



## **CAPTURING CHANGE IN WOMEN'S REALITIES - The Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluating Our Work**

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**This is a work in progress, drafted for discussion only.  
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## Introduction<sup>1</sup>:

Over the past few decades, important strides have been made in developing ways of capturing a whole range of abstract but vital social realities, and particularly in trying to quantify them. These efforts have been the result of the realization that when policies, resources, and strategies are applied towards building more equitable, sustainable, rights-affirming, inclusive and peaceful societies, we have to devise ways of checking whether they are working effectively or not - whether they are producing the changes we wish to see. This meant gathering appropriate and concrete information about the size or extent of the problem being addressed, its contours, characteristics and dynamics, and about the lives of the people experiencing them. This in turn demanded means of measuring or tracking both the people and the processes of change unleashed in their midst.

While the attempt to assess changes in social realities was certainly a positive development, measurement has become something of a power unto itself in modern times: indeed, one of the hallmarks of modernization is the creation of a range of instruments to measure virtually anything – the size of sub-atomic particles, the health of economies, the rate at which blood is pumped through the heart, the level of democracy and transparency in different countries. Measurement has become such an integral part of our approach to the world that we no longer question its value or relevance. We assume that measurement is a good thing, something that enhances our ability to track change, growth, health, success.

This assumption has naturally entered the world of social change as well - Edwards and other attribute this to the permeation of the capitalist business model into the domains of philanthropy and international development assistance<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, it is not only assumed that the processes, outcomes and impacts of social change **should** be assessed but that they **can** be assessed. In other words, it is taken for granted that the instruments we have at our command for measuring such change are adequate, effective and sensitive. More problematically, it is assumed that change measurement enhances our ability to **make or accelerate positive change**. But we need to interrogate all these assumptions – to determine when and what kinds of measurement are actually useful, versus those that may be meaningless or even detrimental to social change. Such an interrogation has become particularly urgent with the burgeoning demand, particularly from donors, for increasingly elaborate monitoring and evaluation systems of the development and social change projects they support. Social change organizations and activists are spending increasing amounts of time and energy on filling in sophisticated log frames and compiling various kinds of data using measures that are thought to effectively track change.

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<sup>1</sup> This section, and many parts of this paper, draw extensively on earlier work by Srilatha Batliwala, in particular, “Measuring Social Change: Myths, Assumptions and Realities”, in *Alliance Magazine*, Volume 11 Number 1 March 2006, P.12-14, ([www.alliancemagazine.org](http://www.alliancemagazine.org)); “Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud” for CREA (Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action), 2008, to be published in 2010; and “Can Civil Society Be Measured? A Review of Challenges and Approaches”, Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations (Harvard University) Working Paper Series, March 2003.

<sup>2</sup> “Just Another Emperor? The Myths and Realities of Philanthrocapitalism”, ©2008 Michael Edwards, New York, Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action, The Young Foundation.

In this document, we attempt such an interrogation in the context of women's rights / gender equality / women's empowerment work, where M&E approaches create particular kinds of challenges. Part I provides a critique of current M&E frameworks as experienced by women's organizations and movements worldwide; Part II offers a critical analysis of some of the prevailing M&E approaches and models; and Part III attempts to articulate some of the principles and attributes of an alternative gendered M&E approach, which AWID hopes to develop into a full-fledged "meta framework" that can be adapted by women's rights activists and advocates in their diverse settings and sectors.

## PART I

### TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK

Women's empowerment and gender equality initiatives have been equally affected by the pressure to measure their impact – perhaps even more so, since certain kinds of women's empowerment or rights work is considered too slow, amorphous, or intangible to credibly and concretely capture. In fact, the challenges of measuring change – i.e., of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) - in the context of gender relations, and the social relations within which they are embedded, are somewhat more challenging, for several reasons which are discussed below. The greatest challenge of all is well summed up in the words of a seasoned activist:

“When you work for women's interests, it's two steps forward – if you're really smart and very lucky! - and *at least* one step back. In fact, it's often two or three steps back! And those steps back are, ironically, often evidence of your effectiveness; because they represent the threat you have posed to the power structure, and its attempt to push you back. Sometimes, even your 'success stories' are nothing more than ways the power structure is trying to accommodate and contain the threat of more fundamental change by making small concessions.”<sup>3</sup>

This quote eloquently articulates a universal truth: transforming gender power relations is the last frontier of social change. While changes in the social power relations of North-South, developed-developing, race, class, caste, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, etc. are also difficult to achieve, patriarchal norms are *embedded and normalized within each of these power structures*, so that challenging and transforming them is a doubly daunting task. And because gender power is integral to both public and private institutions and relationships, shifting it in one domain does not guarantee that it has been uprooted in another. Thus, investments in women's empowerment that have demanded “proof” of positive change generally want evidence of a smooth progression, rather than a picture of the messy reality – the steps forward and the steps back – that is closer to the truth.

#### 1. Why do we measure change?

Any critique – gendered or otherwise – of M&E frameworks must begin with the basic question of why we monitor or evaluate at all. Why, in fact, do we measure change at all? In theory, at least, monitoring and evaluation is motivated by at least five basic objectives:

- **To learn** how change happens, what strategies and interventions worked and didn't, in order to refine our policies, strategies and interventions for more effective and impactful change; most of all, to grapple with both progress and reversals, and build more effective change strategies as a result;
- **To analyze our role in the change process** – i.e., either to attribute credit or locate our contribution to change, and to identify cause-effect relationships;

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication of Sheela Patel, Director, SPARC, India.

- **To empower our constituencies** – to engage stakeholders in analyzing change processes so that they are also empowered and strengthened to sustain, extend, and expand change;
- **To practice accountability / build credibility** – to our donors, constituencies, other activists, and the public at large; and to build our legitimacy, credibility, and transparency; and finally,
- **To advance our advocacy for social justice** – to demonstrate how change has advanced social justice goals, and mobilize broader support for our change agenda.

In reality, though, M&E is more likely to be done because

- **Donors require it** to ensure their funds have been utilized correctly and to demonstrate to their own constituencies (their governing bodies, contributors, governments, etc.) that they are supporting effective work, the “right” kind of work;
- **To sustain or obtain more funding**; or to compete for new grants / contracts - donors are more likely to invest in organizations with a proven track record of work (manifested in the form of concretely measured results!); and / or
- **To support public fund-raising or advocacy work**, by showing how successful particular approaches or interventions have been.

It is these sorts of pressures that convert measurement from an activity designed to **aid learning** into one that **evaluates performance**, and so distorts the purpose and potential value of our M&E work. A feminist M&E approach would be motivated primarily by the first set of objectives rather than the second.

## 2. Current M&E practice – what isn’t working:

Over the past several months, AWID has undertaken a critical review of a wide range of current M&E frameworks, and particularly those that are in wide use among women’s organizations. We have gathered and analyzed over 50 frameworks and tools to assess their strengths and limitations. We have also reviewed the growing critiques of the assessment frameworks and tools that currently predominate in the development sector<sup>4</sup>. What follows is a summary of some of the key challenges posed by these for organizations and individuals trying to use them to track and assess change and their contribution to it.

Firstly, we find that very few M&E frameworks actually enable us to understand **how change happens or how gender relations have been altered** – of locating the most effective interventions for shifting the complex social power relations that mediate women’s access to resources and rights, security and autonomy. More linear frameworks, particularly, tend to describe goals and the activities related to those goals, so that the only thing one can say at the end of a project cycle is whether those goals were achieved, not whether real change was achieved. This is ironic since most M&E exercises hope to discover the right formula, so that it can be reproduced, extrapolated, and expanded.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Oliver Bakewell & Anne Garbutt, The Use and Abuse of the Logical Framework Approach - A Review of International Development NGOs’ Experiences. A report for SIDA, November 2005. INTRAC.

Even frameworks that assess changes in the communities or constituencies with which we work cannot help us understand whether the changes we help trigger constitute or lead to **sustainable change**. This is important because women everywhere (and the activist we quoted earlier) have learnt to their cost that power structures accommodate some degree of change, but resist more sustained transformations in the status quo, so that a strategy that worked once may not work again even in the same context.

### Box 1: Why GDP Won't Do

The Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, set up by French President Sarkozy nearly 18 months ago, headed by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, supported by fellow Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and several others, has concluded that worshipped indicators of economic growth such as GDP can be misleading, and that new indicators, incorporating a notion of lifestyle and national well-being, are required<sup>5</sup>. Indeed, Stiglitz writes, in a hard-hitting piece entitled “The Great GDP Swindle”, “In our performance-oriented world, measurement issues have taken on increased importance: what we measure affects what we do..... If we have poor measures, what we strive to do (say, increase GDP) may actually contribute to a worsening of living standards. We may also be confronted with false choices, seeing trade-offs ..... that don't exist.”<sup>6</sup> “It is time for our statistics system to put more emphasis on measuring the well-being of the population than on economic production.” President Sarkozy established the Commission because of his conviction that current economic measures often indicate levels of economic progress that are far higher than citizens' actual experience, since they tend to hide high levels of inequality and disparity within societies.

The second and related challenge is whether current tools help us to know **what to measure**, particularly in relation to the assumptions or theory of change underlying the intervention or program. This dilemma is now being acknowledged even in “hard” fields like economics, where seemingly invincible measures like GDP have prevailed for a long time<sup>7</sup>. There seems to be a growing trend of questioning even such long-standing and highly quantitative measures because they aren't able to tell us what is really happening on the ground, in people's daily lives – which is why, perhaps, the government of Bhutan instituted a National Happiness Index to supplement the GDP! Within the domain of international aid, where the goal is to catalyze positive change

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr/en/index.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Stiglitz, “The Great GDP Swindle”, in The Guardian, Sunday 13 September 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/13/economics-economic-growth-and-recession-global-economy>

<sup>7</sup> The Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, set up by French President Sarkozy nearly 18 months ago, headed by Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz, supported by fellow Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen and several others, has concluded that worshipped indicators of economic growth such as GDP can be misleading, and that new indicators, incorporating a notion of lifestyle and national well-being, are required. See Joseph Stiglitz, “The Great GDP Swindle”, in The Guardian, Sunday 13 September 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/sep/13/economics-economic-growth-and-recession-global-economy>

that promotes human rights, economic development, peace and social justice, monitoring and evaluation frameworks are considered an aid to provide lessons about particular interventions in order to guide further action. In practice, however, M&E frameworks and their indicators take on a life of their own and become an end in themselves, rather than a means. In some contexts, measurement is used more as a tool of enforcement and accountability than a means of changing strategy or learning about what works.

***The linearity of many tools*** – especially widely used methods like the logical framework – have proved to be problematic because they flatten change processes into linear, causal relationships that cannot capture and measure complex social changes, and may even mislead us about how these occur. The log-frame has, for this reason, been described as the “simple linear” theory of change model, since it attempts to establish uni-dimensional causal chains. The assumptions underlying each part of the logframe – that x intervention led to y effect, which led to z change – are also limiting because they cannot incorporate the many other dynamics that may occur. In a SIDA study of NGO experiences with the Logical Framework Approach,

“one NGO respondent commented that the focus is often the logical framework – to look at the expected achievements laid out in the matrix – rather than the work itself. As a result the emphasis of monitoring and evaluation systems based on the LFA is often upwards accountability to the donor, to show whether the intervention is delivering the outputs and impact as proposed.”<sup>8</sup>

Recent attempts have been made, however, to make the logframe both more modest in its aims and less flat – a major bilateral, for instance, has put “risks and assumptions” into the frame, and limits measurement to “verifiable indicators”. Nevertheless, the tool is at best a supplement to other methods that better accommodate complexity and challenges from both within and without the change process.

A hugely important factor, particularly for activists working in the developing world, is the ***macro-political assumptions underlying many M&E frameworks***. These are not the sort of obvious assumptions mentioned earlier, but macro-political assumptions about the way the world and society works – that democratic rights, law and order, an impartial judiciary and police, due process, rights of association, civil liberties, an independent media, etc. etc. – are inevitably present, surrounding change processes in a larger safety net. In reality, few of these conditions can be presumed to exist in most contexts where women seek radical change. The growing number of attacks on women human rights defenders (MesoAmerica), the growing incidence of femicide (Guatemala), the violent removal of democratically elected regimes by juntas of various kinds (Honduras), weakness or impotence of even democratically elected regimes (Pakistan), violent extremist movements antithetical to women’s rights (Afghanistan, India, Iran), humanitarian and natural disasters (this year, India, China, Philippines), wars and civil conflicts (Sri Lanka, Sudan, Congo, Cote d’Ivoire), rogue states and leaders (Zimbabwe), suspension of civil liberties and most rights (Honduras, Zimbabwe, China), mass displacement (Darfur, Congo, Sri Lanka) ecologically- and economically-induced migration (India), human trafficking (Russia, Eastern Europe, Indonesia, Philippines, India, Sri Lanka), revival of barbaric and primitive penalties for “errant” women like whipping, stoning and honor killings

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<sup>8</sup> Bakewell and Garbutt, 2005, *op.cit.*, P.10

(Nigeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia), and populations devastated by global pandemics (Botswana, South Africa) – these are the catastrophic realities against which legions of women’s rights actors operate, the abnormalities that are all too normal in too much of our world. How many M&E frameworks actually enable or allow these factors as integral elements affecting every project or intervention? And if they don’t, these are not minor but very fundamental flaws, since women everywhere are far more severely affected by these forces, in turn deeply affecting any change intervention that aims at transforming their realities.

**Box 2: Why tracking negative shifts matters:**

Impact evaluations of micro-credit programs for women’s economic empowerment in India, where this is a dominant form of investment in women, have found some interesting facts: the more successful the program in raising women’s income levels, the more male earners in the household tend to shift responsibility for the household’s economic security onto women, earning less and working less regularly, while also taking control of the women’s income<sup>9</sup>. Women themselves report increased violence as a result of tensions around their newfound economic power, especially where lending schemes exclude men.

In another Indian case, a violence-against-women intervention<sup>10</sup> was declared a failure because the impact evaluation found that the expected outcome – viz., increased reporting to and filing of complaints with the police – did not occur. A deeper enquiry found that the focus on police and legal remedy was the problem – women were afraid of the police, whose record in committing atrocities on poor women, including rape, ensured that no woman would voluntarily seek their help in dealing with violence from other men<sup>11</sup>. But women had developed more community-level strategies that were beginning to have some impact, but could not be measured through police complaints.

Similarly, most tools do not provide for **tracking negative change, reversals, backlash**, unexpected events and processes that push back or shift the direction of the change process. In women’s rights work, this is vital, because as soon as the work seriously challenges patriarchal or other social power structures, there are often reactions and setbacks. These are not, ironically, always indicative of failure, or lack of effectiveness, but exactly the opposite – that the process was working, and creating push-backs as a result (see Box 2). Of course, not all negative changes are signs of progress – sometimes they are just what they are – evidence of the strength of the dominant order, or that our strategies need to change, or that women need to build more collective power. How do we create tools that can capture this two steps forward, one step back phenomenon that many activists and organizations acknowledge as a reality, and in which large amounts of learning lay hidden? Interrogating the forces pushing back or complicating change is critical, and yet this doesn’t really find a place in our current M&E frameworks.

<sup>9</sup> Nirantar Qualitative Study of SHGs and Empowerment, First Edition, Feb 2007

<sup>10</sup> Project details cannot be shared to protect the identity and confidentiality of the organization.

<sup>11</sup> Personal communication of Nandita Shah, Akshara Centre, Mumbai.



Monitoring and evaluating ***less tangible but vital gender equality interventions is quite difficult with current instruments***. For instance, women’s organizations engaged in research and knowledge building, capacity building through training and other means, challenging dominant perspectives and discourses, changing public attitudes, playing support roles to other movements or networks, policy advocacy, public campaigns to shift attitudes, and consciousness-raising with women, all find it quite challenging to show the impact of their work. Consequently, they are compelled to measure their *processes, outreach and outputs* (number of training programs held, number of participants, publications, attendance at rallies and meetings, etc.), rather than the *effects* of their work. We have yet to create effective M&E tools for this critical range of activities and strategies, which is the core work of thousands of women’s organizations throughout the world.

Several ***false binaries and dichotomies*** are embedded within or underlie many M&E approaches – e.g., “quantitative-qualitative”, “subjective-objective”, “macro-micro”, “success-failure”, and so forth. These create problematic hierarchies rather than approaches that can integrate and transcend such dualities. Indeed, women activists are also guilty of carrying some of these dichotomies into their approach to M&E. We have witnessed vehement assertions that “the kind of work we do cannot be measured or quantified – it is very nuanced. We can only tell stories about it, we can’t provide hard data.” These stances not only negate the fact that many dimensions of changes in women’s status and rights CAN be quantified, but reinforce the sense that women’s empowerment processes are difficult to monitor or evaluate. But if one is motivated by the desire to demonstrate that even the most abstract interventions can have measurable impact, then women’s organizations come up with incredibly innovative ways of doing so<sup>12</sup>.

Another problem is the ***disjunct between our change measures and our time frames***. The changes we are trying to track may not be visible within the time frame in which we are seeking it. This is particularly true for example, with the assessments being done of the MDG3 Fund grants, whose 3-year time frame imposes limits on what can be realistically measured in this short time. Many MDG3 Fund grantees find there is lack of clarity about short- vs. medium- and long-term changes in the current M&E framework. A similar problem gets passed down the line by women’s funds, who have to report their effectiveness in relatively short periods of time, to their donors.

Few of our ***current assessment methods are gendered or feminist*** in their principles or structures. As some M&E analysts have pointed out, gender analysis frameworks – of which there are several (see Part II of this paper) - are not the same as feminist evaluation<sup>13</sup>. Feminist evaluation should incorporate at least five dimensions that are generally missing in other M&E approaches, viz.,

1. tools to unpack the nature of gender inequalities and the social inequalities through which these are mediated;
2. treats gender and social inequalities as systemic and embedded in social structures, and hence examines the way interventions are addressing these;

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<sup>12</sup> Report of the Results Assessment workshop conducted by HIVOS with Indian partners in 2004.

<sup>13</sup> Donna Podems, June 2007, “Gender and Feminist Issues in Global Evaluation,” paper presented at the AEA/CDC Summer Institute, Atlanta, Georgia.

3. does not seek to *attribute* change to particular actors, but to understand who and what *contributed* to the change;
4. breaks the traditional hierarchy between the evaluator and the “evaluated” and respects the knowledge of both; and
5. views monitoring and evaluation as a political activity, rather than value free, and uses them as part of the change process.

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Given these myriad and serious challenges, it is crucial to construct new feminist M&E approaches and tools that combine the strengths of some of our existing tools, overcome their more serious shortcomings, and adequately capture the complexity of gender equality work and the social dynamic within which it occurs. We are at a threshold where building new frameworks can not only provide the most convincing, quantitative “hard” data, but also much deeper insights into the kinds of strategies that usher in sustainable, long-term transformation in gender and social power relations. What women’s movements around the world are looking for is a “meta framework” with elements that can be adapted to the diverse contexts, sectors, approaches, organizations and movements in which they work. Part III will attempt to offer some principles and ideas for such a feminist meta-framework.

## Part III

### TOWARDS A FEMINIST FRAMEWORK FOR M&E

One of the earliest and most path-breaking frameworks for capturing social reality was the UNDP's Human Development Index. But there are many others - a range of other approaches have been developed for measuring phenomena as disparate as **world values** (the World Values Survey), corruption (Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index), and democracy (Freedom House's Democracy surveys and the Polity project series). When we study these different efforts, all attempting to map, measure and assess abstract social phenomena, we discover that they all share certain common attributes – they all ask and attempt to answer these common questions:

- ◆ **What is it?** How clearly can we define what we are studying / measuring? They all begin with as clear a definition of the phenomenon under study as possible.
- ◆ **Where is it?** Where is our social problem or change intervention located – either geographically (in communities, or at the national or transnational level); or socially (which groups are affected / concerned / vested in the change); or institutionally (government, women's commissions, aid agencies, multilateral institutions, etc.) or politically (state policies, electoral processes, political parties, social movements, trade unions, etc.), or sectorally or thematically (health, education, public services, environment, etc.).
- ◆ **What are its boundaries?** Along with location, it is vital to set boundaries to our change arena. These are not just *spatial or demographic* boundaries – i.e., these twenty villages, this province, these countries, this particular age group or population, etc. – but *conceptual and analytical* ones. For example, if we are engaged in a change process related to violence against women, we not only have to delineate the area and population that we will target, but also the limits of the forms of violence we will address: e.g., all forms of physical and sexual violence, but not psychological abuse or violence. In other words, we need to spell out what is *included and excluded* from our intervention, who/what is in and who/what is out. Otherwise, the process of monitoring and evaluating our effectiveness and the change that occurs becomes too amorphous and unwieldy, and we may have far more difficulty assessing our role in the change.
- ◆ **What does it look like?** i.e., what are its key characteristics? This is a critical part of studying and tracking change in social phenomena, since this is where we unpack the dimensions of the problem, the power structures and power relations embedded in it, the characteristics of the social groups involved in it, and the nature of the institutions and structures we will engage in the process of change. This is what is sometimes described as the “situational analysis”, with the added dimensions of gender and power analysis.
- ◆ **What can we measure?** Finally, from these key characteristics, we must distill those dimensions, sub-units or indicators that are most easily quantifiable or measurable, along with those less amenable to measurement but possibly more critical to our understanding, and make choices in how we combine quantitative and qualitative measures.

Most critically, ***feminist evaluations will look for shifts / changes in power relations within four key domains***, and will attempt to track the processes that achieved these shifts:

***In access to / control over resources*** (material, intellectual, human)

***In the division of private, productive, and reproductive labor***

***in visibility, voice and decision-making power***

***in social norms and practice***

***in laws, policies, and public services***

## Part II

### A Feminist Review of Some Current M & E Models

In order to better develop strong feminist frameworks and techniques for M & E, we must better understand the dominant systems currently in practice in the development field. These frameworks have been categorized according to their underlying assumptions in tracking and understanding the nature of change. Two overarching trends emerged in a review of over fifty M & E frameworks:

1. **Causal Frameworks**, which aim to demonstrate the causal chains leading to program impact;
2. **Contribution Frameworks**, which attempt to track the multiple and variable forces involved in producing change, and highlight the contribution of change agents to the change process; and
3. **Gender Analysis Frameworks**, which may draw from both causal and contribution frameworks, but due to their importance to feminist work are included as a separate category.

This section attempts a critical analysis of each of these categories and some of the leading M&E tools that fall within each.

#### 1. Causal Frameworks

Most bilateral and multilateral agencies rely on Logical Frame or Results Based Management approaches to documenting social change. Both assume a logical and causal perspective in documenting program impact. On the other hand, the Theory of Change model approaches the causal link from a different perspective, highlighting the underlying assumptions that should lead to successful program outcomes and mapping each step in the process required to achieve those outcomes. Attention is also placed on unintended consequences and pathways to change.

##### a. Logical Frame Approach

The Logical Frame Approach aims to systematize and identify a logical hierarchy, which outlines how project objectives will be reached. The process includes multiple analyses and steps, including a cause and effect problem analysis, a stakeholder analysis, an objectives tree and hierarchy, and an implementation strategy. The Log Frame is the product of the analysis, which is a 4 x 4 matrix that details the goals, component purpose, output, and activities in one column crossed with a row detailing performance indicators, monitoring mechanisms, and main assumptions. The Logical Frame Approach has been adopted by most bilateral and multilateral aid agencies as standard practice and is often mandatory for reporting aid impact. An adaptation to the standard Log Frame Approach is the MDG3 SMART Planning.

**Logical Frame Approaches can be beneficial in:**

- ◆ Setting forth simple and **clear guidelines** for outlining main goals and developing indicators;
- ◆ Reflecting on the **connection** between program resources, activities, and results;
- ◆ Identifying **risks** to the project by outlining assumptions; and
- ◆ Providing a **simplified structure** for project planning and monitoring.

**Logical Frame Approaches can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ **Implementation** in different contexts, particularly since log framework approaches rely extensively on project implementation in stable organizational settings with well-defined planning structures; however, many development settings are not stable, and organizations are working in complex and radically shifting environments that do not allow for implementation as planned;<sup>1</sup>
- ◆ The assumption that change occurs through **a hierarchal and logical cause and effect process** and can be **attributable** directly to an intervention;
- ◆ **Adaptability**, as often once a log frame analysis is produced it remains the same planning and monitoring framework for a project over time, and is not updated and reviewed based on new contextual developments;
- ◆ The focus on **activities and outcomes, rather than the actors**, limiting understanding of the processes and people involved in change, which leaves no accounting for people's voices;
- ◆ Using **macro-economic and quantitative indicators to shed light on project goals**, which do not reflect people's lives and experiences;
- ◆ Contextualizing **change**, since the approach lacks attention to contextual conditions that may constrain or augment program outcomes or track dynamic reversals based on political backlashes;
- ◆ Understanding **power dynamics**, since assessment of power relations is lacking;
- ◆ Capturing **how change occurs**, since there is an *embedded logical fallacy* in the framework that states by implementing project goals and activities, more successful program outcomes will be achieved. This assumption lacks traction as the process of implementing the program is not outlined or assessed; therefore, we only know *if* a goal was achieved or not, but have no mechanism for determining pathways that lead to that goal achievement or if there was a point of breakdown in the path to goal achievement; and
- ◆ Shedding light on program strengthening, since the focus on **measuring only goals and outcomes precludes other learning** that can provide valuable lessons to the women's movement, such as challenges, unexpected consequences, most effective means of implementation, as well as exploring the pathways and catalysts of the intended change.

**b. Results Based Management Approaches**

Results Based Management approaches place primary focus on the outputs and outcomes in an evaluation. The goal is to define the main results of the project and then monitor progress against those results. It helps an organization determine how they are faring in the effort to implement their project and its intended aims. It provides information on whether an intervention is working in relation to the expected results. Results have three different categories, outputs, outcomes, and impact. Outputs are the

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Reflection from CDRA. 2001. "Reflections on Measurement."

result of the implementation of activities, outcomes are the result of mid-term outputs, and the impact is the result of the mid-term outputs. Results Based Management approaches assume a causal relationship between the projects and its results, meaning that the implementation of the project should produce expected results.<sup>2</sup>

Agencies that use Results Based Management systems include bi-lateral agencies, such as CIDA, and multi-lateral agencies, such as the World Bank, particularly in relation to poverty reduction strategies. The Women's Funding Network (WFN) draws on some aspects related to Results Based assessment systems in their *Making the Case* evaluation framework. However, WFN adapts the model to be more conscious of the context and its influences on changes at five levels—shifts in behavior, definition, engagement, and policy, as well as in maintaining past gains.

**Results Based Management Approaches can be beneficial in:**

- ◆ **Outlining** the inputs, outputs, and outcomes and **clarifying** the main program activities and the intended goals of a project;
- ◆ Beginning to **attend to the multiple forces at work** that can influence development outcomes;
- ◆ **Tracking against intended goals**; and
- ◆ Emphasizing the **importance of including qualitative and quantitative indicators** for programs involving a gender dimension. However, this recommendation should not only be limited to gender analysis, but also more broadly applied to all M & E frameworks.

**Results Based Management Approaches can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ Creating an **embedded bias toward new changes in behavior or policies** and not on maintaining past gains, particularly since results are defined as a change;<sup>3</sup>
- ◆ The assumption that **change occurs through a logical cause and effect process** and that program implementation will produce results; typically, this approach does not capture and assess how the program was actually implemented—so we cannot determine if the implementation was successful, if constraints to implementation occurred, or if reversals or shifts occurred based on contextual conditions;
- ◆ A lack of attention to the **role of context**, such as in the systemic contributions to poverty or gender inequality and in accounting for broader socio-political factors that may constrain, advance, or reverse change;
- ◆ Using **macro-economic indicators to measure program impact, which creates false attributions**, e.g., in a poverty reduction program, using % of the population whose consumption falls below the poverty line; this is particularly important since these outcomes are not solely attributable to the poverty reduction strategy of interest and as such, discount the multiple programs and

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<sup>2</sup> Kusek, Jody Zall and Ray C. Rist. 2004. "Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation." World Bank.

<sup>3</sup> Schacter, Mark, 1999. "Results-Based Management and Multilateral Programming at CIDA: A Discussion Paper." Institute on Governance.

- policies beyond the agency that influence development outcomes in a certain context;
- ◆ Using indicators that are **not reflective of individual lived experiences**, with a particular focus on quantitative indicators;
  - ◆ **Evaluating only in extreme cases**, e.g., best case scenario or innovation, which limits broader lessons that can be learned from the interventions;
  - ◆ The lack of an explicit gender analysis, which **prevents understanding of the differential impacts** of development interventions on men's and women's lives; and
  - ◆ The **understanding of power dynamics**, since assessment of power relations is not a primary focus.

### c. Theory of Change Framework

The Theory of Change<sup>4</sup> is a mapping process for making explicit the assumptions behind why and how a program should create social change. The Theory of Change outlines the relationships and steps between program activities, interim goals, and short-term and long-term outcomes, while also accounting for the context, key allies, as well as unintended consequences. The organization develops their vision of what "success" looks like and highlights the social changes they desire. This mapping helps an organization to understand where they presently are and how they aim to achieve their vision, paying particular attention to identifying who will help them achieve their specific goals as well as outline what is needed in order to maintain desired changes. They also consider what kinds of working relationships are needed with specific constituents in order to achieve their vision more effectively. The preconditions for achieving change are also mapped according to each constituent group in order to ensure solid assessment of the links between processes and outcomes. Finally, the method emphasizes the role of the organization's constituency and their role in developing the Theory of Change.

A wide variety of civil society organizations have drawn from the Theory of Change approach. Keystone Accountability has largely popularized the approach in the NGO sphere, funders like HIVOS and Tides Foundation have adopted the approach, and international NGOs, such as AWID and Women's Learning Partnership also use the Theory of Change approach for mapping pathways to change.

#### **Theory of Change approaches can be beneficial in:**

- ◆ Assessing the **fundamental assumptions underlying an organization or program**; by making these assumptions explicit and testing their relevancy in a certain context, we can gain deeper understanding into why a program does or does not work;
- ◆ Mapping **preconditions for achieving change** with constituents, which strengthens collective understanding of a program and its implementation;
- ◆ Fostering **stakeholder and, particularly, grassroots' agency** in defining what "success" looks like, which circumvents misspecifications based on the lack of understanding local realities;

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<sup>4</sup> The Theory of Change framework has been adapted for the development sector, but the notion stems largely from decades of evaluation work by Dr. Carol Weiss, see *Evaluation* 1972 (1997).



- ◆ Highlighting and measuring **alternative or unexpected outcomes of the program**, feeding into program learning;
- ◆ Offering possibilities for **capturing the messy nature of change**;
- ◆ **Using multiple methods** and highlighting the necessity of different types of data—both qualitative or quantitative, based on what is being measured and designed to reflect local realities;
- ◆ Designing **context-specific monitoring or evaluation systems** that are sensitive to power dynamics; and
- ◆ Strengthening **accountability and transparency** across stakeholder groups, including with the staff and in reporting to funders.

**Theory of Change approaches can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ The **time commitment** required to develop a mapping of change and design indicators to measure change with a variety of stakeholders;
- ◆ The ability to **track reversals in gains made**; and
- ◆ The **logical assumptions**; some have argued that even with attention to context and stakeholders' input, the approach still focuses on the causal testing of program assumptions and the validity of the theory, not accounting for the complexity of change.

## **2. Contribution Focused Frameworks**

Another way of conceptualizing the pathway to impact is not through direct causal links, but rather through a variety of combined forces that diversely contribute to program outcomes. Outcome Mapping introduces the notion of contribution rather than attribution and Participatory approaches highlight the necessity of multiple voices, particularly from the target community, in shaping evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

### **a. Outcome Mapping**

Outcome Mapping recognizes that the promotion of social justice is essentially about changing how people relate to each other and to their environment. Outcome Mapping is different from conventional approaches to evaluation, which assumes a causal relationship between an intervention and lasting changes in the well being of intended beneficiaries. Outcome Mapping focuses on tracking outcomes that result from changes in behavior, relationships, or activities of stakeholders. Outcomes are not only outlined for direct recipients of an intervention, but also for all actors or groups targeted or potentially influenced, referred to as 'boundary partners'. The hallmark of Outcome Mapping is a focus on contribution to change, rather than directly attributing a program's activities to change. Outcome Mapping uses three core concepts: outcomes, boundary partners and progress markers. Typically, progress markers are identified for each boundary partner on a three-point scale ranging from 'expect to see, like to see, and love to see'.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Source: Earl, Sarah, Carden, Fred, and Smutylo, Terry. 2001. "Outcome Mapping. Building Learning and Reflection Into Development Programs."

Different Variations on the Outcome Mapping approach include: the Secondary Teacher Training Environmental Education Program in Zimbabwe (St2eep). In addition, AWID and Women's Learning Partnership draw from Outcome Mapping to guide their annual planning and monitoring systems.

**Outcome Mapping can be beneficial in:**

- ◆ Challenging **traditional assumptions regarding logical attribution**, which are nearly impossible to validate in evaluation work, yet nevertheless remain the 'gold standard' of current M&E;
- ◆ Honoring feminist perspectives, which argue that **change is not linear and attributable to one specific intervention**, but rather is the culmination of multiple interacting factors;
- ◆ Recognizing the **complexity of any social change context** and its multiple influences, which can stem from political, legal, social, or family spheres, and which variably affect individuals' lives by contributing or constraining change;
- ◆ Integrating a **relational assessment of different stakeholders' contributions, needs, and influences** and offers a straightforward path for tracking systems of change through its boundary partner approach;
- ◆ Acknowledging the **importance of collaboration**, including the work of other actors as well as expected and unexpected circumstances;
- ◆ Including participatory learning and reflection processes encourages **greater respect for diversity and honors multiple voices and feedback** in developing organizational planning and reflection cycles;
- ◆ Creating **streamlined annual planning documents** that account for intended outcomes; and
- ◆ Focusing on a **graduated system of progress markers** that help organizations to think strategically about their bottom-line hopes for program outcomes as well as their best-case scenarios. This level of detail can help enhance program planning and strengthen implementation activities, particularly if in the course of outlining outcomes additional activities are found to be necessary to more effectively reach best case scenario goals.

**Outcome Mapping can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ A primary focus on progress markers for tracking advances in outcome achievement, which **draws attention away from understanding failures or challenges**;
- ◆ The lack of an assessment mechanism for **capturing different pathways of change**, leaving alternative explanations or unexpected consequences unaccounted;
- ◆ The focus primarily on **planning and monitoring**;
- ◆ The necessity of **an experienced facilitator**, as the process requires knowledge of the methodology and customization to each specific context; and
- ◆ **The time commitment** and buy-in from leadership and staff needed to successfully implement all planning stages.

**b. Participatory Approaches**

Participatory approaches to M & E integrate stakeholders from various communities and involve them in every step of the evaluation process from design and measurement to

data collection and analysis. The process of involving stakeholders in evaluation work is particularly important when striving for contextually relevant outcomes that respect local traditions, customs, and productions of knowledge. The shifting of traditional power relations between researcher and researched for the purposes of transformative social change underlies this approach. These approaches to M & E also highlight learning - both at the individual and collective level - as stakeholders aim to better understand the context, the strengths and weaknesses of their approach and strategies, and visions for social change. This learning supports in-depth capacity building and organizational and programmatic strengthening. Finally, participatory approaches are flexible and adaptable to local developments and shifts related to implementation or broader socio-political changes in the context.<sup>6</sup>

Participatory approaches are adaptable to a variety of different research, monitoring, and evaluation settings, and components of the approach can be used in more conventional evaluations as well. Different organizations have adapted participatory approaches to their specific structure, programs, and context. For example, Action Aid International's, Accountability, Learning, and Planning System (ALPs), involves annual participatory learning and review processes by stakeholders, Oxfam's 'Most Significant Change' Technique process draws from stakeholders' collection and assessment of local change stories, and Concern Worldwide's 'Listen First' develops a framework for increasing accountability and transparency to stakeholders.

**Participatory approaches can be beneficial in:**

- ◆ Improving the **relevance of evaluation design, methods, and implementation**, particularly in cross-cultural evaluation work;<sup>7</sup>
- ◆ Challenging notions of the **unbiased and apolitical nature of M & E**;
- ◆ **Honoring feminist principles related to varied influences in the change process** by focusing on including multiple voices, especially from marginalized groups in defining program outcomes, setting targets, and developing relevant indicators;
- ◆ Providing space to account for the **complexities in the change process**, including barriers to, reversals, and power struggles that shape the social change context;
- ◆ Analyzing **power imbalances** in the broader social context, in organizational processes, and in relations between staff and stakeholders;
- ◆ Transforming **conventional power relations** between evaluators and the grassroots;

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<sup>6</sup> Source: Estrella, Marisol and John Gaventa 1998. "Who Counts Reality? Participatory monitoring and Evaluation: A Literature Review." IDS Working paper No. 70.

<sup>7</sup> Evaluators in Nepal (Mathur, Mehta & Malhotra 2004) compared more traditional experimental evaluation methodologies with participatory evaluation approaches. While both evaluation approaches garnered similar results, individuals involved in the participatory evaluation identified additional social and contextual factors that provided more extensive information in understanding why the program intervention was successful. Not surprisingly, these additional factors were closely related to the social context and individual lives.

- ◆ Engaging participants in **iterative and critical reflections**, which increases individual and collective capacity for learning;
- ◆ Ensuring strong **feedback mechanisms** are in place, which enhances organizational learning;
- ◆ **Engaging stakeholders in the planning process**, which increases the relevance of program outcomes to communities of interest, thereby strengthening the link and possibilities between program and outcome; and
- ◆ Focusing on **both successes and failures** and its relation to strengthening programs.

**Participatory approaches can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ **Deliverables**, as the data and outcomes may be of variable quality based on the levels of knowledge, facilitation, training and skill of the organization and staff doing M & E;
- ◆ The ability to shed light on **cross-group comparisons**, which may be particularly important for organizations in a network, since different M & E designs are produced based on each stakeholders' analysis;
- ◆ Gathering reliable information for **comparing outcomes over time**, particularly if M & E systems constantly evolve and change based on contextual developments;
- ◆ The possibility of **hijacked local agendas**, given the need to produce participatory M & E processes under funder or partnership demands; and
- ◆ Describing **pathways to social change**, as it is not an explicit focus of the approach.

### 3. Gender Analysis

The descriptions of the various frameworks in this part of the analysis are drawn and reproduced from a document prepared by Development Technical Systems.<sup>8</sup> The analysis, particularly of strengths and shortcomings, is the work of the authors of this paper.

#### a. The Harvard Analytical Framework or Gender Roles Framework<sup>9</sup>

The Harvard Analytical Framework (sometimes referred to as the “Gender Roles Framework” or the “Gender Analysis Framework”) was developed by researchers at the Harvard Institute of International Development (HIID) in collaboration with USAID’s Office of Women in Development. It represents one of the earliest efforts to systematize attention to both women and men and their different positions in society. It is based upon the position that allocating resources to women as well as men in development efforts makes economic sense and will make development itself more efficient – a position labeled as the “efficiency approach.”

<sup>8</sup> Retrieved from [www.devtechsys.com/gender.../review\\_of\\_gender\\_analysis\\_frameworks.pdf](http://www.devtechsys.com/gender.../review_of_gender_analysis_frameworks.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Sources: Overholt, Anderson, Cloud and Austin. 1984. *Gender Roles in Development Projects: A Case Book*. Kumarian Press: Connecticut and Rao, Aruna, Mary B. Anderson, and Catherine Overholt. 1991. *Gender Analysis in Development Planning: A Case Book*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press.

Key to the Harvard Analytical Framework is adequate data collection at the individual and household level, and it adapts well to agricultural and other rural production systems. Data is collected on men's and women's activities, which are identified as either "reproductive" or "productive", and is then considered according to how those activities reflect access to and control over income and resources, thereby "highlighting the incentives and constraints under which men and women work in order to anticipate how projects will impact their productive and reproductive activities as well as the responsibilities of other household members."<sup>10</sup> Data is collected for three distinct dimensions of analysis, viz.: an activity profile, an access and control profile that looks at resources and benefits, and a list of influencing factors. The framework helps those with little understanding of gender analysis to create useful ways of documenting information in the field: according to one donor, "It makes men's and women's work visible."<sup>11</sup>

Because the approach emphasizes gender-awareness and does not seek to identify the causes of gender inequalities, it "offers little guidance on how to change existing gender inequalities."<sup>12</sup> There is the expectation that having good data on gender will, on its own, allow practitioners to address gender concerns in their activities; it is somewhat technocratic because it assumes that both the problem and its solutions are technical / managerial ones. Compared to more recent and more participatory approaches, the Harvard method does not involve informants in describing their own views of the development problems they face.

**The Gender Roles Framework can be beneficial in:**

- ◆ Identifying the **gendered division of access and control** over community resources and benefits;<sup>13</sup>
- ◆ Mapping **gender differentials** and providing a visual way of understanding differences in men's and women's work and resources;
- ◆ Stimulating **common understanding** among different groups of stakeholders through collective brainstorm and mapping activities; and
- ◆ Highlighting the need for **gender disaggregation** in measuring program impact, which can help reveal if there are differential outcomes for men and women receiving the same program intervention.

**The Gender Roles Framework can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ Identifying the **sources of social power dynamics and inequality**;
- ◆ Creating **strategic or targeted initiatives** designed to address or transform power relations and decrease inequality;
- ◆ Accounting for **complex change processes**, including reversals or the maintenance of goal achievement;
- ◆ Drawing from **stakeholder knowledge and participation**, limiting the grassroots relevance;

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<sup>10</sup> Netherlands Development Organization, "Gender Reference Guide."

<sup>11</sup> International Labour Organization, "Online Gender Learning and Information Module."

<sup>12</sup> International Labour Organization, "Online Gender Learning and Information Module."

<sup>13</sup> Donna Podems. 2007. "Gender (and Feminist) Issues in Global Evaluation." AEA/CDC Summer Institute Atlanta, Georgia.

- ◆ Focusing on **inequalities in economic distribution**, rather than inequalities in power and rights; and
- ◆ Highlighting **mechanisms for assessing pathways of change**, impeding the extent to which we can understand why a program intervention may work.

## **b. The Moser Gender Planning Framework<sup>14</sup>**

This framework, developed by Caroline Moser, links the examination of women's roles to the larger development planning process. The approach introduces the idea of women's "three roles" in production, reproduction, and community management (see below), and the implication that these roles have for women's participation in the development process. In making these links, both between women and the community, and between gender planning and development planning more broadly, Moser's framework encompasses both the technical and political aspects of gender integration into development.

The framework is composed of several components (or tools):

1. In the first, the activities of all household members - including children - are mapped over the course of twenty-four hours in order to identify women's multiple roles, viz.,
  - a. Reproductive Roles: Childbearing and rearing, domestic tasks that guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the current and future work force (e.g., cooking, cleaning, etc.)
  - b. Productive Roles: Work done for remuneration, in cash or kind. (E.g., wage labor, farming, crafts, etc.)
  - c. Community Management Roles: Work that supports collective consumption and maintenance of community resources (e.g., local government, irrigation systems management, education, etc.)
2. The second component identifies and assesses gender needs, distinguishing between practical needs (to address inadequate living conditions) and strategic needs (for power and control to achieve gender equality).
3. The third component, or tool, disaggregates information about access to and control over resources within the household by sex: who makes decisions about the use of different assets.
4. The fourth component identifies how women manage their various roles, and seeks to clarify how planned interventions will affect each one.
5. Finally, the WID/GAD policy matrix evaluates how different planning approaches (welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency, and empowerment) have addressed women's triple roles and their practical and strategic needs.

### **The Moser Gender Planning Framework is beneficial in:**

- ◆ Distinguishing between **two critical types of empowerment**, meeting basic *practical needs*, which enhances living standards but does not challenge division of labor or power inequities, and *strategic needs*, which aim to increase power toward the goal of gender equality;

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<sup>14</sup> Source: Moser, Caroline. 1993. *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice, and Training*. London: Routledge.

- ◆ Highlighting the differences between **distinct approaches to development**, such as programs that aim to provide services versus those that aim to transform power relations: both of which are often conflated under the broad term empowerment;
- ◆ Highlighting the **multiple and complex roles that women manage on a daily basis**, particularly those roles that influence access to and control over household and social resources;
- ◆ Designing **strategic action plans and options for program implementation** that include a sophisticated gender analysis, which can be integrated with other evaluation frameworks; and
- ◆ Attending to the **complexity of how women's lives and roles may interact with program interventions**, providing opportunities for more nuanced analysis and mapping of sources of power, as well as potential constraints and opportunities.

**The Moser Gender Planning Framework can be limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ Identifying the **underlying program assumptions** about why a program intervention should produce change, limiting assessment of why or how a program works;
- ◆ Excluding other forms of analysis that may be useful for designing action plans or assessing program interventions, such as the **intersection of race and class with gender**;
- ◆ Assessing **relationships** between men and women and how they interact to influence a context; and
- ◆ Conducting **evaluation work**, as the analysis is best suited for planning purposes; however, when integrated with other approaches as suggested above, other limitations may arise (see previous categories of analysis).

**c. Gender Analysis Matrix<sup>15</sup>**

The Gender Analysis Matrix was developed by Rani Parker as a quickly employed tool to identify how a particular development intervention will affect women and men. It uses a community-based technique to elicit and analyze gender differences and to challenge a community's assumptions about gender. Unlike some of the other tools described, this one is explicitly intended for use by the community for self-identification of problems and solutions. The principles of the Gender Analysis Matrix are:

- ◆ All requisite knowledge for gender analysis exists among the people whose lives are the subject of the analysis
- ◆ Gender analysis does not require the technical expertise of those outside the community being analyzed, except as facilitators
- ◆ Gender analysis cannot be transformative unless the analysis is done by the people being analyzed.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Parker, Rani. 1993. "Another Point of View: A Manual on Gender Analysis Training for Grassroots Workers." New York: UNIFEM.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted from the Global Development Research Center (website <http://www.gdrc.org/gender/framework/matrix.html>).

Each project objective is analyzed at four levels of society: women, men, household and community by various groups of stakeholders. They carry out the analysis by discussing each project objective in terms of how it impacts men's and women's labor practices, time, resources, and other socio-cultural factors, such as changes in social roles and status.

**The Gender Analysis Matrix is beneficial in:**

- ◆ Implementing **participatory processes** where stakeholders define project objectives, impacts, and the different categories for analysis, accounting for gender roles and practices;
- ◆ Encouraging **multiple stakeholder analysis**, i.e., men and women or political groups versus community groups, as it yields community specific and relevant information for program planning;
- ◆ Demonstrating how attention to **multiple voices** can result in broadened understanding of a program and its intended and unintended outcomes;
- ◆ Producing more holistic **gender sensitive and grassroots-led evaluations** by integrating this approach with other frameworks;
- ◆ Mapping **power relations and identifying sources of inequality**; all of which strengthen understanding of gender roles, status, and resources in a particular community; and
- ◆ **Simplifying planning** without relying on external experts or complicated evaluation logic.

**The Gender Analysis Matrix is limiting to in regards to:**

- ◆ Creating wider **learning channels**, as grassroots analysis of the objectives and outcomes is the primary focus;
- ◆ Absence of any inbuilt mechanism for using its alternative analysis to **challenge or critique mainstream discourse**, and especially, mainstream M&E approaches;
- ◆ Accounting for **time variant reversals or the maintenance of goal achievement**;
- ◆ Including mechanisms for **tracking how or why a program works** or how it changes over time; and
- ◆ **Conducting evaluation work**, as the framework alone may be best suited as a precursor to program planning and the development of a monitoring system; however, when integrated with other approaches as suggested above, other limitations may arise (see previous categories of analysis).

**d. Women's Empowerment Framework**

The Women's Empowerment Framework was developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe, a gender expert from Lusaka, Zambia. Her model is explicitly political, arguing that women's poverty is the consequence of oppression and exploitation (rather than lack of productivity), and that to reduce poverty women must be empowered. The framework postulates five progressively greater levels of equality that can be achieved (listed from highest to lowest).

1. **Control** – equal control in decision-making over factors of production.



2. **Participation** – equal participation in decision-making processes related to policymaking, planning and administration.
3. **Conscientisation** – attaining equal understanding of gender roles and a gender division of labor that is fair and agreeable.
4. **Access** – equal access to the factors of production by removing discriminatory provisions in the laws.
5. **Welfare** – having equal access to material welfare (food, income, medical care).

The framework is intended to assist planners to identify what women's equality and empowerment would mean in practice, and to determine to what extent a development intervention supports greater empowerment.

The tool examines elements of a project's design or a sectoral program to determine whether it affects the five different levels of equality negatively, neutrally, or positively.

**The Women's Empowerment Model is beneficial in:**

- ◆ Focusing on the **political nature of gender and development**, providing a strong analytical basis for better understanding the gendered distribution of control of resources, power, access, and participation;
- ◆ Making **gendered assumptions of equality** explicit and providing an excellent framework for a feminist context analysis, highlighting the political dimensions of gender inequality;
- ◆ Highlighting **ascending levels of gender equality**, which can be used as a frame of reference for progressive steps towards increasing equality, starting from meeting basic welfare needs to equality in the control over the means of production;
- ◆ Identifying **three point scale of a program effect**, e.g., positive, neutral or negative impact, which can easily be compared across programs and can help clarify which program impacts are the strongest and weakest; and
- ◆ Providing a **political framework to help organizations develop programmatic strategies** that aim to fundamentally shift the bases of gender inequality.

**The Women's Empowerment Model is limiting in regards to:**

- ◆ Including mechanisms for **tracking how or why a program works** or how it changes over time;
- ◆ Tracking program effects using the three point scale, e.g., positive, neutral or negative impact, ignores important qualitative assessments of "success" that provide valuable information critical for **program improvement**;
- ◆ Assuming a **hierarchy of gender equality is questionable**, since not only might women stakeholders disagree with this hierarchy, but others working in different contexts;
- ◆ Assuming such a hierarchy also suggests a somewhat **linear change trajectory** than is advisable in women's empowerment work, as though each stage of empowerment leads to the next in some natural progression; and
- ◆ **Conducting evaluation work**, as the framework best suits program monitoring and planning goals; however, when integrated with other approaches as suggested above, other limitations may arise (see previous categories of analysis).

## e. Social Relations Approach<sup>17</sup>

The social relations framework was created by Naila Kabeer at the Institute of Development Studies in Sussex, UK, and draws on explicitly structural feminist roots. It is more broadly oriented than earlier approaches, locating the family and household within the network of social relations connecting them to the community, market, and state. Kabeer writes that the triple roles model formulated by Moser is insufficiently attentive to “the fact that most resources can be produced in a variety of institutional locations (households, markets, states, and communities) so that the same resources may be produced through very different social relations.”<sup>18</sup> In contrast, the Social Relations Approach allows the resulting analysis to show how gender and other inequalities are created and reproduced within structural and institutional factors, and then to design policies that can enable women to work to change those factors that constrain them.

The Social Relations Approach asserts that:<sup>19</sup>

- Development is a process for increasing human well being (survival, security and autonomy), and not just about economic growth or increased productivity.
- Social relations determine people’s roles, rights, responsibilities and claims over others.
- Institutions are key to producing and maintaining social inequalities, including gender inequalities. Four key institutions are the state, the market, the community and the family. These have rules (how things get done), resources (what is used and/or produced), people (who is in/out, who does what), activities (what is done), and power (who decides, and whose interests are served), all of which engender social relations.
- The operation of institutions reflects different gender policies. Gender policies differ according to the extent they recognize and address gender issues: gender-blind policies, gender-aware policies, gender-neutral policies, gender-specific policies, and gender-redistributive policies.
- Analysis for planning needs to examine whether immediate, underlying, and/or structural factors are responsible for the problems, and what their effects on those involved.

### **The Social Relations Approach is beneficial in:**

- ◆ Reframing the analysis from individual experiences of inequality to **structures of gender inequality**, allowing for analyses that address the root causes of collective inequality;
- ◆ Identifying spaces where inequalities exist and are reproduced, allowing for a **dynamic analysis of gender relations**;

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<sup>17</sup> Kabeer, Naila. 1994. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. London, UK: Verso.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Miller and Ravazi, <http://www.sdn.org/gender/resources/mono6.html>

<sup>19</sup> Drawn from the Netherlands Development Organization’s, “Gender Reference Guide.”

- ◆ Providing valuable information for the development of **strategic interventions and appropriate policy prescriptions** based on the ranking of gender policies in institutions, ranging from gender blind to gender redistributive;
- ◆ Highlighting the fundamental importance of **social relations to systemic inequalities** through mapping intersections between actors, resources, and relationships;
- ◆ Separating notions of ‘**development for efficiency and productivity**’ from ‘**development for improving human wellbeing and empowerment**’ offers important distinctions for purposes of structural transformation;
- ◆ Pairing components of this approach with other frameworks in order to create **more effective planning, monitoring, or evaluation** programs;<sup>20</sup> and
- ◆ Identifying spaces where **structural contributions to inequality can be disrupted**, offering new possibilities for strategizing in development.

**The Social Relations Approach is limiting in relation to:**

- ◆ Inhibiting **multiple voices and experiences** in analysis due to the structural bias of the analysis;
- ◆ Using a **structural perspective to assessing and improving policies**, which may not fully account for grassroots’ experiences or contextual specificities of particular minority groups;
- ◆ Identifying **pathways to change and reversals**, highlighting the complexity of how change occurs in a particular intervention; and
- ◆ The tools it is paired with in order to conduct a full-scale evaluation, which may create **other weaknesses depending on the tools selected** (see previous categories of analysis).

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<sup>20</sup> For example, Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) integrated elements of the Social Relations approach with the logical frameworks in order to reduce some of the contextual limitations embedded in log frame models in the planning of a credit intervention program for the poor in India.

## PART III:

### Towards A Feminist Meta Framework For Monitoring & Evaluation

As we begin the search for a more feminist meta-framework for monitoring and evaluating gender equality, women's empowerment and rights work, it is useful to interrogate other frameworks that attempted to measure and assess changes in equally difficult and complex social terrain. Among these, the UNDP's **Human Development Index** was one of the earliest and most path-breaking. But there are many others - a range of approaches have been developed for measuring phenomena as disparate as **world values** (the World Values Survey), **corruption** (Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index), **democracy** (Freedom House's Democracy surveys and the Polity project series), and the health and growth of **civil society** (CIVICUS's Civil Society Index). When we unpack these different efforts, all attempting to map, measure and assess abstract social phenomena, we discover that they share certain common attributes – they all ask and attempt to answer these common questions:

- ◆ **What is it?** How clearly can we define what we are studying / measuring? They all begin with as clear a definition of the phenomenon under study as possible.
- ◆ **Where is it?** Where is our social problem or change intervention located – either geographically (in communities, or at the national or transnational level); or socially (which groups are affected / concerned / vested in the change); or institutionally (government, women's commissions, aid agencies, multilateral institutions, etc.) or politically (state policies, electoral processes, political parties, social movements, trade unions, etc.), or sectorally or thematically (health, education, public services, environment, etc.).
- ◆ **What are its boundaries?** Along with location, it is vital to set boundaries to our change arena. These are not just *spatial or demographic* boundaries – i.e., these twenty villages, this province, these countries, this particular age group or population, etc. – but *conceptual and analytical* ones. For example, if we are engaged in a change process related to violence against women, we not only have to delineate the area and population that we will target, but also the limits of the forms of violence we will address: e.g., all forms of physical and sexual violence, but not psychological abuse or violence. In other words, we need to spell out what is *included and excluded* from our intervention, who/what is in and who/what is out. Otherwise, the process of monitoring and evaluating our effectiveness and the change that occurs becomes too amorphous and unwieldy, and we may have far more difficulty assessing our role in the change.
- ◆ **What does it look like?** i.e., what are its key characteristics? What is our analysis of the situation we are intervening in or wish to change? This is a critical part of studying and tracking change in social phenomena, since this is where we unpack the dimensions of the problem, the power structures and power relations embedded in it, the characteristics of the social groups involved in it, and the nature of the institutions and structures we will engage in the process of change. This is what is sometimes described as the “situational analysis”, with the added dimensions of gender and power analysis.

- ◆ **What can we measure?** Finally, from these key characteristics, we must distill those dimensions, sub-units or indicators that are most easily quantifiable or measurable, along with those less amenable to measurement but possibly more critical to our understanding, and make choices in how we combine quantitative and qualitative measures.
- ◆ **When do we measure?** This is very critical, since it is not only about establishing a baseline, but determining what will be tracked on an ongoing basis, as part of monitoring activities, and what will be examined in post-facto or impact evaluations.

### **Core elements of a feminist framework:**

- 1) A feminist framework would begin by **answering the above key questions in a feminist way** – which means
  - a) Involving our key constituencies in addressing all the six questions;
  - b) Interrogating all hidden and overt assumptions – particularly assumptions arising from internalized patriarchal and other ideologies about power – that are embedded within it;
  - c) Incorporating the best secondary data and insights from academic research into our answers; feminist M&E will bridge the usual activist-academic divide and use the best of both;
  - d) Ensuring that our answers are gendered – i.e., that it addresses gender relations and the situation of men relative to women in the analysis; and
  - e) Ensuring that other social power relations that intersect with our constituency – e.g. race, class, region, religion, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, age, etc. – are included in our analysis.
  
- 2) **Appropriate values and principles** would be embedded in and guide a feminist framework – these would include some of the following, but need to be elaborated and fleshed out in the particular context of our work:
  - a) **The right of our constituency** – the women we organize, serve, represent, support - **to inform, co-design and participate in the monitoring and evaluation of change processes**;
  - b) **Respect for the voice and perspective of all key stakeholders**, breaking the hierarchy of “monitor – monitored” “evaluator – evaluated”.
  - c) **Positioning M&E as a political activity**, not a neutral one, and using M&E as also a means of consciousness-raising, building collective power, learning and critical thinking;
  - d) **Integrating political and social forces and context into our M&E frameworks**, in recognition of how they influence and shape our change interventions and our constituency;
  - e) **Ensuring space for historical perspective and analysis**, in recognition of the fact that our interventions are occurring along a historical trajectory of struggle for change;
  - f) **Avoiding claiming credit or attributing change entirely to ourselves**, but looking for our contribution to change; this includes claiming organizational credit for processes or changes that women of our constituencies have wrought;
  - g) **Viewing M&E as primarily for learning and strengthening our work**, and secondarily for satisfying donor requirements and accountability;

- h) **Eschewing false dichotomies** (subjective-objective, success-failure) and creating more integrative tools;
  - i) **Not using M&E as a means to penalize organizational staff or communities**, or for rewarding them;
  - j) **Capturing, analyzing and addressing negative changes**, reversals, shortcomings, etc., openly and transparently; and
  - k) **A willingness to abandon, revise, or recast our assumptions and frameworks** as and when necessary.
- 3) In addition, every feminist framework will create **both quantitative and qualitative means and methods** (indicators, life histories, surveys, case studies, participatory mapping, and other information gathering tools) to look for shifts / changes / impact in five key domains:
- a) In access to / control over resources (not just material resources or assets but also intellectual and human resources)
  - b) In the division of private, productive, and reproductive labor
  - c) in visibility, voice and decision-making power
  - d) in social norms and practice
  - e) in laws, policies, and public services
  - f) in mainstream / dominant discourse
- 4) **Appropriate and differentiated time frames** will guide feminist M&E, with distinct time frames for tracking small steps forward and back, for significant shifts forward and back, as well as for sustained positive changes.
- 5) **Our frameworks will be based on complexity** – consequently, they will examine both the processes and interventions aimed at change as well as their results; they will attempt to track, document, analyze and distill lessons about how change occurs, and assess the role of all factors and agents involved in the change process, including sources of resistance.
- 6) **Our frameworks will be tailored to the level, nature of work, and strategy of our particular organizations** – for example, the meta framework would allow a global or transnational organizations doing advocacy with the UN and World Bank on engendering environmental policy to reflect its work and impact as appropriately as the work of a grassroots women’s organization or NGO organizing indigenous women against state violence, exploitation of their labor by private interests, and indigenous patriarchal power relations.

### **How will this work?**

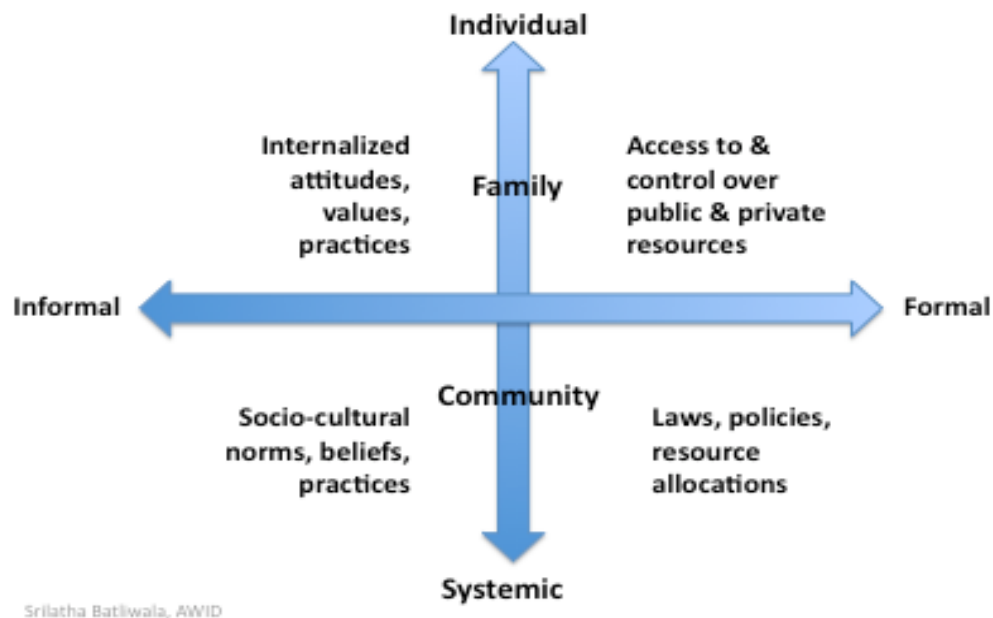
These principles and elements sound wonderful, but what would they look like in practice? While the meta-framework needs much more thought, discussion, and co-designing, we offer here some steps suggestive of the larger framework.

#### **1) Situational Analysis and problem definition:**

The first step in the meta framework would be tools and frameworks for analyzing the social context of our particular intervention, and defining and setting the boundaries of our problem or change arena. One useful tool for problem definition is that

developed by Rao and Kelleher, which provides four windows for unpacking the issue or gender power challenge we wish to address:

**Fig.1: A Tool for Problem Definition / Situational Analysis**



Although some find it somewhat dichotomous and rigid, this tool can nevertheless be a useful way of filling in the specific details of the situation in which we are intervening. And because it emphasizes not just the situation in the formal domain of government policies, budgets, etc., but the even more critical informal domains of culture, beliefs, practice, it allows us to elaborate on these vital dimensions, and position our change strategies vis-à-vis all the quadrants. Since it also provides for an analysis of the situation at the individual, community and systemic levels, we can disaggregate the specific ways in which the problem operates at all these levels. The problem definition within each quadrant could also enable us to set boundaries to what we are going to track. This tool is also helpful because we can track changes over time using the same quadrants, and locate changes – from small shifts to major leaps – in each quadrant, at different points in the change process.

Another approach to situational analysis is illustrated below (next page– the “Force Field” analysis. It is not necessarily a substitute for the Rao-Kelleher tool, but can be used to build on and supplement it, since it incorporates the forces acting for and against gender equality and women’s rights:

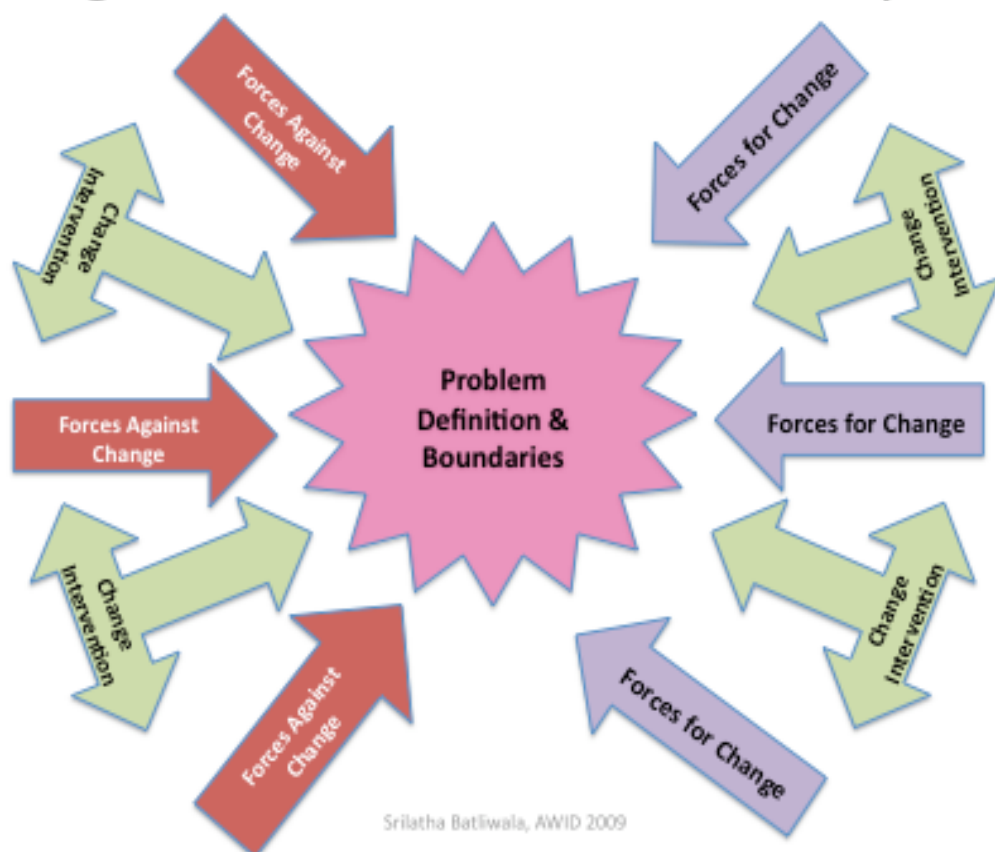
## 2) Establishing a baseline:

One of the main difficulties women’s organizations face in demonstrating their role and contribution to change in women’s lives and realities is the absence of solid baseline data or evidence. We have to be able to measure change – both positive and negative – against clear, time-bound benchmarks. Baseline surveys / baseline situational analyses are critical to tracking and capturing the changes our

interventions and processes have helped create, and also to establish the ways in which negative forces have pushed back gains or neutralized the effect of progressive policies and laws. Below is a graphic representation of how such a baseline can be created in a way that maps four key elements and creates a benchmark against which progress and change can be assessed at different periods of time, viz.:

- The definition of the problem or discriminatory / unequal power relations syndrome that we wish to address and alter, as well as the contours and boundaries of the issue;
- The nature and strength of forces that will support or act FOR the change – these could be as diverse as women farmers wanting equal rights to land, indigenous women seeking equal voice in the indigenous people’s movement, or a progressive law or government policy that will support the change we seek;
- The forces arrayed AGAINST the change – from strongly embedded local cultural practices (e.g. FGM), entrenched economic interests (e.g., a mining company or local landowners), or an ethnic fundamentalist group opposed to women’s rights; and
- The nature and contours of the change strategies / interventions that we propose to employ to create change – these should obviously reflect and address at least some of the forces against change, if not all, and demonstrate how the forces for change will be leveraged.

**Fig.2: Baseline Force Field Analysis**

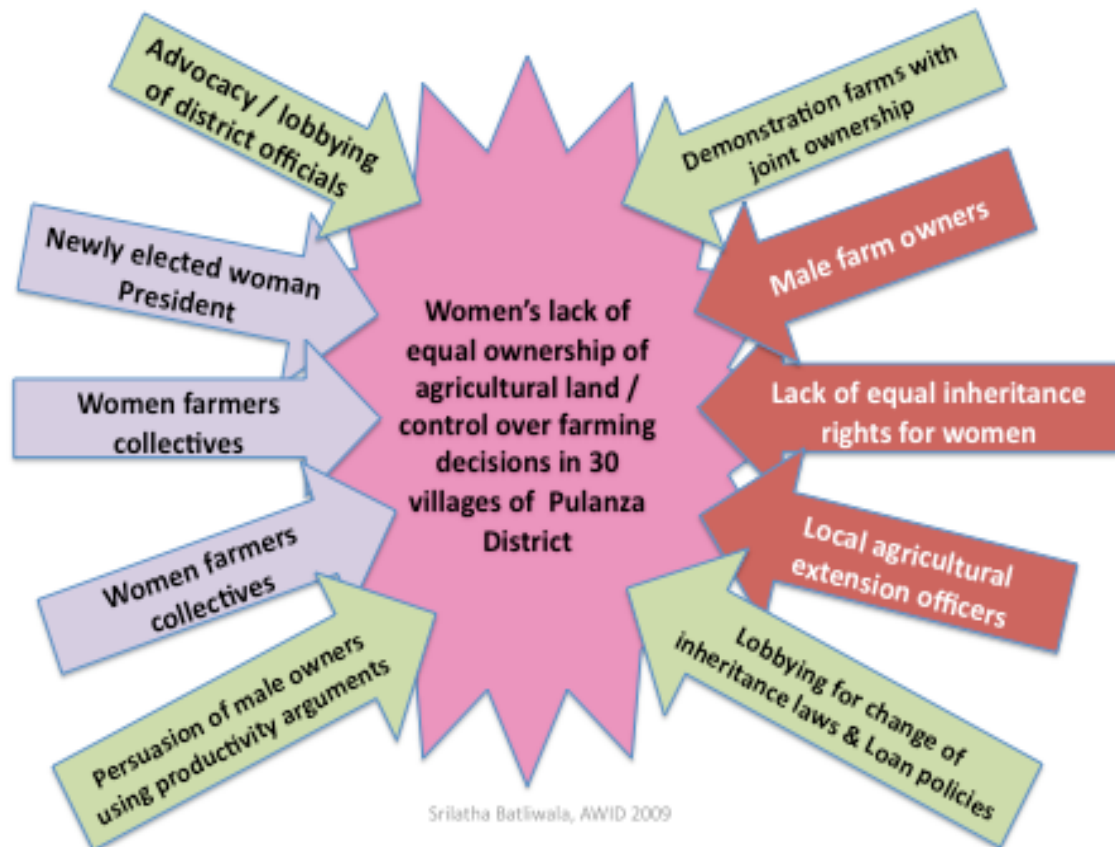


The above figure is only suggestive of how the baseline might look if presented in a graphic. Each arrow would of course contain specific descriptions based on the context – e.g., see Fig.3, next page. However, the actual baseline can take many forms, including quantitative data based on primary or secondary research (for example, statistics on women’s land ownership, women in leadership positions within a movement, or incidence of violence against women within the group / area of our change intervention. Similarly, qualitative data, rich description, and analysis of



various elements can also be provided. Women’s voices and analysis of the problem and need for change should also be placed in the baseline, to operationalize the feminist principle of ensuring our key constituency and its perspective is prioritized. The baseline could be followed with an outcome map or any other tool one chooses from the menu presented in the previous section for setting out our expected outcomes and outputs. The point is this offers one part of a “meta-framework”

**Fig.3: Example of Baseline Force Field Analysis**



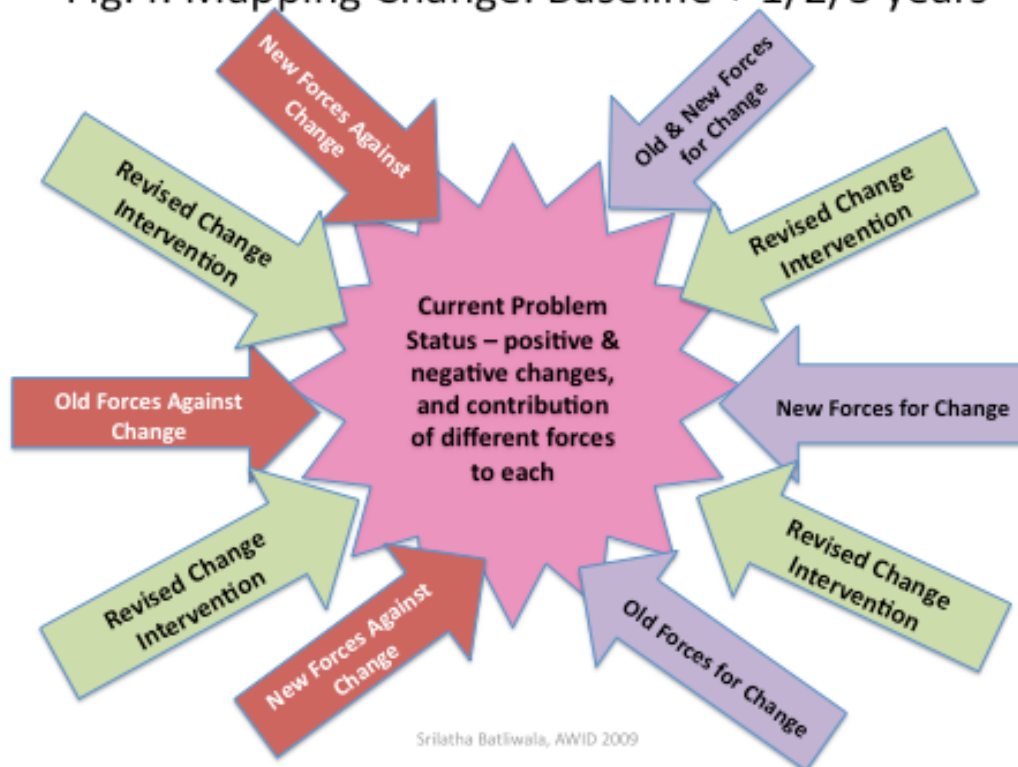
### 3) Tracking and mapping change

These four core elements – problem analysis, forces for and against change, and change strategies - then become the pillars on which we build our monitoring and evaluation design and process. Each element can be broken down to locate specific dimensions and indicators for monitoring, and for framing our articulation of expected outcomes as well as expected resistance. The involvement of women constituents is vital in this process, as the example in Box 3 (next page) shows, because not only will they have uniquely different insights on the problem / situation, but because they can identify extremely sensitive and telling indicators for monitoring change.

Applying this approach to the above example, for instance, we could identify the following elements for annual or bi-annual tracking: the percentage of women owning or jointly owning agricultural land, and the percentage of women stating they have increased – or decreased – voice in farming decisions. Similar indicators for both quantitative and qualitative tracking of change – both positive and negative – can be selected within both the forces for and against change. Using the above example

again, these could be for instance, the national parliament admitting a petition for equal inheritance rights for women (though it may take many years to pass into law), winning of some support from local agricultural officers, and some male farmers voluntarily sharing land title with their wives / daughters / etc. Degrees and intensity of change can also be mapped in creative ways – using plus signs (+) for positive change and negative signs (-) for negative change.

Fig.4: Mapping Change: Baseline + 1/2/3 years



The picture that emerges from this kind of monitoring framework can be generated at any interval that seems appropriate and useful to the implementing organization. In fact, we can separate the indicators into short-, medium- and long-term changes and generate profiles of the problem status accordingly. For instance, using the example of the women farmers, we could identify short-term changes as winning over some male farmers and agricultural officers, increased productivity in demonstration farms with women’s equal say in farming decisions, and joint land title in a few households; medium-term as parliament admitting of the petition for equal inheritance rights and women winning the right to agricultural development loans in their own names; and long term as equal inheritance rights for women secured in law, joint land titles in the majority of households in the 30 villages of Pulanza district,

Critically, the framework allows us to track the dynamic nature of the negative and positive forces working for and against change. These forces will shift as the change process moves along, and, as discussed in Part 1 of this paper, successful impact will sometimes breed more intense backlash - the periodic situational analysis allows us to capture these dynamics as well.

Creating a process and discipline around this kind of monitoring could also structure organizational learning and strategic refinement on an ongoing basis, strengthening their effectiveness. Most of all, such a structured process, ensuring the involvement

of women from the constituency, would create a culture of critical reflection, including self-reflection, that would strengthen not just the organization but the movements and constituencies it seeks to build and support.

### Box 3: Why Women's Inputs Are Crucial

- ◆ A women's empowerment project of three years' duration was undergoing a mid-term evaluation. The evaluation team held meetings with the grassroots women's groups that had been organized through feminist popular education techniques. When the women identified greater strength and confidence as one of the ways in which the process had empowered them, evaluators asked for examples. One woman, a landless agricultural laborer, said, "Three years ago, when the landlord in whose fields I work addressed, I would answer him looking down at his feet. Now, I answer with my eyes on his chest. Next year, I will be strong enough to look him right in the eyes when I speak to him."
- ◆ A study of gender relations and the status of women probed men's and women's relative autonomy and power with respect to control over private resources. The researchers struggled to come up with the right question to get at women's control over private assets – e.g., house, land, livestock, equipment, etc. During the pre-test, the question had been asked rather crudely and directly – "Who has control over the following....?" The researchers knew they hadn't gotten at the truth, because both men and women respondents were confused by the question – they had identified the legal owner or patriarch of the family. The researchers then conducted focus group interviews with a set of women who had participated in the pre-test, and discussed this question with them. One wise woman in the group asked, with some amusement, "What are you trying to understand?" "Who really has control over this asset" the researchers replied. "Oh!" she said, "In that case, all you have to ask is: if there is an emergency and you need money quickly, what can you sell or pawn without asking anyone's permission?" The question was changed accordingly, and the study yielded not only accurate, but astonishing results: the vast majority of women identified their personal jewelry as the only asset they truly controlled. And the men said the only asset they controlled was their wife's jewelry!!

\* \* \* \* \*

The title of this part of the paper – "Towards a Feminist Meta Framework...." Must be re-emphasized at its conclusion. **What we have presented here is not the framework** – just some very preliminary principles, ideas, and approach to kick off a broader discussion for creating such a meta-framework. We hope some of the ideas here will prove useful and provocative, and catalyze our allies, members, and donor partners to brainstorm the issues more widely and deeply.