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Reflections on Womankind Worldwide's experiences of tackling common challenges in monitoring and evaluating women's rights programming

Helen Lindley

There are a number of technical, conceptual, and institutional challenges in monitoring and evaluating programme work and advocacy on women's rights. Measuring progress and change is difficult because of the complexity and variety of the work involved in women's rights projects and programmes, and their limited time-frames. In order to capture change, to promote learning within development organisations and the broader sector, and secure donor investment and policymaker commitment to women's rights, it is vital to find creative ways to tackle these challenges. This article presents Womankind Worldwide's and partners' experiences in attempting to tackle some of these challenges by using Outcome Mapping-based approaches, in activities aiming to end violence against women and girls and promote women's participation.

A la hora de monitorear y evaluar el trabajo programático y la incidencia en el ámbito de los derechos de mujeres surgen varios retos técnicos, conceptuales e institucionales. Los cambios y los avances logrados resultan difíciles de medir debido a la complejidad y a la variedad del trabajo que implican los proyectos y los programas orientados a promover los derechos de las mujeres, así como debido a sus plazos de tiempo limitados. Con el fin de documentar el cambio, de promover el aprendizaje en las organizaciones de desarrollo y en otros sectores, de asegurar las inversiones de los donantes y los compromisos de los formuladores de políticas destinadas a promover los derechos de mujeres, es imprescindible encontrar maneras creativas de hacer frente a estos retos. El presente artículo describe las vivencias experimentadas por Womankind Worldwide y sus contrapartes al momento de abordar algunos de los retos mencionados haciendo uso de enfoques basados en el mapeo de resultados en el contexto de las actividades orientadas a poner fin a la violencia contra las mujeres y las niñas, así como a fomentar la participación de las mujeres.

Il y a un certain nombre de défis techniques, conceptuels et institutionnels dans le suivi et l'évaluation des travaux de programme et des activités de plaidoyer en matière de droits de femmes. Il est difficile de mesurer les progrès et les changements à cause de la complexité et de la variété des activités entreprises dans le cadre des projets et programmes en faveur des droits de la femme, et de leurs délais serrés. Afin de saisir les changements, de promouvoir l'apprentissage au sein des organisations de

développement et du secteur en général, et d'obtenir les investissements des bailleurs de fonds et l'engagement des décideurs en faveur des droits de la femme, il est essentiel de trouver des moyens créatifs de relever ces défis. Cet article présente les expériences de Womankind Worldwide et de ses partenaires dans leurs efforts afin de relever certains de ces défis en utilisant des approches basées sur la cartographie des résultats, dans les activités visant à mettre fin à la violence contre les femmes et les filles et à promouvoir la participation des femmes.

Key words: M&E; women's rights; Outcome Mapping; learning; violence against women and girls; participation

Introduction

Identifying and communicating change brought about by international development programming, advocacy, and campaigning is vital. Evidence of change is needed to strengthen learning within the sector, so that projects are relevant and effective for participants; it is also required to secure further donor investment and policymaker commitment to women's rights work. Sometimes, these objectives of both upwards and downwards accountability and learning are particularly hard to reconcile. A particular challenge is the relatively short time-span of development projects which are complex and varied, and aiming to have an impact on relationships and dynamics which are likely to take much longer to show real change.

Womankind Worldwide is an international women's rights organisation working to help women transform their lives in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In addition to its own policy and advocacy work, Womankind currently works in solidarity with 35 partner women's rights organisations in 14 countries to implement programmes and conduct advocacy under the strategic objectives of women's participation, violence against women and girls (VAWG), and women's economic empowerment.

The nature, size, and objectives of Woman kind partners varies from national coalitions to smaller rural-based organisations, all of which play a key role in strengthening the women's movement in their countries and internationally. Womankind works directly with partners to implement programmes, and also supports its partners through a process involving joint identification of needs, and intensive accompaniment from Womankind Programme Managers, with targeted training and capacity building where needed. It seeks to support partners to strengthen and diversify their funding base, and manage the requirement and expectations of different donors. Womankind does not have any in-country presence itself, to avoid competing with partner organisations for sources of funding.

Womankind has an operational budget of £4.7 million and a presence in 14 countries. Womankind has a variety of funding sources, each with distinct monitoring

and evaluation (M&E) and reporting needs; 70 per cent of funding is derived from statutory and institutional grants, such as UKaid and Comic Relief, and the remainder comes from individual giving, trusts, and legacies (Annual Report, 2012–3).

Currently, Womankind – in common with many other international development organisations – is increasing its investment in tools, approaches and systems to monitor and evaluate changes brought about by its work. Monitoring and evaluating development work intended to support women's ability to realise their rights involves specific technical and institutional challenges in identifying, measuring, communicating and understanding change.

This article presents and analyses key technical and institutional challenges that women's rights organisations and programmes commonly face in designing and implementing M&E approaches and systems. It then discusses Womankind and its partners' experience of tackling some of these challenges in their M&E of programmatic and advocacy work to end VAWG, and promote women's participation in decision-making. The article ends with a discussion of some practical lessons from our experience, and recommendations for both practitioners and policymakers. The examples from programme experience come from a series of M&E support visits to partner organisations conducted by the Womankind Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisor and Programmes Team between October 2012 and November 2013.

The context: M&E challenges facing Womankind

Womankind and its partners are familiar with the need to have strong M&E systems. Over the years, both Womankind and partner staff have monitored the progress of programmes and advocacy, and sought to understand their effectiveness and the changes in women's lives, through simple surveys, qualitative tools such as focus groups and in-depth interviews, staff's own observations, and the commissioning of external evaluations where appropriate.

The reality in which international development organisations work is complex at the best of times. In seeking to use resources to make the maximum possible positive impact upon the lives of those we work with, learning about both the effectiveness of individual programmes and of wider models and approaches is a key aim of M&E in order to inform our current and future work so that it builds upon this knowledge and learning.

Recognising these needs and challenges, Womankind undertook a Learning Review in 2008 (Wallace and Fernandes Schmidt 2008) to understand better the changes Womankind and partners were supporting, and Womankind's positioning within the sector, and has increasingly invested in facilitating mutual learning opportunities with partners.

M&E is also used for accountability purposes. International development organisations work across multiple contexts, and they are answerable to multiple donors,

including governmental and international agencies, trusts and foundations funded by corporations or wealthy individuals, and private donors.

In recent years, a number of government and international agencies have shifted towards Results-based Management approaches. Although donors may have different systems, common to this approach is the definition of clear results which are used to judge the success of a programme through the measurement of progress against specific indicators.¹ In addition to reporting results to specific donors, in 2010 Womankind was awarded a Programme Partnership Agreement (PPA) with the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID), providing unrestricted funding to Womankind. This has necessitated the systematic reporting of results across all Womankind programmes.

The demands for information for both learning and accountability have led to us recognising the need to consider what kind of M&E systems and approaches would enhance Womankind's ability to track and measure change systematically. The approach needs to be practical and realistic; sufficiently flexible to be used in programmes of different sizes; and useful to our different partner organisations, which have different capacities to absorb new M&E tools and ways of working. Finally, any approach taken needs to reflect Womankind's partnership values. These are to work in co-ordination with partners, to build upon partner systems in place, to engage partners in the design and development of monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks and tools; and to strengthen not only Womankind's own reporting, but partners' own M&E systems.

M&E of women's rights – technical and institutional challenges

The increased focus on demonstrating and understanding change is both necessary and welcome. However, it throws up particular challenges to organisations working on women's rights. They may be development organisations which focus on women's rights as one element of many, or specialist women's rights organisations. They may be large organisations working internationally, or local organisations focusing on the specific interests of women in one particular country. All of these are finding they are needing to invest in M&E, focus on this in innovative and creative ways, and engage in dialogue with others to exchange ideas.²

Defining changes associated with women's rights and empowerment

Many of the changes that these interventions seek to bring about may be hard to conceptualise and define in measurement terms. Whereas a development intervention seeking to increase access to clean water, for example, can decide on indicators which focus on tangible, material changes, many of the changes we are interested in (subjective) understandings of abstract ideas. This highlights the power dynamics

involved in who decides how changes such as 'women's empowerment' are defined, and subsequently what is measured.

For example, the aim of 'women's empowerment' is a constructed concept which contains multiple components, such as self-confidence and control over decision-making, which are subject to multiple interpretations (Kabeer 1998). These concepts are not only understood differently by many different researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, depending on their politics and their understanding of development and women's rights and the connections between the two; they are also influenced by and defined by individual experience, position, and location. Gender, race, socio-economic background, and other aspects of identity define everyone's views about empowerment and what it looks like. In practical terms, this creates challenges in developing appropriate measures of such changes.

Observing change to gender power relations: sensitivities around this

Even when clearly defined, some changes may be technically difficult and sensitive to observe, such as changes in social norms surrounding the acceptability of violence or in household power dynamics. Promising best practice has been developed in the use or, for example, survey questions to measure reductions in violence (World Health Organisation, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council 2013) or changes in social norms (Mackie *et al.* 2012). In addition to technical challenges such as social desirability bias,³ however, integrating such techniques into routine M&E, where the technical capacity of teams may be lower, is a long-term process.

A second issue which is important in M&E of women's rights interventions – in particular those operating at the grassroots community level – is the identity of the observer, which is imbued with power and needs to be taken into account. The power the observer holds (which is related to his or her gender identity as well as to other aspects including race and class) is important because this may skew or affect results. For example, if an evaluator sits in a women's group meeting to observe the meeting, this may well affect the behaviour of the participants and the issues discussed.

Quality versus quantity? Measuring, comparing, and aggregating change

Many women's rights programmes and organisations have attempted to tackle these challenges through the use of qualitative methods, and have unearthed valuable results. Qualitative research methods, however, have historically encountered prejudices in the social sciences (and in practice and policy relating to social change) as they are perceived to be less 'scientific' than quantitative methods. In line with Results-based Management approaches, both donors and Programme Managers require

quantified results which can be summarised to track the progress of a project or multiple projects over time, and compared with other projects in different contexts.

Whilst some changes programmes may seek to achieve, such as an increase in the number of women Members of Parliament (MPs), lend themselves to quantification and aggregation, there is the risk that success is defined according to those changes that can be easily quantified as opposed to changes which are more suited towards qualitative data collection. For example, as one woman politician supported by Womankind partner Zambia National Women's Lobby described, the nature of women's participation in politics, and the experiences they face, can be as important to measure as simply the number of women in Parliament:

Women candidates are given a lot of names and called prostitutes in campaigns. Men used to intimidate women before I knew the Women's Lobby. (Focus Group conducted as part of external evaluation, Solwezi Women Politicians, Zambia; Womankind 2014a)

A risk is that if success is increasingly defined by quantitative indicators, then meaningful signs of change which are harder to quantify, such as an increase in the self-confidence of a survivor of violence, are not valued, making some projects less attractive to donors. Tackling this challenge requires both creative ways of expressing and summarising qualitative change, and a recognition of the value of measuring changes more suited towards qualitative data collection.

Capturing and analysing long-term change

Changing gender relations, and attitudes and beliefs about gender issues and women's rights, is a long-term process, yet it is rare that international development programmes continue longer than three to five years. When identifying changes to measure as part of project frameworks, the length of time real shifts will take to come about needs to be considered, and appropriate indicators chosen. For example, although a 'reduction in violence against women' may be the key change a prevention programme seeks to achieve, this is rarely feasible or realistic in a typical project time-frame of a few years.

When defining changes to measure it is therefore important to consider what changes might be expected to be seen, in whom, and at what point in time, in order to develop 'signposts' of change, placing emphasis on short- to medium-term changes which may often be overlooked. These changes should be closely linked to how it is envisaged a programme will influence change. For example, projects which seek to raise women's knowledge of the existence of local service providers for cases of violence, and support women's confidence and ability to access services if needed, may result in an increase in the number of women reporting cases of violence in the short term. Viewing these statistics without knowledge of the programme's theory, what changes it expected to achieve, and when, would risk painting a picture of failure.

Institutional challenges

The increased emphasis on M&E in Results-based Management poses particular issues for some kinds of work and types of organisation. Large international development organisations may be better able to find unrestricted funding to invest in M&E, but many partner organisations (including small development non-government organisations (NGOs) and also women's rights organisations) not only have lower technical M&E experience and capacity, but often have challenges in funding their core organisational costs (Esplen 2013), and investing in strengthening their institutions. Even if funding for an M&E Officer may be partly or fully in place, and the institutional will exists to strengthen an organisation's M&E, if an organisation is struggling to pay the salaries of other staff or does not have resources to travel to communities to monitor activities, then M&E is much less likely to move forward.

Womankind's approach to M&E of women's rights

Core principles underlying Womankind's M&E

In addressing these challenges, Womankind has taken a three-pronged approach in its M&E:

1. Engagement with partners to define and unpack the changes they wish to achieve.
2. The use of these definitions of change to develop frameworks and specific tools which can be used to collect, analyse, and understand changes.
3. The collation and aggregation, where needed, of change across programmes.

To support this, Womankind combined the principles of feminist evaluation, the practical use of Outcome Mapping and Outcome Harvesting, and used a range of data collection tools.

Rather than providing a specific framework or an approach, *feminist evaluation* entails a set of values and ways of working that place emphasis upon understanding women's experiences and viewpoints, whilst recognising that the analysis and interpretation of these are mediated by the socioeconomic, cultural, and political background of the evaluator (Podems 2010).

Outcome Mapping is an approach which supports the identification and measurement of specific behavioural changes in 'Boundary Partners' – that is, those actors within an organisation's sphere of influence⁴. Through a process in which an organisation defines the changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, and activities that it would expect to, like to, and love to see in each Boundary Partner (whether an individual or a group), the approach shifts the emphasis of monitoring to assessing

progress against these changes, and understanding the organisation's contribution to change (Earl *et al.* 2001).

Outcome Harvesting is a method which, rather than measuring progress against pre-established outcomes as you may find in a log-frame, supports the identification and collation of positive and negative, intentional and unintentional changes as they emerge. 'Outcomes' are defined as specific observable changes in the behaviour of an individual, group, organisation, or institution (Wilson-Grau and Britt 2012). When used in monitoring, outcomes can be identified and collated on an ongoing basis through observations or additional monitoring tools. When used in an evaluation, outcomes are identified and collated retrospectively.

Womankind has adapted the methodology of Outcome Mapping, originally developed by the International Development Research Centre in 2001, to establish a means with which to engage partners in clearly identifying the changes it sought to achieve and explore the thinking behind these, as a basis for collecting data on these changes. This process sought to move M&E away from seeking programme outcomes phrased in relation to 'improved policies and practices' or 'improved attitudes' to define specific changes that could be observed and monitored.

The Womankind four-step process

The process comprises four steps:

1. Identifying the stakeholders that a partner will engage with and seeks to influence.
2. Identifying 'Progress Markers'. Rather than quantitative indicators, these are descriptive statements which refer to a series of changes that the programmes expect, would like to, and would love to achieve, particularly small changes, which are often overlooked but which also may be the first signs of progress in a programme. In reference to a metaphor of a winding road, these changes are 'signposts' that let you know if you are going in the right direction.
3. Identifying how and when changes relating to these Progress Markers could be observed during the programme – this might be through direct observation of a meeting, a conversation in a community, or the use of a tool such as a focus group. Data collection could include both quantitative and qualitative methods.
4. Analysing and reporting progress against Progress Markers – an analysis of progress against Progress Markers using both quantitative and qualitative information.

The method is initially facilitated by the Womankind Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisor or Programme Manager with partner organisation staff, with the aim of enabling staff to be able to repeat the process themselves in the future.

By placing focus upon clearly unpacking and identifying the change, rather than the technical M&E tool being used, this process provides a strong basis which data collection can subsequently build upon. When facilitating this process with partner organisation staff, ranging from an organisation's Director, through Programme Manager, to staff working directly with community members, it is a means to engage staff in developing common understandings of specific changes they are seeking to achieve in a programme, highlighting areas where there may be disagreement, and beginning to unearth their assumptions and beliefs. These shared understandings and conscious debates are important not only to strengthen the implementation and M&E of a particular programme, but can begin to facilitate deeper discussion around how we think change happens.

Building frameworks and specific tools upon definitions of change

Once Progress Markers have been developed and agreed, they can subsequently be used as a basis for reporting frameworks and/or the development of specific tools. When used as reporting frameworks, they provide a means to collectively analyse the extent to which change in the Progress Markers is being observed using direct observation and qualitative data collection methods, such as guiding the development of focus group questions, or as a field journal to record observations from community meetings and fields, in a simple form (Table 1).

This approach works particularly well for programmes where there are direct observable changes that can be recorded during meetings, such as governance and accountability programmes. In Kenya and Ghana, for example, as part of an existing monitoring schedule, partner organisations had planned visits to facilitate and observe quarterly meetings between women MPs/District Leaders and female constituents. The meetings were a rich source of qualitative information concerning what actions the leaders had taken since the last meeting, to what extent the female constituents were able to plan and develop proposals to submit to the leaders, and to what extent

Table 1: Example Outcome journal

Stakeholder:		
Level of change	Progress Marker	Description of change
Low	'Signpost of change'	Who did or said what, when, where, why is this important?
Medium		
High		

the leaders were responding to complaints and demands, however, there was no means to record, analyse, and report systematically upon these changes.

Following the development of Progress Markers for the women leaders and constituents, staff subsequently used these as a framework for taking notes during the meetings according to the changes they were trying to observe. Following the meetings these notes were used as a basis for team discussion to complete the journals (Table 2).

In some cases, it can be more appropriate to use the Progress Markers as a basis for the development of specific monitoring tools, such as observation forms and community-based surveys. Whilst the Progress Markers provide a framework, it can sometimes be used to develop more structured checklists, for example when repeatedly measuring whether an individual stakeholder is changing clearly defined behaviour. In 2013, in Kenya, Womankind partner Centre for Rights, Education and Awareness (CREAW) used the exercise to define specific changes in the behaviour of Police Officers concerning the treatment of survivors of violence, as follows.

Police Officers:

- Correctly complete PR3 forms (e.g. they put in the correct date).
- Receive women at the Gender Desk, not in the middle of the office.
- Do not use derogatory language.
- Read a woman’s statement back to the woman for verification that it is accurate.

As CREAW staff were able to observe directly to what extent this behaviour was being displayed through observations of Case Managers when accompanying women to the Police Station, this list of behaviours was turned into a Service Provider Monitoring

Table 2: Excerpt from an Outcome journal from Ghana

Progress Marker – District Assembly (DA) and Unit Committee Representatives:	Description of change
Attend Gender Centre meetings, particularly the decision-makers	Four members of the DA attended but not the District Coordinating Director (DCD).
Acknowledge the importance of involving constituents in decision-making/seeking their views	The DA members there acknowledged that they should hold meetings however several DA members also noted that community members don’t attend meetings organised, or don’t turn up on time.
Make formal commitments during meetings about what actions they will take	One DA member said that she will attend a meeting on Wednesday organised by the Market Women’s Association in order to discuss issues of security. One DA member said they will support the Dressmakers Association in writing a proposal to win contracts to sew school uniforms.

Form – a checklist for the Case Managers to complete after each visit, with space for comments.

In community-based programmes, such as those that seek to change attitudes and behaviour of individual men and women, although the journals can be a useful tool of triangulation, for example through observing a community meeting, the Progress Markers can also be used to provide a structured means of data collection through the development of surveys, which are often the most feasible means to structure data collection across a geographically wide and diverse area.

An example comes from Zambia, where Womankind used the development of Progress Markers as a facilitation exercise with its partner, Women for Change, in order to identify specific changes in individuals that could be used as survey questions for a survey of knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

In addition to using international best practice questions, however, such as from the Gender Equitable Men Scale (Pulerwitz and Barker 2008), Womankind worked with field-based facilitators to develop specific Progress Markers for what ‘change would look like’ in different individuals. This exercise provided a means to move beyond conceiving of change in terms of ‘women are involved in household decision-making’ to develop consensus on what this would look like, and how it would be observed, in this specific context. This helped bring out the facilitators’ own knowledge, in which they identified that the key way of knowing who had influence over household resources would be to ask:

When a family member dies, who makes the decision on what happens to land and property?

Man

Woman

Both

This involvement in shaping the survey was particularly important, as the facilitators were to be responsible for administering the survey, analysing results, and feeding them into their future engagement in communities.

A number of Womankind-supported programmes also provide training and services such as legal aid, psychological and medical support, shelter, and income generation training to individual women who have experienced violence and discrimination. In such programmes, in attempting to understand the changes that individual women experience through this support and the extent they are able to maintain these changes, Womankind’s experience has similarly been that more structured data collection tools can be built upon definitions of change developed with partners. In Ethiopia and Nepal, Womankind drew from the Outcome Mapping methodology to develop and test a process to engage with partners in defining the areas in which they sought to support change in individual women, and what the journey these women

might be expected to take looked like. These descriptions of change were subsequently integrated into a visual ‘star’ tool which is used to structure longitudinal interviews with individual women during their time receiving support and afterwards. The tool has been called the ‘Empowerment Star’ in these two country programmes, to enable Womankind and partners to define and express what they understand is different areas of ‘empowerment’ important in the context of their work.

Each area of change, such as self-confidence and self-esteem, forms a point of the star, with the ‘rungs’ of the ladder under each point describing what a woman might think, feel and act like at each stage in her journey (Table 3).

Importantly, these descriptions of change are not prescriptive – the journey that each woman faces will be unique and is unlikely to be linear. However, there may be elements in common which can be used as a framework for the analysis of more in-depth qualitative information. The use of a scale as a guide means that the information collected can also be quantified and measured using an indicator if needed.

In Peru, in attempting to define and understand the changes groups of women community-based organisation members who had received training on leadership, advocacy, and rights had experienced, the women themselves were supported to define criteria for ‘Empowerment’ or ‘what a powerful woman looks like’, and score progress against these criteria. This methodology built upon work originally undertaken by the Chars Livelihood Programme in Bangladesh in developing an Empowerment Scorecard (McIntosh 2012) and provided a means and space to allow women themselves

Table 3: Excerpt from *Empowerment Star, Women for Human Rights, Nepal*

Area of change: safety and freedom from violence	
Stage of change	Description of change
1	She thinks that is still not safe at the safe house. She feels that she is the only one experiencing violence. She doesn't want to do anything, she won't accept help from others.
2	She will think that she is in the right place to receive help; 'I am facing violence and I can get help'. She will feel that she isn't the only one who has been violated, that there are other women like her, that she is more secure. She understands that there are people willing to help her and understand the feelings she is going through and the violence that she has faced.

opportunity to voice changes significant to them, in a way which could be quantified and reported upon. The importance of supporting the women directly involved with the project to define 'empowerment' was realised when the same exercise was repeated with the Project Staff, who clearly described how empowerment may vary according to a woman's background. For an indigenous woman it may be seen in terms of having access to land, water, and resources; for a richer Peruvian woman a sign of empowerment may be being able to influence decision-making; and for a rural woman it may be not being beaten very often, or denouncing the violence they face. The final criteria developed by women representatives of community-based organisations included some perhaps surprising components such as 'communicates, shares, teaches' and 'shares experience', which would have been harder to predict (Womankind 2014b).

Collating and aggregating change

Whilst the adapted Outcome Mapping methodology and associated tool described above have contributed to the strengthening of partner programmatic M&E and understandings of change, Womankind was left with the challenge of collating the information collected across programmes. In addition, reporting for Womankind's DFID PPA required a means to aggregate changes as Outcome indicators.

Through the integration of the Outcome Mapping methodology into partner organisations' M&E, Womankind has begun to identify a series of different specific changes in the following classification of different actors that partners are directly trying to influence and benefit from the programme:

- Survivor of violence.
- Male community member(s).
- Female community member(s).
- Women's groups.
- Woman aspiring leader.
- MP (male/female).
- Local elected/nominated leader (male/female).
- Other policymaker.
- Service provider (e.g. Police).
- Traditional/community/religious leader.
- Media (including individual journalists).
- Project volunteers, e.g. paralegals.

Drawing from Outcome Harvesting, Womankind has created a form to collate and synthesise the changes being reported in different actors through journals, M&E tools, and partner Annual Reports (Table 4).

Table 4: Example use of Outcome Harvesting form

Change	Of the 37 aspiring grassroots women candidates identified and trained by Malawi National Women's Lobby [MNWL] in 2009, 34 candidates are now preparing to stand in 2013 Local Government Elections.				
Significance	It is firstly significant that such a high proportion of those trained four years prior to the election date remain motivated and are ready to stand for election. Secondly, the women's background is particularly significant – the women were identified from women's listener clubs, established by the MNWL in their communities, and 32 of the women reported never previously having spoken in public in their communities before (see FGD [focus group discussion] for details).				
Partner contribution	MNWL established 80 Women's Radio Listen Clubs, comprised of 1342 members, as part of a five year (2008–13) Women's Leadership Project. As part of the listener club activities, aspiring women leaders were identified, and provided with leadership training, including on formal rules, processes, and leadership skills. In a FGD in Rumphi, Malawi in July 2013, the women aspiring leaders noted that the clubs provide a politically neutral environment where all the aspiring leaders can interact with each other, share ideas and experiences regardless of their political affiliation.				
Classification	Type of change	Actor	Country	Partner	Funder
Evidence	<i>Description of evidence</i>			<i>Insert evidence</i>	

For aggregation purposes, the number of specific evidenced reports of change in different actors can subsequently be recorded in a database and reported as indicators. The original Outcome Harvesting methodology defined Outcomes as specific changes in the behaviour of individuals, groups, or institutions. As changes in both knowledge and attitudes are central to the Theory of Change for many women's rights programmes, the decision was made to replace the word 'outcome' with 'change' and log changes in knowledge and attitude in addition to changes in behaviour.

Given the number and variety of Womankind partner programmes, and the varying start dates, this provides an overall 'snapshot' for global reporting purposes and a means of information management. The ACT Programme in Tanzania, however, managed by KPMG, has pioneered the aggregation of changes from Outcome journals for a specific governance programme and reporting to DFID, which provides more focused information (Dyer 2012).

Tracking incremental change

The approach has been particularly useful in firstly placing value upon, and providing a means to track, incremental change, in addition to singular changes at the outcome level. An example of a smaller incremental change that may be overlooked was

identified by Womankind partner CREAM in Kenya, in the context of a programme which sought to strengthen the response of the Police Service to survivors of violence. In addition to identifying specific changes in the behaviour of the Police as Progress Markers, the partner identified a marker as follows:

The people from the correct Police Departments attend training sessions on VAWG. (Womankind Workshop with CREAM staff, Nairobi, 8 October 2013)

Partner staff regarded this change as signifying a shift in the value the Police Commissioner placed upon the training provided by the partner, through sending the appropriate staff, as requested. This is an example of a 'signpost' which indicates if a programme is progressing in the right direction, but which may not be captured with traditional indicators. In advocacy programmes, similarly, a commonly mentioned change is:

Policymaker attends meetings him/herself, as opposed to sending their assistant. (Womankind Workshop with CREAM staff, Nairobi, Kenya, 8 October 2013)

Secondly, the process of defining Progress Markers has in some cases supported partners to articulate and define, as a basis for measurement, the nuance of change. In Kenya again, in the context of a programme that aims to strengthen the accountability of women MPs and leaders to their female constituents, in addition to defining Progress Markers according to the number of complaints women MPs respond to, and the number and type of actions taken, CREAM staff identified as a Progress Marker:

Women leaders are articulating their challenges to constituents and explaining what they can't do and why. (Womankind Workshop with CREAM staff, Nairobi, 8 October 2013)

This change could be tracked through observation of quarterly meetings between the MPs and constituents, and was considered significant as it described a shift in the relationship between the two parties necessary in order to sustain change in the long term. Similarly, in Afghanistan, in the context of a programme which sought to strengthen the implementation of the Ending Violence Against Women Law (EVAW), instead of defining change in terms of the number of cases of VAWG that were successfully prosecuted, Womankind partners defined a key change as:

Articles of the Ending Violence Against Women Law are mentioned during cases, regardless of the outcome. (Womankind Workshop, Kabul, 17 September 2013)

Finally, the process, through defining changes that a programme is seeking to achieve, also provides a framework to capture and report clearly unanticipated changes that were not originally identified as Progress Markers. Womankind partner reports have

revealed the importance of including space to allow partners to demonstrate influence of external actors and events in both revealing the extent of change, and driving change. In the context of a programme which aimed to change behaviour to women MPs, a partner explained how a revealing but unexpected change was when a political party they were trying to engage with did not sanction a male MP who publicly slapped a woman leader. In Kenya again, FIDA Kenya reported that publicity surrounding the anticipated enactment of the Family Bills had seen an increased number of women visiting their office to enquire about their rights under the bills and legal aid, despite the fact that the Bills had not yet been passed.

Conclusions: lessons and recommendations for NGOs and donors

The following lessons and recommendations are based upon Womankind's experiences to date for both practitioners and donors.

Invest time and actively engage in understanding the dynamics of change

Before the design of M&E tools and systems begins, it is important to invest time in identifying and understanding the dynamics under way in change with those partners or field staff who will be responsible for implementing the programme. Investing time in this process provides a strong basis from which M&E tools can be developed and findings analysed, but is an important step in revealing assumptions about how we think change happens.

Donors should encourage grantees to engage staff in this process in a practical way which is appropriate to their circumstances, whether it be through Outcome Mapping, Theories of Change, or 'light touch' methods, and build in grant start-up periods which help facilitate this. Where possible, this process should also include project participants, in order to explore how women and different actors see change as happening, and what is relevant and meaningful change to them. Following this process, there should be flexibility from donors in modifying the outcomes and indicators originally defined in a project proposal to reflect the reality of the programme.

Simple tools and creative reporting format that support nuanced identification and reporting of change

Build simple qualitative and quantitative tools upon these definitions and frameworks of change. Reporting formats provided by donors and the indicators programmes report upon should reflect the time-frame of the project, and the nuanced nature of the changes being measured. If using log-frame reporting formats, donors should include sections which encourage programmes to report upon intermediary change, and changes which are less easily quantified in a structured way, rather than leaving this just to the narrative section. Donors should recognise when aggregation is and is not

possible, useful, and meaningful, and discuss with NGOs alternative ways to ensure accountability, capture progress, and report against change.

Understand institutional resources available and constraints

Both NGOs and donors should recognise that although creativity in approaches to tackle technical M&E challenges is important, this can be considerably facilitated or constrained by institutional resources and culture. Both donors and NGOs working with partners, particularly women's rights organisations, need to take a holistic approach when examining M&E capacity, which analyses not only if an M&E Officer, tools, and systems are in place, but how the strengths and structures of all levels of an organisation can support and constrain M&E. This extends from the extent to which field staff have sufficient time during visits to take and write up notes, to whether and if there are sufficient office staff to process, analyse, and learn from information.

The variety, complex nature, and difficulty of observing changes which women's rights programmes and advocacy seeks to achieve, and the limited time-frames in which to report progress on programmes that seek structural change, presents a number of technical, conceptual and institutional challenges for programmes and organisations that work on women's rights. Womankind has begun to tackle these challenges through supporting partners in a process which places an emphasis on 'unpacking' these changes, and using mixed-methods tools which are appropriate to the context and resources available. This is a practical step that can be integrated into new and existing programmes. M&E, however, cannot take place in a vacuum, and needs to be supported by wider institutional support and investment to ensure that women's rights organisations have the institutional capacity to tackle these challenges. More fundamentally, however, these challenges raise questions for the sector and donors concerning what is feasible and appropriate in different circumstances, for different purposes.

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Notes

- 1 Results-based Management is commonly characterised by the 'results chain' which outlines a programme's logic as follows:
Inputs → Outputs → Outcomes → Impact.
Each stage of the results chain is measured, and the actual results compared to the targets in order to judge performance. A clear critique of Results-based Management can be found at: <http://www.mango.org.uk/Guide/WhyRBMnotWork> (last checked by the author April 2014).
- 2 These challenges are common with other 'Hard to Measure Benefits'. This framework draws upon work carried out by DFID Programme Partnership Agreement Agencies through a Hard to Measure Learning Group, and discussed during an event at DFID in October 2013.
- 3 Social desirability bias refers to the tendency of respondents to respond to a question with the answer they think is socially acceptable or desirable. This is particularly true of sensitive subjects, such as violence against women and girls or social norms, where respondents may be aware that admitting personal attitudes, such as whether or not they think violence is acceptable under different circumstances, is not desirable. For more information, see <http://bit.ly/1gVlaml> (last checked by the author May 2014).
- 4 Although Outcome Mapping uses the language of 'Boundary Partners', Womankind refers to these individuals or groups as 'stakeholders', so as not to introduce additional M&E language.

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