



Feminist Evaluation Tip Sheet

How feminist principles can enhance evaluation

Adopting a feminist approach reflects a broader commitment to transformative social change in Canada's foreign policy, including through evaluation. Feminist evaluation is about critically examining who participates in evaluations, how they participate, and how their contributions are valued. Rather than a set of methods, feminist evaluation is an approach that focuses on gender inequalities and commits to social change. Here are a few practical tips and examples of how Global Affairs Canada is using feminist principles to enhance our evaluations.

Consider Feminist Evaluation at the Program Design Stage

Feminist evaluation approaches are about the evaluation process as much as the evaluation product. In contrast to a traditional top down approach, the evaluator's role is to facilitate collaborative processes that empower participants and foster ownership from the onset of projects.

For example, the Women's Voice and Leadership Program is prioritizing capacity building in feminist evaluation as part of the program design. Evaluators who have a background in feminist research are being identified to work with partners throughout project implementation. To determine what monitoring and evaluation activities and objectives are useful and achievable, workshops are being held with partners (women's rights organizations) around the world.

Incorporate Methods to Explore Power Relations

Feminist evaluation approaches focus on the systemic or structural causes of inequalities and discrimination that may be present in the context of a given program. Examining power relationships can help to include actors that would otherwise be overlooked. Without critical analysis, an evaluation can reinforce power imbalances and result in distorted findings or recommendations.

For example, in Senegal, system mapping was used to identify and examine the relationships between key regional actors through interviews and community walks. Findings pointed to the important role that informal actors – particularly women and adolescent girls – played in implementing nutrition, health and education programming.



Engage in North-South Collaborations

Feminist evaluation approaches involve learning and exchanging with local cultures as well as using an activist approach to empower participants and seek social change. This calls for a different outlook, and requires different skills and knowledge. Diverse evaluation teams that meaningfully involve local evaluators, experts and participants, can help to bridge cultural divides and include multiple ways of knowing. Local representation helps ensure evaluation teams are aware of local gender norms, attitudes and power dynamics, as well as institutional biases and influence.

For example, in Colombia, local feminist economists designed and facilitated a participatory reflexive process to fully involve project participants in evaluating changes in women's financial autonomy and empowerment as a result of rural development projects. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, local psychologists and gender experts helped to design culturally sensitive and appropriate tools to reach marginalized women, including survivors of gender-based violence.

Validate Findings with Project Participants

Feminist evaluation approaches view knowledge created and used by participants as a powerful tool for change. Returning knowledge to project participants can help to create local ownership.

For example, in Colombia, validation workshops were held with implementing agencies and project participants after the initial analysis of evaluation data was completed. This helped to enrich the evaluation findings and foster greater inclusion throughout the evaluation process. Learning products, describing the feminist evaluation approach and findings, were then co-created with project participants. The resulting booklets and posters provided a meaningful tool for participants to use in their advocacy work.

Prioritize Women's Voices

Given that women's contributions are often overlooked or undervalued, feminist evaluation approaches provide opportunities to emphasize the voices of women and other marginalized groups. Strategies to identify and include women from different social, political, organizational and cultural backgrounds need to be integrated in evaluation planning.

For example, in the Philippines, focus group discussions were supplemented with targeted interviews with women recovering from the effects of Typhoon Haiyan. These interviews highlighted their unique experiences as leaders in their households and in their communities. The women's stories helped to foster a deeper understanding of how post-disaster reconstruction programming can and should address issues of gender equality.