

INTRODUCTION

Oxfam partners with Gender at Work (G@W) to run Gender Action Learning (GAL) processes for driving change. GAL processes focus on utilizing emergent learning to explore how relationships influence individual and organizational change, recognizing the formal and informal ways in which systemic transformation happens. Feminist evaluation principles and tools¹ accompany these processes, given their focus on power and emphasis on participatory reflection.

Tools like Social Network Analysis (SNA) and Most Significant Change (MSC) must be intentionally adapted to address power dynamics among participants, as well as between participants and facilitators in GAL processes. Not only is this necessary for evaluations, but also to support more reflexive exercises that challenge assumptions, heighten self-awareness and support transformation across all levels of change.

Oxfam would like to share with others what this adaptation has looked like and what the results were, as well as to learn from others about their experiences with applying feminist evaluation to assess complex change.

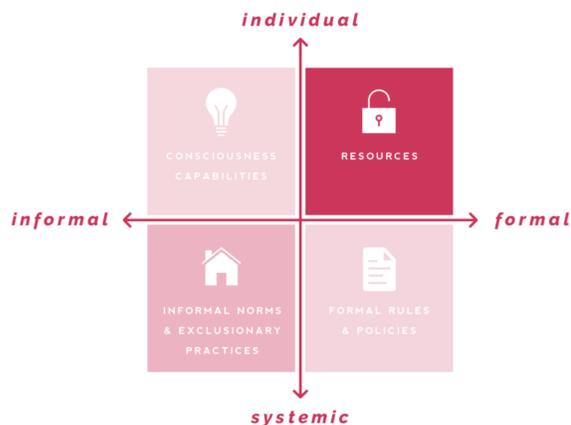
Measuring Transformation:

Evaluations of this work must seek to recognize formal and informal ways in which transformation occurs. Transformation through GAL is rooted in the G@W Framework and requires measurement of change across the four quadrants of the framework.

Successful transformation is linked to common building blocks:

- Reflective spaces for self and organizational practice of learning and action
- Use of action learning methodology for peer learning
- Establishment of small groups to leverage for change
- Incentivizing experiential learning modalities
- Examination of intersectional power inequalities
- Promoting women's empowerment and gender equality

G@W Framework²



MEASUREMENT METHODS

Intentionality of Evidence Informed Participation: Social Network Analysis (SNA)

Oxfam utilized SNA to assess relationships between team members undergoing a GAL process at Oxfam America by the process and presentation of results as part of a sense making exercise during a learning workshop exploring power within the organizations teams.

While atypical, the adaptation was done by surveying participants during the midway point of the 18-month long GAL process. SNA results were analyzed by internal monitoring and evaluation staff and presented back to participants through an experiential exercise. Initially, teams were asked to analyze the findings of their one of the multiple groups whose data had been anonymized. Then they shared out their findings. Following this activity, teams were asked to consider their own group dynamics utilizing the tool.

This was an adaptation that led to more meaningful reflection and learning in the sessions.



Intentionality of Collaborative Evidence Creation: Most Significant Change Methodology (MSC)

Oxfam executed a modified MSC methodology for the end line evaluation of two GAL processes with the hope that participants could engage more deeply with their peers as they evaluated the GAL process transformations across the G@W Framework. The design sought to capture stories centered on both individual and organization change from the eyes of the participants themselves.

Initial modifications were due to socio-economic and educational factors of GAL participants. Due to the literacy levels, writing of stories was not possible for all participants. The MSC process was adapted to allow for participants to dictate their story to a rapporteur. The rapporteurs would feed back the draft story to its original storyteller for feedback and modifications prior to sharing with the group at large.

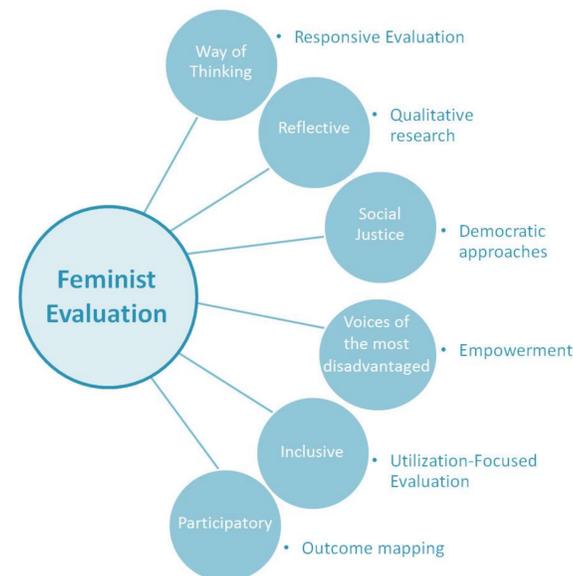
Secondary modifications evolved during the process of analysis following story collection. Participants felt deeply uncomfortable selecting the "most" significant stories, because throughout the GAL process participants sought to avoid privileging the views of the most formally educated storytellers. The group agreed both changes large and small expressed transformation occurring and were needed to show the full value of the GAL process.

PRINCIPLES PRACTICED

Why Feminist Principles in Evaluation?

While viewing each of the projects through gender approaches would map where women are within their cultural context, using these adapted feminist methodologies allow for the evaluation to challenge that position to change. Fundamentally, feminist evaluation was most relevant, because the projects seek to fight social injustice, and to change the systemic and structural discrimination faced by women and women's rights activists.

Feminist Evaluation Principles³



Lessons Learned from Pushing on Power

Challenging power leads to pushback, defensiveness, and adaptation in evaluation methods. While the evaluation teams considered how to best be inclusive and tackle power across the participants themselves, we had not prepared for the pushback on the power of the evaluator. Remaining humble with the process can allow you to better document unexpected outcomes.

By creating a space where participants could voice dissent in our MSC, the evaluators conducting the MSC process were able to see the voting process itself as a use of hierarchy, which inherently privileges specific knowledge and information in an anti-feminist way. Participants instead focused on the stories themselves and each of their valuable lessons.

Within the SNA adaptation, the pushback on evaluators came in response to difficult conversations about power. In this case, we saw successful use of SNA during a GAL process to provoke otherwise impossible conversations through frank data collection.

CONCLUSIONS

Applying a feminist approach ensures specific actors and/or specific information types are not privileged, and that the M&E conducted has the potential to be participatory and collaborative- not extractive- spaces for data creation.

Flexibility in our approaches to implementation of MSC and SNA enabled deeper understanding of change within our evaluative processes as well as encourage the progression of that change itself.⁴ Measurement of personal and organizational transformation required a combination of feminist methodologies, but also was critical to empowering project participants.⁵

Participation and engagement requires transparency by implementing organizations who must recognize their own power and that of the evaluator.



OUR ASK

The evaluation community continues to promote adaptive learning for complex change, which requires adaptive tools. Feminist evaluation provides a solid foundation for this – however, it can be challenging to identify and adapt specific tools that support application of feminist evaluation principles.⁶ Oxfam would like to share and learn from others, so that as an evaluation community we can have even better insight into measuring (and challenging) power and supporting meaningful change.

Please join the conversation by adding your experiences to the comments!

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