked their situation five years ago, so women in CARE VSLs feel their context and situation in relation to religion and spirituality has improved marginally 25.% report that this change is down to the program activities, and a quarter of women feel that the program contributed significantly to this change, and 71% felt that Roco Kwo had some contribution to the changes.

36.1 % of women in non CARE VSL groups ranked their current situation very good or good compared to 46 % of women in non CARE VSLA groups, suggesting that women in non CARE VSLAs feel that their connection to transcendent belief systems has weakened over the past 5 years.

Table 2 Ranking - Connections to transcendent belief systems

Religion and spirituality		As %			
		Very good	Good	Okay	Not good
	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)				
CARE VSLA	Concerning “your religion and spirituality” – please rank your overall situation now	11.2	39.3	29	5.3
Non CARE VSLA		4.2	31.9	39.7	10.8
CARE VSLA	Concerning “your religion and spirituality” how would you rank the situation five years ago?	8.4	40.9	40.3	8.4
Non CARE VSLA		8.4	39.6	34.7	18.4
		Moderate	A little	Quite a bit	So much
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	30.4	40.6	20	5.3
Non CARE VSLA		12.6	12.6	7.2	16.2

3.7.3 Raising children well

The qualitative interviews show that women all report that they do not differentiate when paying fees for their children, “our girls just like the boys are equally sent and paid fees at school.” There is a sense amongst the impact group that if income increased, then the focus is on ensuring all children stay in school. Indeed women report that reduced vulnerability to economic shocks, and raised incomes has had an impact on the levels of GBV in some households because school fees can be settled. Some women report that they are now better able to pay school fees for both boys and girls through borrowing from the VSLA, which had not been the case before the Rokokwo program. They report that this has eliminated and reduced violence in many households because finance, and school fees in particular were felt to be a significant cause of violence.

The research also showed that women feel that they never had time to connect with their children because of the workload that they had to do in the home. With the role model initiative, some men’s

attitudes have changed and are supporting women to reduce their workload. They are thus able to find time to be with their children.

Interviews with women at endline stage reveal that some are very much more involved in their children's education as they consider it very important for a child's future because, "education helps a child to become independent." They also report an increasing emphasis over the last four years to involve children in household decision making, commenting, "women see that educated children bring dignity to the parents and the family at large." Many women also report that their elder children are always consulted on major household decisions.

As Table 3 shows, a higher proportion of women in CARE VSLAs report that their children are in school all or most of the time (82.8%) than non CARE VSLA members (64.4%). It seems this may be linked to the subsequent statement, where women in CARE VSLAs are more likely to report that they are able to find a way to pay school fees all or most of the time (72.3%) compared to non CARE VSLA members (63.8%). The majority of women are confident that when their children are grown that their children will care for them.

18.7% of CARE VSLA members are confident that Roco Kwo activities contributed significantly (and 76.9% felt that Roco Kwo made a moderate contribution) to the changes they have experienced in relation to keeping their children in school and paying school fees.

Table 3 Hopefulness

	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
Children who are able to go beyond where I am in life					
CARE VSLA	My children are in school	24.7	58.1	10.4	2.3
Non CARE VSLA		13.2	51.2	14.4	4.8
CARE VSLA	I have a way to pay school fees	15.2	57.1	19.6	3.3
Non CARE VSLA		9	54.8	18	4.8
CARE VSLA	When my children are grown they will care for me	11.2	65	21.3	0.5
Non CARE VSLA		6.6	60.8	28.9	1.2
		Moderate	A little	Quite a bit	So much
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	31.4	45.5	14.4	4.3
Non CARE VSLA		7.2	19.2	8.4	16.2

Other interviews and focus group discussion support this sense that changes in household decision making has also led to more transparency and sharing of roles and responsibilities between men and women in upbringing of the children too. Most felt it was the women who were managing their

children's hygiene, but that with the help of the role model men, some men are now changing seeing what the role model men are doing and collecting water, and helping bath the children.

A few women indicated that their husbands take time to engage their children but many also suggested that it is still usually women who engage with children the most, as they are always home with the children. There was a sense from the focus group discussions that girls are more likely to talk with their mothers, and fathers with their sons, "Boys are most times favored and considered by the fathers than the girls." Other women lamented that, "Fire place lessons are rare now days but yes father sometimes have time with their children but most time with the boys to talk to them and teach them lessons of life." However, as one focus group summarized, "there are of course differences since boys and girls are trained differently but due to the changes from Rocokwo the trend is changing and both boys, girls and parents engage them equally."

81.6% of CARE VSL members are able to send the children in their care to school all or most of the time, compared to 64.4% of women in non CARE VSLA groups. The majority of women surveyed reported that they have happy time with their children laughing and talking, and are positive that there is a perception that their children exhibit good behavior.

Table 4 Raising Children Well

	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)	All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
Children growing well					
CARE VSLA	I am able to send the children in my care to school	25	56.6	13.1	2
Non CARE VSLA		10.8	53.6	19.3	4.2
CARE VSLA	Me and the children laugh and talk together	20.5	56.9	20.8	0.1
Non CARE VSLA		20.4	50.6	23.4	0
CARE VSLA	Others praise me for the good behaviour of my children	13.4	59.6	24.7	0.3
Non CARE VSLA		7.2	52.4	31.9	1.2
CARE VSLA	My children's behaviour mirrors my good parenting when they are out	16.1	65.7	16.3	0.1
Non CARE VSLA		11.4	58.4	22.2	0.6
CARE VSLA	The children in my care show love and affection to me	24	63.1	11	0.1
Non CARE VSLA		17.4	63.8	13.2	0

As Table 5 shows women in CARE VSL groups the majority of women rank their situation in relation to raising their children as very good or good, compared to five years ago when 58.5% gave the same assessment, and non CARE VSLA members also ranked their situation 5 years ago less positively (49.4%).

Table 5 Ranking – Raising Children Well

Children growing well	
	As %

	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)	Very good	Good	Okay	Not good
CARE VSLA	Concerning “the growing of your children” with five years ago how would you rank the situation now	30.6	66.7	1.3	1.3
Non CARE VSLA		17.5	74.7	2.4	5.4
CARE VSLA	Concerning “the growing of your children” with five years ago how would you rank the situation five years ago.	7.2	51.3	23	6.9
Non CARE VSLA		2.4	47	29.5	4.2
		Moderate	A little	Quite a bit	So much
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change? (High no response 65.1%)	10.8	24	42.2	18.3
Non CARE VSLA		2.4	12	13.9	6.6

3.7.4 Women’s associations / VSLAs and clans / churches, others

Broadly women interviewed for the qualitative research at endline felt that the most relevant parts of the program in terms of improving their psychosocial wellbeing were the emotional and social support structures formed within the group, one commented, “Being members of a group has enabled women gained confidence in themselves and on fellow women.”

Other elements of the support such as the drama groups were also viewed positively. For example some women reported using the drama group to educate the community on issues such as SGBV. Others reported that they had better knowledge themselves of certain issues as a result of the Music, Dance and Drama, debates and dialogue meetings held by CARE and its IPOs.

Counseling offered by CARE was also seen to be highly relevant, “the improvement in my self- esteem because of the counseling I got from the program through my fellow colleagues in the program; this has opened my mind and I started valuing myself and realized I have a lot of potentials in me and a bright future. Additionally the trainings and sensitizations on peaceful existence have tremendously reduced the levels of GBV in the households. It has also given women confidence to participate in community meetings and leadership positions.

3.7.5 Good home and marriage

In terms of happy marriage indicators, women in the pre study felt that key indicators were the ability to solve problems through discussion; Love; mutual understanding and trust; good sex; working together and freedom from alcoholism.

Women interviewed for the endline qualitative research reported that the most important elements for a good home and marriage were mutual understanding and trust and harmony. Women commented that, “A good home has mutual understanding among members, spouses are married and wedded in church and children of that particular family are either educated or going to school.” Education and healthy children were also felt to be important as well as a clean home. The endline shows that mutual decision-making has increased in some cases, women’s voices are increasingly heard in household matters, and they also have control over resources in their household.

There is also a sense that some women feel that their husbands listen to the opinion of their wives and take them into consideration, with trust reported to be now more visible between many couples – evidenced by their actions of joint decision making.

Interviewers asked women if men and women take equal responsibility for the wellbeing of the family, most women report that they feel they have a bigger share of the responsibility for the wellbeing of their family. In terms of good sex, some women felt that they were able to find time to enjoy sex with their partners or husbands, but that it is the men who usually make decisions about sex, and in some cases this suggested that marital rape fuelled by alcoholism exists, with one reporting, "No enjoyment especially with alcoholic men who do not respect sexual rights of women (use of force)."

3.7.6 Freedom from anxiety, worry and fear

The majority of women report that they feel safe in their community and at home all or most of the time. 13.2 % of women in non CARE VSLAs report that they only feel safe some or not at all of the time. The majority of women in both CARE VSLs and non CARE VSLs report that they feel accepted by others, as part of the community.

3.7.7 Sustaining Human Connections

As Table 6 shows, in relation to a loving home and family, around two thirds of women report that they solve their problems through discussion. Over 78% of women feel that their marriage is recognized by the community. Just under half of women feel that their husband loves them and she loves him and they just under half feel that they can enjoy each other sexually when the children are asleep. Around 67% of women in CARE VSLA (and 62 % of women in non CARE VSLA groups) report that their husband and they share the work in the garden. Women in CARE VSLA were more likely to agree that their husband understands them and when he is there they do not feel alone

Table 6 Women's response to statements about Freedom from anxiety, worry and fear and sustaining human connections

		As %			
		All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)					
Freedom from anxiety, worry and fear					
Peace and security in my home and in my community and my country					
CARE VSLA	I feel safe in my community	39.0	53.4	6.9	0.7
Non CARE VSLA		32.5	56.6	8.4	2.4
CARE VSLA	I feel safe in my home	37.3	55.1	6.7	0.7
Non CARE VSLA		28.9	57.8	12	1.2
CARE VSLA	I feel accepted by others, as part of the community	33.6	58.8	7.4	0.2
Non CARE VSLA		28.9	60.2	10.8	1.2
Sustaining Human Connections					
Loving home and family					
CARE VSLA	My husband and I solve our problems through discussion	19.2	44.7	18.3	2.0
Non CARE VSLA		15.1	46.4	24.7	1.2
CARE VSLA	My husband loves me, and I love him	19.5	48.6	13.3	2.4

Non CARE VSLA		20.5	46.4	17.5	1.8
CARE VSLA	My husband and I share the work in the garden	18.8	48.2	12.8	3.0
Non CARE VSLA		13.3	48.8	19.9	4.8
CARE VSLA	When the children are asleep my husband and I enjoy each other sexually	6.7	33.4	36.5	3.5
Non CARE VSLA		3.0	40.4	38.6	2.4
CARE VSLA	Our marriage is recognized by the community	33.4	45.2	5.2	0.7
Non CARE VSLA		33.7	45.8	7.8	1.8
CARE VSLA	My husband understands me and when he is there I am not alone	16.3	51.8	13.4	2.4
Non CARE VSLA		12.7	51.2	21.1	1.8

In relation to having a loving home and family, CARE VSLA members (76.9 %) were more likely to rank their situation now as better than non CARE VSLA members (69.3 %). 54.9 % of CARE VSLA members ranked their situation five years ago to be OK or not good, compared to 50% of women in CARE VSLA groups. 72.6 % of women in CARE groups report that the program activities made the happen change, or at least contributed to it.

Table 7 Having a loving home and family. Please rank your overall situation concerning this category

		As %			
		Very good	Good	Okay	Not good
CARE VSLA total n 595					
Non CARE VSLA n 166					
Not stated n 46 (not included)					
CARE VSLA	"Having a loving home and family" rank it now	12.4	64.5	11.3	3.5
Non CARE VSLA		6.6	62.7	13.9	7.8
CARE VSLA	"Having a loving home and family" rank the situation five years ago.	2.5	36	33.6	21.3
Non CARE VSLA		1.8	37.3	36.1	13.9
		It made it happen	Quite a bit	Little	Not at all
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	32.8	39.8	13.6	4.5
Non CARE VSLA		12.7	14.5	7.2	15.7

3.7.8 Education

The Care study⁸ interviewed Acholi women who identified the following elements of education as relevant to track:

- Acquisition of knowledge, skills
- Access to information
- Knowledge about agriculture for the soil and climate

⁸ Bragin, M., Taaka, J. & Eibs, T. (2013). Conflict-Affected Women's Perceptions of Psychosocial Well-being in the Acholi Sub-Region of Northern Uganda. Vienna and Kampala: CARE Österreich

- Men must be informed and acquire knowledge, “If we want to be well the men need to have education and access and be included in all things”.

“I think the most significant change is that of women acquiring education because it has very many long term positive effects in our communities and in the lives of the new generation to come.” Respondent, Acholi 2014.

The researchers asked if women here have aspirations to learn something? The main areas of interest reported included business skills, modern farming techniques, mechanics, brick laying, handcrafts, pottery, hair dressing, tailoring and knitting. However there was sense that the opportunities to learn these skills do not exist within their communities. It was also suggested that even if there were opportunities, women would not have the time to attend any training because they cannot leave the family alone to go and study. Some women reported however that through their VSLA and the WEP Roco Kwo programme they have been able to benefit from training on VSLA; and also counseling. Literacy was reported to be a key barrier to accessing and benefitting from learning opportunities.

Women interviewed at baseline report that opportunities for learning that have been created, and that while some women have taken advantage of this opportunity and attended, other women could not take advantage of opportunities because they cannot leave their homes. Additionally, other men intentionally deny women this opportunity. Gaps still remain in the types of IGA skills, which women would like to access such as catering and hairdressing.

In the theory of change for the Roco Kwo programme there was the assumption that increased savings and economic wellbeing will allow women to send their girls to school. It is interesting to see that women interviewed for the qualitative research groups all report that they do not differentiate when paying fees for their children, “our girls just like the boys are equally sent and paid fees at school.” There is a sense amongst the impact group that if income increased, then the focus is on ensuring all children stay in school.

Researchers also asked women if they feel that they have access to important information (e.g. on farming, health...) and what are women’s main sources of information. Radios, community meetings, local leaders and the informal “grape vine” are seen to be the main sources of information on farming and health and behavioural change. Information on climate change was also via radio, community leaders, meetings or via friends.

There is a sense that men have better access to information because they usually attend meetings compared to women and move with their radios when they leave home; however they often share the information they hear with women and children. Women perceive that men are better able to get information from additional sources, which they cannot such as drinking places and other organisations when they go for community meetings like National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS).

3.7.9 Participation and advocacy

- To be seen and heard
- To represent self and others
- To advocate for one’s own ideas

This area has been explored more expansively in section 2.1 above, but broadly women in focus group discussions report that as a result of the Roco Kwo WEP programme community sensitizations and the trainings, women have become very confident in speaking in public about their concerns and stand for leadership positions. Women have built confidence in speaking in public gatherings and meetings and their views are considered important in planning process, helping to inform some policy makers. One lady commented, “Women nowadays compete with men in leadership and political positions!” Other women reported that women are being elected as clan leaders, which used not to happen in the past.

“Women of this community raised their voices and the women got elected as oriented farmers because in the past it was only men who were in that position.” There is a sense from women that when some women have been given the opportunity to be seen and heard, this has inspired many women to join different community campaigns.

At baseline and before WEP and Roco Kwo were implemented it was recognized by women that some men did not allow their wives to attend community meetings or stand for leadership. This attitude was perceived to have changed gradually with the WEP community awareness raising exercises and also the work of the engaging men programme.

Conflict affected women (Reporters) also stress the value of the advocacy forums in raising voices on issues affecting women and children. One commented, “The advocacy forum did a lot of sensitization thus reducing stigmatization. E.g. on LRA returnee, a practical example is me! The advocacy forum boosted my morale to participate in group activities, but before Rokokwo support, I had a lot of fears.” Researchers asked what the main joint women’s issues are, and whether any women had raised the issues. The main areas of concern seem to be service delivery (schools, education, water) and land disputes. Women seem to have tried to raise the issues via community meetings, or with local or religious leaders. They had also tried alternative methods for advocacy such as the use of song.

As Table 8 shows, women in CARE VSLA groups are more likely (71%) to report that they are seen and heard in clan or other family meetings, compared to women in non CARE VSLA (57.8%). 69% of CARE VSL members, compared to 55.3% of non CARE VSL members report that they feel able to represent themselves at meeting all or most of the time; a higher proportion of CARE VSL members also report that they feel able to represent others at meetings, compared to non CARE VSL members. Over half (54.5%) of CARE VSL members feel able to advocate for their ideas all or most of the time, compared to 39.7% of non CARE VSL members. The majority of women agree that all or most of the time they respect and protect the rights of others.

Table 8 Self and Community Efficacy

		As %			
CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)		All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
Self and Community Efficacy					
CARE VSLA	I am seen and heard in clan or other family meetings	17.6	53.4	26.5	1.8
Non CARE VSLA		6	51.8	34.3	6.6
CARE VSLA	I can represent myself at meetings	22.1	47.5	26.5	3.5
Non CARE VSLA		12.6	42.7	37.9	6.6
CARE VSLA	I can represent others at meetings	17.3	39.6	36.6	6
Non CARE VSLA		8.4	32.5	43.9	15
CARE VSLA	I can advocate for my ideas	12.4	42.1	41.5	3.6
Non CARE VSLA		5.4	34.3	45.1	15
CARE VSLA	I try to respect and protect the rights of others	25	58.4	15.9	0.5
Non CARE VSLA		21.6	51.8	24.6	1.8

CARE VSLA	I can advocate for the things that I am entitled to	13.9	44.3	36.4	5
Non CARE VSLA		9.6	35.5	46.3	8.4

Women at endline perceive that their current situation in relation to self and community efficacy is overall more positive (86.3% CARE VSL members, 62 % non CARE VSL members) compared to five years ago when only 41.2 % (CARE) and 41.3% ranked their situation to be good or very good. Of the CARE VSL members, 77.7% perceive that the program activities contributed to this change – made it happen or contributed “quite a bit.”

Table 9 Self and community efficacy. Please rank your overall situation concerning this category

		As %			
		Very good	Good	Okay	Not good
CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)					
CARE VSLA	“Self and community efficacy” - please rank your overall situation now	13.9	72.4	11.5	1.8
Non CARE VSLA		6.6	55.4	29.5	7.8
CARE VSLA	“Self and community efficacy” how would you rank the situation five years ago.	2.1	39.1	36.9	21.6
Non CARE VSLA		1.8	39.5	38.5	18
		It made it happen	Quite a bit	Little	Not at all
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	35.7	42	17.6	3
Non CARE VSLA		10.8	12.6	10.2	14.4

3.7.10 Being able to help others

The qualitative results show that women have become very much involved in groups and organizations outside the family. Some of these include drama groups, which sensitize people on non-violence in the community; plus dance and VSLA groups. Involvement in these groups has reportedly increased the level of solidarity of women as they start to take part in activities, and see progress when working together as a group. Membership of various groups has enabled women to support each other financially and emotionally. Women are able to help others by counseling and any farming activities, and they use the VSLA meetings as a platform to share their problems and find solutions hence they do not feel isolated anymore.

The level of solidarity between women has improved by other women becoming members of groups like VSLA and drama groups that did not exist before WEP. Women share experiences and get counseling during these meetings. Before, women used not to gather into groups like now. The VSLA has not only improved women’s access to finance but also improved attitudes towards each other. As one VSLA member commented, “In case of any issue /problem we now convene than seek help from outside.”

3.7.11 The garden

The garden is considered the major source of livelihood for women by many of the women interviewed; as one lady commented, “Everyone is supposed to have a garden in her home as you cannot stay in the

village without one.” It means having enough food items for the family; the ability to send children to school; staying together and working together as a family.

Interviews with women suggest that there is a perception now that women cultivate for consumption and sale differently. This has improved planning for other things like school fees and it has also ensured relative food security in their homes. Interviewers asked women if men and women take equal responsibility for the wellbeing of the family, and the garden. There is a sense that this is a joint responsibility for husband and wife to take care of, "Yes, work in the garden is together." Women felt that men working alongside women in the garden ensures a bigger harvest, brings harmony in the home and because working together is the best thing to do in a community like this, one commented. As Table 10 shows, the majority of women enjoy working in the garden all or most of time, in fact a higher proportion of CARE VSLA (92.2 %) versus non CARE VSLA (84.3 %) members reported this. A higher proportion of CARE VSLA members (62.7%) also reported that their husband and sons participate in the garden activities with them and their daughters compared to 48.1 % of non CARE VSLA members. In relation to climate change, over 50% of women report that they are learning how to grow crops that resist climate change and gardening methods to address climate change.

Over 20% of CARE VSLA members feel that the Roco Kwo Program activities strongly contributed to the changes they have experienced in relation to the enjoyment, support in their gardening and also using and applying new techniques for climate change adaptation.

Table 10 The garden

		All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)				
	Garden				
CARE VSLA	I enjoy working in the garden	34.4	57.8	6.7	0.5
Non CARE VSLA		27.1	57.2	12.6	2.4
CARE VSLA	I am learning how to grow crops that resist climate change am learning different gardening methods to address climate change	13.2	43.8	28.7	13.6
Non CARE VSLA		4.8	42.1	27.7	24.6
CARE VSLA	The men in my life are learning different gardening methods to address climate change	No responses recorded in data file to this question (Q 202)			
Non CARE VSLA					
CARE VSLA	My husband and sons participate in the garden activities with me and my daughters	11	51.7	19.6	3.1
Non CARE VSLA		4.2	43.9	31.3	4.8
		It made it happen	Quite a bit	A Little	Not at all
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	31.5	44.2	18.3	2.3
Non CARE VSLA		7.2	18.6	7.8	16.2

Strengthened cohesion between VSLA members has also led to an increase in-group farming, enabling some women to increase their garden space and corresponding harvest yields have increased. In some areas such as Kitgum, agricultural productivity gains have been hampered by serious droughts which have destroyed crops, but perceptions of vulnerability to economic shocks are more positive on the whole, one Reporter commented, *“at least I can afford to overcome any shocks, as I now have some assets which I can sell off to help me overcome crisis.”*

Women report that they have been able to use their savings to pay other group members to help them maintain their gardens, saving time. Training in agronomy has reportedly helped group members monitor their agricultural activities.

3.7.12 Dressing well, and looking good

Women strive hard to look smart despite their workloads, when asked how they managed to do so the sense was that this is essential, “Smartness is not a choice but a must. “Women try to take a bath after gardening, before cooking and change into clean clothes and attend to their hair. Women ensure that their homes are clean and tidy. They believe that they need to look smart and have a nice home despite the workload that they have. There is a perception that frequent gatherings mean that a nice home is essential to maintaining good social relationships within the community.

As Table 11 shows, 70 – 80% of women feel that they are beautiful, and able to dress nicely most or all of the time, and that people see that they are smart when they go out. The majority of women, both in CARE VSLA and non CARE VSLAs report that their children and houses are clean all or most of the time.

Table 11 Self and Community Esteem

	CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)	As %			
		All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
Self and Community Esteem					
CARE VSLA	I feel that I am beautiful	30.7	52.6	15.4	0.8
Non CARE VSLA		31.3	45.7	20.4	1.2
CARE VSLA	I am able to dress nicely	15.4	63.8	19.8	0.8
Non CARE VSLA		13.2	60.2	25.3	0.6
CARE VSLA	People see that I am smart when I go out	12.1	62	25.5	0.3
Non CARE VSLA		9.6	58.4	31.9	0
CARE VSLA	I am able to bathe and be clean	29	57.3	13.6	0
Non CARE VSLA		29.5	46.3	24	0
CARE VSLA	My children are clean	22.3	60	16.4	0
Non CARE VSLA		22.2	58.4	16.8	1.2
CARE VSLA	My house is clean and orderly	25.7	62.6	11.2	0.1
Non CARE VSLA		24.6	56.6	18.6	0

Women were asked to rank how they felt about their self and community esteem now - 88.6% of CARE VSLA women and 72.8% of non CARE VSLA women ranked themselves now as very good or good. This represents an increase in self perception regarding self and community esteem compared to the ranking they gave themselves for 5 years ago when only 44.9 % of CARE VSLA women ranked themselves very good or good five years ago and 44.5 % of non CARE VSLA women. 75.7% of women in CARE VSLAs felt that the program activities contributed to this change.

Table 12 Self and Community Esteem

		As %			
CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)		Very good	Good	Okay	Not good
CARE VSLA	Overall ranking now	11.5	77.1	10.7	0.5
Non CARE VSLA		9.6	63.2	24.6	1.8
CARE VSLA	Overall ranking five years ago	3.6	41.3	38.6	16.3
Non CARE VSLA		3.6	40.9	41.5	10.8
		It made it happen	Quite a bit	Little	Not at all
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	35.1	40.6	18.1	4
Non CARE VSLA		10.2	16.8	8.4	12

3.7.13 Time to rest and relax

We asked women if they ever had any time to relax. They commented that women hardly ever find time to relax because they are busy the entire day. They usually rest at night when going to sleep and on Sunday because they don't do garden work on Sunday. Approximately 60% of women report that they can only find moments in their life when they can just sit down and relax some of the time, and around 5% report that they never find the time.

Table 13 Time to rest and relax

		As %			
CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)		All of the time	Most of the time	Some of the time	Not at all
	Time to rest and relax				
CARE VSLA	There are moments in my life when I can just sit down and relax	4.2	34.2	58.3	3.1
Non CARE VSLA		2.4	30.7	61.4	5.4

In terms of ranking their time to rest and relax 5 years ago, 40.9% of women in CARE VSLA groups report that they felt the situation was positive (good or very good) compared to 34.3% of women in non CARE VSLA groups. Women were more likely to rank their situation now as more positive if they were in a CARE VSLA (77.8%) compared to non CARE supported VSLA (57.8%). Over 70% of women (In CARE

supported VSLAs) felt that the positive change in relation to their time to rest and relax was strongly linked to the Roco Kwo programme activities.

Table 14 Time to rest and relax

		As %			
CARE VSLA total n 595 Non CARE VSLA n 166 Not stated n 46 (not included)		Very good	Good	Okay	Not good
CARE VSLA	Overall ranking now	5.2	72.6	18.8	3.1
Non CARE VSLA		2.4	55.4	32.5	9.6
CARE VSLA	Overall ranking five years ago	1.3	39.6	37.3	21.6
Non CARE VSLA		1.2	33.1	45.1	18.6
		It made it happen	Quite a bit	Little	Not at all
CARE VSLA	How much did the program activities contribute to this change?	30.9	40	21.8	4.3

3.8 Sustainability

How sustainable is the approach of working with community-based facilitators? (Acceptance by the community, willingness of the local authorities to financially support psychosocial activities, is the program promoting social work?)

The approach to Counseling by a task force to provide emotional support was felt to be effective, particularly because community volunteers work very closely with local leaders and with other key stakeholder groups. The community leaders who were trained during the program are continuing to sensitize people and counsel those that need emotional support, which is a positive indicator of sustainability.

The organization and lifting of advocacy on women's problems to advocacy forum members and community-based facilitators (?) also raises hopes that these structures will continue to support psychosocial issues in the future, beyond the life of the programme. Encouraging men and women with similar psychological problems into self-support groups' was felt by stakeholders and women to bring hope and mutual solution finding. "People in self-help groups frequently share on their problems which makes the problems seen light hence fostering resilience".

There is also a suggestion from the wider Roco Kwo endline research that some of the focus group discussions that the gains achieved by the role model men are not always sustainable, "they are mentoring households to reduce violence though some have fallen back to drinking alcohol and abusers of domestic violence leading to their failure. The suggestion is the "need for continuous training and sensitization because people forget." Focus groups in Gulu and Nwoya also suggest that a minority of role model men are not functioning effectively as, "some backslide or are the worst perpetrators of violence, "Some have not even been in the field to conduct any sensitization". However its clear that this is a minority and for the most part the engaging men strategy has been highly effective.

3.9 Added value of the psychosocial dimension for women's empowerment

What is the added value of the integration of the psychosocial dimension/ psychosocial activities for women's empowerment?

Women felt that the project has used innovative approaches to support psychosocial wellbeing within the wider framework for empowerment. Formalized support through service provider (IPOs) varied; for example Para-legal FSKAPAWA and CPC provided psychosocial support in case of land wrangles or in cases of gender based violence. Other IPOs such as FOKAPAWA provided psychosocial support in GBV or in cases of child abuse.

The use of Community theatre was felt to be very helpful in helping people understand a concept and helping to change attitudes regarding sensitive issues. Women recommended that for future programming, CARE spread the training and sensitization to other women in the community who did not benefit in the previous project. There was also felt to be a need for additional training for local leaders and structures for referral of psychosocial cases; and an increase coverage and volume of counselors trained in the community to ensure efficient and adequate PSS provision.

3.9.1 VSLA: Social Cohesion

The benefits of the VSLA approach as an entry point and model for empowering women are compelling; the self selection of members means that a certain level social cohesion and ease of mobilization already exist. Local councils report that VSLA's not only benefit their members, but also produce wider ripple effects; with members mobilizing community members in areas such as community development or finance issues. This highlights the effectiveness of using VSLAs as a point of intervention, with unintended effects felt more widely into the community.

Most VSLAS have strict eligibility criteria, which often requires members to be recommended by others and secondly that they should be able to save. All impact group members we spoke with report that their groups are closed to people who are "loan defaulters, liars or violent." There is a sense that the existing members rely on trust and understanding the record and status of their members and potential new members. This excludes those who are relatively new in the community with reduced social and economic networks; but clearly the value of self-selected groups cannot be underestimated.

For the Roco Kwo baseline, The majority of women interviewed agreed with the statement that they have a good social network in the community, are happy with their own involvement in funeral associations, informal women's support groups, etc, and that community members are ready to support [them] in case of shock or crisis etc. Social cohesion is the key intervening variable between social capital and violent conflict, and it is in the nature and quality of relationships across people and groups in society, including the state that we begin to understand its strength. VSLAs offer a focused approach to bring community members together to build interpersonal trust (social capital) in particular for groups such as reporters or IDPs who may have experienced reintegration challenges within the community. For convergence to occur, different groups need to see that it is better to collaborate than to be in conflict, so becoming a member of VSLA in Northern Uganda can be an indicator of improving social cohesion.⁹ At end line, there is evidence that the VSLAs have also fostered social cohesion among community members by the fact that many issues that affect the community are discussed, and involve wider community members.

⁹ (2012) Societal Dynamics and Fragility. Engaging Societies in Responding to Fragile Situations. Summary Report World Bank

3.9.2 Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) has been identified by women of Northern Uganda as the second most significant challenge facing them (besides poverty).¹⁰ Men's traditional masculine identities to protect and provide for families have been destabilized by prolonged experience of conflict, and life in IDP camps. Alcoholism and SGBV has increased, as, "Violence has become a means for men to assert themselves at a time of great social change and personal disempowerment."¹¹ Disagreements over schedules, activities and priorities, money, saving and spending, and division of labour and responsibilities are often associated with violence, aggravated by husbands' alcoholism.¹² This was also supported by the qualitative research, with women in focus group discussions often referring to the constant threat of violence at a domestic level in particular, if they challenged norms, attitudes or practices.

Impact group member Koro sub county

I was captured by the LRA rebels in 1988 when I was only 13 years old and came back in May 1991 pregnant with a rebel Commander; I married another man but was again captured in 2004 and returned in 2005, I was really stressed because people had negative attitudes especially towards formerly abducted persons, women had very low self-esteem, no confidence and personally I under rated my self-worth and sometimes considered myself completely useless.

With the coming of the RocoKwo program, there have been a lot of positive changes that has been realized, I joined Aol Ki Tam VSLA group since 2010 where I received counseling from fellow women which enabled me to socially interact freely with other group members and the general community. Through VSLAs, there have been so many benefits. The level of stigmatization has reduced in the community and attitudes towards especially returnees and people living with HIV/AIDS have positively improved because of the constant sensitization and different capacity building trainings.

Through the VSLAs there has been a reduction of occurrences of SGBV cases especially among couples who are VSLA members because they get sensitized about the dangers of SGBV and the benefits of respect of people's rights and a violent free home and community in the weekly meetings. Self-esteem of women has greatly improved because of the different capacity building trainings and sensitization sessions got especially in the different groups. Through the VSLAs, women are now able to participate and contribute in the decision making process at Household and community levels.

In the Community the Most Significant Change I can talk of is the reduction in the level of stigmatization and use of violence especially on women by men which has fostered unity at household levels and also among community members, a good percentage of women have been empowered and are able to demand for the rights, report cases of violence against them and support each other emotionally and psychosocially because their capacities have been built through the Program enabling community ownership of the program

RocoKwo has played an important role in encouraging men to advocate for reduction of GBV through the couple's seminars, real men campaign and its ten/ten role model men programme, whereby ten households attached to one role model man, and he then works with those households to influence attitudes and change behaviour. IPOs report anecdotally from their work with communities that incidences of GBV in the communities have reduced as a result of the cumulative effect of the RocoKwo interventions. As one male respondent commented,

¹⁰ International Alert (2010) Changing Fortunes: Women's Economic Opportunities in post war Northern Uganda. Investing in Peace Issues No 3.

¹¹ CEWIGO (2010) Uganda UNSCR Report 1325 Monitoring Report. September 2010

¹² World Bank (2013) End Evaluation Report. Monitoring & Evaluation of the Establishment and Strengthening of Women's Economic Associations: Gulu, Kitgum and Pader, International Law and Policy Institute

“At the community level, there has been significant reduction in the level of SGBV which has fostered healthy relationships and shared roles and responsibilities between husbands and wives; this in turn has enabled the involvement of women in joint decision making especially at the household levels a thing which was rare in the past. Because of the different capacity building trainings done, men are now joining the VSLAs willingly; this has strengthened relationships and bonds amongst the people and to some extent even reduced land wrangles.”

