# Measuring Empowerment of Women and Girls

## *Some thoughts on the 'what' and the 'how'*

Webinar CGIAR Gender Platform
31 January 2018

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# Measuring empowerment of women and girls

"Empowerment is one of the best examples of the distortion of good ideas and innovative practices as they are lifted out of the political and historical context in which they evolved and rendered into formulas that are 'mainstreamed'.

This usually involves divesting the idea of its cultural specificity, its political content, and generalizing it into a series of rituals and steps that simulate its original elements, but lacking the transformative power of the real thing.

Thus good ideas – evolved to address the specific development challenges – are altered into universally applicable panaceas."

(Batliwala 2007, in 2013: 80)

technical

political
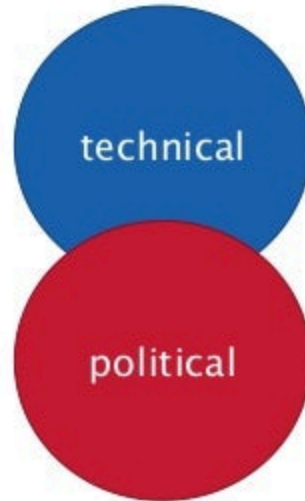
"Just because empowerment is complicated does not mean we should avoid monitoring it. Simplifying can be dangerous, but it is possible to present changes in power relations in a simple but insightful way.

This can be done, for example, by unpacking different components of empowerment, relating to individuals, groups, organizations, networks and systems"

(SDC 2006, cited in Holland & Reubin 2012:3)

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# This webinar

**Part 1 – *the 'what'***

– What is empowerment?

(core definition, elements, and qualifying it)

– What this means for what to measure

(outcomes and illustrative indicators)

**Part 2 – *the 'how'***

– Importance of 'voice' in measurement process

– Value of participatory approaches

– Illustrative examples

# Background

• Review of measurement of empowerment of women and girls literature

• Web-based search of over 200 materials (approaches, frameworks, studies, reports)

• 24 experts contacted (MN)

• Reached out to: over 30 responses
  • Pelican (platform for evidence-based learning and communication for social change)
  • Gender & Evaluation Ning

• Drawing from White Paper on Empowerment of women and girls (conceptual model) (BMGF)

• Forthcoming: *Working Paper* on participatory approaches to the measurement of empowerment

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*Empowerment of women and girls is the expansion of choice and strengthening of voice through the transformation of power relations, so women and girls have more control over their lives and futures. It is both a process and an outcome.*



**Choice** : ability to make and influence choices that affect her life

**Voice** : capacity to speak up and be heard, and to shape and share in discussions and decisions

**Transformation** of **power** relations : challenges systemic constraints on women's and girls' agency

**Process & outcome**

- Degree of freedom to control her life and future

- Process valuable in itself (experiencing, directing, and on-going)

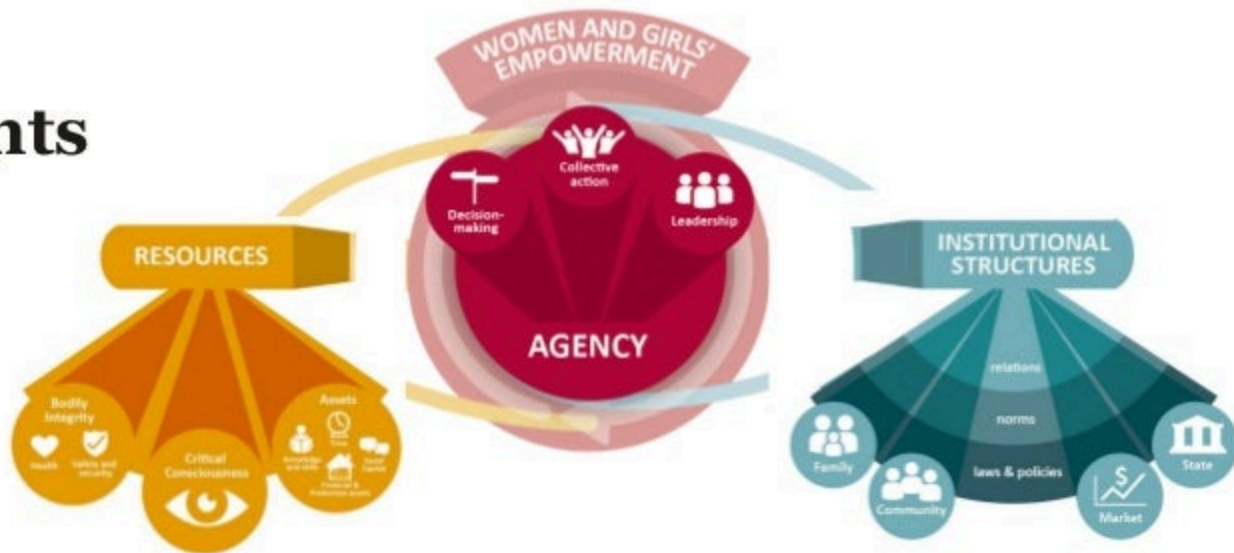- Process vs. achievements (not pre-define outcomes)

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# Elements



**Resources**
= tangible and
intangible capital
and sources of
power that women
and girls have,
own or use,
individually or
collectively

- Wide **range**
- Interact with
  each other
- Critical
  consciousness

**Agency** = capacity for purposive action, the ability to pursue
goals, express voice and influence and make decisions, free
from violence and retribution

At the **heart** of empowerment

Explicit on 3 expressions of agency:
- Decision-making
- Leadership
- Collective action

**Institutional
structures**

= social
arrangements of
formal and informal
rules and practices
that enable and
constrain agency of
women and girls, and
govern the
distribution of
resources

- A key element
- Broader than
  norms in family
- Arenas
- In practice

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# Dynamics of transformative change



## Empowerment as transformative change
- Tackle multiple barriers of marginalization and disempowerment
- Systemic change → intentional
- Interplay : mutually reinforcing, but not automatic, nor to be assumed

## Unpredictable and non-linear pathways
- Dynamic and _iterative_ interplay
- Push-backs and _reversals_
- _Pathways_

## Facilitating change in a non-prescriptive way
- _Bottom-up_ process
- _Not prescribing_ women's and girls' choices and voices

## A few lessons learnt on measuring empowerment

- Single indicators fall short in capturing interactions across dimensions

- Need for multilevel measures: linking individual level and systemic level change

- Capturing transformative change:
    - the loosening of patriarchal structures; change in power relations
    - Pathways of change

- Empowerment as outcome or as process?

- Need to track reversals and negative change (including backlash)

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# Multidimensional and multilevel

1. Measures as a set of outcomes:

   - go beyond single outcomes
   - cover different elements of the model
   - Women's and girls' expression of agency at the heart

2. Changes in at individual level are placed in context of social and systemic change

   - Capture shifts in:
     - Institutional structures
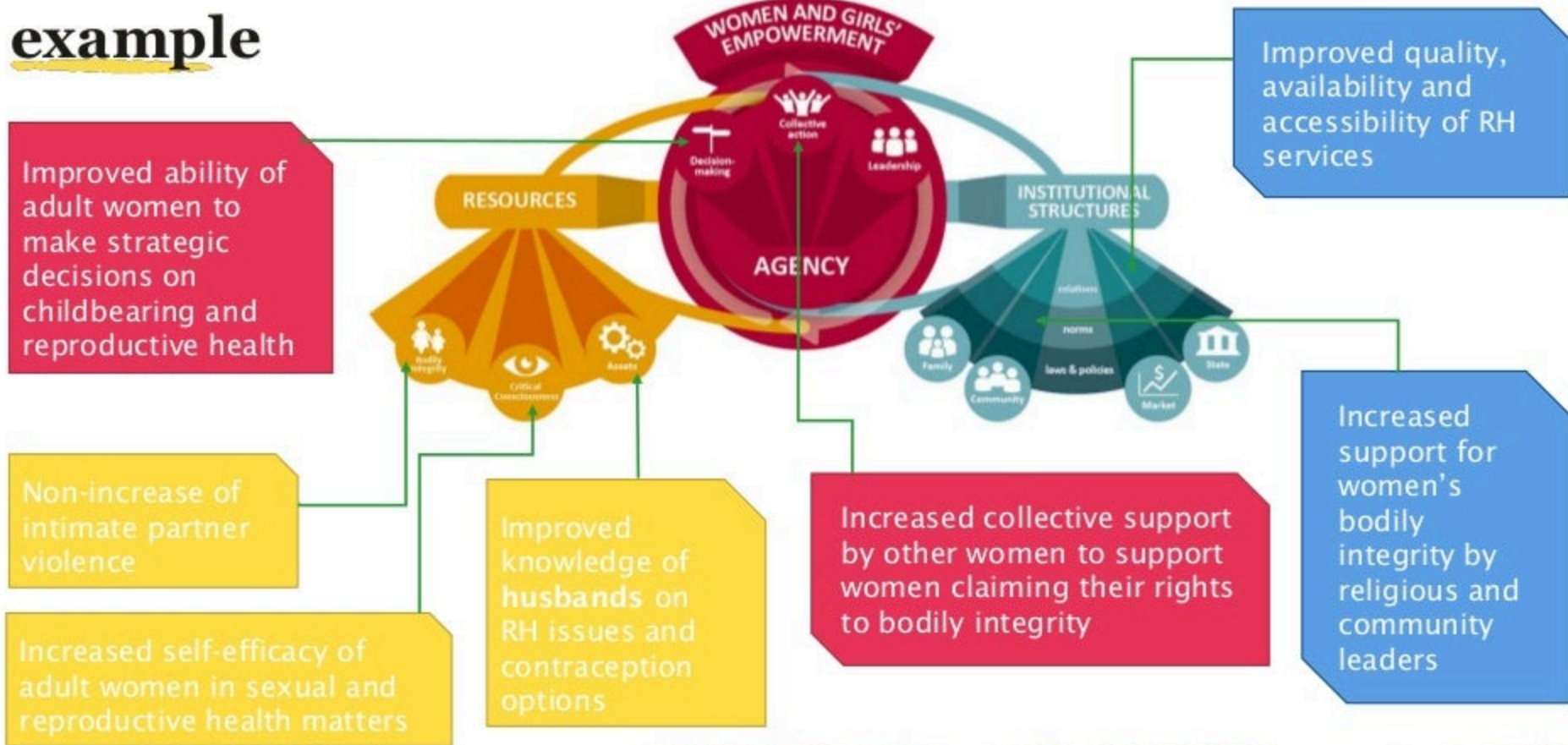     - Resource distribution

3. Identify negative or unwanted consequences of transformative change

   - Backlash in norms
   - Loss of control over certain assets
   - Increase in workload
   - Increase in violence against women
   - Reduced self-esteem and self-worth

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# Example



Increased equitable DM in couples on financial and productive assets

Increased financial literacy of women

Increased use of financial products from formal financial institutions by women

Non-increase in women's workload and time poverty

Improved quality of spousal communication on financial issues

Enhanced women-responsive financial service provision

Increased acceptance by community of women's mobility to visit formal financial institutions

WOMEN AND GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT

Collective action

Decision-making

Leadership

AGENCY

RESOURCES

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES

Critical Consciousness

Family

Community

norms

laws & policies

State

Market

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# Another example



Improved quality, availability and accessibility of RH services

Improved ability of adult women to make strategic decisions on childbearing and reproductive health

Non-increase of intimate partner violence

Increased self-efficacy of adult women in sexual and reproductive health matters

Improved knowledge of **husbands** on RH issues and contraception options

Increased collective support by other women to support women claiming their rights to bodily integrity

Increased support for women's bodily integrity by religious and community leaders

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# Decisions ... and assets as a pre-condition

| What is your focus? | Primary outcome is expression of AGENCY | Intermediate outcomes can include RESOURCE as a pre-condition for expression of agency |
|---|---|---|
| Example 1.<br><br>Focus:<br>on women expressing agency in decision-making over land.<br>(acquiring or selling land, its use and what crops are grown) | **Increased level of control women in decisions over land** | Increased access to and control of women over farm and non-farm <u>income</u> |
| | | Increased access to and control of women over <u>credit and savings</u> |
| Example 2.<br><br>Focus: women expressing agency in decision-making over income. | **Increased level of control women in decisions over farming income** | Increased access to and control over agricultural <u>land</u> |
| | | Increased access to and control of women over <u>credit and savings</u> |
| | | Increased ownership of women over large and/or small <u>livestock</u> |

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# Indicators Agency

**Joint or sole? Bargaining power or autonomy?**

Rather be specific about what is at stake: ability to make strategic decisions, level of influence, level of control, autonomy, or equitable DM.

**Types of decisions**: to expand control over her life

Illustrative **indicators**:

- Self-reported <u>level of control</u> (1-5; control over all/most/some/few/no decisions)

- <u>Areas</u> of strategic decisions: which ones? Expanding?

- Self-reported <u>level of autonomy</u>: (avoid repercussions; avoid blame; own values/interests)

- Self-reported <u>level of influence</u>: (1-6; not involved, informed, consulted, can influence, take final decision, decide on my own)

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# Indicators Norms

- in relation to various elements and sub-elements of the empowerment model (e.g. on DM; on land ownership)
- Interrogate *how* they affect women's and girls' agency and empowerment

(empirical and normative expectations, sanctions, sensitivity to sanctions, exceptions)

- Capture shifts, capture positive perceptions, capture positive deviance

Illustrative **indicators**:

- Increased visibility and acceptance of equitable DM/women's autonomy (descriptive norm change)
- Perceptions of women/girls in leadership roles
- Increase of contestations over women's leadership in public spaces
- Self-reported expectations on specific behavior (leadership, earning income, taking decisions) (injunctive norm change)
- Justifications for intimate partner violence

# Indicators Relations

- In all arenas
- Quality of relations (Positive: equity, trust, support, reciprocity) (reduction of negative features: levels of conflict, threats of violence)
- Women's perceptions of these qualities

Illustrative **indicators**:

- Self-reported respect for one's opinion/perspective
- Appreciation and recognition of family members for opinion/perspective
- Frequency of interspousal communication
- Increased freedom from male domination
- Self-reported level of being treated with respect by service providers
- Self-reported level of being able to ask questions to service providers

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Genevive Audet-Belanger (KIT

# The HOW

- Politics of measurement
- Voice matters
- Value of participatory approaches

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# Why voice matters

| Valuing whose knowledge counts | Context specificity | Process |
|---|---|---|
| · Driven and lead by those whose lives it affects | · Different meanings/elements in contexts & different types of women and girls | · Explaining causality<br>· Changes over time |

"Experience shows that **women are often the best sources for sensitive indicators of hard-to-assess dimensions of changes in gender relations;** so rather than reduce these to 'anecdotal' evidence, our tools will find ways of privileging these perspectives in our assessments"

(Batliwala & Pittman, 2010: 20)

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# Why and when use participatory approaches?
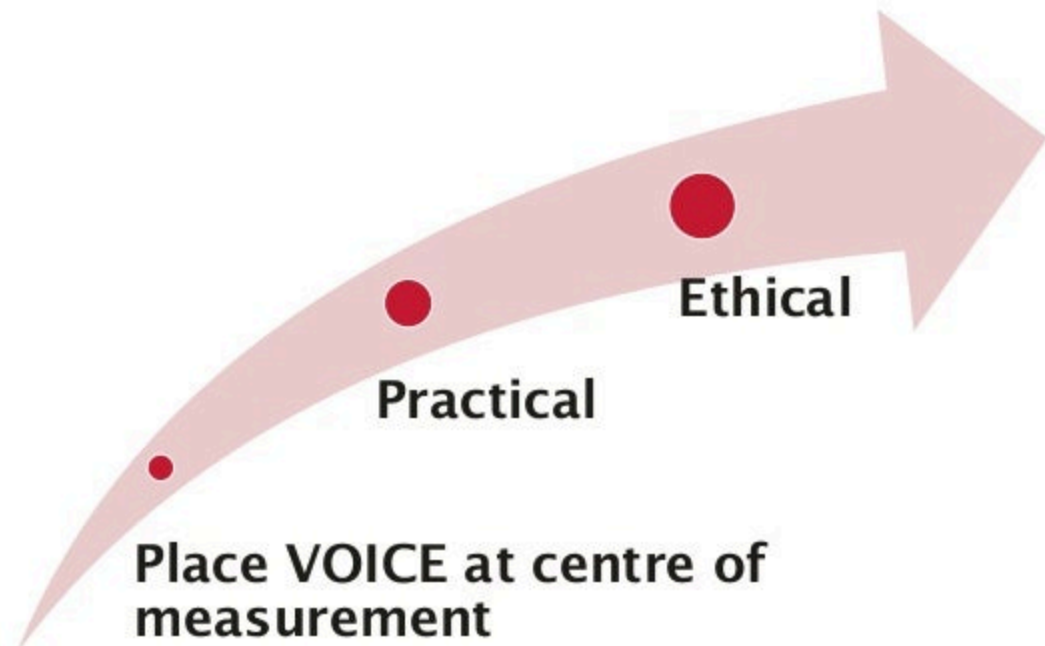
Place VOICE at centre of measurement

- Practical
- Ethical

## Three guiding questions

1. What **purpose** will different women and girls participation support in stage of measurement?

2. **Whose** participation matters and what stage?

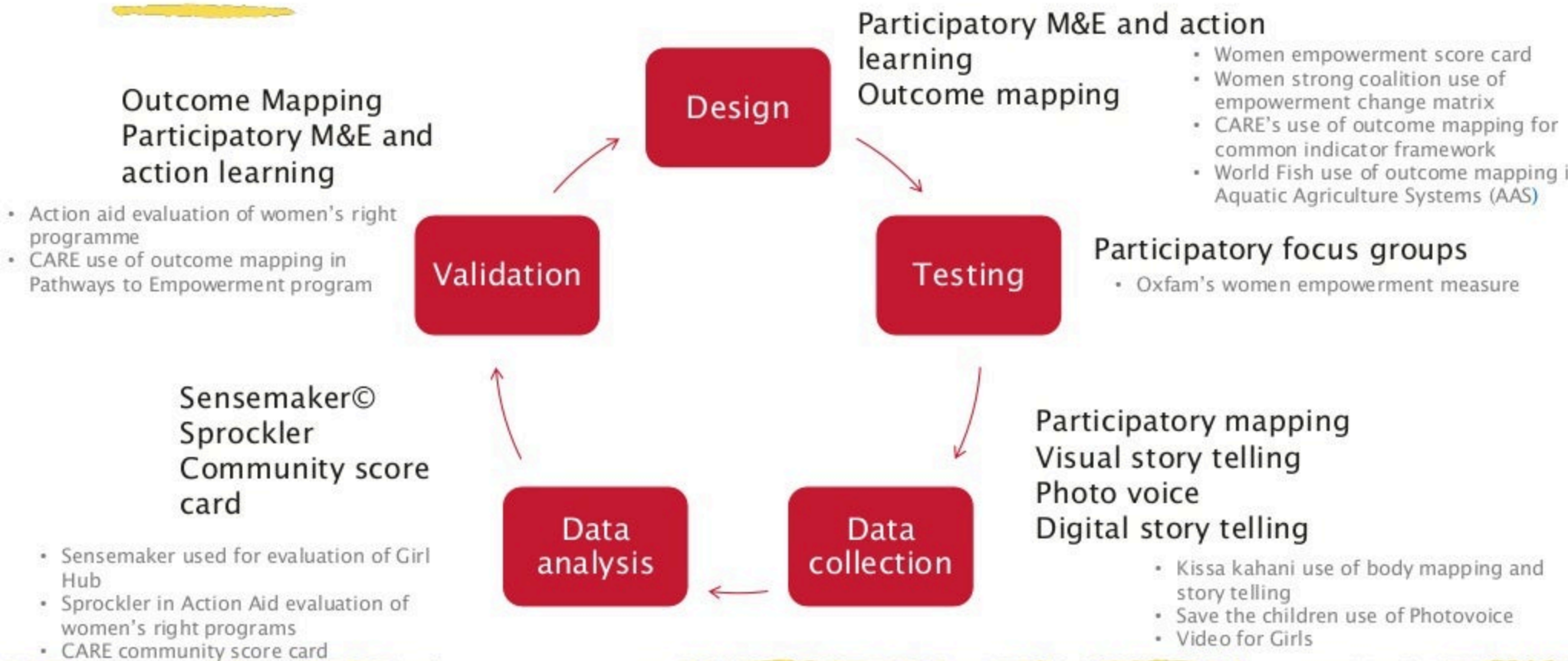3. **When** is participation feasible?

Guijt (2014)

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# Participation levels

| Level | What participation means to commissioners of measurement | What participation means for program participants |
|---|---|---|
| **Nominal** | **Legitimation**: to show something done about stakeholder involvement | **Inclusion**: to gain access to measurement process |
| **Instrumental** | **Efficiency**: to make measurement more cost effective by using the contributions of women participants/community/other stakeholders in the measurement process | **Cost, time & labour**: effort and energy is spent on measurement process, but potentially gaining new capacities |
| **Representative** | **Sustainability & fairness:** to avoid creating dependency and to reduce inequitable benefits. To give people a voice in determining their own development | **Leverage**: to influence and shape the intervention and its management, as a chance to express their own interests; to influence and shape measurement and its management |
| **Transformative** | **Empowerment:** to enable women to make their own decisions, work out what to do an take action based on findings | **Empowerment**: to be able to decide and act for themselves; to assess and act |

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# Different participatory approaches in Project/Research Cycle



**Outcome Mapping
Participatory M&E and action learning**

- Action aid evaluation of women's right programme
- CARE use of outcome mapping in Pathways to Empowerment program

**Participatory M&E and action learning
Outcome mapping**

- Women empowerment score card
- Women strong coalition use of empowerment change matrix
- CARE's use of outcome mapping for common indicator framework
- World Fish use of outcome mapping i Aquatic Agriculture Systems (AAS)

**Participatory focus groups**

- Oxfam's women empowerment measure

**Participatory mapping
Visual story telling
Photo voice
Digital story telling**

- Kissa kahani use of body mapping and story telling
- Save the children use of Photovoice
- Video for Girls

**Sensemaker©
Sprockler
Community score card**

- Sensemaker used for evaluation of Girl Hub
- Sprockler in Action Aid evaluation of women's right programs
- CARE community score card

Design

Testing

Data collection

Data analysis

Validation

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# DESIGN: Participatory Monitoring

CHARs Livelihoods Programme (CLP) : Women
empowerment score card

Design → Testing → Data collection → Data analysis → Validation → Design



Measuring
Empowerment:
Methodology &
Lessons Learnt

http://clp-bangladesh.org/

http://clp-bangladesh.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/monitoring-women_s-empowerment3.pdf

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# Data collection: Visual Story Telling through *photovoice*

**Data collection during mixed methods evaluation: one-off** *representative*
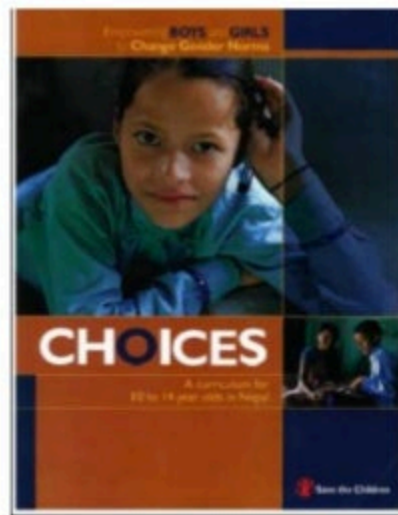


Institute of Reproductive Health, Georgetown University (2011)

**Data collection during design phase and to feed into M&E:** *transformative*



PHOTOVOICE GUIDANCE

10 SIMPLE STEPS TO INVOLVE CHILDREN IN NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

Save the Children ( 2013)



Design → Testing → Data collection → Data analysis → Validation → Design
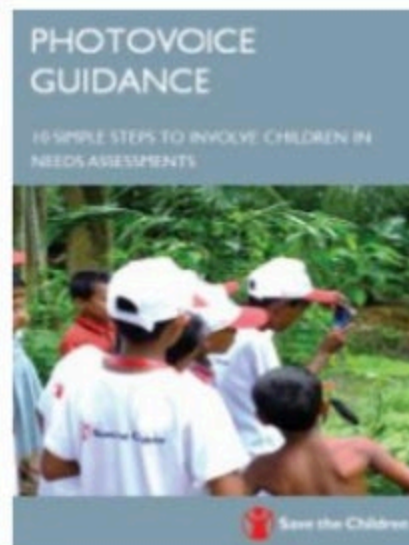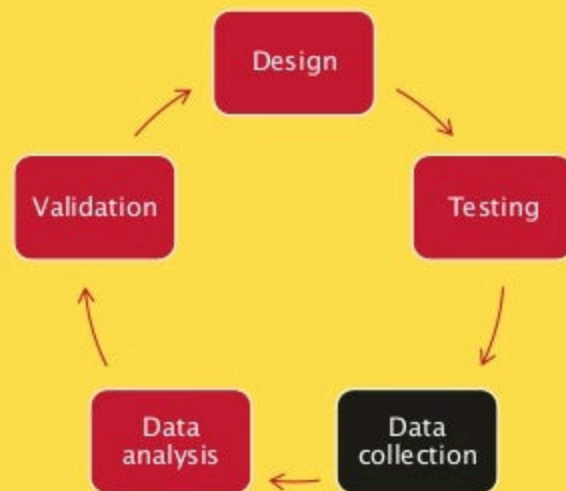
"entrusts cameras **to the hands of people** to enable them to **act as recorders**, and **potential analysist** for social action and change, in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the **visual image and accompanying stories to furnish the evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise** to create public policy" (Wang & Burris, 1997)

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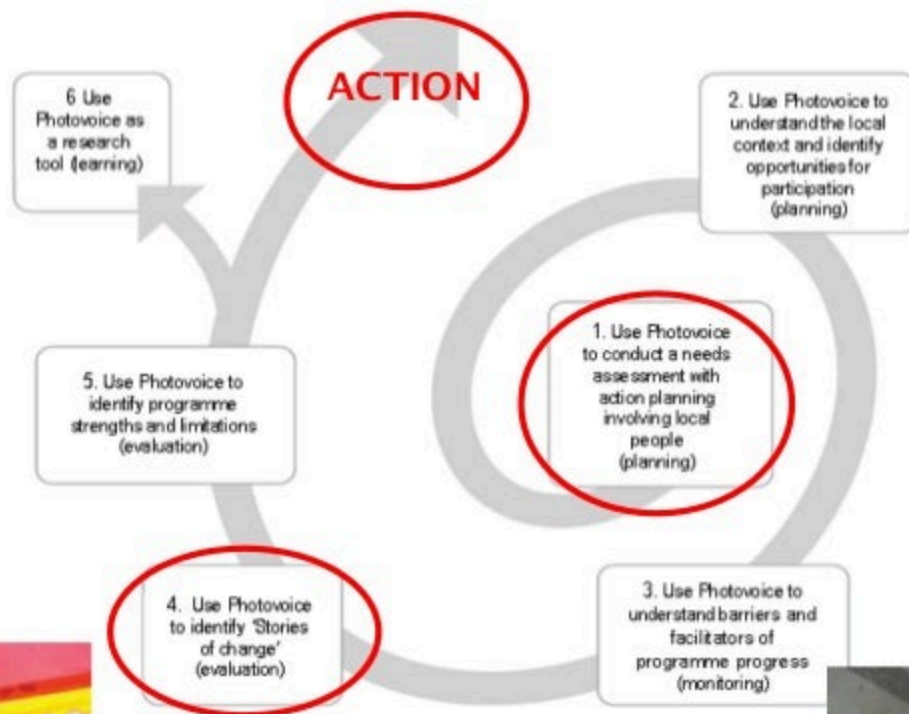| Method | Variables Measured | Tools and Techniques | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Quantitative** | | | |
| Structured Interviews with children | Gender attitudes | Card game/pile sort | Sort statements on cards into agree/disagree piles |
| | Gender roles | Photo pile sort | Pictures of chores and behaviors sorted into piles for male, female, or both |
| | Gender inequality | 1. Arun's Dilemma <br> 2. Time/task distribution between siblings | 1. Read a story written from the perspective of an adolescent and ask respondent to offer advice to a problem <br> 2. A weekly calendar developed to compare frequency of chores between boys and girls |
| **Qualitative** | | | |
| In-Depth Interviews: Children | Hopes and dreams | Projective photo elicitation | A picture deck of local doors were used to aid a visualization exercise to elicit hopes and dreams |
| | Gender roles and attitudes | Photo elicitation (two parts) | A picture deck of boys and girls doing different chores was used to explore what chores could be shared between sexes. |
| | Assessment of individual change | Journey of Change projective drawings | Projective drawings in which respondent draws pictures of life before and after the intervention, highlighting values and lifestyle changes |
| | Choices evaluation | Open ended questions | Explored what they liked and dislike about the intervention, specifically which of the 8 sessions resonated with them the most and why. |
| Photovoice with Children | Gender inequality | Photovoice | Respondent were provided with disposable camera and asked photograph "What is life like for boys and girls in your community?" These photographs were printed and used for individual storytelling |
| Parent Focus Group Discussion | Hopes and Dreams | Projective photo elicitation | Visualization to elicit the hopes and dreams parents have for their children using a picture deck of local doors |
| | Changing gender norms | Photo elicitation | A picture deck of boys and girls doing different chores was used to explore how gender norms have changed over the generations and potential for more equitable distribution of chores among sons and daughters |
| | Maturation/ Changes in children | Open ended questions | To explore if parents noticed any changes in their children as a result of Choices and their feelings towards these changes. |

**Used in mixed methods evaluation: one-off**

⬇

*Representative*

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**Data collection during design phase and to feed into M&E:** *transformative*

ACTION

6 Use Photovoice as a research tool (learning)

2. Use Photovoice to understand the local context and identify opportunities for participation (planning)

5. Use Photovoice to identify programme strengths and limitations (evaluation)

1. Use Photovoice to conduct a needs assessment with action planning involving local people (planning)

4. Use Photovoice to identify 'Stories of change' (evaluation)

3. Use Photovoice to understand barriers and facilitators of programme progress (monitoring)

# Validation: Participatory evaluation



Action Aid's experience of evaluating its women's rights programmes

Delgado et al (2016)

**VISION**

- Women in LRP as co-researchers in evaluation process

↓

- Define empowerment
- Design evaluation questions
- Facilitate collection of data
- Collective sense making
- Plan to act on findings

**Who are the actors involved?**

- Women involved in the local rights programmes
- Local partners
- Action Aid in country staff
- AA commissioning team
- M&E STAFF
- External evaluators

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| Levels | What happened: Reflection from evaluation team |
|---|---|
| **Nominal:** Data collected from sample of women | None |
| **Instrumental**: Training women as data collectors | All workshops primarily of this nature. Asked AA staff, partners, LRP women for assistance with data collection and analysis to minimise cost + gain consent |
| **Representative:** LRP women reps consulted about evaluation design, and invited to comment on findings, help identify lessons learned + determine appropriate steps to take | Constraints limited this from the first phases of process. Only A (London) had meaningful input into evaluation design<br><br>To compensate: evaluation team stressed promotion of participatory process through rest of research (e.g use of *sprockler)* |
| **Transformative** LRP women identify key evaluation questions +help to design and organise data collection methods, analyse data, formulate steps to take as result of evaluation findings | Vision of level of participation aspired for. Constraints (time and planning) hindered ability to do this. But did observe that some women were able to develop awareness of empowerment process they were involved in |

Delgado et al (2016)

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# Sprokler: stories of change

**What is it:** participatory process for story telling and collective data analysis

**Question**: Tell us a story (positive or negative) that explains how power has changed for you or your community.

**Process:**

- Women sent stories using mobile phones
- Collectively analysed at sprockler stations using guiding questions

# Usefulness

- Brings in women's voices (literally through recording of stories) to final evaluation report

- Women themselves able to cluster and categorise different aspects of story using interpretation questions

- Useful vehicle to present findings of evaluation back to women involved in data collection

**For more information see**: http://www.sprockler.com/leitmotiv/index.php

https://sprockler.com/

Description and analysis of methodology applied to the Evaluation of Aciton Aid work on women's rights (Delgado, Guijarro & Otero (2016)

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**The TAKEAWAY™**

- **How + when** (feasibility) to use participatory approaches:
  - For **different purposes**
  - At **different stages** of empowerment measurement
- Value of using participatory approaches for understanding empowerment: as part of mixed methods approaches

- Importance of thinking through:
  - Transparency
  - Positionality
  - Document your process

Participation levels

Design → Testing → Data collection → Data analysis → Validation → (Design)

**Three guiding questions**

1. What **purpose** will different women and girls participation support in stage of measurement?

2. **Whose** participation matters and what stage?

3. **When** is participation feasible?

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