

# CARE INTERNATIONAL BALKANS STRATEGY 2023-2030



*CARE is an apolitical, non-partisan organisation that takes no stand when it comes to border issues or intergovernmental politics in the region. We fight for social and economic justice and gender equality.*

# Executive Summary

CARE International Balkans' (CARE Balkans) Strategy 2023 - 2030 describes the strategic orientation of CARE Balkans' initiatives in the Western Balkan region, which includes Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania, with a population of 17.6 million people.

## VISION

We envision a world of hope, inclusion, and social justice, in which poverty is eradicated and all people live in dignity and security, with equal access to rights. The vision and approach of CARE Balkans are consistent with those of CARE International.

## MISSION

To save and improve lives, defeat poverty, and achieve social justice, with a particular emphasis on improving social and economic justice and responding to humanitarian needs.

Shaping its strategic plan to respond to the main challenges in the region, CARE Balkans continues to support the livelihood of vulnerable households, communities, and populations, by seeking to address and alleviate gender inequality in all aspects by improving the economic, social, and family status of women and girls. The initiatives will be channeled through support to and in partnership with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and, where possible, collaboration with regional and international partners and CSO networks. In this strategic period, CARE Balkans aims to integrate alleviating the consequences of climate change on vulnerable populations, promoting the agenda of climate justice and social cohesion in its program approach.

CARE Balkans recognises that people have various levels of exposure to hazards and crises and aim to identify and protect the most vulnerable populations, applying an intersectional and gender perspective as a guiding principle in tailoring project approaches and providing support.

CARE Balkans works with people of all genders and with vulnerable and marginalised parts of the population such as at-risk youth, refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), remote rural communities, and ethnic minorities such as the Roma people. We put vulnerable women and girls at the centre of all of our projects not only because we recognise that they can be discriminated against in households, communities, and institutions, but also because

we know that poverty cannot be overcome until all people have equal rights and opportunities.

**Impact goal:** By 2030, CARE in the Balkans and partners will support at least 500,000 people, 70% women and 40% youth from most communities, to overcome poverty and social injustice. In partnership with local CSOs, CARE in the Balkans will enable people of all genders, women and youth in particular, to actively participate in decisions affecting their lives. This will lead them to experience greater gender equality, overcome social and political exclusion to strengthen their rights, improve their livelihoods, enjoy equal rights, and safely receive adequate and timely humanitarian assistance and protection.

Organisation-wise, in 2030, CARE Balkans will be a robust regional office with the current organisation improved to respond to the rights deficits experienced by marginalized groups and respond to needs/context by playing a more proactive role in resource mobilisation and promotion.

## CARE Vision 2030

### VISION

We seek a world of hope, inclusion, and social justice, where poverty has been overcome, and all people live in dignity and security and enjoy equal access to rights. CARE Balkans' vision aligns with CARE International's vision and approach.

### MISSION

CARE Balkans supports CARE International's Mission in working towards saving and improving lives, defeating poverty, and achieving social justice with a particular emphasis on improving social justice, and contributing to economic justice and responding to humanitarian needs.

### FOCUS

We put vulnerable women and girls at the centre of our work to ensure equal rights and opportunities and overcome patriarchal social norms.

### IMPACT GOAL

By 2030 CARE in the Balkans and its partners will support at least 500,000 people, 70% women and 40% youth from most communities, to overcome poverty and social injustice. In partnership with the local civil society organisations, CARE in the Balkans will enable people of all genders,

women and youth in particular, to experience greater gender equality, address and overcome discrimination, exclusion and threats to their human rights, improve their livelihoods, and receive adequate and timely humanitarian assistance and protection.

## PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

We are driven by and devoted to shared global values. We uphold our values in all aspects of our work, values such as Respect, Integrity, Commitment, and Excellence. Our policies for partnerships, staff recruitment and retention, and resource mobilization are aligned with these values. We will be bold and speak out and stand up for our community partners' rights and values.

Independent of political, commercial, military, ethnic or religious objectives, CARE Balkans takes a rights-based approach based upon identified rights deficits, and specifically the felt and expressed needs and rights issues expressed by vulnerable groups, particularly women and girls, with a strong emphasis on engaging men and boys as participants, allies and supporters. CARE Balkans will:

- Promote empowerment and justice
- Work with partners, with a focus on empowering WB civil society and grass-root initiatives
- Ensure accountability and promote responsibility
- Address discrimination and promote equality
- Support vulnerable societies to overcome climate change's challenges
- Seek sustainable results
- Do no harm

Strategic areas	With a specific focus on	Further capitalising on
Economic justice	Women's economic justice and livelihood security	Gender mainstreaming and exploring and introducing Climate Justice principles in CARE Balkans' approaches
Social justice	Access to and use of quality services and enjoyment of rights, transforming social and gender norms	Gender equality institutionalisation in all aspect and social transformation



Strategic areas	With a specific focus on	Further capitalising on
Humanitarian action	Life-saving emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction, and response and protection in Food and Livelihood Security, Shelter, Sexual Reproduction Health and Rights and WASH	Gender in Emergencies and mobilizing and strengthening the advocacy and response capacity of the civil society sector in the Western Balkans

## PROJECT PARTICIPANTS AND TARGET GROUPS

### Vulnerable populations and individuals

CARE Balkans works to support marginalised groups such as women, ethnic minorities, rural populations, refugees, IDPS, and returned and at-risk youth, as well as the CSOs representing them.

### Civil society organisations

CARE believes that grass-root CSOs with input legitimacy, representing the authentic voice of their members, should be given special attention, and recognised in the dual capacity of partners/collaborators and target group.

### Public institutions at all levels

CARE Balkans will continue targeting public institutions at all levels to ensure to ensure systemic human rights policy and practice reform, encourage gender equality institutionalisation, and strengthen local CSO partners' advocacy and policy-influencing results.

### International CSOs, networks, and partners

CARE Balkans will continue and expand the cooperation areas with the international, regional, and national civil society initiatives, aiming to join forces in all aspects of livelihood, social inclusion, gender equality, and all anti-discrimination efforts. Convinced that sustainable support to vulnerable populations requires a coordinated multisectoral approach, CARE Balkans aims to facilitate viable

## CARE BALKANS THEORY OF CHANGE

We expect that people of all genders, primarily disadvantaged women and girls, enjoy greater gender equality by eliminating discrimination and gender-based violence and increasing women's and girls' voices and leadership with the support of men and boys as allies. Gender Equality is at the centre of all

CARE impact areas to transform harmful norms and behaviours and is expected to be achieved across all three domains of change, reflecting CARE's Gender Equality Framework and the 2030 Theory of Change: build agency, develop relations, and transform structures.

## KEY IMPACT AREAS

Economic justice, social inclusion, and humanitarian assistance are key impact areas. CARE Balkans' approach fosters interlinkages between humanitarian, development, and peace actors and is fully aligned with the triple nexus approach<sup>1</sup>, which utilizes the combined expertise of the sustainable development, peacebuilding and conflict mitigation, and humanitarian aid sectors in overcoming collective challenges and ensuring the protection and wellbeing of affected populations.<sup>2</sup>

### I Economic justice

#### Strategic goal I: To enhance inclusive climate-smart economic empowerment and resilient livelihoods in the Western Balkans

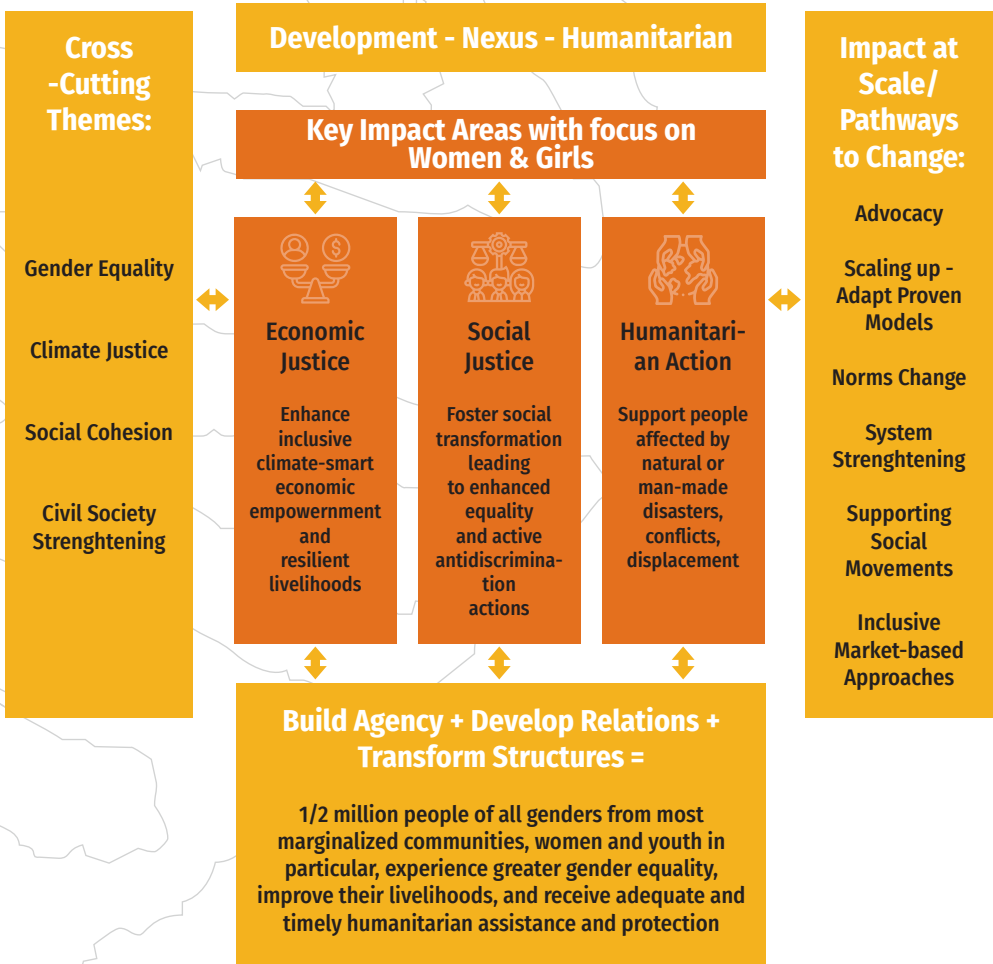
CARE Balkans will streamline the economic support programs, using the strategy that focuses on:

- 1 Developing and supporting small businesses, social enterprises, and cooperatives.
- 2 Fostering innovation and sustainable green approaches.
- 3 Supporting networking and association building to ensure stronger community response, integration with national strategies and defined sustainability potential.

**Expected change:** Vulnerable communities and women will benefit from the tangible forms of adequately defined and interest-based sustainable economic support programs, consulted and integrated into the decision-making processes. Inclusive economic activities contribute to the development of more vital skills of the vulnerable populations, primarily women, and lead to the development of resilient and prosperous local communities. Progress in this strategic area would be measured by monitoring the number of the most marginalised populations, women and youth, particularly having more equitable access to and control over resources and increased economic opportunities.

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- 1 In the UN's New Way of Working (NWoW), these actors are expected to work towards collective outcomes over multiple years, where appropriate
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# CARE Balkans Programme Strategy 2030



## II Social justice

**Strategic goal II:** To foster social transformation leading to enhanced equality and anti-discrimination actions in the WB countries.

**Expected change:** The anticipated change is based upon a strengthened enabling environment through the advocacy for policies that serve as the pillars of the integrated social inclusion system and for greater inclusion of



the women, youth, and disadvantaged populations in access to social services and economic support. CARE Balkans will continuously strive to identify and support the most vulnerable local communities, their populations, as well as their civil society representatives (grassroots CSOs), to address the bottlenecks leading to social exclusion while simultaneously confronting the discriminatory and exclusion narratives and fostering participatory approaches. By increasing the capacities of the vulnerable populations' representatives and advocating for the changes in community policies and practices to make them more inclusive, CARE Balkans will work with civil society actors and communities to improve their responsiveness and create preconditions and channels for a more robust and sustainable social inclusion environment.

### III Humanitarian action

**Strategic goal III: In humanitarian emergencies, CARE will support people affected by natural or man-made disasters, conflict or displacement with lifesaving and urgently required support in line with CARE International's global strategy.**

CARE Balkans does not identify specific humanitarian activities, as it aims to tailor the humanitarian response to the needs-based assessment of community emergencies linked to CARE International's Gender in Emergencies (GiE) Toolkit as guidance. In providing humanitarian assistance, CARE recognises and aims to respond to the vulnerability of all affected people but prioritises vulnerable women and socially excluded populations less likely to get priority assistance through national support channels. The humanitarian assistance approach will embed a vital women empowerment component to tackle and change patriarchal social norms in providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable people and communities.

### CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

**Gender Equality:** We will integrate a gender lens across all three impact areas to ensure that barriers to gender equality at household, community, and institutional level are addressed throughout programming. People of all genders have a right to access and own resources, make decisions, and participate in private and public life without undue discriminatory impediments, and to live a life free from violence regardless of their sex, ethnicity, social status, religion, disability, and sexual orientation.

**Social Cohesion:** Decades after the wars of the 1990s, the Western Balkans region is still not resilient to war-mongering rhetoric and ethnonationalists' narratives. The turbulent international political scene, the war in Ukraine, and global migration further steered heated political dialogue and revived

ethnonationalists' narratives in the Western Balkan region. CARE Balkans recognises the need to pursue efforts to build a more tolerant and inclusive societies by integrated social cohesion and peacebuilding elements in CARE Balkan projects.

### **Commitment to supporting local civil society organisations:**

CARE Balkans has built long-term experience and sustained vibrant communication with local civil society organisations. Commitment and support to the development of local grass-root organisations and ongoing follow-up and CSO support has helped develop dozens of sustainable organisations in the region. CARE Balkan commits to further exploring new methods and modalities to support and ensure adequate support to local CSOs, focusing beyond granting, and aiming to further explore and fortify thematic partnerships and networking. CARE Balkans also remains committed to supporting building national policy reform networks and exploring innovative forms of regional exchange and collaboration.

**Climate justice:** CARE Balkans recognises its role in supporting vulnerable communities in adopting to specific climate justice challenges they experience and finding opportunities to access development support provided through the Green Agenda program. Different population groups are differently affected by climate change, both in terms of its adverse impacts as well as economic and societal transformation needs in the region to develop in a more climate friendly way, in line with the countries' nationally determined contributions and the European Green Deal.

## **CROSS-CUTTING ACCOUNTABILITIES**

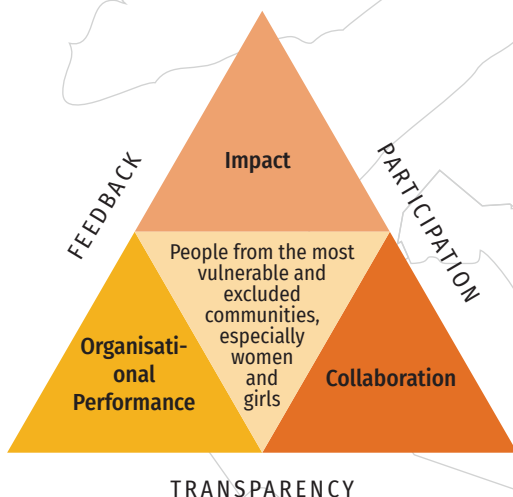
We are committed to meeting international standards of quality and accountability, guided by a rights-based approach and our programming principles to ensure that our partners and the communities we work with play an active part in planning, implementing, and evaluating our work.

**Impact:** CARE Balkans' contribution to bringing about sustainable change in the fight against poverty and injustice, specifically through our commitment to support the most vulnerable and excluded Western Balkans communities to overcome poverty and social injustice by 2030 reflects our commitment to yield lasting impact by changing knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, practices, institutions, and their policies over the long term. We measure this through a set of global outcomes and change indicators.

**Organisational Performance:** CARE Balkan commits to being an efficient, effective, and equitable organisation that makes the best use of the resources entrusted to us to deliver on our impact in the Balkans. We recognise our task to communicate and respond in partnership with the Western

Balkans vulnerable communities to the rights deficits they have identified by demonstrating our commitment to gender equality and social inclusion in all our approaches.

**Collaboration:** CARE Balkans is channelling its actions and activities through partnership mechanisms established with civil society organisations, communities, and institutions, to achieve a greater, sustainable, and more just impact



## CORE ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES

### TRANSPARENCY

Observe, understand and openly report to our stakeholders

### FEEDBACK

Share input, concerns, and suggestions for improvement and actively seek responses

### PARTICIPATION

Actively involved in shaping strategies and defining priorities in decision-making

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