



The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Final Evaluation of Funding Leadership
Opportunities for Women (FLOW 2) 2016–
2020

Final evaluation report

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Foreign Affairs

By // IOD PARC

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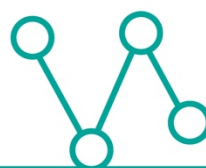


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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AFE	Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AWC	All Women Count
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plans
CREA	Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
CVAW	Combating violence against women
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EASE	Economic and Social Empowerment
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EMAP	Engaging Men in Accountable Practices
EOWE	Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises
EQ	Evaluation question
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FLOW	Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women
GADC	Gender and Development for Cambodia
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
GGGI	Global Gender Gap Index
GGJDC	The Governance, Gender, Justice and Development Centre
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GIMAC	Gender Is My Agenda Campaign
HDI	Human Development Index
HHD	Household Dialogue
HRBA	Human Rights-based Approach
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative

INGO	International Non-governmental organisation
IOB	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Netherlands MFA
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IRB	Independent Ethics Review Board
IWDA	International Women's Development Agency
KESWA	Kenya Sex Workers Alliance
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LBT	Lesbians, bisexual women and transgender
LEHA	LBQ Education Health and Advocacy
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
MDG	Millennial Development Goal
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MEP	Men's Engagement Programme
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MTR	Mid-term review
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIWA	Panos Institute West Africa
POV	Power of Voices
POW	Power of Women
POWER	Promoting Opportunities for Women's Empowerment and Rights
PWPPA	Participation by women in politics and public administration
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TFVG	Taskforce Women's Rights and Gender Equality
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCW	Unpaid Care Work
UHAI-EASHRI	The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWG	Violence against Women and Girls
VfC	Voice for Change
VfM	Value for Money
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WAVE	Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment
WE4L	Women Empowered for Leadership
WEE	Women's economic empowerment
WEPSR	Women's economic participation and self-reliance
WfWI	Women for Women International
WOLREC	The Women's Legal Resources Centre

Executive Summary

Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW 2) was a grant instrument of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), providing funding opportunities to civil society organisations (CSOs). It ran from 2016–2020 and invested a total of Euro 93 million to support CSOs to contribute to sustainable improvement in women's rights and opportunities. In order to achieve this, the programme aimed to kick-start structural transformation in gender relations in institutions at the levels of the household, community, economy and governance, and to work towards a better enabling environment of standards, laws and policies.

The core model of the programme was one in which direct partners or consortia provided funding and/or capacity-strengthening support to national and subnational level non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and CSOs to implement programmes in the three focus areas of combating violence against women (CVAW), participation by women in politics and public administration (PWPPA) and women's economic participation and self-reliance (WEPSR). The ten programmes were led by international NGO (INGO) partners with two partners/consortia led by organisations based in the Global South. Two of the programmes were also firmly focussed on 'movement building' rather than on programme implementation as such.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation was theory-based, centralising the Theory of Change (ToC) as an analytical framework and common platform through which to explore how far ideas about how change would take place were or were not confirmed by identifiable causal pathways. It also took a mixed methods approach to understand and assess the contribution of the programme to tackling root causes of power inequalities embedded in norms, institutions and practices.

The process was undertaken in five phases from September 2021 to February 2022, starting with an inception phase which included a meta-evaluation of the individual programme evaluations and reviews and a quality scan of these. The data collection phase included an in-depth desk review of about 100 documents, key informant interviews and focus group discussions involving 98 informants and a survey reaching 76 respondents. Data analysis and synthesis was followed by a workshop for the validation of findings, a collaborative process of developing recommendations, and then reporting and disseminating findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The evaluation covered the full scope of the ten programmes under FLOW 2, and included two in-depth country case studies in Kenya and Lebanon.

The evaluation took an overall gender responsive and explicitly feminist approach, centralising an examination of the issues of power at the core of gender inequalities. As far as possible it used methods that were inclusive and collaborative. In its analysis and interpretation of data it focussed on an understanding of women's rights and structural gender relations, and prioritised questions that can advance knowledge on how to progress gender equality and women's empowerment.

Data was triangulated both within and across data types (documents, interviews and focus group discussions/FGDs, survey), as well as across different types of stakeholders through interviews, FGDs and survey material. The evaluation team has been attentive to and accountable for the strength of evidence used to bring forward findings, by detailed and extensive sourcing of data in footnotes and references. Any evidence that is weaker

(triangulated only once) or that is very strong (triangulated more than 3 times) is indicated in referencing. This represents a comparatively strong methodology for ensuring that findings are robust and credible.

Limitations and bias

As a theory-based evaluation, the methodology used does not attempt to establish definitive attribution of results to the programme. Rather, it seeks to assemble evidence on the causal processes at work to be able to generate confident understanding of the programme's contribution to changes taking place. It is assumed that the FLOW 2 programmes were working in partnership with a variety of stakeholders. This parallel work is expected to also have played a part in contributing to changes generated.

The continued global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions led to the design decision to collect almost all data through remote methods. While these generally worked well, this design has entailed some bias towards funded stakeholders directly and indirectly associated with the programme and therefore towards positive reporting of results and processes. The team met little success in engaging non-grantee stakeholders except in case study countries. This bias was somewhat exacerbated by the fact that data collection took place almost a year after all the FLOW 2 programmes were closed. While this presented an opportunity to investigate impact and sustainability more deeply than in an earlier evaluation, it also made contacting relevant stakeholders and engaging them more challenging, especially at sub-grantee level. Similarly, opportunities for inclusion of beneficiary perspectives in the data were only available through the case study work. Despite these limitations, the evaluation did succeed in collecting a wide range of data through Zoom interviews, focus groups with beneficiary rights-holders for the case studies, and the survey attracted responses from a broad range of sub-grantees. The evaluation also drew on the programme end-line evaluations which had more opportunity to consult beyond direct stakeholders.

Summary of findings

Relevance and coherence: FLOW 2 programmes were found to be relevant, responding to priority global themes and broadly corresponding to priorities in respective countries. Sub-grantees have been instrumental in the implementation of activities and the generation of outcomes. More consistent inclusion of sub-grantees in programme design, particularly ToC design, would have strengthened contextual alignment and their ability to deliver.

Effectiveness: FLOW 2 programmes made important contributions to a wide range of key achievements in policy and legal change, mainly through advocacy. In terms of changes in power relationships, FLOW 2 programmes have had a range of results at household and community levels in targeted thematic areas and geographies. Structural changes in economic and governance institutions have been more limited.

Capacity-strengthening of sub-grantees was an important part of the FLOW 2 theory of change and took several forms, including capacity-strengthening to support the implementation of gender transformative programmes and for approaches to movement building. FLOW 2 partners used both established and experimental approaches to strengthening sub-grantees advocacy capacity, and some prioritized non-hierarchical co-learning methods.

Sustainability: Partners took a number of measures to try to ensure the sustainability of programme outcomes, including establishing networks, working with governments, creating resources and knowledge and investing in individuals. The largest focus for sustainability was on strengthening national and subnational organisations' core capacity and advocacy capacity. More could have been done to develop the capacity of these organisations to secure subsequent funding.

Impact: There is some evidence of impact at the individual level across all three pillars. Impact, in the sense of reaching towards scale, or long-term change of norms and an enabling environment, remains a challenge in the absence of further activity and a focus on diffusion or spread. FLOW 2 partners made extensive adaptations to their workplans and approaches due to COVID-19, but the pandemic severely disrupted some outcomes and further progress towards impact across all the pillar areas.

Efficiency: Sizeable programme budgets, a 5-year implementation time frame and a focus on outcomes have allowed many grantees the scope to adapt strategies to achieve results. Learning and adaptation on the basis of this has also been an asset to the programmes: those placing learning more centrally in their project design and implementation and adopting feminist approaches to learning seem to catalyse a wider range of benefits for partners. Most grantees have largely welcomed FLOW 2's new outcome-focussed approach to monitoring and reporting which they have largely used to take a strategic implementation approach, though many have not taken full advantage of this to simplify their monitoring frameworks and reduce the monitoring burden on partners. Most grantees have also struggled to ensure appropriate human resourcing for programme delivery and management of partnerships, especially when adopting a feminist approach to consortium management, which strives to provide a level playing field for all partners.

Overview of learning and conclusions

FLOW 2 had a strong focus on advocacy as a core strategy to achieve both policy and legal change and structural transformation in institutions: this was undertaken by the INGO/consortia as well as their sub-grantee partners at local and national levels, sometimes in coordination and working across these local-national-global levels; and sometimes as individual organisations working mainly at the level of their organisational location.

This approach bore fruit: FLOW 2 partners contributed to a wide range of concrete achievements in policy and legal change relevant to each of its three pillars. These were achieved partially through technical support, but mainly through advocacy on all levels and of many kinds. Most key outcomes took place at national level, but advocacy at local, regional and international levels contributed to the groundswell, networks and evidence that were brought together to focus on national level changes. The programmes also had a range of results in changing power relationships at household and community levels in targeted thematic areas and geographies. These manifested in changing attitudes on gender roles and relations; changes in household divisions of labour; in women's control of household assets; and reduced violence against women (VAW). To a lesser extent, results were also achieved in governance institutions, in terms of increased representation of women, mainly at local government level.

These results were hard won and important, showing that progress towards gender equality can effectively be made through focussed advocacy at all levels and intensive discussion-based strategies, including engaging with male gatekeepers, at local level. Some key features of MFA's approach have facilitated these achievements, including the concerted effort to focus organisations, and its own monitoring systems, on outcomes rather than outputs and activities. Combined with a strong emphasis on learning – reflected in the annual learning conferences as well as in support for partners' learning processes – and with some degree of flexibility, this has meant that partners were able to review, reflect, and adapt their programmes so that they maximised the extent to which they were oriented towards those outcomes.

However, while there are signs of sustained impact – in terms of some women continuing to progress the gains made, and CSOs continuing to advocate and engage governments to complete policy change processes, for example – the intended 'kick start' to equal rights and opportunities is vulnerable for two reasons. First, the programme ToC did not elaborate any pathway to scale. There was an assumption that changes in laws and policies would work top-down to change women's lives; while results in local level structural change would combine in a bottom-up process with these changes to create equal rights and opportunities more broadly. But in the event, structural changes in institutions were mainly confined to the geographies in which programmes were implemented, and no strategy was consistently put into place to diffuse, spread or 'grow' these.

Second, while many CSOs have indeed continued their advocacy and have made gains in analytical and advocacy capacity for gender equality and in organisational strength in terms of internal policies and processes, the weak link is in their ability to continue to raise funds to sustain their work or even simply their existence. Relatively little attention was paid to this issue in terms of specific capacity-building by the INGOs/consortia lead partners, although it is essential for these organisations to be able to sustain their work generally, and specifically their roles in holding governments to account for gender equality.

While these gaps in the theory present a challenge to sustained progress towards gender equality, the FLOW 2 experience contains some valuable learning, including some key kernels of experience which may contribute to solving it.

First, FLOW 2 programmes used groups, networks or platforms in some form in every programme. These were core drivers of the results achieved, as platforms for discussion and advocacy, as well as the mechanisms through which the programme achieved reach. There

were also two programmes which explicitly used a ‘movement building’ approach for which the coming into being of strong networks was not simply an activity or strategy but an output result, as these relationships were understood to be central to the change strategy. There is also considerable evidence that these groups and networks were indeed more than just vehicles driving results; they were also environments in which women (and men) can find space for analysis, exploration and to challenge gender norms, as well as mutual support and solidarity as resources for challenging their families, communities and governments. There is some evidence that these groups, platforms and movements offer a pathway for scaling up – that they can be mechanisms for diffusion and amplification of results – but this was not fully articulated nor systematically explored by the programmes.

Second, FLOW 2 included programmes which were consciously and explicitly exploring feminist ways of working towards gender equality, and others in which particular elements of feminist ways of working were embedded. Systematic exploration of the distinction between these and other ways of working, and of their meaning and consequences for effectiveness/ results, was beyond the scope of this evaluation; nevertheless, findings suggest that feminist approaches to learning in particular may catalyse a wider range of benefits to a wider range of stakeholders. These have included collaborative approaches to partnership-building at the levels of consortia and with sub-grantees, which have emphasised mutual strengths and co-learning, and have contributed to creating stronger women’s movements.

Third, FLOW 2 partners increasingly saw the relevance, indeed the necessity, of engaging men, and most programmes included methodologies for this which contributed to their results in structural change. While this bore more fruit at the level of household and community than in governance and economic institutions, results were not straightforward or consistent at any level, suggesting the conclusion that while working with gatekeepers is clearly key, there is more to learn on what works and in what circumstances. Engaging men has in part been a response to the recognised risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) and other forms of backlash in interventions which promote gender equality at household level. However, FLOW 2 experience suggests that supporting the sustainability of organisations and individuals carrying out women’s rights advocacy may require a stronger acknowledgement of the real risks that women’s rights advocates can face in public spaces beyond the household, including (but not limited to) digital spaces. Seeking ways to mitigate these risks and support those who face them will be important in the onward journey.

Finally, FLOW 2 sheds some light on how the central role of sub-grantees and local partners in advancing women’s rights could be better supported through funding relationships. Gaps identified in maximising their potential include the need to involve these organisations more closely in programme and ToC design to increase relevance and the contextual embeddedness of the approaches developed. Second, including specific capacity-strengthening and network building to secure future funding would be a clear contribution to their sustainability. More fundamentally, however, there is emerging evidence from FLOW 2 that doing more to directly involve national and Global South organisations in funding partnerships would increase the returns from the funding investment. This is because MFA has most of the pieces in place to best support effective development programming, including relatively long-term commitments, realistic budgets, a strong focus on outcomes and the flexibility to adjust steering towards those outcomes on the basis of incremental learning. Ensuring that these benefits directly reach the organisations most crucial to the change process would better realise their intent. However, because there was no value for money (VfM) framework in place, it was difficult to analyse and/or draw conclusions on returns from the funding investment.

Directions for MFA development policy and funding practices

Broadly, then, this evaluation points to the following directions for MFA development policy and funding practices in support of gender equality and women's empowerment going forward:

- There is much still to explore on what 'movement building' means and whether it can scale results to meet the gap identified in the current ToC for this process. Exploring the defining features of a movement progressing women's rights and gender equality, and the roles of networks, platforms and groups is part of this. Understanding what is/can be the role of funding in creating and sustaining movements will also be key. These explorations will need to be documented to capture learning.
- There is also more to explore on the added value of taking feminist approaches to knowledge creation and learning, and by what processes (causal pathways) these approaches support or enhance effectiveness in terms of stronger progress towards women's rights and gender equality. This will require a framework which recognizes and resources the time demands of these approaches and carefully documents what works.
- Continuing to build knowledge on how to engage men in their roles as gatekeepers effectively and consistently in support of progress towards gender equality and women's rights will be a vital contribution to further advances. As a backdrop to this, better recognizing risks to advocates of women's rights and gender equality and developing mechanisms both to mitigate them and to support women and men who face them, will be welcomed.
- It will be necessary to continue exploring models and pathways for directly funding national and Global South-based organisations, and establishing mechanisms to do this effectively. These might include specific capacity-strengthening programmes which aim incrementally to facilitate these organisations to compete for funding at international levels; or establishing national or regional level women's funds which are more accessible to these organisations and using criteria and processes appropriate for their situations.
- The several promising features of the current funding approach can be refined by encouraging partners to make learning an integral part of programme design; developing a plan to guide MFA's efforts in promoting learning between partners/consortia; and embedding incremental learning in the programme framework by periodic reflection and review of the ToC. Partners can be supported to achieve the best possible results in various ways, such as enhancing clear communication and guidance on corporate gender equality indicators, and expectations of an outcome-focussed approach; developing a VfM framework, if this is considered a priority, in liaison with partners to incorporate their perspectives on value in their contexts; and enhancing the institutional priority given to programme management.

Introduction

Evaluation background

Funding Leadership Opportunities for Women (FLOW 2) was a grant instrument of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) from 2016–2020, to the value of Euro 93 million, providing funding opportunities to civil society organisations (CSOs). These opportunities were intended to enable CSOs to contribute to greater agency and empowerment for women, and a better enabling environment of standards, laws and institutions for sustainable improvement in women’s rights and opportunities. Of the MFA’s three-track policy on women’s rights and gender equality, FLOW 2 contributed to the track focussed on financing for gender equality and women’s rights in low income and lower middle-income countries.¹ FLOW 2 was the successor to two earlier grant instruments, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 3 Fund (2009–2012) and FLOW 1 (2012–2015).

This evaluation report has been prepared by IOD PARC, a company based in the United Kingdom (UK) specializing in results-based performance assessment in international development and commissioned to undertake the independent final evaluation of FLOW 2. It presents the findings, conclusion and recommendations from the evaluation, which was conducted between September 2021 and February 2022 by a team of consultants under the management of IOD PARC.

Evaluation purpose, scope and target audience

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this final independent evaluation of FLOW 2 was to assess how far the MFA and FLOW 2 partners have achieved an enabling environment for equal opportunities, rights and safety for women and girls using a specific, strategic, contextual and results-based approach, and via its three thematic focus areas:

- Combating violence against women (CVAW)
- Participation by women in politics and public administration (PWPPA)
- Women’s economic participation and self-reliance (WEPSR)

The evaluation had a results-focussed accountability element at the same time as a strong formative objective, aiming to consolidate learnings from the programme and make these available to other development stakeholders with objectives related to women’s rights.

Evaluation scope

Starting in 2016, 18 organisations were engaged as lead and consortia partners in 10 selected programmes under FLOW 2. These consisted of international and regional women’s rights organisations implementing activities in 35 low- and middle-income countries: 10 countries in South and South-East Asia; 2 in the Pacific; 1 in Latin America; 5 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region; and 17 in sub-Saharan Africa. More than 100 local national and subnational organisations were in turn engaged by these lead partners as sub-grantees. The 10 programmes ran for five years until the end of 2020. The final nine months of the projects, from March 2020, took place in the context of the global economic and health shocks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ The other tracks are: diplomatic efforts to promote gender equality and women’s rights; and integration of equal rights and opportunities for women into general foreign policy.

The evaluation covered each of these ten programmes, with some greater depth achieved regarding the four programmes operating in the two countries (Lebanon and Kenya) selected for case studies. The evaluation process included analysis of the end-line evaluations externally commissioned for each programme during 2020, as well as the mid-term reviews (MTRs) conducted by most programmes.

Expected users and intended use

The principal intended user of the knowledge generated by the evaluation is the Taskforce for Women's Rights and Gender Equality (TFVG) in the MFA, as well as all the organisations involved in the ten FLOW 2 consortia. In addition, the evaluation report will be published online² to provide access to a broad spectrum of stakeholders involved in the project of gender equality, as well as the general public.

Evaluation approach and questions

The evaluation took an overall **gender responsive**³ and explicitly feminist approach,⁴ centralising an examination of the issues of power at the core of gender inequalities. This means that as far as possible it used methods that were **inclusive and collaborative** and that in its analysis and interpretation of data it focussed on an understanding of women's rights and structural gender relations. It also focussed strongly on creating learning that can advance knowledge on gender equality and women's empowerment. In order to acknowledge that accountability for interventions is due not only to the donor/funder but also to the people whom the programme is intended to serve, it sought to include beneficiary voices despite being a high-level programme evaluation, and within the limitations presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. It also provided participants, where possible, with an opportunity to share and discuss information in a manner which is useful to their own work as well as to the evaluation.

A set of 11 evaluation questions was developed collaboratively with the MFA team and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), covering the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact.

² To be published at www.Rijksoverheid.nl and www.government.nl.

³ UN Women define gender responsive evaluation as having "two essential elements: what the evaluation examines and how it is undertaken. It assesses the degree to which gender and power relationships—including structural and other causes that give rise to inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations, change as a result of an intervention using a process that is inclusive, participatory and respectful of all stakeholders (rights holders and duty bearers).

Gender-responsive evaluation promotes accountability to gender equality, human rights and women's empowerment commitments by providing information on the way in which development programmes are affecting women and men differently and contributing towards achievement of these commitments. It is applicable to all types of development programming, not just gender-specific work." (UN Women 2015 'How to Manage Gender Responsive Evaluation, Evaluation Handbook')

⁴ **Feminist evaluation** has overlap with key characteristics of other evaluation approaches and is a way of thinking about evaluation rather than a specific approach. Important elements are:

- A central focus on the gender inequities that lead to social injustice;
- Based on an understanding that discrimination or inequality based on gender is systemic and structural;
- Acknowledging that evaluation is a political activity; the contexts in which evaluation operates are politicized; and the personal experiences, perspectives, and characteristics evaluators bring to evaluations lead to a particular political stance;
- Understanding that knowledge is a powerful resource that serves an explicit or implicit purpose; and that it should be a resource of and for the people who create, hold, and share it; and
- Acknowledging that there are multiple ways of knowing; some ways are privileged over others.

Sielbeck-Bowen et al. 2002: pp. 3–4 in Better Evaluation. (2020, July 29). Feminist evaluation. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/feminist_evaluation

These developed the questions formulated in the Terms of Reference (ToR) into a set designed to draw data in a programme synthesis perspective aligned with the Taskforce Theory of Change. Sub-questions focusing on key issues identified by the ERG were also included (See Annex 3 for full list of questions and sub-questions).

Relevance and coherence

1. How far did the programme respond to priority gender inequality issues? Who were the key organisational / institutional allies / co-advocates in the gender equality project?

Effectiveness

2. How and how far did the various FLOW 2 projects contribute to improvements in the enabling environment of policy and legal change for women's rights and gender equality in relation to CVAW, WEPSR and PWPPA (at national or subnational level)?

3. To what extent and how have the different FLOW 2 projects contributed to structural changes in power relationships between women and men in households, communities, economic institutions and governance institutions?

4. To what extent, how and with what results did FLOW 2 programmes strengthen sub-grantee and other local organisations' capacity?

5. What unintended consequences, both positive and negative did FLOW 2 programmes have and in which ways did they affect the different target groups and stakeholders?

Sustainability

6. What steps and measures did the consortia propose and take to ensure sustainability of programme outcomes? What roles are sub-grantees playing in sustainability?

Impact

7. What evidence is there that structural power changes and an improved enabling environment will be or have been (or are likely to be) sustained so that they create long-term impact in rights and opportunities for women and girls in the areas of CVAW, PWPPA and WEPSR?

Efficiency

8. How has exchange of information, good practices and learning between partners and consortia supported the programme?

9. How have changes in M&E requirements, including using the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) system and moving towards results-based monitoring, been used and embedded? How far have they supported implementation of the programmes? What have been the challenges?

10. How far has the implementation framework of procedures and resources (human and financial) supported results? How far have partners put in place procedures to enhance value for money (VfM)? What were the results of these procedures in terms of (increased/decreased) VfM?

Lessons learned

11. What are good practices, lessons learned and recommendations to improve future programming to enhance women’s rights and gender equality?

The FLOW 2 Programme and Contexts

Programme overview

FLOW 2 was a continuation of FLOW 1 (2012–15) and the MDG3 Fund (2008–2011). It was designed to respond to one part of the overall international gender policy of the MFA and was premised on the assertion that sustainable improvement in women’s rights and opportunities, and a fair share for them in power, requires a structural transformation in the standards, values and rules of conduct for men and women. This structural transformation can be achieved through an interplay of greater agency and empowerment for women and a better enabling environment of standards, laws and institutions. It was designed as a funding mechanism through which CSOs working for women’s rights and gender equality could be supported to contribute a vital role in kick-starting this structural transformation.

FLOW 2 consisted of ten selected programmes working towards these broad goals through strategies targeting the focus areas of CVAW, PWPPA and WEPSR in 35 low income and low-middle income countries. These programmes were led by international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) or consortia as summarised in Table 1. Overall, CVAW was addressed by five projects, WEPSR by six projects and PWPPA by six projects. Most of the programme lead organisations worked through more than 100 sub-grantees altogether in implementing countries, while a few (SNV, Hivos) implemented via their own country offices. At least 26 countries had funded sub-grantee partners.

Targeted beneficiaries of the programmes included women farmers, pastoralists, workers in small-scale gold mines, men and women living in remote areas, women media practitioners, women leaders, marginalised women, lesbians, bisexual women and transgender (LBT) people, women’s rights organisations, and the broader public for social norms and institutional change.

Table 1: Summary of programmes and grantees

Lead grantee	Project name	Project countries	Focus area/s	Expenditure
ActionAid	Promoting Opportunities for Women’s Empowerment and Rights (POWER) project	Bangladesh, Ghana. Pakistan (until 2018), Rwanda	WEPSR	€14,605,482
Creating Resources of Empowerment in Action (CREA)	All Women Count (AWC)	Bangladesh, Burundi, Egypt, India, Kenya, Lebanon, Nepal, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda	CVAW, WEPSR	€3,871,950
Hivos	Women Empowered for Leadership (WE4L)	Jordan, Lebanon, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe	PWPPA	€14,969,000

Impunity Watch and Oxfam IBIS	FLOW	Burundi, Guatemala, Liberia	CVAW PWPPA	€ 10,124,768
International Women's Development Agency (IWDA)	Women's Action for Voice and Empowerment (WAVE)	Cambodia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste	PWPPA	€14,327,652
Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA)	Women: Occupy the Media!	Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal	PWPPA, CVAW	€ 3,293,845
Rutgers	Prevention+	Indonesia, Lebanon, Rwanda, Uganda	CVAW, WEPSR, PWPPA	€14,759,495
SIMAVI	Going for Gold/Golden Line	Ghana, Tanzania	WEPSR, PWPPA	€ 7,986,233
SNV	Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises (EOWE)	Kenya, Viet Nam	WEPSR	€ 6,130,885
Women for Women International (WfWI)	Engaging Women as Agents of Change against Gender-based Violence and Poverty	Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nigeria	CVAW, WEPSR	€6,789,906

All ten programmes began implementation in 2016 with the intention of carrying out a five-year project ending in December 2020. Some adjustments to planned programmes took place, notably in the specific countries implementing activities. For example, of the planned eight countries engaged in the Rutgers Consortium Prevention+ project, eventually only four took part. For the ActionAid POWER project, implementation in Pakistan took place only until 2019 when the whole ActionAid Pakistan country programme was closed due to contextual constraints.⁵

⁵ ActionAid POWER Mid-Term Review.

Financial overview

FLOW 2 expenditure totalled at euro (€) 96,859,217 in grants to the ten partners/consortia, ranging between nearly €4 million and €15 million to each programme spread over the 5-year period. Of the 10 partners/consortia, 4 were awarded the maximum or near the maximum amount of €15 million over the 5 years; 4 were awarded medium-sized grants of between €6.5 and €10.6 million; and 2 were awarded smaller grants of just under €4 million. Of these smaller grants, the Panos Institute West Africa (PIWA) programme was approximately €1.4 million smaller than their proposal and the Creating Resources of Empowerment in Action (CREA) programme received only 25 per cent of what was proposed. Other grants were awarded as proposed.

As shown in Figure 1,⁶ funding was spread quite evenly across the three focus areas of CVAW, WEPSR and PWPPA, with slightly more (nearly 37 per cent) committed to outcomes focussed on PWPPA. While most funds were spent in-country (68 per cent), Figure 2 shows that 21 per cent, or just over €20 million, was spent in countries in the Global North by lead partners.⁷ A further 11 per cent was spent as regional or joint country budgets.

Figure 1: Proportion of expenditure by focus area 2016–2020 (approximate figures)

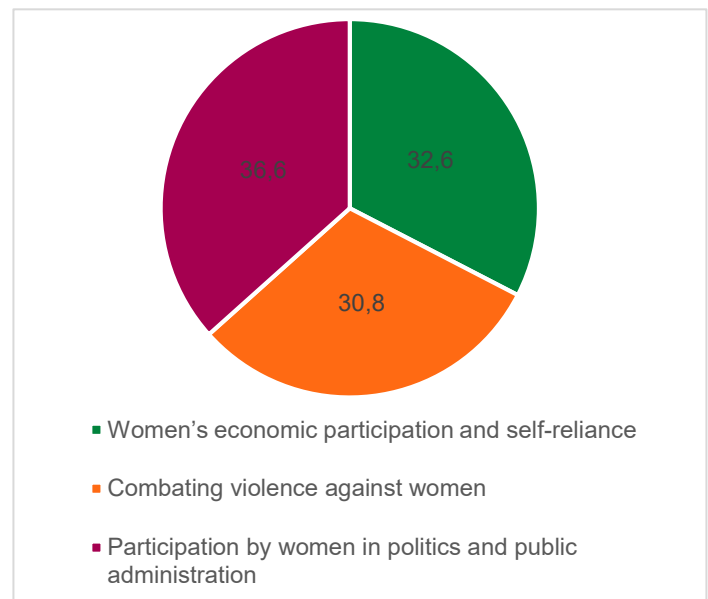
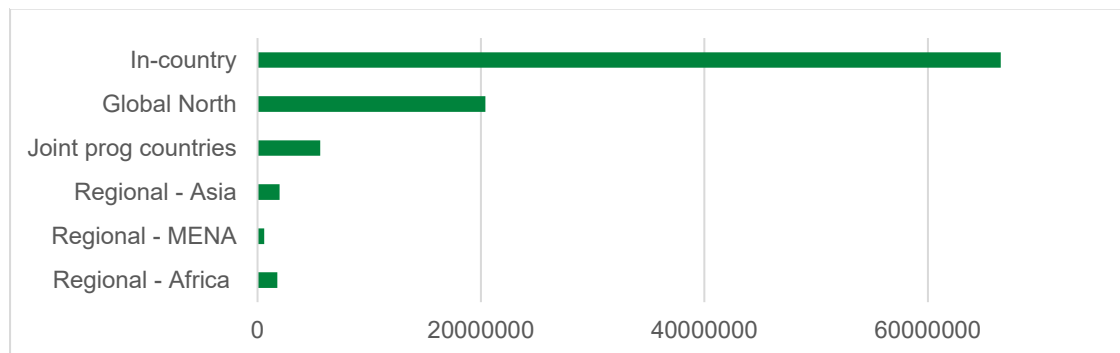


Figure 2: FLOW 2 Global North, regional, in-country and joint expenditure 2016–2020



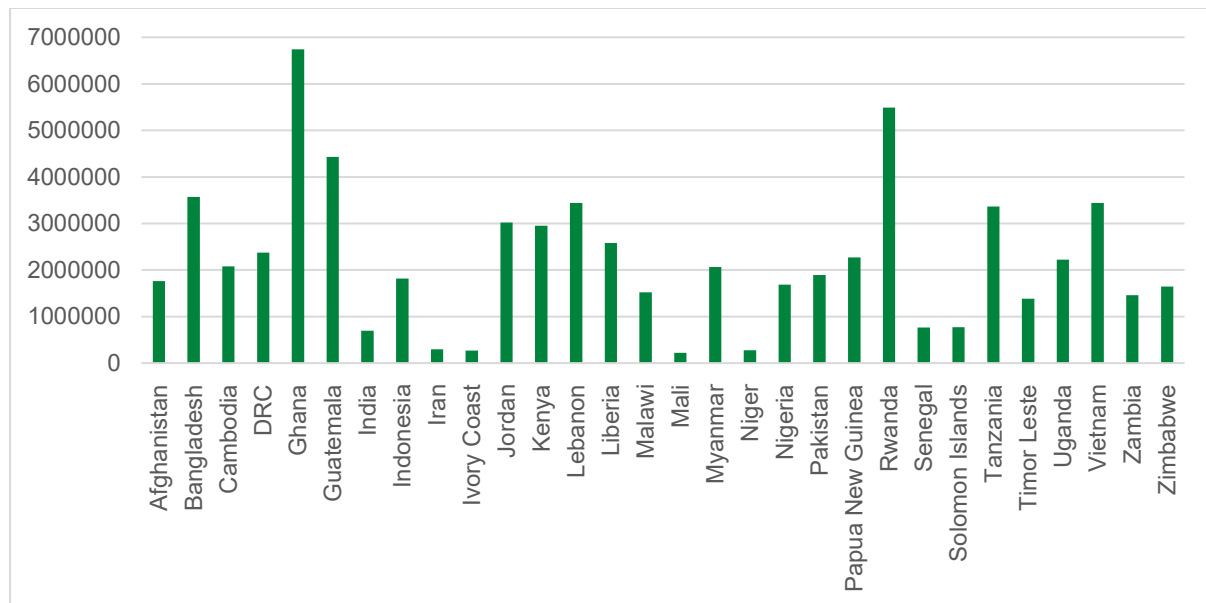
Of the 35 countries included in FLOW 2, 30 incurred in-country expenditure, with Ghana having the largest country expenditure at €6,742,683, followed by Rwanda at €5,489,568 and

⁶ The proportion is calculated using expenditure data combined with an analysis of how outcomes align with the pillars. Where the programme outcomes are focussed on more than one pillar, expenditure is divided in proportion to the number of outcomes. This is therefore an approximation.

⁷ Much of this expenditure was on international staff for coordination and overall management of multi-country programmes; international meetings; dissemination; and technical support to country programmes. Financial reporting available to the evaluators does not allow consistent analysis of these expenditures across all programmes.

Guatemala at €4,428,854, as shown in Figure 3.⁸ Ivory Coast, Mali and Niger all incurred low expenditures, at less that €300.000 each.

Figure 3: FLOW 2 Expenditure by country 2016–2020



Context: women’s rights in implementation countries

The 35 countries in which FLOW 2 projects were implemented were all low or lower-middle income countries (with the addition Jordan and Lebanon which were also deemed to be eligible) but nevertheless show a good deal of variation in terms of gender equality, women’s rights and key areas of challenge. As shown by the analysis in Annex 13, countries fall into all five of the groupings of the Gender Development Index (GDI), but the largest number (14) fall in Group 5 indicating the highest levels of inequality between men and women (Afghanistan, DRC, Egypt, India, Ivory Coast, Jordan, Lebanon, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Senegal and Uganda). Three countries (Burundi, Malawi and Viet Nam) are in Group 1 with the highest level of equality between men and women; two countries in Group 2; eight countries in Group 3; and three in Group 4.

The Human Development Index (HDI) rank (2020), indicating overall levels of human development, shows a similar range, but with a high number of countries among the lower ranks: only one country (Lebanon) ranks above 100 out of 189 countries; 15 countries rank at 150 or below.

In terms of FLOW 2’s main focus areas, women’s labour force participation ranges from nearly 84 per cent in Rwanda to 14.6 per cent in Jordan. For countries where data is available, female share of employment in senior and middle management ranges from 4.2 per cent in Pakistan to 40.3 per cent in Zambia. In terms of women’s leadership and political participation, 14 countries have less than 20 per cent representation of women at national parliament level, and 14 per cent at local government level. Only eight countries have more than 35 per cent representation of women at either level (Burundi, India, Nepal, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Timor-Leste, Uganda). For CVAW, the data for intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most complete; more than 50 per cent of women aged 15 and above in six countries state that they have experienced IPV (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, DRC, Pakistan, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste). This rate is less than 20 per cent for only 4 countries (Indonesia, Jordan, Myanmar,

⁸ 30 countries had direct programme expenditure. A further five countries were included in activities budgeted under regional spending.

Nigeria). Rates of early marriage (by age 18) are 30 per cent or above in 12 countries (Burundi, Egypt, Indonesia, Malawi, Mali, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe).

This overview shows that all participating countries have some moderate to severe gender equality/women's rights challenges, but that these are inconsistently spread and manifest in different configurations according to the precise nature of gender inequality structures in each country. There are some associations between gender inequality and overall human development, but these are inconsistent and not strong (Burundi, for example, falls at 185 of 189 in terms of the HDI but is in Group 1 for GDI). Indicators associated with FLOW's pillars of work are also not strongly associated at an individual level with higher GDI groupings: higher levels of labour force participation, for example, are not strongly associated with higher GDI (Bangladesh, DRC, India); higher levels of women's leadership are not connected to overall human development (Jordan, Lebanon).

Indeed, at the outset, FLOW 2 recognised that the links between gender equality and economic growth are complex and asymmetric, and that several low- and middle-income countries have experienced substantial economic growth without any automatic improvement in the position of women.

A number of particular economic, social and political challenges have been faced by FLOW 2 countries over the course of the five implementation years with relevance for women's rights. These have included armed conflict in some contexts (Afghanistan, DRC, Myanmar, Sudan) and political contexts which have included oppressive gender dimensions in others (India, Pakistan). In addition, the Covid-19 pandemic which progressed rapidly across the world during the months following February 2020 has affected all countries, with some differences in degree.

As noted in the FLOW 2 programme documents prior to the onset of the programme, despite important differences, a common feature across most countries is that while progress has been made towards gender equality, the pace of change is often slow. And despite regional and contextual differences, there is no country where progress towards gender equality has been either assured or irreversible.

FLOW 2 Theories of Change

MFA Theory of Change for women's rights and gender equality in foreign policy

FLOW 2 did not have its own tailored Theory of Change (ToC). Instead, the programme has been guided by the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs ToC for women's rights and gender equality in foreign policy (Figure 4), and each of the 10 programmes developed their own, related, ToCs. The MFA ToC envisages a three-track approach to promoting women's rights and gender equality in foreign policy, through:

- Diplomatic efforts;
- The integration of equal rights and opportunities for women into the Netherlands foreign policy more broadly; and
- Targeted financing for women's rights and gender equality in low and middle-income countries.

FLOW 2 constituted one of the MFA's targeted financing programmes supporting women's rights and gender equality in low and middle-income countries. The basic premise of the ToC is that for women and girls to enjoy equal rights and opportunities – living in peaceful societies, free from violence, fully engaged in political and civil structures, and able to take up economic and other opportunities – societal transformation must accompany and support the empowerment of individual women and the emergence of a strong civil society working in

support of women's rights and gender equality. This societal transformation calls for formal institutions – legal frameworks, policies, public institutions, markets – to enshrine and protect women's rights and gender equality, and for the informal rules and norms, which shape public attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, to similarly support and enable women's rights and freedoms. Once catalysed, the interplay between women's agency, stronger institutions and more supportive informal norms is expected to create an upward spiral for change in support of equal rights and opportunities.

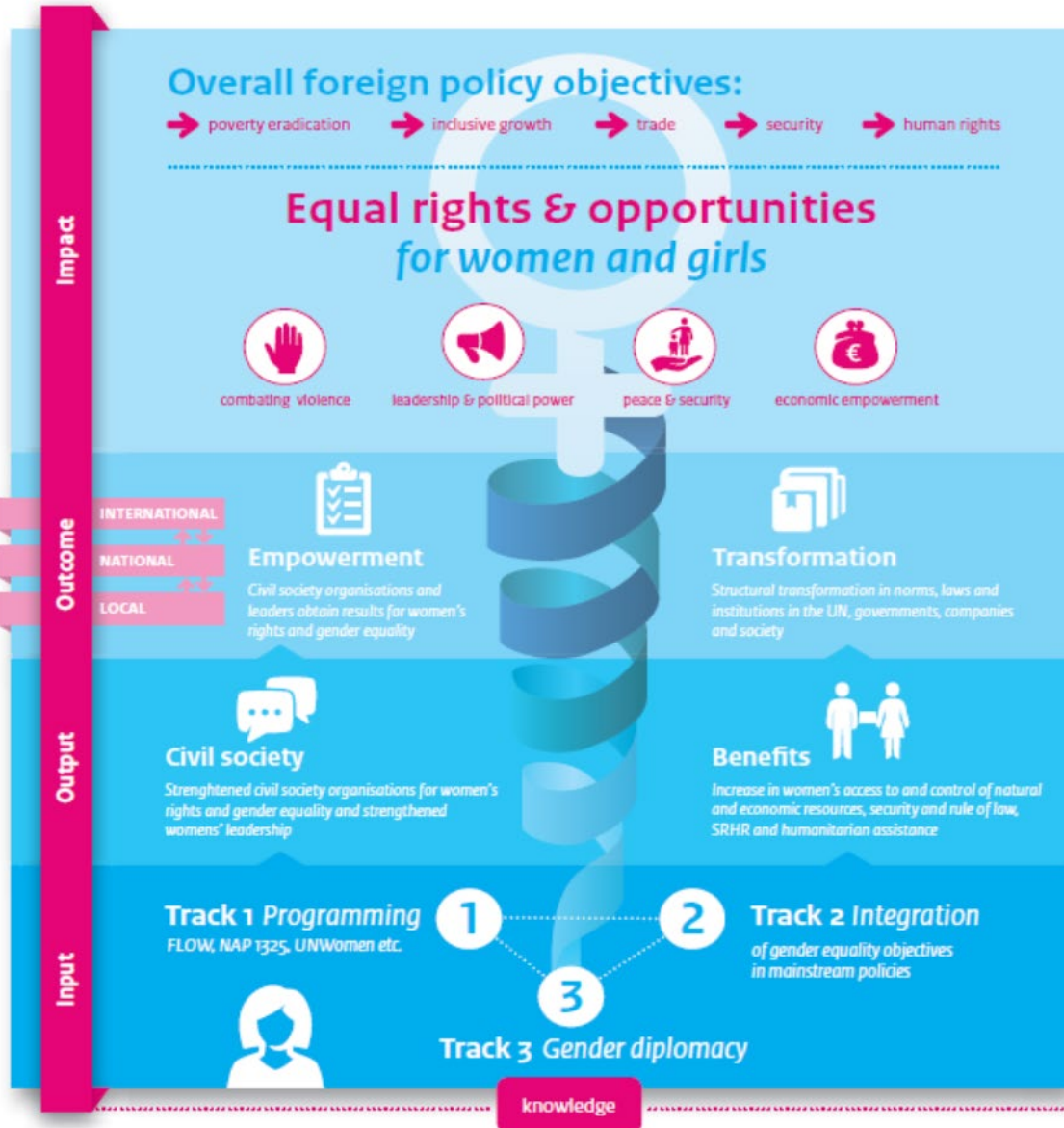
FLOW 2 Programme Theories of Change

As a requirement, each of the 10 FLOW 2-supported programmes was requested to prepare a specific ToC. These align well with the MFA ToC, but they have gone further in unpacking the types of societal transformation needed to achieve sustainable improvements in women's rights and gender equality. Informed by the socioecological framework commonly used in the design of interventions to promote gender equality and other types of social change, programme ToCs largely envisage change at four levels: the individual, within the family/social networks, within society and in formal institutions. Annex 6 presents an analysis of the similarities and differences across these ToCs and alignment with the MFA ToC. Broadly, all of the programmes have a strong focus on strengthening the capacity of individual women or women's CSOs, or both, as an essential driver of change at all levels, and on connecting women and women's organisations. This focus fits with the MFA ToC 'civil society' and 'empowerment' domains. All of the programmes reviewed recognise that sustainable improvements in women's rights and gender cannot rely on the empowerment of women alone, but also require a supportive enabling environment. Each of the projects therefore tackles different elements of this environment to make it more supportive, including public and service provider attitudes (societal change), social and gender norms (family/social networks and societal change), policy and legal frameworks (institutional change).

Figure 4: Task Force Theory of Change

Women's Rights and Gender Equality

in The Netherlands' foreign policy



Evaluation Methodology

Overall approach and design

The evaluation took an overall **gender responsive** and explicitly feminist approach centralising an examination of the issues of power at the core of gender inequalities (see above). The evaluation was **theory-based**, with the ToC at its centre as an analytical framework and common platform through which to explore how far ideas about how change were or were not confirmed by identifiable causal pathways. This framework also formed the basis for an assessment of the contribution made by the programme to identified changes. It also took a **mixed methods** approach using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to understand and assess the contribution of the programme to tackling root causes of power dynamics and power inequalities embedded in norms, institutions and practices.

Meta-evaluation and data quality scan

The evaluation process was undertaken in five phases from September 2021 to February 2022, starting with an inception phase which included a meta-evaluation of the individual programme evaluation and reviews and including a quick scan of the quality of data available in these. For the meta-evaluation, project mid-term reviews and evaluations were fully reviewed against a preliminary set of evaluation questions (EQs) as identified in the ToR and subjected to a comparative analysis across the ten projects. This process revealed that the existing evaluations included information and analyses that would provide useful contributions to an assessment of several of the key questions suggested in the ToR. In particular, in combination they contain good data on the process and results of efforts to strengthen local partner capacity, and on higher level project outcomes (particularly the end-line evaluations). Primary data collection tools were then designed on the basis of information gaps identified by this review; these included how the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system supported the programme; how other operational features supported or hindered achievements (Efficiency); and what was achieved at long-term impact level.

Through the same process, available data was also assessed for quality considering ten criteria. These included two types of criteria, a group designed to assess the validity of the evaluation information, and a group designed to identify whether the evaluation document included information that would be key – in a practical or analytical sense – to this evaluation process. These criteria included:

- How far critical analysis is apparent in the evaluation report;
- How far evaluation findings take into account wider challenges of working on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE);
- How far evaluation recommendations are relevant;
- How far evaluation recommendations seem implementable;
- Whether the report includes stakeholder analysis and evaluation participant list; and
- Whether the evaluation includes lessons learned.

Overall, it was found that data quality was at least acceptable and a reasonable foundation for this synthesis evaluation, with the proviso that primary data collection would need to fill gaps and also be used to triangulate and verify key points and themes emerging from the evaluations (See Annex 5). This data therefore was analysed alongside primary data according to the EQs and forms a proportion – but not the entirety – of the evidence for most of these.

Evaluation scope and sampling

The evaluation covered the full scope of the ten programmes under FLOW 2, but included two in-depth country case studies in Kenya and Lebanon. These were selected as advised by the ToR and on the basis that the two countries had more than one programme implemented (SNV and CREA in Kenya and Hivos, Rutgers and CREA in Lebanon), and where there is a Dutch embassy. They also cover two of the four main geographic regions, and hosted implementation in all three of the WEPSR, CVAW and PWPPA focus areas. Kenya and Lebanon are also countries where work for FLOW 2's successor programme, Power of Women, is continuing.

For remaining countries and programmes, data was collected and reviewed referring to all, but with a **'light touch' focus on five countries** which included data collected at sub-grantee level where possible. This was intended to provide a depth of information lying somewhere between programme and case study levels. For these countries, primary data collection was somewhat more intensive than for the remaining countries: efforts were made to consult stakeholders beyond lead partners, at least at sub-grantee level, through in-depth interviews. The countries selected for light touch focus were Bangladesh, Cambodia, DRC, Ghana and Liberia.

Purposive sampling was used to select these countries, with the objective of achieving a set of countries broadly representative of the regions FLOW 2 worked in and including the maximum number possible of the ten FLOW 2 projects. Broad geographical representativeness was calculated on the basis of the proportion of FLOW 2 countries in each region: nearly 50 per cent of these are in Africa, 26 per cent in Asia, 17 per cent in the MENA region and 9 per cent in the Pacific. Since Kenya and Lebanon were pre-selected for deep dive case studies, the East Africa and MENA regions and corresponding FLOW 2 projects were represented through these. Sampling logic and methods are explained further in Annex 7. Although Timor-Leste was originally selected as the light touch country for Asia-Pacific, subsequent discussion with the MFA and International Women's Development Agency (IWDA) teams indicated that (remote) data collection would be challenging there for a range of reasons. Therefore, Cambodia was substituted as the Asia-Pacific light touch country.

Evaluation questions mapping key parts of the Theory of Change were used as the basis for data collection and analysis, using [an Evaluation Matrix](#) (Annex 3) to guide focus and coverage.

Data collection

Data collection was an iterative process, beginning with an in-depth review of the individual programme end-line evaluations and mid-term reviews, in order to identify areas of the ToC and EQs with weaker existing data. This formed the basis for the design and emphasis of tools for primary data collection.

Given the ongoing Covid-19 situation globally, tools for primary data collection were designed mainly for remote data collection, consisting of key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted using Zoom and other remote meeting platforms, and an online survey. The Kenya case study also offered opportunity for some limited field data collection among beneficiary/rights holder groups; in the case of Lebanon, where ongoing economic crisis has created a particularly challenging environment, data at beneficiary and sub-grantee level was also collected remotely.

Methods for data collection are summarised in Box 1.

Box 1: Data collection included



Literature review: approximately 100 documents:

- A meta-evaluation of 20 programme evaluations and mid-term reviews
- 56 programme narrative and financial reports
- 24 other analytical documents



Interviews with 62 stakeholders:

- 15 sub-grantee stakeholders
- 39 lead partner stakeholders
- 8 MFA staff



7 Focus groups with 36 participants:

- Programme beneficiaries in Kenya and Lebanon
- Partner staff members responsible for M&E
- Partner staff engaging on sustainability and impact



Online survey with 76 respondents:

- 20 lead partner staff
- 49 sub-grantee staff
- 7 'other' respondents

Analysis methods

Documentary data, interviews and FGDs were analysed applying social science coding methods using the MAXQDA analysis platform and a coding tree developed iteratively across the initial meta-evaluation and subsequent analysis of further literature and primary data. Analysis was conducted against the EQs and sub-questions, gathered into separate documents, and then key word marked to identify emerging themes and level of data within each question. This allowed a comparative perspective to develop across the ten programmes against each question.

The survey data, collected using the SurveyMonkey platform, was analysed separately using SurveyMonkey tools allowing cross tabulations according to stakeholder type and country and (at a more limited level) according to programme focus areas. Further analysis was conducted manually to review emerging themes such as broad partner organisation type ('movement building', 'developmental' or 'hybrid').

Financial analysis was also carried out separately using financial reports from the ten programmes. Where consolidated five-year financial reports were not available, relevant financial data was extracted from each of the annual financial reports (specifically, spending by country; spending by outcome was approximated where it was not explicitly available).

Triangulation

Data was triangulated both within and across data types (documents, interviews and FGDs, survey), as well as across different types of stakeholders through interviews, FGDs and survey material. The evaluation findings have been built only on data that is triangulated at least once (i.e. similar information is available from at least two stakeholders or data types). Most data used has been triangulated at least twice (similar information from at least three stakeholders/data types). Key wording coded extractions allowed for themes to emerge which are strongly triangulated through repetition across sources.

The evaluation team has been attentive and accountable for the strength of evidence used to bring forward findings, by detailed and extensive sourcing of data in footnotes and references. While these are anonymised in order to preserve confidentiality agreements with informants, they give regular information on the strength of data for each point brought forward. Any evidence that is weaker (triangulated only once) or that is very strong (triangulated more than 3 times) is indicated in referencing. This represents a comparatively strong methodology for ensuring that findings are robust and credible.

Methodological limitations

As a theory-based evaluation primarily aimed at generating learning for future women's rights programming, the methodology used does not attempt to establish definitive attribution of results to the programme. Rather, it seeks to assemble evidence on the causal processes at work to be able to generate confident understanding of the programme's contribution to changes taking place. In this, it is assumed that the **FLOW 2 programmes were specifically not working alone but in partnership** and in mutual influencing with a variety of stakeholders. The prior and parallel work of these other movement members and development actors is expected to also have played a part in contributing to changes generated.

The continued global crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions led to the design decision to collect almost all data through remote methods. While these generally worked well, **this design has entailed some bias towards funded stakeholders** directly and indirectly associated with the programme and therefore towards positive reporting of results and processes.

In addition, data collection took place almost a year after all the FLOW 2 programmes were closed. While this presented an opportunity to investigate impact and sustainability more deeply than in an earlier evaluation, it also made contacting relevant stakeholders and engaging them more challenging. In combination these factors have resulted in the following limitations.

First, it was challenging to contact and engage stakeholders at sub-grantee level in some cases, and the team met little success in engaging non-grantee stakeholders except in case study countries. The case studies therefore served their purpose in allowing this depth of data. Non-case study data has some bias towards stakeholders directly engaged as funded partners in the programmes. Similarly, opportunities for inclusion of beneficiary perspectives in the data were only available through the case study work. Despite these limitations, the evaluation did succeed in collecting a wide range of data through Zoom interviews, focus groups with beneficiary rights-holders and through the survey, which attracted responses from a broad range of sub-grantees across 22 Global South and 2 Global North countries and associated with all 10 programmes. It also drew on the programme end-line evaluations which had more opportunity to consult beyond direct stakeholders. Interviewees were also assured of confidentiality so that criticisms and shortcomings could be discussed without fear of repercussion. They were also made aware that the primary purpose of the evaluation was to extract learning to further evolve women's rights programming, and therefore that a critical perspective would be welcomed.

Second, the evaluators found that the scheduling of the interviews has been more difficult and less efficient than in face-to-face field work and took a longer timeframe than expected. This put time pressure on the subsequent processes of analysis and drafting findings.

Third, remote data collection leaves little opportunity for between the lines data collection: observation of the environment, relationships between participants/informants, and the social information given through body language: weakness in this regard may have affected the transmission and interpretation of data.

Ethical considerations

The evaluation observed ethical principles and standards set by both the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IOD PARC, both based on the principle of 'Do no harm'. The ethical code of conduct adopted by IOD PARC rests on its ethical framework for all its work, including field visits. It is based on international guidelines for all contexts:

- UN Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation, 2008;
- UN Evaluation Group Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System, 2007;
- UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis, 2015;
- Department for International Development (ex DFID, now Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, FCDO), Ethics Principles for Research and Evaluation, 2011; and
- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Framework for Research Ethics Principles, 2012.

This means that the evaluation team have upheld the appropriate obligations of evaluators, including maintaining the independence, impartiality, credibility and accountability of the individual team members and the evaluation process as a whole. This evaluation has included a wide range of project stakeholders, including representatives from direct partner organisations, sub-grantee organisations, other CSO stakeholders, and a limited number of rights-holder beneficiaries. Therefore, during the inception phase the evaluation methodology and protocols were submitted to an Independent Ethics Review Board (IRB),⁹ to ensure that subjects of the evaluation are not placed at undue risk; that their participation is voluntary and subjects are provided information to make an informed consent prior to participation; and that written protocols are in place to assure subjects' confidentiality or anonymity. Feedback from the IRB has been incorporated in the methodology and tools in the final version of the inception report, together with the certificate of ethical approval.

Informed consent was sought from all participants verbally prior to commencing interviews and focus groups, and data management, analysis and reporting was conducted in a way that ensures confidentiality of the information shared.

Evaluation management and quality assurance

The evaluation was managed by MFA through the Task Force programme manager and the FLOW 2 programme manager, with overall guidance provided by an Evaluation Reference Group (ERG). MFA supported the evaluation through facilitating access to project stakeholders, providing key documentation, and actively engaging in the process and liaising closely with the external evaluation team. The ERG, composed of six members who have been selected by MFA, has been responsible for reviewing and providing comments on the draft inception and evaluation reports.

The evaluation team consisted of a team leader, a gender and evaluation expert, gender and national experts for Kenya and Lebanon, and a project manager and researcher based at IOD PARC. Julian Gayfer at IOD PARC was the Project Director, providing regular thought partnership and with overall responsibility for quality assurance provided at inception and reporting stages.

⁹ This was submitted to HML IRB, an autonomous committee authorized by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections (IRB #1211, FWA #1102, IORG #850), to review and approve research involving human subjects before the start of research. More information can be found at: www.healthmedialabirb.com

Findings of the Evaluation

In this section, findings are presented according to the criteria of Relevance and Coherence, Effectiveness, Sustainability, Impact and Efficiency. One finding is offered for each of the evaluation questions (EQs) and sub-questions. Bold boxed text at the beginning of each section is the Findings Statement which summarises and pulls the key messages out of the broader findings. The following text then elaborates on the evidence for each finding and on the detail of variation and strategies. As a theory-based evaluation, EQs were designed to focus enquiry on elements of the ToC, and on the causal links between these elements. This aimed to collect evidence on the 'how' of each ToC step. Accompanying text therefore usually includes information on the strategies and approaches that contributed to the achievement of results.

Relevance and coherence

Finding 1: Thematic focus

FLOW 2 programmes were found to be relevant, responding to priority global themes and, with some exceptions, broadly corresponding to priorities in respective countries. However, relevance and coherence could have been strengthened by including a greater representation of women rights organisations from the Global South as lead partners.

FLOW 2 worked globally across three priority themes: combating violence against women (CVAW), participation by women in politics and public administration (PWPPA), and women's economic participation and self-reliance (WEPSR). With the overall objective of contributing to equal rights and opportunities for women via creating an improved enabling environment and structural power changes within household, community, economic and governance levels. Under FLOW 2 the spending for each priority theme was: CVAW (30.8 per cent), WEPSR (32.6 per cent), and PWPPA (36.6 per cent) (approximate figures, see Figure 1 above).

These themes respond to clear critical gender gaps on the global level, with regard to violence against women, women's economic participation, and women's involvement in politics and public administration. An estimated 30 per cent of women around the world have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV).¹⁰ The highest regional incidence rate of IPV is estimated to be in Africa, Eastern Mediterranean, and South-East Asia regions, all of which have an approximate rate of 37 per cent, followed by the regions of the Americas at approximately 30 per cent.¹¹ Furthermore, in a global survey of 133 countries, it was observed that while 80 per cent of surveyed countries had laws to prevent violence, only 57 per cent of the laws were fully enacted and/or enforced.¹² Women's economic participation and opportunity remain dismally low in comparison to their male counterparts; less than 62 per cent of women are in the labour force, compared to 93 per cent of men.¹³ In addition, 58 per cent of women are working within informal economies that are often characterized by low wages and limited social protection mechanisms, and are often juggling the double burden of paid and unpaid work.¹⁴

¹⁰ WHO (2014), [Global Status Report on Violence Prevention](#).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ UN (2020), [Women and Girls – Closing the Gender Gap](#).

¹⁴ Ibid.

Similarly, gaps remain with regard to women's political participation and representation within decision-making bodies. In 2016, women's global representation in national parliaments was 23.3 per cent, with regional averages amounting to less than 30 per cent per region (MENA Region – 18 per cent, Asia – 19.3 per cent, sub-Saharan Africa – 23.6 per cent).¹⁵

Although there is increasing international awareness about the need to channel more funds directly to organisations in the Global South (GS), figures from 2016 – 2017 show that only 1 per cent of gender focussed funding was directly channelled to women's organisations, with the bulk of aid being given to INGOs residing within donor countries.¹⁶ Lead organisations under FLOW 2, were predominately from the Global North (GN). Only two programmes (the CREA-led All Women Count (AWC) programme and PIWA's Women Occupy the Media (WOM) were entirely facilitated and/or comprised of partners from the Global South (GS). The AWC consortium was also initially unsuccessful in securing the FLOW 2 grant, but this decision was reversed following a formal appeal.¹⁷ Both AWC and WOM were awarded the two smallest grants, with AWC receiving 25 per cent of the original proposal¹⁸ and WOM receiving approximately €1.4 million less than their proposal. For AWC, the reduction in the budget by the MFA led to a reduction in the number of countries and activities targeted by the programme.¹⁹ While both AWC and WOM,²⁰ are considered as being highly relevant, it is difficult to make a comparative assessment on whether they were more effective on the basis of relevance than other FLOW 2 programmes, seeing that their awarded funding was considerably smaller than all other programmes, and therefore not comparable. As shown in Figure 1 (in Financial Overview above), while most funds were spent in-country, 21 per cent of FLOW 2's overall expenditure was incurred in countries in the Global North by lead partners. Only 11 per cent was spent as regional or joint country budgets.

As such, the MFA initially received some pushback from women's rights organisations regarding the criteria of selection and awarded grants under FLOW 2.^{21, 22} In an open letter to the MFA, women's rights organisations cited that the administrative process for application was prohibitive for women's rights organisations which do not have the resources to produce the required proposal, that many of the organisations selected were not women-led and therefore women's representation on decision-making bodies was limited, and that the majority of those receiving funding were multi-national organisations from the Global North who are not directly engaged with the beneficiaries.²³ The FLOW 2 selection criteria for funding was also acknowledged as a challenge within the MFA, *'Even looking at the funding criteria, sometimes people can say is a bit exclusionary. Sometimes, it can make it difficult for many organisations, which do good work, to be able to apply for it...'*²⁴

Women's rights data collected for this evaluation (see Annex 14: Status of gender equality and women's rights in FLOW 2 implementing countries), has demonstrated that FLOW 2 programmes in all 36 countries, as well as the priority themes addressed within them, are relevant. Furthermore, the selection criteria of applicants awarded the FLOW 2 grant was not

¹⁵The Inter-Parliamentary Union (2017), [Women in Parliament](#) 2016.

¹⁶ OECD (2019), [Aid in support of gender equality and women's empowerment: donor charts](#).

¹⁷ AWC Mid Term Report and Endline evaluation; KII 64 lead partner.

¹⁸ AWC Endline evaluation. However, CREA received funding for the Advocacy outcome of their initial proposal through a different MFA funding mechanism.

¹⁹ AWC 2017 annual report.

²⁰ Although WOM's Evaluation Team has considered the programme to be relevant and highly coherent, it has also highlighted several issues and concerns pertaining to PIWA's overall management of the programme (i.e. reporting, weak communication with partners, lack of human resources, weak M&E systems).

²¹ KII 66 sub-grantee; KII 74 sub-grantee.

²² OECD (2016), [Donor support to southern women's rights organisations: OECD findings](#).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ KII 07 MFA stakeholder.

only based on the quality of the proposals submitted, but also, the applicants/co-applicants past accomplishments and experiences in gender equity programming as well as their knowledge and added value regarding the context of the selected country or countries.²⁵ As such, the evaluation found that all partners selected did contribute to the overall relevance of the programme by demonstrating a strong track record in gender equity programming as well as being reasonably well versed in the country/countries context (a majority of the partners had previously implemented activities in their focus countries under different funding and/or have established country/regional offices). The FLOW 2 policy framework outlined three conditions for partner/programme and country eligibility in meeting the grant's overall scope and objectives: programmes must have a multi-country strategy; countries selected must be low or lower-middle income countries with the exception of several countries (Algeria, China, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Thailand and Tunisia), and that programmes must address at least one priority theme (CVAW, WEPSR, PWPPA).²⁶ The final selection of countries under FLOW 2, as well as which priority themes are addressed within which countries, has been largely decided by the partners, who submitted proposals including countries at their discretion.

From our data, it also appears that there was no clear and/or defined geographical prioritisation of FLOW 2 programmes beyond these eligibility criteria. As such, while the lack of a defined geographical focus for FLOW 2 programmes may have contributed to achieving a strong global reach, effectively implementing activities across 36 countries, and 5 regions (Africa, Asia, MENA, Pacific, and Latin America); it has also resulted in activities being somewhat unevenly spread, with the largest concentration of activities in Africa (16 countries), followed by Asia (10 countries), and to a lesser extent the MENA region (4 countries), Pacific (2 countries), and Latin America (1 country).

In addition, focus themes did not always correspond with the highest priority regional issues. For example, even though the MENA region has the lowest rate of women's economic participation in the labour market (21 per cent), in comparison to Southeast Asia (40 per cent) and Africa (60 per cent),²⁷ none of the FLOW 2 programmes implemented any WEPSR activities. On the other hand, WEPSR programmes were implemented in seven countries in Africa, with five out of the seven countries having two different FLOW 2 partners implementing WEPSR activities simultaneously. Similarly, while the MENA region has one of the highest global prevalence rates of Gender-based Violence (GBV) (37 per cent),²⁸ only Prevention+ (Lebanon) and AWC (Egypt, Lebanon, Sudan) provided CVAW activities within the region, and although their activities achieved results (see Annex 12: Lebanon case study), they were relatively small in scope.

²⁵ MFA (2015), 'Leadership and Opportunities for Women 2016-2020 (FLOW 2016-2020) policy Framework'.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Nazier, H. (2019), Women's Economic Empowerment: An overview for MENA region. European Institute of the Mediterranean yearbook 2019. <https://www.iemed.org/publication/womens-economic-empowerment-an-overview-for-the-mena-region/>

²⁸ WHO (2013), Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241564625>

Finding 2: Coherence and sub-grantee partnerships

Sub-grantees were key players in the implementation of activities and the generation of outcomes. Many were selected on the basis of established relationships and strong organisational experience: in some cases, this may have excluded newer, potentially effective organisations. More consistent inclusion of sub-grantees in programme design, particularly ToC design, would have strengthened contextual alignment and their ability to deliver.

Collaboration and coordination with key institutional allies and co-advocates was deemed necessary by FLOW 2 programmes in achieving effective wins in their thematic priorities (CVAW, WEPSR, PWPPA). As such, the building of networks and platforms across different organisations was very much a central theme within many of the FLOW 2 programmes. This is especially evident amongst the different ‘movement building’ approaches utilized by FLOW 2 programmes, whereby networks were both vertical and horizontal, with concerted effort placed on connecting different level organisations with community constituencies. These established and/or promoted networks, comprising different stakeholders (women groups, media-WCSOs, religious/community leaders, different service providers, INGOs, etc.), sought to strengthen collective lobbying for gender equality legislation and policies, promote gender equity within communities, address GBV prevention and coordinated response, enable access to markets/labour opportunities, and increase women’s political participation on all societal levels (See Finding 11). Coordination with other INGOs and UN agencies was also evident among FLOW 2 programmes, either for the purpose of establishing joint activities (IBIS-Liberia and UN women)²⁹ or avoiding the duplication of activities (POWER-GLOWA worked with existing savings and loans groups established by Plan International),³⁰ and/or building national, regional and international advocacy campaigns (See Finding 4). Furthermore, many programmes actively engaged local and national governments to not only secure necessary political will to effect change on the policy and legislative level, but also involved them as collaborative partners in the scale-up and sustainability of interventions (See Finding 11). However, the real central allies within the FLOW 2 model are the sub-grantees.

All FLOW 2 programmes operated and/or facilitated the bulk of their programmatic activities through the work of sub-grantees, and to a lesser extent, non-funded actors within their respective countries of focus. As such, the ability of FLOW 2 programmes to achieve their overall objectives and stated outcomes within their ToCs, was very much dependent on the strength of the sub-grantees selected as well as the collaborative relationship formed throughout the duration of the programme. Regarding the selection of in-country partners, only 38 per cent of survey respondents stated that partners were selected through a competitive process,³¹ while 88 per cent stated that partners were selected through appraisals of project proposals submitted by sub-grantees. Some partners (i.e. Power, WAVE, Prevention+) included sub-grantees whom they had successfully worked with under other programmes and/or funding (this may also explain the lower response rate in the competitive process for partner selection) or had old strategic alliances, and used the opportunity of FLOW 2 funding to build on and/or scale up previous activities.

Sub-grantees were largely selected based on their technical capacity, reach, knowledge and expertise in the local context, *‘What they do really well and why we partner with them, is all the knowledge and specific expertise that they have ... They know the context, they know the*

²⁹ IBIS Endline evaluation.

³⁰ ActionAid POWER Endline evaluation.

³¹ Proposals submitted by sub-grantees were evaluated based on a set of criteria and the overall merits of the application. Within this process partners are not pre-selected, but rather, those with the best proposals are awarded the grant.

*community, the target group, and they are very active.*³² As such, selection criteria for sub-grantees was also reliant on not only their experience in working with beneficiaries, but also where they work (i.e. urban vs rural) and at which level (local, subnational, national).³³ Many of the sub-grantees were also assessed by partners with regard to their organisational capacity (i.e. financial, administrative processes) and legal status: 63 per cent of survey respondents stated that they conducted financial appraisals of sub-grantees, and 69 per cent stated that vetting and/or security checks took place. It is evidenced through the qualitative data that most of the sub-grantees strategic priorities were well aligned with those of the partners as well as the overall objectives of the programmes.³⁴

There is some evidence from the Lebanon case study (Annex 11) that these methods of selecting partners according to technical and organisational capacity to deliver on programmatic outcomes, while satisfying donor requirements and having the potential to achieve the greatest impact, may have limited the programme's ability to partner with potentially equally or more effective smaller or newer organisations. Interview respondents in Lebanon stated that it was quite challenging to initially include organisations that are considered grassroots, because the internal processes of selecting sub-grantees doesn't favour the selection of less established organisations, even if they may have the potential for greater impact: *'In order to receive the grant [as a sub-grantee] they need to have certain qualifications (registration, financial capacity etc.). Therefore, most implementing partners need to be somewhat institutionalized, and the problem is a lot of these institutionalized organisations are, but a few, quite urban and Beirut-centred, or if they are in another big city [would] only stay focussed there. They also tend to be educated and middle class ... so already you have a number of barriers.'*³⁵

There is some mixed evidence that greater involvement of sub-grantees in programme design would have strengthened both the 'deliverability' of objectives as well as the contextual relevance of activities. It was highlighted by some partners that the competitive nature of applying for grants such as FLOW 2, pressures organisations to develop and/or present complex ToCs that aim for *'high numbers and high outcomes'*, which in turn, *'forces them to follow a very ambitious five-year plan'*.³⁶ Furthermore, engagement of different stakeholders in the formulation of the ToC, in particular with sub-grantees as well as rights holders, was found to be lacking in many of the programmes. This is evidenced through participant interviews conducted with partners and sub-grantees as well as within some of the evaluation reports for the different programmes. Reasons given for not including more stakeholders in the design of the ToCs, included a lack of time and unfavourable sequencing (for some programmes the selection of sub-grantees took place after securing the grant, by which time the ToC (a requirement for application) had already been formulated). Similarly, the design of programmatic activities by some of the programmes wasn't always inclusive of sub-grantees and/or beneficiaries.

While this was offset to some degree by holding annual joint sessions which provided the opportunity for partners and sub-grantees to reflect on the ToC and the activities, and adjust programmatic components and activities, this contextualizing could have come earlier. One stakeholder suggested that these adjustments enabled better alignment with the practical realities of their specific contexts, *'For the first year we didn't design the activities together, but for the second year and the rest ... we would sit together and have to revise some of the*

³² KII 73 lead partner, KII 66 sub-grantee.

³³ WE4L Endline evaluation, Power Endline evaluation, IBIS Endline evaluation.

³⁴ KII 69 sub-grantee, KII 30 sub-grantee, KII 31 sub-grantee, KII 66 sub-grantee, KII 13 sub-grantee, KII 62 sub-grantee, KII 67 sub-grantee, KII 50 sub-grantee, KII 52 sub-grantee, KII 59 sub-grantee.

³⁵ KII 68 lead partner.

³⁶ KII 76 consortium partner, KII 68 lead partner.

*activities ... because we realized that we don't want to just promote what the donor wants, but we have to be very practical on the ground.*³⁷

Effectiveness

Finding 3: Legal and policy change

FLOW 2 programmes made important contributions to a wide range of key achievements in policy and legal change relevant to each of its three pillars. These were achieved partially through technical support, but mainly through advocacy on all levels and of many kinds. Most key outcomes took place at national level. At sub-national level, the main focus was on promoting the implementation of national-level policy via influencing planning and budgeting.

Key results in policy and legislative change at national levels to enhance the enabling environment for progressing women's rights are listed in Box 2.³⁸ These results demonstrate that FLOW 2 partners did cumulatively contribute to specific improvements in the enabling environment for women's rights and gender equality in relation to each of the three pillars.³⁹

An array of methods has been used to contribute to these results, including many kinds and forms of advocacy. Figure 5 shows that advocacy was carried out by the majority of respondents at several different levels (See also Finding 4). Qualitative data reveals that approaches to and forms of advocacy used to contribute to results included different types of campaigns (see below); building platforms for protest and voice (e.g. contributing to Liberia's National Emergency on rape); bringing sub-grantees together at national levels (e.g. for Myanmar party quotas; for legal change in Timor-Leste); and protest/representation by affected marginalised groups (e.g. resulting in repeal of the anti-pornography act following its misuse to limit women's rights, Uganda).

³⁷ KII 71 sub-grantee.

³⁸ This list is not comprehensive of all policy changes that were the subject of advocacy and may have made progress towards adoption. Rather, it lists outcome level results in actual policy and legislation changes.

³⁹ For reasons explained further in Finding 17, it has not been possible to use reporting against the two corporate indicators used by MFA to report cumulative progress from all funding instruments to parliament. Primarily, this is because figures specific to FLOW 2 cannot retrospectively be extracted from the overall figures, and no documentation is available of separate FLOW 2 data.

Box 2: Key results in policy change at national levels to which FLOW 2 programmes contributed

WEPSR

- Unpaid care work was recognised and partially incorporated into the eighth five-year plan of **Bangladesh** (contribution by ActionAid POWER programme).
- Parental leave was legislated in **Bangladesh** in 2017; and progress was made in implementing the maternity allowance which had been introduced earlier.
- **Uganda** saw the development of a National Family Policy and the accompanying national action plan, and a final review of these in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Affairs, with contributions from the Rutgers Prevention+ programme.
- In **DRC**, the new land policy (at provincial level) was influenced to take account of social realities by a sub-grantee of the WfWI programme.
- The updated Nationally Determined Contribution for climate change in agriculture, with gender mainstreamed through support from SNV's Enhancing Opportunities for Women's Enterprises (EOWE) programme, was approved in **Vietnam** in 2020.
- Integration of gender equality into the One Commune One Product programme by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, **Vietnam** was supported by SNV's EOWE programme.
- In **Liberia**, adoption of the 2018 Land Rights Act, giving women equal rights to inherit, was in part a result of advocacy through the IBIS programme.

CVAW

- **Uganda** saw a repeal of the anti-pornography act in 2021 which, following its misuse, sex worker sub-grantee organisation of UHAI, member of CREA's Unpaid Care Work consortium, had been advocating for under FLOW 2.
- Rape was declared as a national emergency in **Liberia**, with policy commitments, resulting from a sustained campaign by the IBIS-supported platform for sub-grantees and others.
- The Domestic Violence Act was passed in 2019 in **Liberia** with contributions from advocacy through the IBIS programme and following sustained work that preceded FLOW 2.
- In **Indonesia**, advocacy by Prevention+ partners led to the Ministry of Justice's acceptance and formalisation of standard operating procedures for GBV services that included referrals for counselling.
- In **Timor-Leste**, WAVE partners were instrumental to the passing of the Law No. 3/2017 on Prevention and Fight against Trafficking in Persons and Fourth Amendment to the Penal Code in 2017.
- Promulgation of a law criminalizing rape in **Senegal** was supported by media advocacy through PIWA's WOM programme.

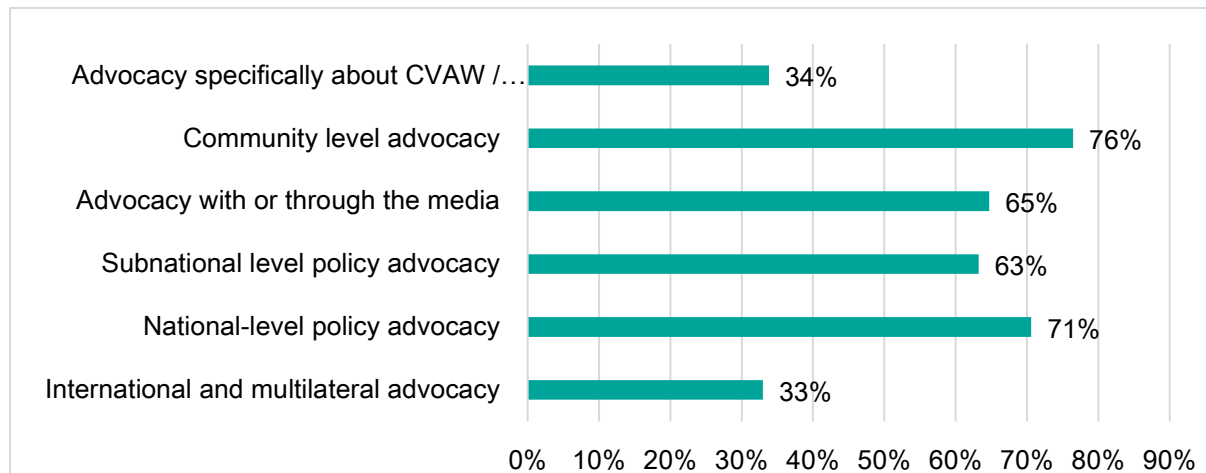
PWPPA

- In **Zambia**, the national police force developed a gender policy which included 50 per cent representation of women and men, in part due to the contribution of the Hivos WE4L programme.
- In **Solomon Islands**, there was significant progress in passing the Temporary Special Measures (TSM) by Provincial Governments, led by the lobbying work of WRAM, a sub-grantee of IWDA's WAVE.
- In **Myanmar**, two political parties committed to 30 per cent of candidates for preselection being women, and to quotas for women in leadership positions and on party committees. IWDA WAVE sub-grantee Akhaya played a central role in advocating to the Myanmar Government for amendments to the Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women Bill to ensure its compliance with CEDAW.
- In **Zimbabwe**, a 30 per cent quota for women in local government was adopted in December 2020 with contribution from the Hivos WE4L programme.
- In **Timor-Leste**, WAVE partners and others successfully advocated for amendment of the 2016 Suco Election Law for greater opportunities for women to stand as candidates in village elections.

General: In **Cambodia**, the Gender and Development Network (GADNet), convened by WAVE sub-grantee GADC, engaged with the Ministry of Women's Affairs on the new National Gender Equality Policy, in which all of GADNet's 23 recommendations were accepted.

Lobbying-based advocacy was also used in some cases, such as through the cultivation of influential **champions** (for example which resulted in the inclusion and recognition of unpaid care work in the text of the new five-year plan of Bangladesh); when the focus was the progress of a particular document, or where campaigns were not possible due to limited civic space (Oxfam Burundi). The provision of direct technical support has also contributed to some results (see below).

Figure 5: What kind of advocacy did you do? (Source: survey, Q25, 68 respondents)



Campaigns / critical advocacy / movement building

Campaign-based advocacy was a widespread approach to achieving policy change via influencing public opinion and demonstrating this to governments. This approach was used by at least seven of the ten programmes:⁴⁰

- WfWI in DRC stakeholders participated in the 16 days of activism for the GBV campaign; in Nigeria the programme's Change Agents contributed to women's economic campaign;
- ActionAid conducted media campaigns, and linked up with broader ActionAid campaigns such as the Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC);
- Association for Progressive Communications (APC)/CREA continued the previously established Take Back the Tech campaign;
- Hivos carried out media campaigns to disseminate the findings of studies and research; in Malawi stakeholders were involved in advocacy campaigns by the Governance, Gender, Justice and Development Centre (GGJDC), Tovwothere and the Women's Legal Resources Centre (WOLREC) to raise awareness on the ongoing debate on the 50/50 Gender Equality Act as per the Constitution;
- Under the IBIS programme, Oxfam Guatemala stakeholders took part in the broader Oxfam 'I have a great dad', and 'Score a Goal against Machismo' campaigns; in Liberia, several national and subnational campaigns were conducted, directly focussed on legislation against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) (including for rape convictions) and the Domestic Violence law; and reform of New Elections Law;
- In Timor-Leste under IWDA's WAVE programme, sub-grantees drove the 100% I'm Ready campaign advocating the election of women; and

⁴⁰ Not explicitly used by PIWA, SIMAVI and SNV.

- The Rutgers consortium undertook campaigning contributing to criminalizing sexual harassment in public spaces.⁴¹

Technical support has also driven policy gains in some cases. For example, Oxfam Guatemala guided the drafting of key policies, including the ‘Institutional Policy for Gender Equality at the Attorney General’s Office’, the ‘Policy for Equality and Non-Discrimination in the Justice Sector’; and a sub-grantee drafted the communications manual for the Technical Unit in the Justice Department and the Protocol for Investigation of Prejudice and Hate Crimes against the LGBTQI Population. In Pakistan, Rutgers was requested to provide technical support to the Ministry of Human Rights in the execution of the National Action Plan on human rights. The EOWE programme in Kenya took the lead through technical support and strategic guidance in the development of gender policies articulating the aspirations and commitments of the County Governments in relation to the Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) agenda.

At subnational level some advances were made in the enabling environment through progressing the implementation of policy and legislation. As shown by Figure 5, a good deal of the advocacy conducted under FLOW 2 was directed at community levels. Here, objectives were centred on awareness-raising, making key issues more visible, and changing behaviour and attitudes. This level was a significant focus for a sub-set of FLOW 2 programmes: for SNV’s EOWE programme; IWDA’s WAVE; the IBIS programme especially in Guatemala; the WfWI programme; and ActionAid’s POWER.⁴² Advocacy on and facilitating women’s access to elected and appointed positions at this level was a common theme. Beyond this, Hivos WE4L, IWDA WAVE; SNV EOWE and parts of the ActionAid POWER programme also worked at subnational level on policy, and particularly on the implementation of policy through planning, and on budgeting to drive implementation, with a number of successes (See Box 3)

Box 3: Achievements in policy and legislation at subnational levels

WEPSR

- Incorporation of day care into local government plans (ActionAid POWER – Rwanda).
- Gender Policies were developed articulating the aspirations and commitments of the Kenya County Governments on the WEE agenda, guided by SNV’s EOWE programme.⁴³
- SNV’s EOWE programme made a contribution to establishing the Isiolo County, Youth, Women, and Persons with Disability Enterprise Development Fund, now passed by the Makueni county assembly and assessed by the governor.⁴⁴
- EOWE also conducted advocacy on the development of the county budget resulting in county government setting up resources and initiating the construction of chicken slaughterhouses for women in Makueni County, Kenya.⁴⁵
- In Viet Nam, EOWE supported implementation of the women’s empowerment fund at provincial level.⁴⁶

CVAW

In Papua New Guinea, WAVE partner Voice for Change (VfC) advocated to provincial and local governments to more effectively respond to very high levels of VAW in Jiwaka Province.

PWPPA

⁴¹ KII 41 sub-grantee.

⁴² Our data collection only reached subnational levels in case study countries and to some extent in the light touch study countries. Of these, Kenya stands out as hosting a Flow programme that was concentrated at subnational levels – therefore our data is biased towards this experience.

⁴³ KII 52 sub-grantee; KII 53 lead partner.

⁴⁴ KII 52 sub-grantee.

⁴⁵ KII 55 lead grantee; KII 49 lead grantee.

⁴⁶ KII 49 lead grantee.

Policy and legislative reform endorsement of temporary special measures (TSMs) at Provincial Assembly level, (WAVE, Solomon Islands).

General

IWDA's WAVE programme also saw better integration of women's issues into local government plans and increased budgetary allocations for women and children.

In Kenya, memoranda were submitted to local government by SNV sub-grantees for consideration into county government policies; proposed policy suggestions have been accepted and entered into key local policy documents.

SNV sub-grantees also made a contribution to formulation of the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP).⁴⁷

Prior to these achievements at both national and subnational levels, it is clear there were very lengthy and sustained causal processes contributing to these outcome level gains. All FLOW 2 organisations insist that results in policy and legal change take long-term and consistent effort, whether through technical support or advocacy strategies, and pathways to results at the level of policy and legal change are frequently not simple or straight. Not all partners or sub-grantees were successful in securing any specific policy or legal changes despite progress towards these,⁴⁸ and most FLOW 2 activity was directed at types of advocacy that precede the achievement of specific outcomes. These prior activities include:

- Gaining visibility for a marginalised group or a neglected issue through research and evidence and campaigns to disseminate findings;
- Amplifying the voice of affected groups and facilitating them into positions where they can represent themselves;
- Campaigning to influence wider public opinion and attitudes on the issue;
- Lobbying and campaigning for recognition of an issue or marginalised group in policy discussions;
- Lobbying or technical support for the inclusion of a marginalised group or issue in draft policy documents and policy recommendations;
- Campaigning and lobbying for the adoption of prepared policy and legislation;
- Advocacy for implementation of the policy and for monitoring; and
- Securing access to resources for implementation, for instance through influencing budgeting.

⁴⁷ KII 51 sub-grantee.

⁴⁸ For example, one sub-grantee of the Hivos programme reports no policy or legal change in Lebanon. KII 22 sub-grantee.

Finding 4: International level advocacy

Advocacy by FLOW 2 partners has made important contributions to the strengthening of international commitments. Most stakeholders focussed advocacy mainly on the level at which they were located, but a pattern of working across levels has contributed to the focus and strength of demands made at national level where most policy changes were made. There is scope for more explicit focus on regional-level network building and stronger efforts to support connections across all advocacy levels.

FLOW 2 had a strong focus on advocacy in nearly all programmes,⁴⁹ but survey results show that the international level and multilateral opportunities were a focus for a subset of the lead grantee partners: 33 per cent of survey respondents, or 22 of 68 who answered the question, see Figure 5 above.

At these international levels, contributions were made by FLOW 2 partners towards UN resolutions at the Human Rights Council and towards a political declaration at the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (see Box 4). The CSW was a particularly important focus for international advocacy efforts: five of the ten FLOW 2 programmes discussed action at the CSW level in interviews. Also on the international stage, SNV's EOWE-supported gender discussions of the national negotiation delegation during COP22, COP24 and COP25.⁵⁰

Lobbying and direct policy advocacy with policy makers, sometimes based on specific research presented at international meetings, has been the main method for contributing to these types of results by FLOW 2 programmes. Organising side events and exhibitions at international meetings was also a common tool. However, facilitating the self-representation of representatives from marginalised groups – allowing ‘women to speak for themselves’ at international meetings of policymakers – has also been a common strategy (pursued by e.g. ActionAid, IBIS, Simavi).

Box 4: Key advocacy results at the level of international commitments and policy

- Human Rights Council Resolution 35/10 “Accelerating efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls through the engagement of men and boys” (facilitated by the Men Engage alliance/Prevention+)
- The UN Special Rapporteur VAW issued a statement on online VAW in 2018 (contribution by APC through All Women Count)
- First resolution at Human Rights Council on VAW in digital spaces in 2018 (contribution by APC through All Women Count)
- CSW 63 political declaration in 2019 – the removal of regressive language (contribution by Prevention+ partners and Men Engage Alliance)
- Gender sensitivity was included in the Multilateral Mining Integrated Policy (contribution by Simavi's Golden Line)

Qualitative data reveals that advocacy at the regional level was also an increasingly important focus.⁵¹ Target institutions include the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the African Union, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). However, the data does

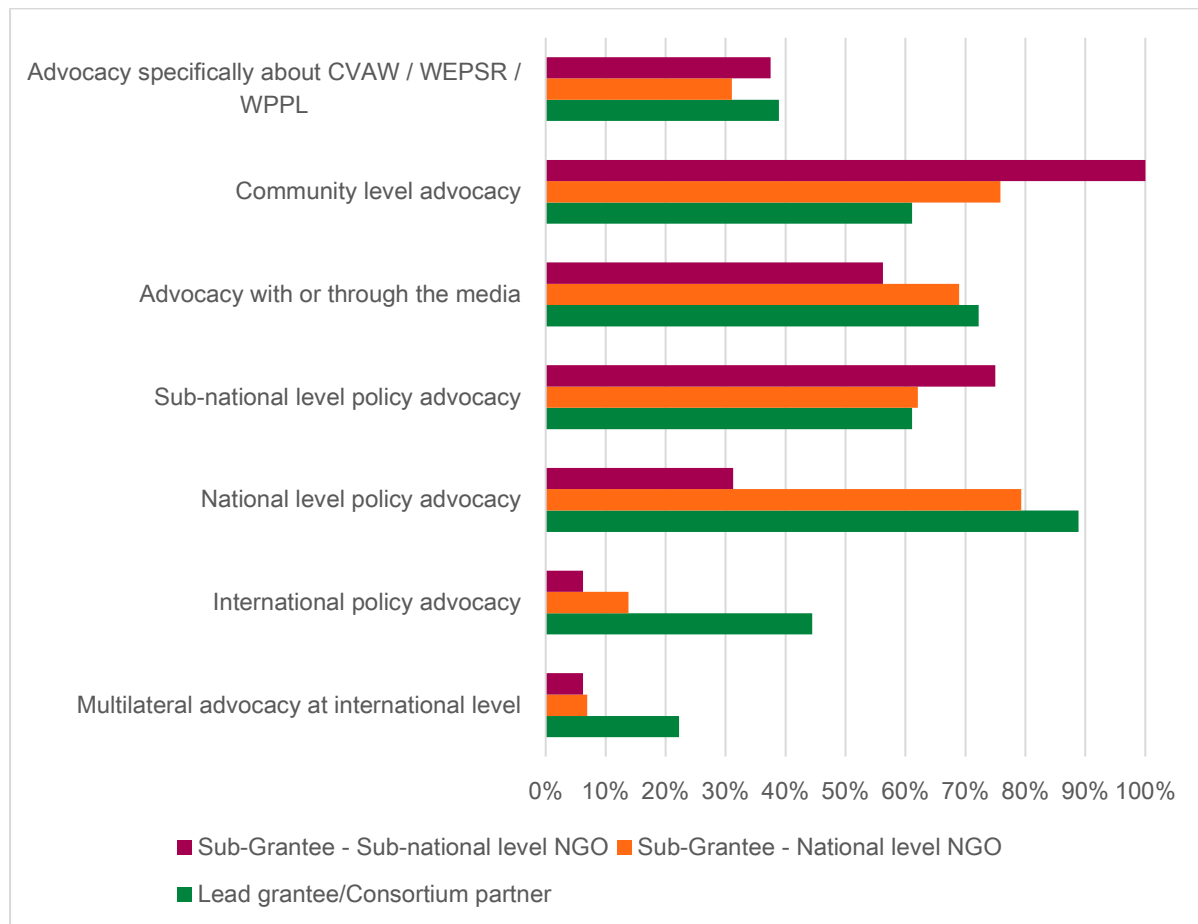
⁴⁹ CREA's planned advocacy component was shifted out of FLOW 2 when allocated funds were less than anticipated.

⁵⁰ Simavi EOWE Five-Year Narrative Report.

⁵¹ ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation; KII 10 lead partner; KII 11 lead partner; KII 12 lead partner; KII 18 consortium partner; KII 35 consortium partner; IWDA WAVE Endline Thematic Brief; KII 28 lead partner; Rutgers Final Narrative Report.

not identify specific results at this level. Instead, there is some evidence from interviews that, the regional level was a key locus for solidarity and networking, and for raising the levels of pressure that can be brought to bear for policy change at national level.

Figure 6: What kind of advocacy did you do? (% of each stakeholder type) (source: survey, Q25, 68 respondents)



International instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and international advocacy days, were also brought to bear at national level: CEDAW was an important focus for national advocacy for the IWDA WAVE programme in all five countries but particularly, for example, in Papua New Guinea which has only reported on CEDAW once in 40 years.⁵² International commemorative dates have been an important focus for national and subnational advocacy, such as International Women’s Day and 16 Days of Activism: at least 6 of the 10 programmes participated in 16 Days of Activism against GBV, for example. Indeed, the purpose of international and regional advocacy is to secure commitments which can be directed towards national-level policy influence, and pressure for policy implementation. While it is not clear from the data here whether there are direct connections between achievements at the international level and at the national level, end-line evaluation data suggests that international-national linkages can strengthen relationships with national policymakers and allied organisations. This in turn **has worked to strengthen the ability of stakeholders to influence national policy agendas and foster political commitment**. The expansion of advocacy capacity and experience brought about by engagement at international levels can also translate into greater clarity at country level on how and where to focus.

⁵² IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

A less articulated strategy supporting the gains that were made seems to be the many ways in which the different levels of advocacy were connected. Not surprisingly, survey results demonstrate that subnational NGOs were more likely to work at community and subnational levels, while lead grantees were more likely to be working at international levels (See Figure 6). Most national-level NGOs and lead grantees were focussed on national-level advocacy. However, it is also notable how frequently efforts are made to work across these levels. Survey results (Figure 6) demonstrate how frequently national level organisations and lead grantees are involved in advocacy at subnational levels: 61 per cent and 63 per cent respectively of lead grantees and national level NGOs were involved at some point in subnational policy advocacy and 61 per cent and 76 per cent respectively in community-level advocacy. Similarly, although overall a smaller proportion of organisations were involved in international advocacy, there are examples of subnational and national-level grantees who were (6 per cent and 14 per cent respectively).

Qualitative data provides a number of examples in which representatives from community levels, particularly representatives of marginalised groups, were facilitated to attend international and national advocacy events.⁵³ These include, for example, facilitating the participation of rural women at the CSW by ActionAid POWER programme,⁵⁴ and in Cambodia the provision of technical support by the WAVE programme for sub-grantees Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC), United Sisterhood Alliance and Banteay Srei to undertake joint advocacy at the 74th Session of the CEDAW Committee in Geneva. Other examples show how **regional and international partnerships have explicitly been used to push the agenda at the national level**. In Zimbabwe, for example, through the Hivos programme, a national sub-grantee, Genderlinks, hosted experts from Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia and South Africa to advocate best practice on electoral systems and women's quotas, and in December 2020 a 30 per cent local government quota was adopted. IWDA similarly reports that WAVE partners were effective in linking the levels by utilizing international platforms such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and other international commitments to press for national governments for greater accountability.

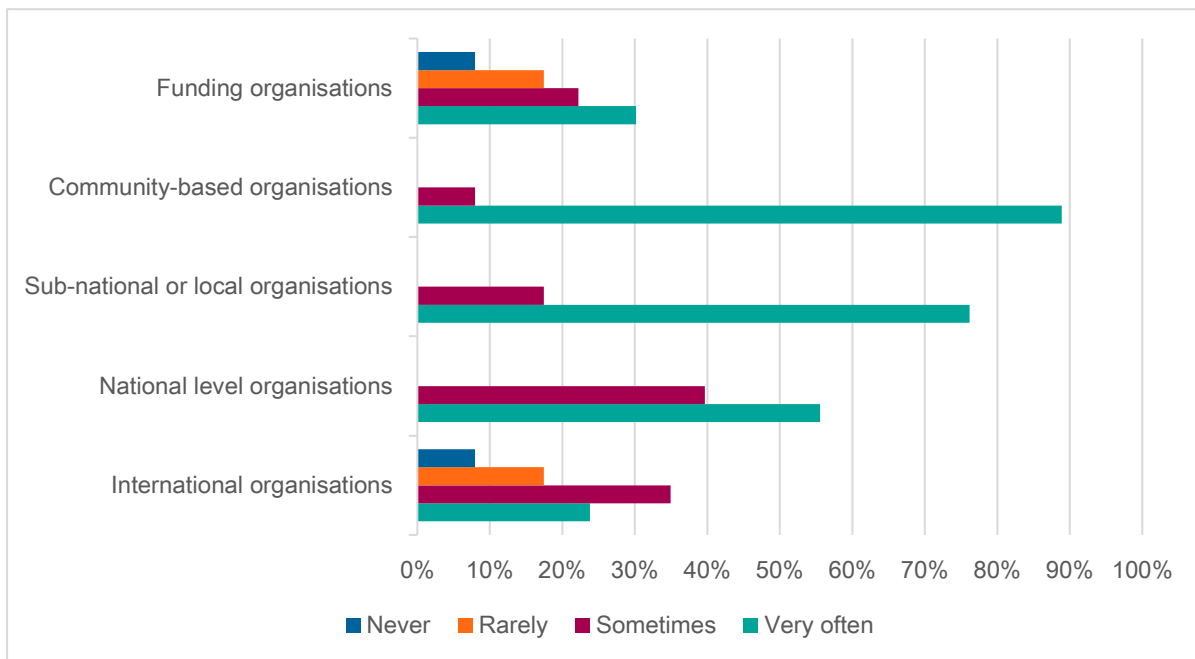
The process of creating evidence for advocacy is a further way in which the different levels of advocacy are linked, including to the international level. A number of organisations discuss how the results of FLOW 2 programmes constitute an evidence base for further advocacy⁵⁵ – by demonstrating how known issues of inequality can be addressed – in addition to the specific research findings which were outputs of the programmes.

⁵³ KII 45 lead partner; WfWI final narrative report.

⁵⁴ ActionAid Endline evaluation.

⁵⁵ WfWI final narrative report; SNV EOWE Five-year Narrative Report; KII 12 lead partner; KII 18 consortium partner; KII 61 consortium partner.

Figure 7: In your advocacy efforts, how often did you work with other organisations? (Source: survey, Q27, 67 respondents)



In view of these examples, survey data suggests that vertical collaboration was, perhaps an under-emphasized dimension. Figure 7 shows that all types of stakeholders usually worked in coordination with other organisations when they carried out their advocacy work, while also revealing some types of linkages which have been less strong. The collaborative way of working was focussed mainly at community and subnational levels; at international levels, it was more common for organisations to be acting alone, and there were relatively few instances in which funding organisations were partners in advocacy (52 per cent of respondents worked ‘very often’ or ‘sometimes’ with funding organisations, compared to 97 per cent with community-based organisations, 93 per cent with subnational organisations and 95 per cent with national-level organisations, and 59 per cent with international organisations) (see Figure 7).⁵⁶

The secondary literature also mentions the importance of working to systematically connect all four levels of advocacy,⁵⁷ notes weakness when these connections are not adequately embedded from the beginning⁵⁸ and highlights the need for more consistent connections, especially in locations where there are limits to women’s freedom to safely speak out within their own countries.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Note that although options were available covering all levels of interaction, not all respondents answered all parts of the question.

⁵⁷ IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflections Report.

⁵⁸ Rutgers Prevention + Final Narrative Report and Annual Report 2020.

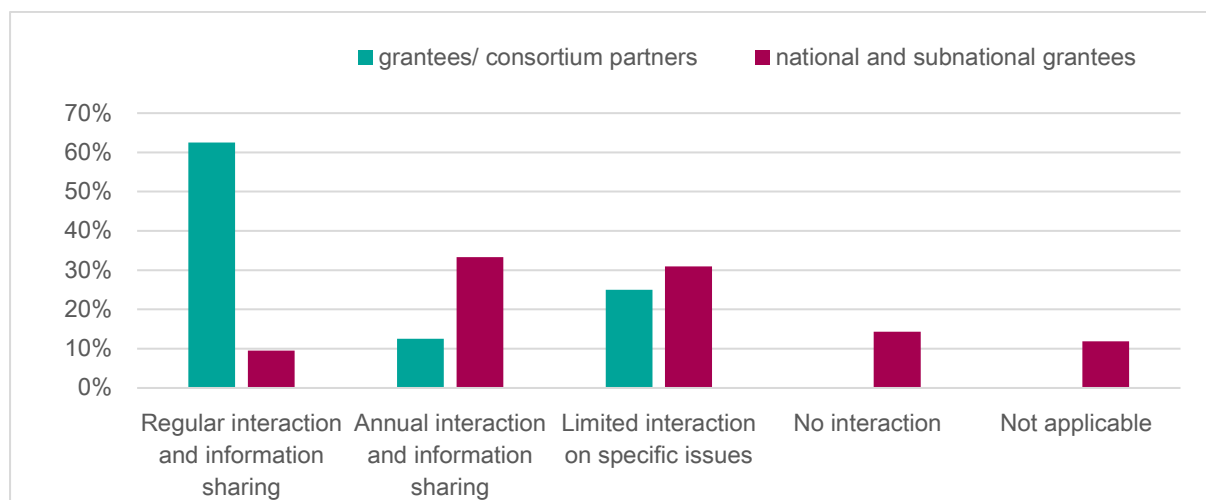
⁵⁹ IWDA WAVE End-line Evaluation Report.

Finding 5: Multi-country approach

The multi-country approach has clearly facilitated learning, sharing and the dissemination of innovations and good practice in tools and approaches for most lead partners and a few sub-grantees. It is an important tool in particular for building regional and international advocacy and movement building. A regional approach appears to minimize challenges associated with resourcing and accommodating different contexts and maximise the benefits.

The invitation to apply for FLOW 2 specified that the proposal should offer a multi-country approach, involving at least two countries. The number of countries included in each of the ten selected programmes varied from two (SNV, Simavi) to six (Hivos).

Figure 8: How much interaction did you have with the other countries covered by your particular programme? (Source: survey, Q28, 63 respondents)



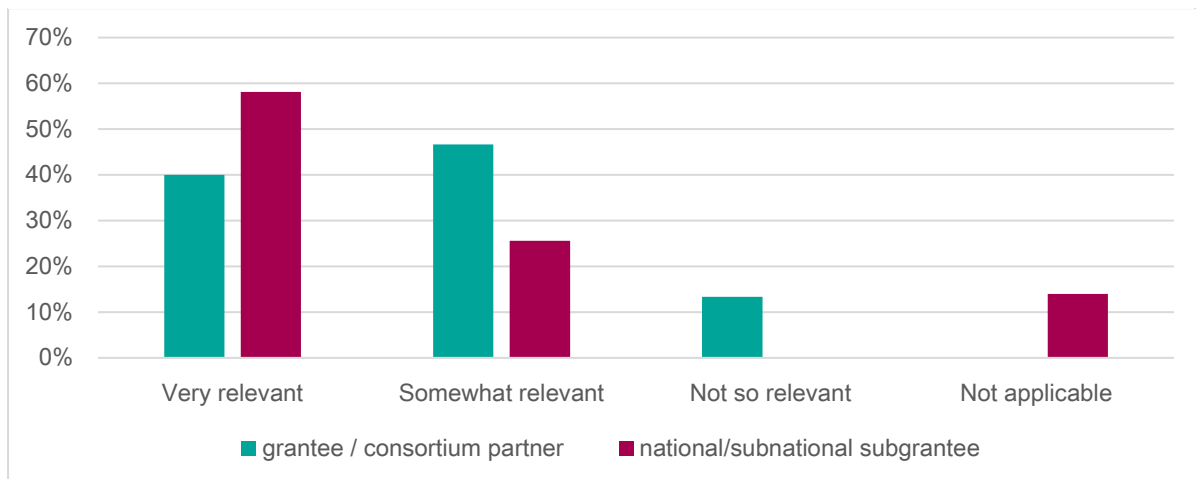
Although most lead programme partners enjoyed regular interaction with the other country teams, **not all stakeholders were engaged in a multi-country way**. Figure 9 shows that among survey respondents, more than 60 per cent of consortium partners had regular interaction and information sharing across the countries, but only 10 per cent of sub-grantees had this level of interaction, with most having annual (33 per cent) or limited (32 per cent) interaction. Interview data confirms this variation – at least three respondents stated that they experienced little or no collaboration across the different countries.⁶⁰

It was cross-fertilizing: the multi-country sharing really changed the programmes.

However, **sub-grantees did clearly consider the work in other countries to be relevant to their own**: a greater proportion of sub-grantee respondents (58 per cent) than consortium partners (40 per cent) considered the work in other countries to be relevant to the work in their own country (see Figure 9).

⁶⁰ KII 41 sub-grantee; KII 50 sub-grantee; KII 52 sub-grantee.

Figure 9: How relevant was the programme's work in other countries to the programme's work in your country? (Source: survey, Q29, 63 respondents)



Qualitative analysis of interview data reveals a number of ways in which a multi-country approach was found to be pertinent and helpful in enhancing the effectiveness of the programmes. Cross-country interactions are repeatedly identified as **source of learning and valuable sharing of experience and good practice**.⁶¹ There are both conceptual and practical dimensions to this learning: learning is cited as being **about methods and tools** such as the Gender Barometer used in the Hivos programme, and for gender sensitive journalism in the PIWA project. It has also **strengthened concepts and approaches** to address key challenges, particularly in 'new' areas of involvement, such as working with men and masculinities.⁶² Grantees and sub-grantees also found cross-country interactions a **source of inspiration** as well as of knowledge.⁶³ There is good evidence that these interactions were effective for spreading innovations, allowing different stakeholders to understand and work out how to adapt approaches and tools that their counterparts were using.⁶⁴

Qualitative data also suggests **the multi-country framework was effective in supporting advocacy** for two reasons; first, because when project experience and results come from different kinds of contexts, the evidence base for the benefits of the approach taken is much stronger.⁶⁵ Second, connections across similar project experiences facilitate the development of or engagement with regional and international networks and platforms. This can contribute to strengthening these networks, enabling them to work to keep issues visible in policy spaces.⁶⁶ The value of this dimension was particularly noted by partners who were taking a movement building approach.⁶⁷

Qualitative data also reveals some examples of where **this potential was not fully maximised**, and reasons for this. Several respondents mention that taking advantage of the multi-country situation requires investment in and budget for human resources, and also that

⁶¹ KII 10 lead grantee; KII 12 lead grantee; KII 13 sub-grantee; KII 18 consortium partner; KII 33 consortium partner; KII 34 consortium partner; KII 28 lead grantee (and more showing strong triangulation).

⁶² KII 28 lead grantee; KII 45 lead grantee; KII 56 lead grantee; KII 33 lead grantee.

⁶³ KII 56 lead grantee; KII 09 lead grantee.

⁶⁴ KII 12 lead grantee; KII 09 lead grantee; KII 21 lead grantee; KII 33 lead grantee; KII 34 lead grantee; KII 45 lead grantee; KII 52 lead grantee; KII 56 lead grantee.

⁶⁵ KII 12 lead grantee; KII 20 lead grantee; KII 11 lead grantee.

⁶⁶ KII 12 lead grantee; KII 20 lead grantee; IBIS consolidated Narrative Report 2016–2020: IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflection.

⁶⁷ IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflection; KII 20 lead grantee; KII 18 consortium partner.

exchanges need to be planned and structurally embedded in the programme. Several programmes used remote meetings as routine from the beginning and the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic increased the use of remote methods for multi-country work, but there is some evidence that while **remote meetings** supported everyday technical coordination well, they **were less effective for building movements and solidarity, for which the investment in face to face events is better.**⁶⁸ For most consortia, this was to some extent built in to their networked structure, although there are also examples where consortium partners worked in siloed ways, taking individual responsibility for the work in each country.⁶⁹ It is suggested that it takes time and focus for the lead grantee models to extract the learning in a useful way and that a method for this needs to be built in from the beginning, requiring resources and engagement. Building in specific thematic learning opportunities, or shared knowledge-building exercises, such as research, has been a productive approach.⁷⁰

Working across countries with quite different contexts seems to have generated a mixed picture. On the one hand, engaging with difference was described as offering important analytical learning.⁷¹ On the other hand, where country contexts are very different, it can be difficult to adapt innovation and practices across contexts, and when common ground is not built this may work against strengthening strong evidence and advocacy platforms, or simply make it difficult to see how experience can be effectively exchanged.⁷² There is some limited evidence that **a regional approach may offer the maximum value-added of a multi-county approach**, by minimizing the challenges of different contexts; by minimizing the resources required for face to face meetings; and by maximising the potential for building focussed advocacy.⁷³

Finding 6: Structural change

FLOW 2 programmes have had a range of results in changing power relationships at household and community levels in targeted thematic areas and geographies, mainly through discussion-based approaches. Structural changes in economic and governance institutions have been more limited, although women have gained access to economic opportunities and to local level governance institutions. There is also evidence of another group of ‘structural’ results implying power changes and related to the process of establishing and acting in collectives and collective action. These are not fully articulated in reporting but may represent an approach to scaling up these otherwise scattered changes.

Several FLOW 2 programmes have achieved strong results in terms of putting in place the foundations for changes in power relationships at individual, household and community levels in the specific dimensions and geographies in which programmes worked. Types of results reported as contributing to structural changes at individual level include dimensions of awareness and knowledge of gender inequality;⁷⁴ acceptance of and/or attitude change

⁶⁸ KII 34 consortium partner; KII 45 lead grantee; KII 20 lead grantee.

⁶⁹ KII 39 consortium partner.

⁷⁰ KII 28 lead grantee; KII 37 lead grantee.

⁷¹ KII 09 lead grantee; KII 34 lead grantee; 37 lead grantee; KII 55 lead grantee.

⁷² KII 20 lead grantee; KII 42 consortium partner.

⁷³ KII 20 lead grantee; IBIS consolidated Narrative Report 2016–2020; KII 32 lead grantee; KII 37 lead grantee.

⁷⁴ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; CREA 2020 Annual Report; IBIS Narrative Report 2020; KII 30; PIWA Endline Evaluation; Rutgers final Narrative Report 2020; Rutgers Final evaluation report.

towards new roles and relations between men and women;⁷⁵ self-confidence and efficacy (for women).⁷⁶

At household level, results contributing to structural change include: changes in gender divisions of labour in the household (ActionAid; SNV to a limited degree);⁷⁷ better parenting by men (Rutgers);⁷⁸ women’s participation in decision-making, particularly financial decision-making (SNV; ActionAid to some degree; Rutgers; Simavi);⁷⁹ women’s control of household assets (ActionAid; SNV to some degree); and reduced VAW (ActionAid in some locations; Rutgers).⁸⁰

FLOW 2 provides good evidence that the pathway to structural change is discursive – it involves meeting, talking, sharing, learning, negotiating. It is fundamentally relational. Changes were mainly brought about by working with women in groups, or with men in groups, or sometimes with both. The most frequently-used activities to stimulate these changes are about articulating, voicing, processing information and negotiating; discussion-based trainings; meetings; intensive courses involving group discussion; creating spaces to talk and learn; counselling; community discussions; household dialogues etc., clearly suggesting that this type of change involves learning achieved by absorbing, processing, testing and applying information.

At community level, results include women’s leadership in local institutions;⁸¹ increased ‘voice’ of women in communities;⁸² reduced gatekeeping on women’s leadership by men in the community (IWDA; Rutgers; SNV); increased mobility for women;⁸³ and increased action on VAW (including reduced early marriage) (CREA).⁸⁴

There is some contrast between programmes in the depth or intensity of these kinds of changes, likely related to how the projects were focussed. For example, SNV – mainly aimed

We have overwhelming evidence that women engaged in the programme have improved agency, self-reliance and well-being. (KII lead partner)

at facilitating women’s access to business opportunities but also using a broader ‘Household Dialogue’ tool which included elements addressing household structures – reports limited changes in the behaviour and attitudes of men, and little change in decision-making over resources (Kenya) or in men taking on traditionally female household tasks. In both Ghana and Bangladesh under ActionAid’s POWER programme, which had a major focus on drawing attention to and rebalancing unpaid care work (UCW) by women, a learning review found that men were beginning to help with certain household chores,⁸⁵ but that it was time-saving technologies that had contributed more to reducing the time women spent on these tasks. WfWI’s programme, on the other hand, which used an intensive

⁷⁵ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; Rutgers final evaluation; KII 30; IWDA Mid-term Reflection; Rutgers Final Narrative Report.

⁷⁶ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; Rutgers Final Narrative Report; SNV Five-year Narrative Report; WfWI Final Narrative Report.

⁷⁷ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; IDS Learning Review Summary; SNV EOWE Five-year Narrative Report.

⁷⁸ Rutgers Prevention + Endline Evaluation.

⁷⁹ SNV Endline Evaluation; KII 47.

⁸⁰ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; Rutgers Prevention + Endline Evaluation.

⁸¹ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; KII 16; KII 34; IWDA Mid-term Reflection; Rutgers Final Evaluation Report; SNV Five-year Narrative Report.

⁸² CREA 2020 Annual report; IWDA Mid-term Reflection.

⁸³ CREA 2020 Annual Report; ActionAid Endline Evaluation.

⁸⁴ CREA 2020 Annual Report; WfWI Endline Evaluation.

⁸⁵ These tended to be of particular types, such as outdoor household work.

approach focussed on activities to create a favourable environment with selected village women to create 'Change Agents' alongside the community and men, reports very significant changes in some of these dimensions (e.g. improvements in women's self-efficacy by 264 per cent from baseline to end-line in Nigeria, and by 36 per cent in Afghanistan).

Key results have also been achieved in economic institutions in terms of women gaining access to markets and business skills and thereby improving their incomes, by all organisations working in the WEPSR pillar. In the ActionAid POWER programme, women were enabled to sell produce at market places which involved breaking down restrictions on their mobility, and also to [partially] control that income. Simavi reports that in the EOWE programme 9,694 women increased their income through their own businesses; and in the WfWI programme, savings groups in the three countries⁸⁶ made significant savings. In the Simavi programme, women's non-mine related business expanded. This better access to economic institutions (markets) was achieved mainly through business skills training, and through the provision of inputs such as market information and agricultural knowledge – in the case of SNV, these were provided through incubator-like Women's Business Hubs.

Less has been achieved through FLOW 2 in changing economic institutions themselves (also attracting less attention), although some steps towards this have also taken place in some programmes – for instance, the provision of a crèche facility at one of the Golden Line mining sites was an example of economic institutions acknowledging reproductive roles and associated labour. Some progress was also made towards achieving land security for women. Under ActionAid's POWER, five-year tenure agreements were signed with landowners; and there were instances in both Bangladesh (POWER) and DRC (WfWI) of women claiming land/inheritance rights that have customarily been withheld from them.⁸⁷

There is good evidence from the ActionAid and SNV programmes of a strong feedback loop between women gaining better market access and increased income and changing household power relationships, including in men's attitude to women's business and to household work roles to some extent.

In governance institutions, more has been achieved at local levels than at national levels, where results have been hard fought but very limited. For example, in Malawi, the Hivos programme contributed to 35 of 300 women who had been trained being elected as Ward Councillors, Mayor and deputy Mayor positions; and 3 women were elected in rural districts of Papua New Guinea. At national level, although concessions were won in terms of legislation on quotas in Zimbabwe; the promotion of women in the national police in Zambia, and increased numbers of women put up as candidates by political parties in Malawi, Lebanon, and Zambia, these did not translate into an increase in the numbers of women in elected positions.⁸⁸

Other types of institutions in which progress has been made include schools where attitude and behaviour change among students and teachers was evident (Rutgers);⁸⁹ media institutions;⁹⁰ and limited results in service provider institutions for GBV (IBIS).

There are a few other areas where programmes expected to see outcome level results but did not – these include WfWI, for example, which found despite improvements in action responding to VAW, there were limited changes in actually preventing VAW. Similarly, although women gained in economic self-reliance, there was limited evidence of any changes in men's support for women's economic participation.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Afghanistan, DRC, Nigeria

⁸⁷ ActionAid Endline Evaluation; KII 59 sub-grantee; KII 58 lead partner.

⁸⁸ Hivos Final Evaluation Report.

⁸⁹ Rutgers Final Evaluation Report.

⁹⁰ PIWA, Final Evaluation Report; Rutgers Final Evaluation Report; KII MENA.

⁹¹ WfWI Endline Evaluation.

Despite these varied, sometimes striking, and often hard-fought results, there is little discussion in the data of how these results have or have not dispersed, disseminated and spread or ‘scaled up’. Reporting implies that results are, broadly, limited to the specific geographies in which programme activities were implemented – and these are globally spread, and therefore quite fragmented. In this sense it is not yet possible to talk of structural changes in power relations at impact level (but see Finding 13).

On the other hand, a few programmes heavily emphasise some types of results which suggest power changes which were not systematically tracked or measured but which have a broader geographical implication. In general, these were related to the process of establishing and acting in collectives and collective action, whether this was about group-based learning, network creation for advocacy, or ‘movement building’. For instance, the Rutgers final evaluation reports evidence of a greater sense of solidarity with and between women; CREA’s evaluation reports on community networks of the solidarity that was activated when domestic violence occurred and a strengthened solidarity between consortium partners contributing to movement-building, as well as movement building among sex-worker and LGBTQ groups via sub-granting. Stronger networks are identified by the Most Significant Change process conducted for the end-line evaluation as the third most significant change overall. IWDA’s end-line evaluation also notes that ‘solidarity’ is consistently referred to by participants, although this is a gap in the programmes ToC, and notes a stronger ‘movement mindset’ as one of the programme’s outcomes. The IBIS programme also emphasises the importance of the networks and platforms built in Guatemala and Liberia; PIWA’s final evaluation references the role of networks.

*“This was a big win, broadening the base of communities we worked with.”
(KII consortium member)*

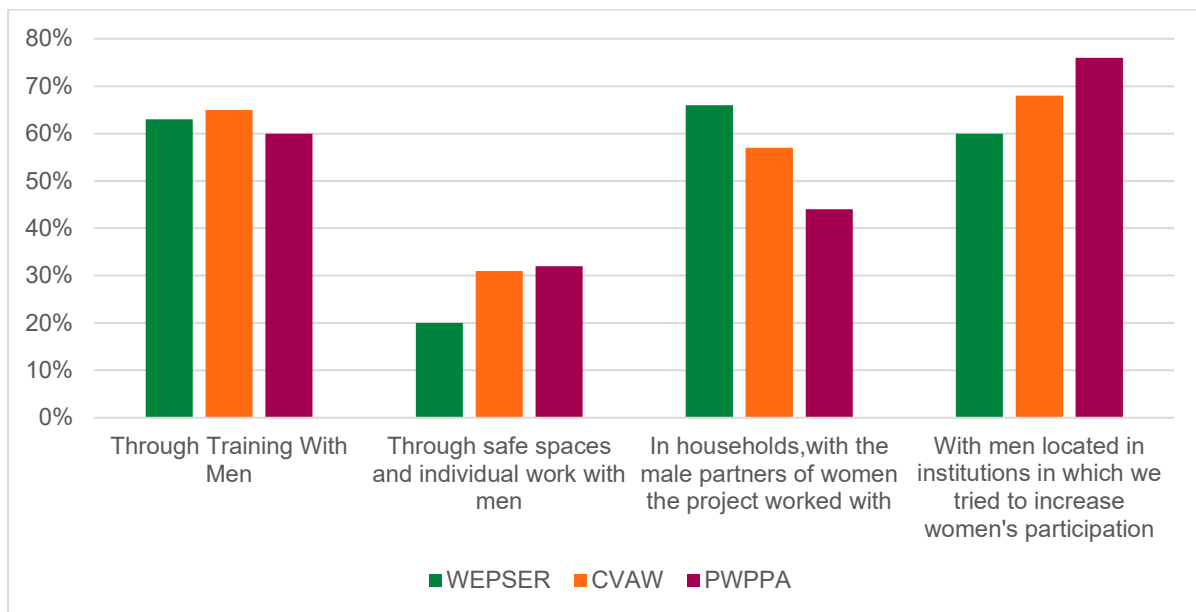
The role of movements, networks and solidarities in creating structural change towards gender equality is as yet ‘experimental’ in some of the FLOW 2 programmes. As such, monitoring of the role and achievements of these models has not been very clearly articulated or coordinated across the programmes. There is scope for articulating this group of strategies more clearly, particularly as setting out to build women’s **movements potentially represents a methodology for scaling up these examples of outcomes in structural change and achieving more widespread impact.**

Finding 7: Engaging men

All programmes engaged men at some level and agreement is high that this is a key strategy to making progress on structural change for gender equality. But programmes have met with different degrees of success in terms of changes in men’s attitudes to gender equality and behaviour change, suggesting there is more to learn about effective methods. Some evidence from the programmes indicates behaviour change and/or male support was more successfully secured when the intervention also served the men’s self-interests.

Components for engaging men and boys as participants and/or active stakeholders were increasingly used in almost all programmes in all three pillars to achieve structural change. This accompanied increasing recognition of the potential role of men in enabling structural changes towards gender equality at different institutional levels, despite broader misgivings by women’s rights groups concerned that engaging men can divert the limited funds available for women’s programmes and services. Several partners added interventions to engage men as the programmes evolved and as partners learned more from each other about how to approach this dimension of work (see Finding 5). For several, this was a new type of activity and approach. Survey responses (see Figure 10) reveal how FLOW 2 programmes sought out men’s engagement by implementing activities at different structural levels.

Figure 10: In what ways did you work with men/masculinities? (Source: survey, Q37, 66 respondents)



Men were most consistently engaged as members of institutions in which structural power is vested: 68 per cent of survey respondents stated that their programmes had targeted activities that engaged men within institutions, with a higher proportion among those working on PWPPA (76 per cent) and CVAW (68.57 per cent), than on WEPSR (60 per cent). For PWPPA programmes in which needed legislation (i.e. quota system) and gender sensitive regulations (i.e. within political parties, media) were a primary focus, it was necessary for programmes to tailor specific activities (town hall meetings, capacity-building of government officials, lobbying etc.) that would effectively involve and engage men within political institutions since they are effectively the gatekeepers of policy change. Hivos' WE4L and IWDA's WAVE programmes are examples that achieved some level of success by actively engaging male political leaders: WE4L, within political parties in Lebanon to implement gender sensitive regulations (two traditional political parties committed to improving their gender policies and practises);⁹² and WAVE, within governing bodies such as the Provincial Government Assemblies in Solomon Islands, to include temporary special measures (TSMs) that would effectively lead to a gender quota for leadership positions (six out of nine Provincial Government Assemblies supported TSMs).⁹³ It is important to note that while both programmes were able to contribute to tangible change through their concentrated engagement of male leaders, the involvement of women political leaders as allies throughout the process was necessary. Furthermore, though some programmes have shown some achievements in engaging men within political institutions, nonetheless, the lack of political will from male political leaders towards greater gender parity within political parties or on the national level, was an evident challenge across the board (see Finding 6).

Men were also engaged at household level as partners of women involved in the programme: 53 per cent of survey respondents said these programmes engaged men; with WEPSR programmes reporting the highest levels of engagement at 66.67 per cent, followed by CVAW at 57.14 per cent, and PWPPA at 44 per cent. The high level of male engagement at the household level among WEPSR programmes, is indicative of the importance of such engagement to not only establish a supportive environment that would foster women's economic empowerment (in particular recognition of unpaid work by partners, also as

⁹² Hivos Five-Year Annual Narrative Report (2016–2020).

⁹³ WAVE Annual Report (2018).

gatekeepers of women's mobility and therefore access to markets), but also to address the complex relationship between intimate partner violence (IPV) and women's income-generation.⁹⁴ As such, programmes such as SNV's EOWE and Simavi's Golden Line focussed considerable attention on engaging men within households. EOWE implemented the Household Dialogues (HHD) which consists of 12 sessions whereby couples engage in active discussions regarding gender norms that are impeding women's economic empowerment: time-use/heavy workload, lack of control over the use of income, and lack of access to and control over credit.⁹⁵ As discussed above (see Finding 6), HHD resulted in greater change amongst men in Viet Nam (increased men's engagement in household and child-rearing activities), than in Kenya where the results were not as significant.⁹⁶ There were favourable changes regarding support for women to work where 95 per cent of women beneficiaries stated they were supported. However, the level of support was found to be somewhat contingent on the women's success, and less on her partner's attitude towards women working in general.⁹⁷ Simavi's Golden Lines established male groups, engaging men in accountable practices (EMAP) which is based on 16 sessions that are informed by discussions with women, and focus on behavioural change through discussion and reflections regarding traditional/cultural beliefs. The mid-term and end-line evaluations acknowledge that EMAP did contribute to some increase in joint decision-making as well as establishing better mutual understanding.⁹⁸ However, the Evaluation Team's qualitative data (FGDs, KIIs) also highlights some of the challenges and risks of interventions working on structural change at household level: women's increased income generation had in some cases also increased IPV; in others it led to some men relinquishing their responsibilities, and misusing the money. Furthermore, recruiting and retaining men within the EMAP continued to be a programmatic challenge.⁹⁹

Training men was also a common approach, with 58 per cent of survey respondents noting this as a programmatic activity. Some programmes such as WAVE-Cambodia and IBIS-Liberia, included 'role models' who were trained men from the community who would be advocates for supporting women's empowerment, and spreading awareness on GBV. Programmes such as WFWI, established a training curriculum – the Men's Engagement Programme (MEP) – which trains selected men in the communities on GBV, women's rights and decision-making. The MEP also includes training of a selected group of men on GBV prevention, and how to safely utilise the established referral pathways. However, the results of the MEP were mixed: Nigeria demonstrated the highest level of impact, Afghanistan showed some basic level of improvement, and the DRC's MEP outcomes were found to be 'disappointing'.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, backlash resulting from some of the programmatic interventions was recorded across all three countries (discussed further in Finding 10).¹⁰¹

Working with men through safe spaces and/or on individual work was the method least employed by the programmes, with a 23 per cent overall response rate from the online survey. Prevention+ focussed heavily on providing individual and couple counselling across all countries of operation. In Indonesia, the programme implemented juvenile counselling for male adolescents within juvenile detention centres, where the majority had either perpetrated sexual violence and/or were at risk of sexual violence. According to the report at the end of

⁹⁴ ILO, Policy Brief: Engaging men in women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship development interventions. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/---ifp_seed/documents/briefingnote/wcms_430936.pdf

⁹⁵ EOWE Annual Report, 2018.

⁹⁶ EOWE programme Endline Evaluation.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Golden Lines Mid-term Evaluation and Endline Evaluation Report.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ WFWI Endline Evaluation.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

the programme, the counselling sessions did demonstrate some changes in knowledge regarding masculinities as well as improved emotional regulation, however, behaviour change was not evident.¹⁰²

Partners broadly agree on the importance of engaging men in achieving results. In the survey, this received an average score of 8/10 (10 being extremely important) by 66 online survey respondents. However, the mixed results and challenges suggest that **there is more to learn about effective approaches and methodologies**. FLOW programmes have also demonstrated that **changing men's behaviour is not a simple linear process but is complicated and complex**. The programmes faced several challenges such as recruitment and retainment of men within activities. Furthermore, while engaging men within certain interventions may have led to some level of knowledge gain, and observed changes in some attitudes and behaviours, the limited duration of most interventions/activities (i.e. engaging men for a set number of sessions, or only over a specific duration of time) may render changes in certain entrenched behaviours difficult to achieve. As noted by one sub-grantee: *'Due to the nature of funding, people forget that transformation is ongoing and that it doesn't stop after three months. The system of beliefs regarding patriarchy and masculinity are heavily entrenched within societies ... this activity should be viewed more as a 'catalyst' or a 'way to jump start them.'*¹⁰³ There is evidence from a few programmes, that men's behaviour change and/or support was apparent when the intervention also served their own self-interest. As indicated above, in EOWE some men's support for their partners working was correlated with their partner's success, and not necessarily their own changed beliefs in women's right to enter the labour market. This is also demonstrated with regard to reforming political parties to become more gender inclusive: *'We also explained to them, when you look at community people in your area, most of them are women and if you want women to vote, you have to change your policy and you have to give opportunity to the women and then you can convince the community people. And they said OK.'*¹⁰⁴ This finding is consistent with wider research, for example in Bangladesh where a study found that men's *'acceptance of egalitarian gender norms'* was largely based on their own economic interest as well as fear of being reprimanded for IPV.¹⁰⁵ Some FLOW 2 partners have found, like this study, that programmes should not only understand what drives men's self-interest, but also, *'emphasize men's self-interests while continuing to advance concepts of social justice'*.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Prevention+ ETR (2016–2020); Prevention+ Endline Evaluation.

¹⁰³ KII 74 sub-grantee.

¹⁰⁴ IWDA Endline Evaluation.

¹⁰⁵ Schuler, S., Lenzi-Weisbecker, R., Badal, S. and Nazneen, S. (2017), Men's Perspectives on Women's Empowerment and Intimate Partner Violence in Rural Bangladesh. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 20, 1-15.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317423724_Men's_perspectives_on_women's_empowerment_and_intimate_partner_violence_in_rural_Bangladesh

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

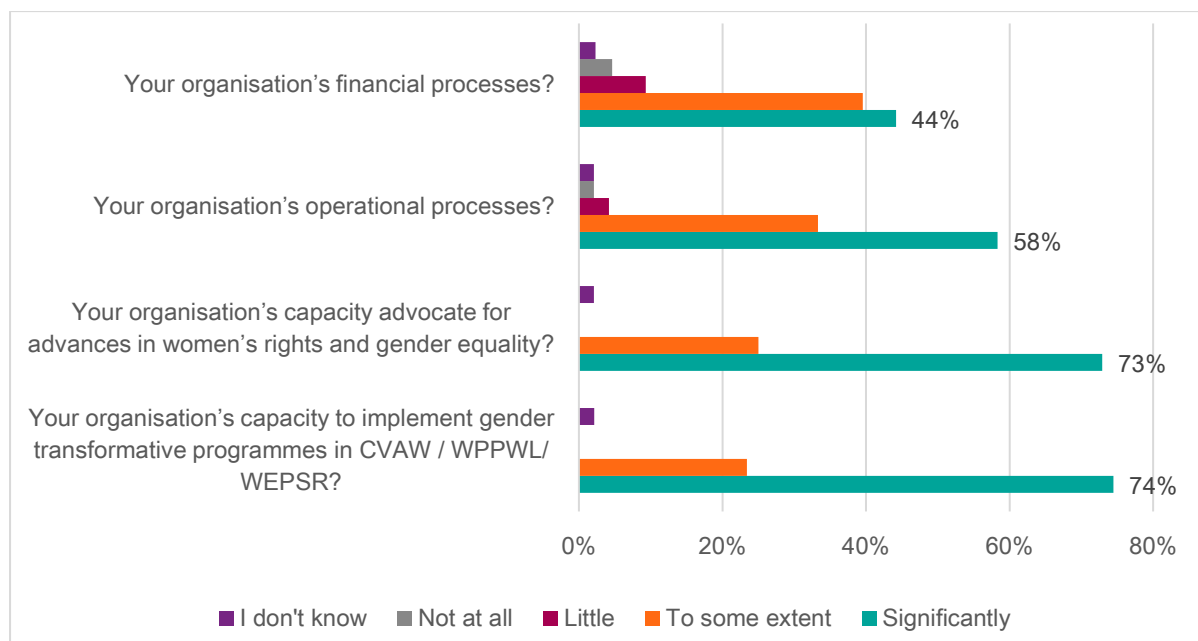
Finding 8: Capacity for implementation

Capacity-strengthening of sub-grantees was an important part of the FLOW 2 theory of change and took several forms. Capacity-strengthening to support the implementation of gender transformative programmes was well received as an element in a cascade approach to programme reach, but is unlikely to contribute to sustainable strength of local organisations where trained staff had been hired on a project basis. Capacity-strengthening for movement building approaches was more incremental, focussed on sharing strengths and supporting the acquisition of experience. While the data does not reveal which approach best supports immediate programme outcomes, the latter is more embedded in organisations and contributes directly to organisational strengthening.

Capacity-building of sub-grantees and other local organisations was an important element of the FLOW 2 model, which selected INGOs to sub-grant to or otherwise support country level and sub-national level organisations. Support from lead partners took many forms, ranging from facilitating organisation networks and nurturing solidarity as foundations for advocacy; technical support and training for organisational strengthening such as proposal writing and M&E; and training for the implementation of women’s rights programmes. Training of this latter kind was received by 80 per cent of survey respondents (33) who found this ‘very important’. This was the highest proportion of respondents compared with other types of support, such as training for M&E.

As shown in Figure 11, sub-grantees also found these inputs effective generally, and particularly so for strengthening of advocacy capacity and capacity to implement gender transformative approaches in CVAW, PWPPA and WEPSR (respectively, 73 per cent and 74 per cent said this was significantly strengthened).

Figure 11: How much did the programme strengthen capacities in ... (Source: survey, Q33, 49 respondents)



Capacity-strengthening for implementation of gender transformative and women’s rights programmes took two main approaches. Most organisations used established methods for capacity-strengthening in international development. This entailed a process by which capacity needs were identified through assessments: these were carried out by ActionAid,

IBIS, SNV (using the 5C capabilities tool¹⁰⁷), and WfWI and initially by IWDA. On the basis of the assessment, training was then carried out in key identified areas. For many organisations it was part of the implementation model that these trainings would then be cascaded to grassroots organisations, groups of [women] beneficiaries or other relevant stakeholders at local level.

The trainings offered to sub-grantees with the purpose of strengthening implementation of gender transformative programmes specifically were of two major types: those that delivered general concepts and approaches for gender equality work, and those delivering methodologies and tools for implementation of the specific programme. The former group included training on gender and masculinities, including militarized masculinities, patriarchy, machismo etc. (ActionAid, WfWI); agency and control; women's rights; women's economic empowerment (ActionAid); human rights-based approaches; gender situation analysis (for example on women's workloads); Violence against Women; the gender and power framework (IWDA). The latter included training on mentoring approaches; agroecology (ActionAid); the Economic and Social Empowerment (EASE) methodology for facilitating community women to lead (Simavi); the Social Behaviour Change Strategy (SNV); gender sensitive journalism (PIWA); tools for a gender transformative approach with men (Men Engage / Rutgers Consortium). In addition, there were trainings for operational strengthening, including for example, in project management, household facilitation, and M&E.

In this model, the sub-grantees formed the mechanism by which lead partners achieved reach to their target constituencies, as these organisations had either prior or potential access to beneficiaries at the community level. For most organisations using this approach, there was an implied or explicit extension to the model, in that sub-grantees cascaded key trainings to groups of women or men at community level, or to grassroots partner organisations. ActionAid, SNV and Simavi took this approach. For PIWA, the model for dissemination of gender sensitive approaches to journalism was similar, except that they trained directly with selected media stakeholders, and then with women's rights organisations for further advocacy.¹⁰⁸ Others partners also included some direct training for stakeholders beyond sub-grantees: SNV, for example, included capacity-strengthening for the gender technical working groups established by the programme, consisting of Kenyan county government and development partners. Themes for these trainings included gender mainstreaming, WEE and gender responsive budgeting.

In this approach **the key objective is to implement the programme efficiently**, therefore trainings **capacitated implementing stakeholders in the programme's approach and key tools, so that project targets and objectives could be met. While there may also have been organisational strengthening effects, these were not consistent because in some programmes, implementing staff who received training were hired especially for the programme, using programme funds, and were not retained once the programme ended. Two lead partner organisations note that a more** general training, not specific to programme implementation, would have been more useful in the long term, and that training should go beyond project staff who may well be temporary.¹⁰⁹

In the case of capacity-strengthening for movement building organisations with explicit objectives to build social and/or feminist movements (CREA and IWDA) framed what constitutes capacity differently. In the case of IWDA, their approach also changed over the course of the FLOW 2 period, and particularly following their Mid Term Reflection process. Qualitative evidence suggests that in this approach, the desired 'capacity' cannot easily be [or

¹⁰⁷ The 5C model: the organisation's capacity to commit an act, capacity to maintain coherence, capacity to deliver on development objectives, capacity to relate and the capacity to adapt and renew.

¹⁰⁸ PIWA also targeted journalism schools with the intention of institutionalizing and mainstreaming gender sensitive journalism in broader journalism training.

¹⁰⁹ KII 47 sub-grantee; KII 51 sub-grantee.

should not be] divided into topics for training; **rather the pathway to strengthening is about accumulating experience in feminist ways of working, building solidarity, and learning incrementally from each other as co-learners.** This approach has more the shape of an ‘equal friendship’ than that of an experienced employer and a less experienced employee.

For example, CREA describes a process of ‘mutual capacity-strengthening’¹¹⁰ which was **embedded into the constituent parts and partnerships of their consortium** and influenced the partners’ ways of working over the course of the programme. In this model, each consortium partner had a unique contribution to bring to the table; consortium members learned from these contributions either in explicit sharing or in indirect exposure to different approaches. This method, it is suggested, led to a ‘strengthened alliance’.¹¹¹ In turn, these consortium members engaged with sub-grantees and other stakeholders on a similar basis, and with **objectives to support agency and leadership of the diversity of women and girls** within each context.¹¹²

Similarly, a major objective of the capacity-strengthening conducted by IWDA and its grantees was to ‘create spaces for alliances and collaboration’.¹¹³ They see progress in terms of confidence and skills gained in applying feminist movement principles and approaches; in building ‘critical consciousness’; and in shifting towards a movement mind-set, which is more about gaining understanding of the ecosystem and how the organisation’s work fits in with others.¹¹⁴ With sub-grantees and their staff seen as forming building blocks of movement capacity-strengthening of this kind has a longer term and more sustainable outlook. Survey results show that this group of organisations focussed more strongly on developing advocacy capacity for sub-grantees (45 per cent of ‘movement builders’ compared with 25 per cent of more ‘developmental’ organisations and 24 per cent of organisations taking a hybrid approach. This group also focussed more on establishing funding opportunities for sub-grantees: 45 per cent compared with 29 per cent and 17 per cent in the other two groups respectively.¹¹⁵

Several partners have used hybrids of these approaches, placing elements of movement building alongside more established training approaches. For example, members of the Rutgers consortium considered that much of the internal gender transformative development resulted from making efforts to model respectful and power-sensitive interactions between the two organisations in meetings.¹¹⁶ IBIS promoted a methodology for the strengthening of sub-grantees that was a step beyond mentor models, taking the form of ‘accompaniment’,¹¹⁷ a term invoking solidarity as well as practical day-to-day support.

¹¹⁰ AWC Annual Report 2020.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² AWC Mid Term Report.

¹¹³ AWC Endline Report.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Groupings for this analysis of survey results were as follows: ActionAid, Simavi and SNV taking a ‘developmental’ approach; CREA and IWDA taking a ‘movement building’ approach; and Hivos, IBIS, WfWI, Rutgers and PIWA.

¹¹⁶ KII 40 consortium partner.

¹¹⁷ From the French usage.

Finding 9: Capacity for advocacy

FLOW 2 partners used both established and experimental approaches to strengthening sub-grantees advocacy capacity, and some prioritized non-hierarchical co-learning methods. Sub-grantees broadly agree that these combined methods have been successful in strengthening their capacity, but also identify ongoing needs and some gaps. Of note, FLOW 2's emphasis on advocacy has meant that lead grantees experienced few finance shortages for advocacy, but this security did not always extend to sub-grantees at national and especially subnational levels.

FLOW 2 partners used both training (Hivos, IBIS, IWDA, WfWI, PIWA, ActionAid)¹¹⁸ and mentoring (Hivos, IBIS)¹¹⁹ approaches to support their sub-grantees in strengthening their advocacy for women's rights and gender equality. They also made key operational inputs, such as accompanying the development of an annual advocacy strategy (WfWI),¹²⁰ and making opportunities for peer learning from organisations with more experience in communications (Hivos),¹²¹ for example. On occasion they also gave technical support in the preparation for particular (international) advocacy events such as presentations to the CEDAW Committee.¹²²

¹¹⁸ KII 21 lead partner; KII 34 lead partner; KII 29 other stakeholder; KII 58 lead partner.

¹¹⁹ KII 21 lead partner; KII 36; KII 34 lead partner.

¹²⁰ KII 58 lead partner.

¹²¹ KII 21 lead partner.

¹²² IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

Box 5: Joint advocacy – good practices for a culture of collective action

Throughout the programme, IWDA developed platforms for collective learning, advocacy and action amongst partners. This has been described as a good practice to encourage a **‘culture of collective action’**. Partners were successful in engaging community members in local and national advocacy processes aiming to influence laws, policies and budgets, as part of larger social movements. Some good practices have been outlined.

- WAVE partners were supported and encouraged to **realise their individual advocacy priorities**, including with strategic support at local, subnational and national levels and support towards their participation in local coalition. IWDA’s support was flexible and responsive to partner needs and contexts. This resulted in the expansion of advocacy work throughout the programme cycle.
- At national and international levels, WAVE partners were encouraged to work towards shared goals and were able to develop and share advocacy practices and prepare for **joint advocacy work**. This was coordinated via advocacy action plans which enabled partners to act collectively in national and international forums. As a result, joint advocacy campaigns on women’s leadership were developed such as ‘Our Voice’ (2018–2020).
- During the programmes IWDA supported the development of a new alliance for advocacy on CEDAW in Myanmar. This initiative aimed to unite Myanmar’s four national women’s rights networks for policy advocacy. This mechanism continues to undertake advocacy about Myanmar’s CEDAW commitments across the country’s states and regions. An achievement of the alliance was the advocacy done with the (then) Myanmar government to amend the Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women Bill to ensure its compliance with CEDAW.

Alongside these established methods, there were also some **more experimental approaches to strengthening for advocacy, which drew on feminist approaches to knowledge creation and learning**. Several organisations used ‘accompaniment’ approaches which explicitly set out to flatten power hierarchies between lead partners and sub-grantees, and in effect operationalized active learning or learning-by-doing approaches.¹²³ These included, for example, CREA’s co-creation of a campaign for 16 Days of Activism with a group of partners. This was an intensive process which included detailed discussions of messaging, social media platforms and other issues, and gave partners the full experience of creating a campaign which they have subsequently used in their own campaigns. Other lead grantees accompanied sub-grantees on their campaign or protest events, offering solidarity as well as guidance.^{124, 125}

These approaches also extended beyond activities where the main purpose was learning, into activities focussed on supporting advocacy, including evidence generation. IWDA carried out an extensive multi-country research programme which was explicitly structured and planned as a learning activity, and through which sub-grantees were able to participate in deciding how to focus the research and therefore what knowledge to generate, and were also then able to link research findings directly into their advocacy work.¹²⁶ Similarly, although not a co-created research process, the ‘time diaries’ research undertaken at the beginning of ActionAid’s POWER project to gather evidence on unpaid care work, were an integral part of programme

¹²³ KII 34 lead partner.

¹²⁴ KII 15 lead partner, KII 34 lead partner.

¹²⁵ These approaches also extended into how work with beneficiaries was approached; WfWI for example saw participating in advocacy activities as a key way for the Change Agents they trained to acquire knowledge.

¹²⁶ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

activity that was therefore visible to all stakeholders. This approach ensured that *'Everyone saw how much work women do'*, and generated evidence that fed directly into the advocacy conducted at local, national and international levels.

Survey results reveal other ways in which sub-grantees felt supported in their advocacy: the majority (88 per cent) of survey respondents got support through FLOW 2 from partners in the form of networks and contacts to support further advocacy, and most of these (56 per cent) found this support 'very important' to the effective implementation of their programme.

Both national level and subnational level sub-grantees felt this support had been effective: 79 per cent of national level respondents (22 organisations) and 75 per cent of subnational organisations (12 organisations) said they felt the programme had strengthened their organisations 'significantly' in their advocacy capacity. A further 21 per cent (6 organisations) of national organisations and 25 per cent (4 organisations) of subnational organisations said they had been strengthened 'to some extent' in capacity for advocacy.

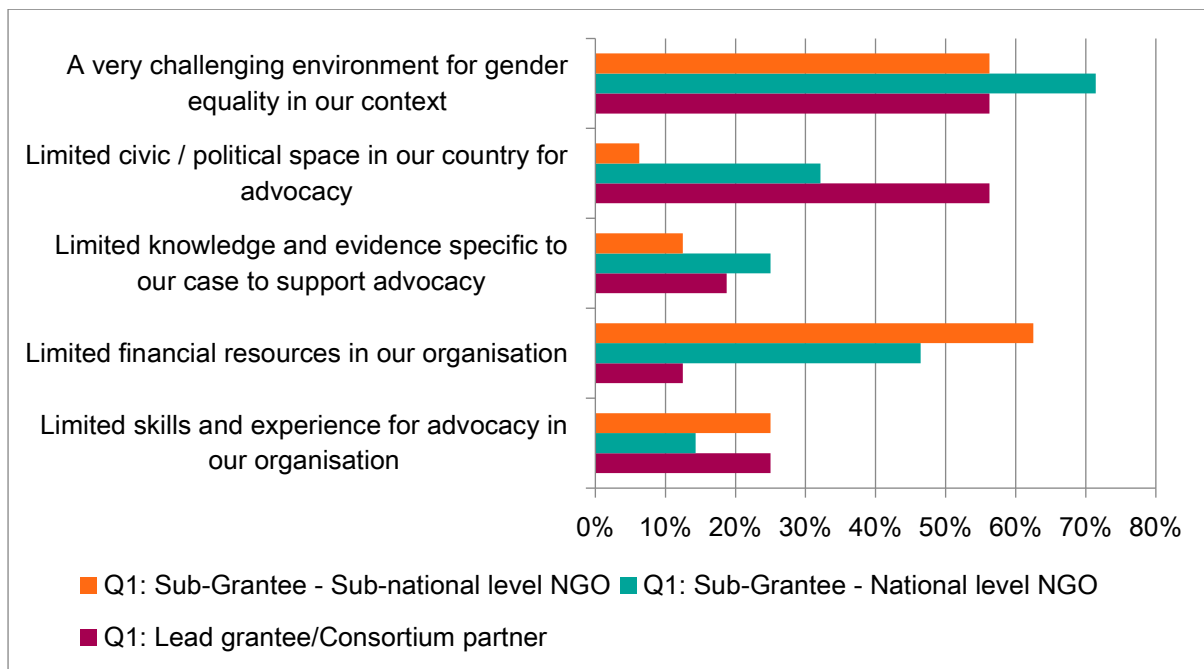
Stakeholders also identify a number of challenges to their advocacy efforts, which suggest areas in which further support and attention may be require. Survey results presented in Figure 12 show that most respondents in all types of organisations identify the challenging environment for gender equality in their context as a challenge to advocacy, with national-level sub-grantees most likely to identify this as a challenge (56 per cent of subnational and lead grantee respondents and 71 per cent of national-level respondents). Ongoing capacity needs for advocacy also remain quite acutely felt; of 41 survey question respondents, 9 raise advocacy as an area where they would like to receive additional training or support.¹²⁷

For subnational sub-grantees, and to a lesser extent for national-level sub-grantees, limited finances for advocacy is also commonly identified as a challenge (for 62.5 per cent of subnational respondents and 46 per cent of national-level respondents), while for lead grantees only 12.5 per cent (two organisations) found this a challenge. **This suggests the security that lead grantees have found for the financing of their advocacy efforts through FLOW 2's emphasis on advocacy and long-term funding has not been fully passed on to sub-grantees at national and subnational levels.**¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Survey question 35.

¹²⁸ This finding echoes those of other evaluations exploring the power relationships between grantees and sub-grantees, for example the [Hewett Foundation Developmental Evaluation](#).

Figure 12: What challenges did you face in your advocacy activities? (Source: survey, Q26, 65 respondents)



There is some limited evidence of concern among national and subnational organisations that more attention needs to be paid to the real risks experienced by women’s rights advocates in some contexts, and particularly those in which civic space is limited or diminishing, or for highly marginalised groups potentially exposed to extreme discrimination through their public action.¹²⁹ The Lebanon case study, for example, notes awareness in the MENA region of the extreme dangers of focusing on advocacy in the region at the same time as donor pressure to do so, but informants bring forward that ‘a certain level of support’ for these risks is not always evident.¹³⁰ This may suggest a more proactive role on the part of donors funding advocacy in analysing and addressing political contexts which imply risk.

¹²⁹ For example, sex worker advocacy in Uganda KII 16 lead partner; increasingly in Burundi – IBIS Narrative Report 2020; burnout among women leaders and advocates: IWDA WAVE Five-year Report.

¹³⁰ KII 64 consortium partner, Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality (AFE); KII 28 lead partner.

Finding 10: Unintended consequences

FLOW 2 programmes had several positive unintended consequences through the implementation of their activities, some of which suggest impact-level changes. Advocating for gender equality, and in turn, structural changes (household, community institutions) within highly complex environments often characterised by shrinking civil space, has also led to unintended negative outcomes including male backlash and broader security threats.

The programmes under FLOW 2 have led to several examples of positive unintended consequences. For example, there is some evidence of spillover of changes beyond direct participants. As discussed further in Finding 13, ActionAid POWER and SNV EOWE programmes include examples in which changes spread to non-beneficiaries who interact with beneficiaries (i.e. neighbours) and through other social interactions. For example, it was found that through AWC's trainings and capacity-building for girls gender transformational changes occurred amongst staff members from organisations who had referred girls to participate in AWC's Self Academy.¹³¹ As further detailed in Finding 13, some programmes such as Simavi's Golden Lines and SNV's EOWE (see Kenya case study) reported increased political participation and leadership by women even though the programme did not have deliberate activities on PWPPA.¹³²

Some activities generated a different kind of unexpected benefit: group activities such as those implemented by WFWI through the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups in Nigeria, or Prevention+ through Programme Abb trainings in Lebanon, successfully brought together different communities with present and/or historic hostilities among them, creating stronger inter-community cohesion. In Nigeria, the VSLA groups were comprised of Muslim and Fulani women, and through the group interactions the women found common ground such as experiencing violence perpetrated against them, which established stronger relationships amongst the group.¹³³ Programme Abb in Lebanon, successfully included both Syrian refugees and Lebanese together within the trainings, subsequently enhancing and/or establishing social relations between the often-divided communities.¹³⁴ Furthermore, Programme Abb not only challenged the notion of separating the Lebanese host community and Syrian refugees within interventions, but moreover, men and women (considered a challenge) whereby the programme was able to effectively include joint sessions between couples: *'The most unexpected result was the possibility of having successful joint sessions with men and women ... It was never tried before this programme. Very successful because you're tackling specific things in a joint session, and it enabled a safe space whereby both men and women were hearing the perspective of the other and getting to understand it more.'*¹³⁵

Some interventions also shone a light on the prevalence of another issue previously unnoticed. For instance, while conducting a standard WE4L communications training for young women activists and leaders (university students), facilitators discovered that the participants were being subjected to high levels of online harassment and bullying, causing much psychosocial distress as well as leading participants to self-censor their activities. This observation encouraged the WE4L partner to work on establishing platforms (to be included within future activities) for young women leaders and activists that would enable them to share their stories

¹³¹ CREA AWC Endline Evaluation.

¹³² KII 45 lead partner.

¹³³ WFWI Endline Evaluation.

¹³⁴ Prevention+ Endline Evaluation.

¹³⁵ KII 66 sub-grantee.

and the harassment and discrimination that they experience which contributed to their sense of solidarity.¹³⁶

Some programmes also led to unintended negative outcomes. Broadly these are related to the very **real risks inherent in advocacy for gender equality and progress in making structural changes**. While programmes often identified the risk of these kinds of consequences,¹³⁷ they were not always equipped to prevent them. Engaging men, for example, was an increasingly visible component within most programmes (see section EQ 3i) that provoked backlash in some cases from men with households and the wider community. In WFWI, Nigeria for example, a ‘substantial number’ of participants involved in the end-line FGDs and KIIs stated that the interventions caused intramarital conflicts, whereby men were still not willing to ‘accept *changes to their perceptions of women particularly in relation to issues of inheritance and GBV*’.¹³⁸

Male backlash was not only directed at women, but at times was also directed against other men who openly supported women empowerment within their community. For example, in IBIS, Liberia, men who were included as ‘role models’ and who advocated for CVAW and PWPPA within their communities, were sometimes the subject of bullying and harassment by other men.¹³⁹ Community backlash was also witnessed towards women who were advocating on issues of GBV and women’s empowerment within public domains. Community disapproval was felt by participants in POWER, Rwanda, whereby some community members disliked having an open discourse surrounding sensitive or stigmatizing topics within public arenas.¹⁴⁰

Similarly, in contexts where civic space is notably shrinking, advocating on issues such as GBV and women’s political participation could be met with troubling hostility. For instance, some participants and partner staff engaged in WAVE activities were subjected to physical threats, violence and even risked being arrested.¹⁴¹ In the Malawi WE4L programme, two partners who were raising public awareness on the politically motivated sexual assaults that took place in 2019, received ‘*threatening late night phone calls*’, and ‘*in one case to a woman’s husband*’, which prompted Hivos to link the partners up with human rights defenders.¹⁴² Several programme partners comment on the real dangers that programme participants can be exposed to, the safeguarding issues this raises,¹⁴³ and how they attempted to address or mitigate these. Tactics included starting with small initiatives;¹⁴⁴ focusing on capacity-building rather than aggressive activism;¹⁴⁵ ensuring counselling services for women leaders ‘especially those who choose to challenge culture and religion’.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁶ KII 65 sub-grantee.

¹³⁷ For example the IWDA WAVE programme partners considered the risk of attacks to women’s human rights defenders in their Mid-term Reflection. IWDA WAVE_Mid-term Reflection Report.

¹³⁸ WFWI Endline Evaluation.

¹³⁹ KII 67 sub-grantee.

¹⁴⁰ ActionAid Power Mid-term Reflection.

¹⁴¹ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

¹⁴² KII 68 lead partner.

¹⁴³ RUTGERS Prevention+ Final Evaluation Report.

¹⁴⁴ KII 64 consortium partner.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review.

Sustainability

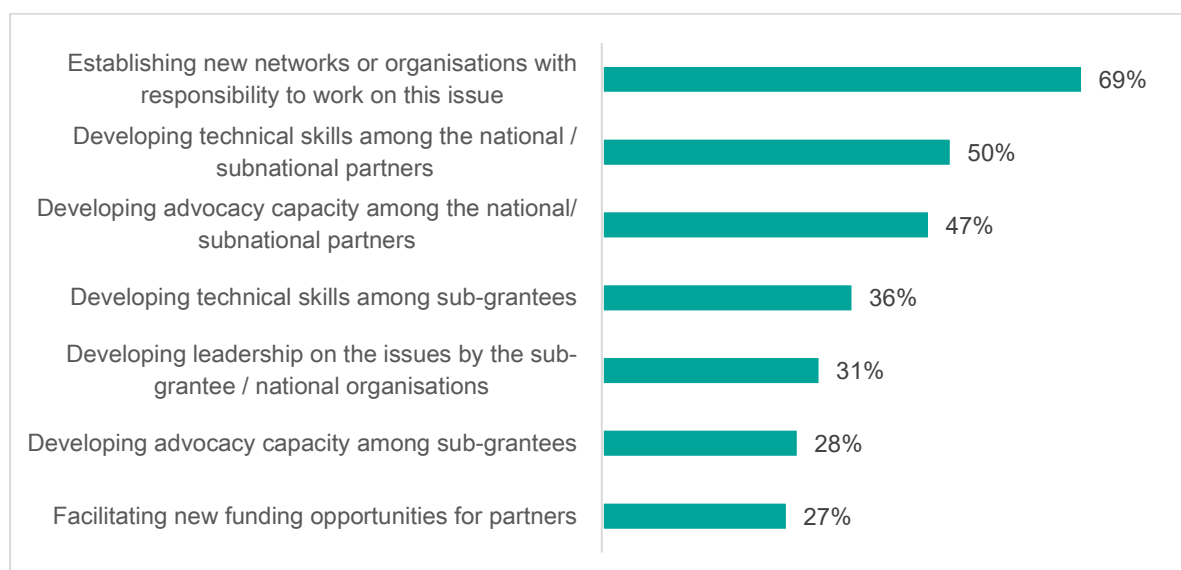
Finding 11: Sustainability

Partners took a number of measures to try to ensure the sustainability of programme outcomes including especially establishing networks, working with governments, creating resources and knowledge and investing in individuals.

Sustainability was an important issue for FLOW 2 partners which was taken seriously from the outset. To some extent, addressing sustainability issues was 'built in' to the programme in the form of capacity-strengthening for sub-grantee national and subnational level partners, in a model which understands that **local organisations have commitment and durability to continue to play civil society roles long after programme closure**. Most partners also had sustainability strategies to facilitate the 'exit' of the programme, although several note that these were put under severe strain by the Covid-19 global crisis and local lockdowns which affected the final nine months of the programme.

Partners took a number of different types of steps and strategies to try to ensure that programme outcomes would be sustained after closure of the programme. Survey results from 64 respondents (Figure 13) suggest that **establishing new networks to continue work on the issues** was the most commonly used strategy (69 per cent of respondents), followed by developing advocacy capacity and technical skills among national and subnational sub-grantee partners (28 per cent to 50 per cent of respondents). The least commonly used step was facilitating new funding opportunities for partners (27 per cent)

Figure 13: Which steps did your programme take to support the sustainability of its results? (Source: survey, Q39, 64 respondents)



Qualitative data bears out that building networks, groups, and indeed movement building on a broader scale, were major strategies intended to enable programme gains to be left in place or maintained after programme end. ActionAid for example, notes that the community women's groups remain cohesive and have relationships with power holders and that UCW has been integrated into the advocacy agenda of other platforms and campaigns. WfWI built platforms bringing together their Change Agents with security personnel and traditional and religious leaders in the community. Hivos expects their Local Women's Forums to be sustainable. Rutgers's GBV prevention networks are reported to be continuing with civil

society partners, and PIWA built networks between women's CSOs, mainstream media, media regulators and ministries.¹⁴⁷

Qualitative data shows that working directly with local and national governments from the outset – providing support beyond just advocacy – was a further important strategy used by at least seven programmes to some degree.¹⁴⁸ The Rutgers Prevention+ took this approach most intensively, with the Indonesia programme, for example, involving government from the start in co-planning and co-monitoring so they were 'fully involved';¹⁴⁹ and in Uganda the Ministry of Education was involved in the production and embedding of a manual for the Prevention+ approach,¹⁵⁰ and in developing Local Action Plans and ensuring a dedicated budget. In Viet Nam, SNV worked closely with the Women's Union in collaboration with the government to establish long-term support for women entrepreneurs. Hivos worked on collaborations with the Ministries of Gender and ministries of local government in Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe. These resulted in contributions to concrete achievements: 50 per cent representation of women and men in the national police force gender policy in Zambia; a 30 per cent quota for women in local government adopted in Zimbabwe (see Finding 3); and involvement of the relevant ministries is partly intended to support subsequent and ongoing implementation of these changes.

A further sustainability strategy has been the creation of resources and knowledge, which have played a role in institutionalisation processes. These have included policy-oriented resources such as process guidance standard operating procedures and materials, as well as guidance available to CSOs and communities. such as manuals on violence against women and girls (VAWG), early childhood development (ECD) centres, seedbanks, empirical research, calls for action, etc.¹⁵¹

Other programmes took sustainability approaches which made strong investments in women as individuals, as feminists, leaders, entrepreneurs and champions of gender equality, and particularly in young women,¹⁵² noting that these embedded skills and perspectives will not be lost at the individual level. Similarly, as detailed in Finding 7, engaging with men as individuals and as gatekeepers to institutional change has been a strategy aimed at both immediate effectiveness the longer-term outlook. Some partners report good signs that men's behaviour change appears to be enduring, although this confidence is not consistent.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷ KII 40 consortium partner.

¹⁴⁸ Rutgers, WfWI, SNV, Hivos, IBIS, ActionAid, Simavi.

¹⁴⁹ FGD 80 Impact and Sustainability.

¹⁵⁰ Rutgers Prevention+ Endline Evaluation.

¹⁵¹ Rutgers Prevention+ Endline Evaluation; ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation; Hivos WE4L Endline Evaluation.

¹⁵² Hivos WE4L Endline Evaluation, WfWI Endline Evaluation.

¹⁵³ FGD 80 Impact and Sustainability.

Finding 12: The role of sub-grantees in sustainability

The largest focus for sustainability was on organisations' core capacity and advocacy capacity. However, the ability to attract subsequent funding is key to getting a return on this sustainability investment. More could have been done to support and facilitate this dimension in particular, such as focussing in particular on capacity for securing ongoing funding.

Findings 8 and 9 detailed the attention that was paid by the programme in the long-term capacity and resilience of a large number of CSOs at national and subnational levels. These findings suggest that project-oriented frameworks are a risk to sustainability even where capacity-building is a priority, because capacity has been invested in staff who have to move on at the end of the project.

Other types of capacity-building detailed in those findings – for advocacy and for core organisational strengthening – have better prospects for sustainability, because advocacy skills are less project dependent. In some cases, it is clear that **organisations can be the bearers of sustainability when the FLOW 2 programme's agenda becomes their core work**: for example, under the Hivos programme, monitoring the elections from a gender perspective is now embedded in Maharat's work in Lebanon, and represents a core element of their work regardless of who their partner is.¹⁵⁴ IBIS also notes that for many of the organisations they partnered with in Guatemala, the programme's priorities are strongly integrated.¹⁵⁵

However, **their effectiveness as sustainability investments does depend on the continued survival of the organisation**, which in turn depends on that organisation's ability to attract funding and continue its work. It is clear that a number of CSOs have gone on to secure further funding. These include organisations working with consortia which have secured funding under the MFA's new Power of Women (POW) funding stream since the end of 2020.¹⁵⁶ Some effort was also made to link sub-grantees to other MFA funding streams, such as Power of Voices (POV).¹⁵⁷ Organisations in this group see sustainability in terms of the journey continuing, and in its expansion, with steps and gains made under FLOW 2 being taken to the next level.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ KII 69 sub-grantee.

¹⁵⁵ IBIS FLOW Endline Evaluation.

¹⁵⁶ The Rutgers consortium secured funds under Power of Women (POW) with a programme called Generation G which includes the Lebanon FLOW 2 sub-grantees. CREA itself also won funding in a different consortium under POW.

¹⁵⁷ The CREA consortium, with one additional member, has been granted funding under Power of Voices.

¹⁵⁸ KII 17 consortium partner.

Some sub-grantee organisations have secured other funding, not related to the MFA opportunities: Economic Justice for Women in Zimbabwe is one example. Types of support offered by lead grantees for sub-grantees to secure funding included guidance for proposal writing, training for managing resources, and direct recommendations to donors from the lead partner.¹⁵⁹ Other evidence suggests, however, that **more could have been done to support sub-grantees to secure funds elsewhere**. Figure 13 (above) shows that among survey respondents, this is the area in which relatively little was done, with only 27 per cent saying that facilitating funding opportunities for partners was part of their sustainability work. Qualitative data carries the same message, with some lead partners noting that more could have been done to secure financial capacity for all grantees.¹⁶⁰ In the survey, 27 of the 57 respondents who answered this open question said they did not have funding to continue the parts of the work that they wanted to, and a further seven said they had only partial funding. Only two specifically mentioned they did have funding for the work they wanted to do. Some organisations are concerned that the networks and platforms they built will also not be sustained unless they can secure funds.¹⁶¹

The partners with or without [the lead grantee] are always going to be in a position to advocate because this is what they do. However, fundamentally the sustainability of their activities primarily comes down to whether they have funds or not, and whether they are in a better position to acquire the needed funding without the support of [the lead grantee].

KII sub-grantee

Other challenges to sustainability

There have been some substantial **and hard-hitting challenges to the sustainability of results related to external events and crises**. In some cases for example, Covid-19 processes drew attention away from this work so that it was incomplete (Rutgers, Lebanon), and the associated economic lockdowns meant that assets built up by savings groups were used for emergency livelihood support (WfWI, Nigeria) as discussed further in Finding 14. The military coup in Myanmar in February 2021 put gains made by the sub-grantees of the WAVE programme into question; and the establishment of the new government by the Taliban in Afghanistan in August 2021 has been a dramatic and severe setback to women's rights involving so much risk to women's rights advocates that all the groups established by WfWI are currently in hiding.¹⁶² Other respondents also see the coordinated and well-funded 'anti-gender' global movement as a particularly severe threat to gains in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and LGBTQI rights made through the programme.¹⁶³

Figure 14: How do you rate the sustainability of your programme's achievements? (Source: survey, Q40, 66 respondents)

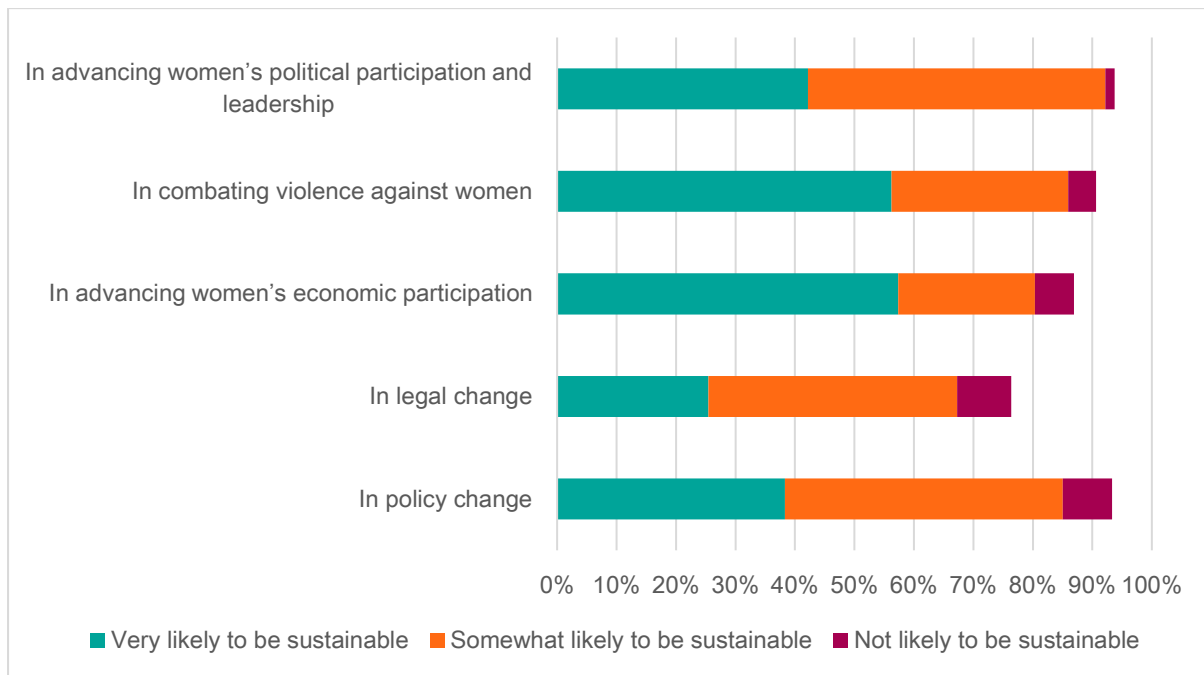
¹⁵⁹ KII 20 lead partner.

¹⁶⁰ KII 73 lead partner.

¹⁶¹ IBIS FLOW Endline Evaluation.

¹⁶² FGD 80 Impact and Sustainability.

¹⁶³ KII 61 consortium partner.



Beyond these external circumstances, **working with governments is not risk free with regard to sustainability**. For example, programmes involving governments may stall if embedding processes are incomplete, even when they have been extensive; or a change of government may produce uncertainty on the durability of gains. Survey results suggest respondents have least confidence in the sustainability of changes made at policy and legal levels (see Figure 14). For example, in Zimbabwe the Ministry of Gender has recently been scrapped and partners now need to re-engage with the new Gender Commission;¹⁶⁴ in Lebanon, the plan for Rutgers's Programme Abb to be adopted by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA) has remained incomplete due to the disruption caused by Covid-19; in Bangladesh, the socialisation of ActionAid's unpaid care work toolkit into District Assemblies was disrupted by Covid-19 and there is uncertainty when this will be taken up again; and in Liberia, IBIS' plan that the GBV safe houses they established would be taken on by the Ministry of Gender has not yet materialised.

¹⁶⁴ KII 20 lead partner.

Impact

Finding 13: Impact

The MFA ToC does not give detail on how impact was expected to evolve. There is some evidence of impact at the individual level, with some women continuing to progress the gains made through the programme across all three pillars. Impact in the sense of reaching towards scale, or long-term norm change enabling opportunities and an enabling environment continuing to evolve, remains a tough challenge in the absence of further activity and a focus on diffusion or spread. While a movement building approach offers a route to scale, the pathway is not yet clear.

Endline evaluations reported on impact for some programmes, but this was defined against their own ToCs, and differed from impact in the MFA taskforce ToC.¹⁶⁵ For the Taskforce ToC, impact means achieving ‘equal rights and opportunities for women and girls’, and any progress towards this situation which goes beyond structural transformation in programme locations (see Finding 6) or beyond the passing of policy and legal change towards an enabling environment (see Finding 3). This progress might include evidence of further diffusion of outcomes beyond programme locations through:

- a) social norming changes (where the norm becomes widespread enough and is copied or replicated); and
- b) funding to scale up so that programme reach stimulates change across a wider area.

In addition, it might include the deepening of outcomes through further evolution after the outcome has taken place – such as women benefitting from the implementation of a new policy.

Scaling up

The programme **did not have an explicit overall strategy for scaling results or stimulating diffusion or spread, and neither did most of the individual programmes. Nevertheless ActionAid reports some (limited) spread of results through social networks – for example neighbours of programme participants changing attitudes** about UCW; and women’s mobility and access to markets (see also Finding 10).¹⁶⁶ There is also some evidence from the Lebanon case study that learning by participants in the programme is being actively passed on by individuals to other friends and family.¹⁶⁷ The Kenya case study also includes an assertion that the removal of barriers (such as to the recognition of sex workers) has been important and clears the ground for later impact.¹⁶⁸

In other programmes, the potential for scale was not achieved, or was not targeted.¹⁶⁹ CREA notes, for example, that the safe spaces approach has not yet been funded to scale, indeed at the level of individual sub-grantee organisations, levels of funding have so far been quite low. Although PIWA’s programme in journalism for gender equality had the potential to operate at scale through publication and readerships, it reports only a few examples of articles from a women’s rights perspective being published following its trainings. Steps towards integrating this approach into journalist’s regular training have not yet been taken, and the ‘watchdog’

¹⁶⁵ ActionAid, for example, describes impacts in its Endline Evaluation which would fall under Outcomes in the Taskforce ToC.

¹⁶⁶ KII 10 lead partner; ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation.

¹⁶⁷ FGD 85.

¹⁶⁸ KII 18 consortium partner.

¹⁶⁹ KII 18 consortium partner.

Observatories, intended to be the key element in the programmes' reach, have met with challenges.

It is of note that both **the 'movement building' approach and, in a different way, the positioning of women in political or institutional leadership are both implicitly potential routes to having impact**, but neither of these have had sufficient time or success to evolve to deliver in a consistent way.

Continued evolution of results

The Lebanon case study includes an example of how engagement with Government has continued after the close of the programme and is paying off with steps towards impact in some places: one respondent describes how one 'very strong' partner has been able to continue to engage, ensuring the gender policy has been completed and continuing to support its implementation.¹⁷⁰ Also in Kenya it was noted that in Makueni district, where there was a good enabling environment, the project worked with women to organise and identify when to engage, so they '*took that space*' and have remained there. It is possible that further case-study level enquiry would reveal more incidences of impact in areas where the programme is no longer operating, and results are therefore not now being tracked.

Evolution of results is also evident in some cases where individual women have made progress through careers in leadership or in their businesses. For examples, some of the women mentored for leadership through the Hivos Zambia programme have progressed from being councillors to becoming MPs¹⁷¹ and have made some impact in those positions; one has raised issues about labour conditions and women, for example; another has an advocacy page on GBV and rights of women and girls; another, who leads 30 women's cooperatives has returned her seat for the fourth time. Similarly, the Kenya case study identifies examples of the progress of individual women: one woman entrepreneur has taken a position as a member of the Municipal Board, and another working on natural resource conservation in an official capacity.¹⁷² Women's businesses in general are reported to have progressed: one group supported by SNV has now procured a lorry and refrigerated trucks and is currently building a mini-factory for dairy.¹⁷³ In some locations, the groups have continued to pressurize local governments to maintain economic opportunities.¹⁷⁴ The Lebanon case study similarly notes that some project staff and community-level women reached by the programme carry forward their own personal changes, and the strength gained by their contact with networks, into their future positions.¹⁷⁵

There are also reports of some impact on children as a result of programme progress: in Kenya, programme partners reported that in households where women participate in successful economic enterprises, their children were all able to enrol in school.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁰ KII 55 lead partner.

¹⁷¹ KII 20 lead partner.

¹⁷² KII 52 sub-grantee.

¹⁷³ KII 52 sub-grantee.

¹⁷⁴ KII 55 lead partner.

¹⁷⁵ FGD 81.

¹⁷⁶ SNV EOWE Endline Evaluation.

Light touch country data collection reveals how organisations (sub-grantees) are continuing to evolve results, in some cases using the structures and capacity put in place by FLOW 2. For example, in Cambodia, there is a strong intention among sub-grantees to carry on pushing for impact of the work thus far on PWPPA, such as by supporting women candidates in the 2022 election, if they are able to secure funds to support this work.¹⁷⁷ In addition, subnational networks are still operating at some level, such as working on GBV in the communities,¹⁷⁸ and the technical working group on PWPPA in the Ministry is still functioning. A National Policy on Gender Equality is soon to be released, which mentions gender training including for men, and coaching for women in leadership.¹⁷⁹

I love the resilience I see in the women, maybe their business collapses [due to Covid] but they are able to use the knowledge they learned in the programme to put things together and go. They are not waiting for manna to fall from heaven, they put their hands on anything they can find to do, to improve it.

KII country partner, 56

Challenges to impact

There have undoubtedly also been a number of significant challenges to achieving further progress towards impact, including shrinking civic space in some contexts, and the felt presence of a global anti-gender pushback movement in some countries, such as Kenya. The Covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns and travel restrictions has also of course been significant (see Finding 14). At least one partner noted that the final year of the programme, in which the pandemic happened, was planned to be really important for harvesting higher level results and then for lobbying with these findings at international levels, and that much of this could not take place. In the domain of international advocacy, spaces became limited for civil society, as, for example, UN meetings such as CSW and Beijing +25 were cancelled, moved online or in some cases minimized to government-only exercises.¹⁸⁰ Some sub-grantees have successfully applied for emergency funds to try to maintain impact over the Covid period;¹⁸¹ other partners note that it takes ongoing action to maintain impact, and that without ongoing pressure ‘not much will happen’.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ KII 30 other stakeholder.

¹⁷⁸ KII 31 sub-grantee.

¹⁷⁹ KII 31 sub-grantee.

¹⁸⁰ KII 35 consortium partner.

¹⁸¹ FGD 80 Impact and Sustainability.

¹⁸² KII 46 lead partner.

Finding 14: Covid-19

With the implementation of lockdowns and restrictions on travel and in-person gatherings, FLOW 2 partners made extensive adaptations to their workplans and approaches. Most programmes delivered a range of activities as planned by the end of 2020 through these adapted methods. But the pandemic severely disrupted some outcomes in the areas of (1) WEE –saving capacities of women’s groups were weakened and therefore economic progress was disrupted; (2) CVAW – increased levels of violence were reported in some cases; and (3) advocacy was limited because governments reprioritized their interventions on the response to the pandemic and therefore stopped pushing for progressive policies and in some instances used measures against Covid-19 to restrict the civic space.

Significant adjustments to implementation were stimulated by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. This caused considerable disruption to projects as partners and sub-grantees adjusted to online operations wherever possible. Some projects adjusted budgets and re-designed workplans.¹⁸³ The programmes did come to a close by December 2020 and all ten succeeded in carrying out end-line evaluations, mainly using remote data collection methods.

Adaptations included many innovations which may have ultimately enhanced impact. The use of digital tools and online methods seems to have opened new opportunities for programme partners: in Bangladesh, ActionAid was able to collect data for the ‘time diaries’ by communicating with participants through phone calls. The use of mobile phones, social media, radio, or interactive voice recordings was particularly appreciated by implementers as it enabled them to continue reaching out to target beneficiaries in communities.¹⁸⁴ In some programmes, the use of digital tools for advocacy produced some results in policy work.¹⁸⁵ In Kenya, household dialogues were conducted through telephone rather than online. This was appreciated by both beneficiaries and facilitators who were still able to monitor progress within households and at community level. Partners also appreciated the use of digital solutions to organise webinars and online meetings which allowed more participants to attend and share lessons learned and good practices.

Our partnership with local radio stations was a big help during this period to get messages across.

KII WfW,I DRC Country Partner 59

More commonly, and unsurprisingly, the effect of the pandemic on outcomes was a negative one. A number of planned end-of-project network strengthening and knowledge-building events could not take place.¹⁸⁶ Some planned programming could not be adjusted to virtual format due to the nature of the activities and circumstances of delivery,¹⁸⁷ and others were delayed: 64 per cent of survey respondents said Covid-19 caused delays in implementing activities. **Most impacted were the capacity-building and advocacy activities which**

¹⁸³ For example, ActionAid had to suspend activities in Bangladesh for several weeks and shared a revised proposal and new activities with MFA; SNV was able to divert funds for emergency support to beneficiaries and sub-grantees.

¹⁸⁴ Rutgers Prevention+ Final Narrative Report 2020; SIMAVI Golden Line Narrative Report 2020; ActionAid POWER Final Project Report 2020; KII 34 consortium partner, KII 58 lead partner.

¹⁸⁵ ActionAid POWER Final Project Report, 2020.

¹⁸⁶ For example, in the CREA AWC project, leadership, capacity-building and knowledge exchange gatherings that could not easily be shifted online were put on hold.

¹⁸⁷ For example, in the Rutgers Prevention+ project some main strands of implementation in Uganda and Lebanon could not be carried out.

required in-person gatherings because participants had limited internet connectivity or because of the nature of the advocacy. 'Digital technology for most people was a challenge' (FGD Kenya). This created challenges for programme implementers as it was difficult to maintain contact with communities and partners, putting a greater distance between grantees and communities.¹⁸⁸

Internal learning was limited during the last year of the programmes due to cancellation of networking and training events, concluding exit activities as well as diversion of resources towards the adaptation of the programme intervention. In addition, outcome harvesting activities were particularly affected as resources had to be reallocated to supporting communities, monitoring could only be conducted virtually, and the collection of quantitative data against set indicators was limited.¹⁸⁹

Results in the area of women's economic empowerment were particularly affected. Income-generating activities were disrupted¹⁹⁰ and many had to use their savings to support their families-¹⁹¹ This directly impacted women's ability to use their savings intended for building their businesses, to make investments and repay loans. The periods of lockdown and curfews resulted in the increase of unpaid care and domestic work for women and girls,¹⁹² although there was some evidence of redistribution of UCW between women and men in some instances as men also had to stay at home.¹⁹³

The economic disruptions caused by the measures taken against Covid-19 put a strain on households and in many instances had a **terrible impact on the levels of violence against women within households and in communities, making it a 'shadow pandemic'**.¹⁹⁴ Several programmes reported a rise in violence against women as restrictions were imposed on populations.¹⁹⁵ Lockdowns and curfews made already vulnerable women even harder to reach by implementing partners and grassroots organisations. In addition, women faced increased barriers to accessing essential sexual and reproductive health information and services during the pandemic.¹⁹⁶ While some organisations made progress in responding to these new circumstances – for example to implement awareness-raising activities and campaigns on gender-based violence making use of

I have been sitting at home for the past three months, as I am not finding any work. If my wife asks me to buy her a packet of instant noodle, I may beat her. She should be more understanding of what I am going through. The economic difficulties that we are going through increase the tension at home. Things become difficult when I come back home with an amount of money that is not enough to buy all that my wife and children need. We sometimes end up yelling at each other, but on some days, we succeed in solving these issues calmly. (FGD Lebanon)

¹⁸⁸ Hivos WE4L Endline Evaluation Report 2020.

¹⁸⁹ SNV 2020 Results for Vietnam, ActionAid POWER Final Project Report 2020; IWDA WAVE Annual Report 2020.

¹⁹⁰ ActionAid POWER Final Project Report 2020; SIMAVI Golden Line narrative report 2020.

¹⁹¹ ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation, SIMAVI Golden Line Narrative Report 2020; KII 34 lead partner.

¹⁹² ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation, Annex A: Bangladesh Country Case Study; IWDA WAVE Annual Report 2020.

¹⁹³ ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation; FGD 84-85.

¹⁹⁴ IBIS FLOW 2 Narrative Report 2020; IWDA WAVE Annual Report 2020. A report was also published by UN Women in 2021 titled 'Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during Covid-19'. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Measuring-shadow-pandemic.pdf>

¹⁹⁵ ActionAid POWER; CREA AWC; Hivos WE4L; IBIS FLOW 2; IWDA WAVE; Rutgers Prevention+; SIMAVI Golden Line. This was also reported in interviews with programme-level key respondents.

¹⁹⁶ ActionAid POWER Final Project Report 2020; SIMAVI Golden Line Narrative Report 2020.

existing networks and new technology,¹⁹⁷ there is little doubt that the situation was a setback to potential impacts in CVAW envisaged by FLOW 2 partners.

Women’s rights organisations were also generally impacted by the measures taken by governments to reduce interactions. Firstly, governments’ and donors’ attention and resources were drawn away from development policy as authorities had to prioritize their response to the pandemic. **Momentum gained in advocacy at national and local levels was therefore disrupted.** However, there was evidence that policy development and advocacy efforts were continued at county and local levels in some of the programmes¹⁹⁸ while others worked with local authorities to support their response to Covid-19.¹⁹⁹

Secondly, the pandemic exacerbated existing political tensions in many countries of intervention.²⁰⁰ Governments introduced **restrictions on mass gatherings and campaigns which limited right defenders’ and activist organisations’ ability to organise demonstrations and collective initiatives.** Activists and rights defenders who were accused of flouting Covid-19 measures faced arbitrary arrest and lost the ability to engage in collective advocacy and movement building.²⁰¹ Despite the use of technology, including online webinars and social media, programmes faced challenges in building and strengthening movements at community levels as well as in monitoring progress made towards these outcomes.²⁰²

Efficiency

Finding 15: Learning

FLOW 2 projects have used a wide range of activities to promote learning across partners and consortia, with the aim of aiding programme delivery, strengthening partner knowledge and capacity, building women’s movements, pursuing advocacy objectives and evidencing the effectiveness of interventions. FLOW 2 programmes placing learning more centrally in their project design and implementation and adopting feminist approaches to learning seem to catalyse a wider range of benefits for partners.

All FLOW 2 projects have undertaken some activities to promote the exchange of information, good practices and learning between partners and consortia. The type of activities undertaken are wide-ranging, with different activities serving different purposes and bringing different benefits (see Table 2). Some of them are undertaken at a country level, but others involve a multi-country perspective, which brings different learning opportunities and challenges (see also Finding 5).

Table 2: The range of learning activities conducted by FLOW 2 partners and their benefits to partners and consortia

Type of learning activity	Purpose of learning	Benefits to partners and consortia
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¹⁹⁷ Rutgers Prevention+; IBIS FLOW 2.

¹⁹⁸ Hivos, WE4L Annual Report 2020; SNV EOWE Annual Narrative Report 2020.

¹⁹⁹ ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation 2020; IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation 2020; SIMAVI Golden Line Narrative Report 2020.

²⁰⁰ Burundi, Cambodia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Malawi, Myanmar.

²⁰¹ CREA AWC Endline Evaluation 2020; IWDA WAVE Annual Report 2020.

²⁰² KII 51 lead partner; Hivos WE4L Annual Report 2020.

Partner meetings at country or project level	To aid programme delivery	Typically forming part of FLOW 2 projects' annual planning cycle, these meetings provide an opportunity for project partners to share models and approaches, reflect on progress and use these insights to inform the following year's activities. In some projects, e.g. CREA, SIMAVI, SNV, these meetings have provided projects the opportunity to strategically influence project direction. ²⁰³
Training workshops for sub-grantees and beneficiaries	To aid programme delivery To support sustainable organisational development	Used across all FLOW 2 projects, the purpose was to build skills and individual or organisational capacity.
Project research ²⁰⁴	To deepen knowledge in particular areas To support sustainable organisational development To evidence model effectiveness	Depending on how the research was conducted, it could result in partners developing research skills, ²⁰⁵ deepening partners' understanding of technical areas, building evidence of the effectiveness of models. ²⁰⁶ Project research also generated evidence, which partners used to underpin advocacy. ²⁰⁷
Conferences and workshops	To pursue advocacy objectives	These were often used to share learning with external partners, particularly as part of projects' advocacy efforts. ²⁰⁸
Mentoring of women by women or buddy systems for partners	To support women's leaders To support movement building To support sustainable organisational development	Mentoring of women's political leaders on WAVE has increased young women's confidence and capabilities, strengthened political connections and solidarity, including across generations. ²⁰⁹ Partner buddying or exchanges have helped build partner capacity and strengthen relationships between organisations, including internationally. ²¹⁰
Networking meetings for women's activists	To support movement building	These meetings increased individual consciousness, helped build relationships between activists and organisations and

²⁰³ KII 16 consortium partner; KII 46 lead partner; FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁰⁴ For example, on WAVE, WFWI and ActionAid projects.

²⁰⁵ For example, WAVE partners developed skills in Feminist Participatory Action Research: IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

²⁰⁶ Noble, E., Ascencio, L., Wilondja, T., Mateba, A., Angelucci, M., Heath, R. (2020). 'The Impact of Women for Women International's Economic and Social Empowerment Programme in the Democratic Republic of Congo', Washington DC: Women for Women International.

²⁰⁷ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

²⁰⁸ For example, the 'Constitutionalism, Gender Equality and the Future of Women's Leadership in Zimbabwe' conference held as part of Hivos' project, Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review.

²⁰⁹ IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflection.

²¹⁰ KII 21 lead partner; KII 64 consortium partner.

		strengthened solidarity, all essential elements for a strong women's movement. ²¹¹
Mid-term reviews and end of project evaluations	To aid programme delivery	These were a feature of all FLOW 2 projects, which evaluation survey respondents reported being useful. ²¹² In several cases, there is evidence that the mid-term reviews helped projects evaluate their learning and re-strategize to consolidate or strengthen results, ²¹³ whilst the end of project evaluations provide a forward-looking agenda for action. ²¹⁴
Publications and videos	To communicate knowledge externally	These were a means to document and share learning with a range of partners, including for advocacy purposes. ²¹⁵

Findings from the evaluation survey suggest that the majority of respondents found all of the learning activities²¹⁶ conducted within FLOW 2 somewhat useful or very useful, with between 88 per cent and 94 per cent of respondents saying the following learning activities were either somewhat useful or very useful: national learning events,²¹⁷ training events, the mid-term review and end of project evaluations. Respondents also appreciated learning events with grant partners in other countries but less so than other types of learning events, with 77 per cent of respondents saying they were somewhat useful or very useful.

The prominence of learning activities in FLOW 2 projects varies somewhat across the portfolio, with those being more intentional about learning in their programme design catalysing a wider range of benefits (see also Findings 5 and 9). Most projects have taken a 'middle of the road approach' which involves annual partner meetings to share tools and approaches, reflect and plan, capacity-building training, a mid-term review and end of project evaluation as integral parts of the project. A small number of projects have chosen to go further, taking forward learning strategies and workstreams, investing human and financial resources to support learning and considering how best to facilitate learning within partnerships (Box 7). A small number such as CREA and IWDA, have **taken an explicit feminist approach to learning**,

²¹¹ CREA AWC 2020 Annual Report; CREA AWC Endline Evaluation; IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflection Report; IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation; KII 04 MFA stakeholder.

²¹² 89% of evaluation survey respondents reported that both the project's mid-term review and end of project evaluation were either somewhat useful or very useful.

²¹³ For example, the mid-term review helped CREA recognize the importance of investing adequate resources into mechanisms which would enable effective consortium management which adheres to the principles of partnership (CREA AWC Mid Term Review); on WAVE, the mid-term review helped partners recognize the importance of creating solidarity among partners and the important role IWDA played in that (IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation); the mid-term review gave IBIS partners the space to revisit their work around learning, leading them to scale it up with an associated budget increase (IBIS FLOW Five-year Narrative Report consolidated).

²¹⁴ WfWI.

²¹⁵ For example, ActionAid 'Annex 4 IDS Learning Review Summary'; WAVE Thematic Brief: Transformative Advocacy, December 2020; WAVE Thematic Brief: Strengthening Movements, December 2020; Noble et al, op. cit., 2020.

²¹⁶ Learning activities investigated in the survey included: FLOW 2 international conferences, national learning and sharing events, training, mid-term review, baseline research, other types of project research, Endline evaluation, and sharing events with other country partners involved in the project.

²¹⁷ 94% of survey respondents reported national learning events as somewhat or very useful; 88% of survey respondents reported training events as somewhat or very useful; and 89% of survey respondents reported the mid-term review and the end of project evaluation as somewhat useful or very useful.

seeking to put in place non-hierarchical learning approaches. In doing so, they have managed to create common frameworks and shared platforms, which enable cross-partner learning from a position of equality and they have involved a wider group of participants, stretching beyond the main consortium partners to include down-stream implementing partners as well as national and international partners external to the consortium.²¹⁸

Adequately resourcing learning activities has, however, been a common challenge faced by projects, irrespective of their learning approach.²¹⁹

Box 6: Good practices in promoting learning

ActionAid International: This programme used time diaries to gather evidence on the domestic burden carried by women. The evidence gathered was powerful in that it revealed the full extent of women's unpaid care work. On this basis, ActionAid and partners used the evidence to support change at household and community levels, as well as in national and international advocacy.²²⁰

CREA: CREA's approach to promoting learning within the partnership is one characterised by equality, trust and fairness. Partners recognise they can learn from each other. As one partner representative said, it is a 'space to learn from one another', a space founded on mutual trust, developed through a long-standing working relationship.²²¹ But partners are conscious of different levels of power they have within the partnership, and try to create a level playing field for everyone to learn from each other.²²² One example of how they do this is by opening a call for applications to join training opportunities. Applications are scored based on past experience, what they envision and what they plan to do following the training. Ensuring a diverse group of participants is one of the objectives, with at least one applicant from each country being accepted.²²³

IWDA: WAVE's evaluation highlights that supporting learning was at the heart of WAVE.²²⁴ With one of the project pillars dedicated to research, evidence and learning, WAVE had multiple spaces for learning, including: (i) multi-country regional research led by IWDA; (ii) research and evidence generation within each partner's specific budgets and workplans; (iii) joint research and learning with local networks and alliances which partners either led or contributed data towards; and (iv) partner-initiated coaching and support for community members to do their own research and evidence generation. Some of the research used innovative methods such as adopting a Feminist Participatory Action Research approach. Research findings were used to inform partner advocacy.²²⁵ In the words of one key informant interviewed, 'They made a genuine attempt to make a cohort of co-learners across the countries ... But they underestimated time and effort for that kind of cohort learning ... it was logistically and financially time consuming.'²²⁶

IBIS: At the project's mid-term, partners agreed to strengthen their learning and communication work. They identified three thematic priorities – transformative justice, violence against women and masculinities – which provided a framework for global experience sharing, learning and influencing. In follow-up, the project published two research papers as well as other policy briefs, findings from which have informed advocacy. The national and international communications of publications have

²¹⁸ For example, evidence suggests that several projects struggled to adequately involve some country level partners and particularly down-stream implementing partners in their learning activities: KII 66 sub-grantee); KII 41 sub-grantee; SNV EOWE Evaluation report; KII 50 sub-grantee; WfWI Final Programme Evaluation; WfWI\MINBUZA-2020.346738 28313 - WfWI - FLOW mid-term evaluation.

²¹⁹ Whilst extensive and innovative, WAVE's evaluation found that its research efforts had taken more time, effort and resources than had been anticipated, and in some cases, had tested the limits of partners' resources. IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation. Whilst linking and learning was an explicit strategy of the Hivos project, the mid-term review found that it was under-resourced and therefore remained weak: Hivos WE4L Mid-term review.

²²⁰ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²²¹ KII 64 consortium partner.

²²² KII 15 consortium partner.

²²³ KII 64 consortium partner.

²²⁴ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report.

²²⁵ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report.

²²⁶ KII 29 other stakeholder.

helped raise the profile of the project's learning, which is reported to have been recognized by the UN and other international bodies. Towards the end of the project, research communication activities were held online enabling a larger number of partners to be involved.²²⁷

WfWI: WfWI conducted an impact evaluation (using a randomized control trial) of its social and economic empowerment programme on women's empowerment in DRC. The study revealed that, compared to the control group, graduates of the programme reported measurable gains in certain economic and social domains, while the level of violence against women remained unchanged. Study results were disseminated widely to programme participants, peer organisations, practitioners and development agencies. WfWI is using findings to inform the design of future programmes.²²⁸ Whilst WfWI invested in learning about the effectiveness of intervention models, other aspects of their learning approach needed strengthening.²²⁹

Finding 16: Learning facilitated by MFA

Evidence on the utility of the FLOW 2 conferences is mixed, but on balance, it is more positive than negative. The immediate benefits of participating in the conferences include building an understanding of how to work with the MFA, learning about different approaches and methodologies and networking with other organisations, but the longer-term benefits are harder to identify. This reflects the indirect and unpredictable ways in which learning was often applied. Greater use of online meetings could make the conferences more accessible to a wider range of grantee representatives, especially those at national and sub-national levels.

The MFA's shift towards outcome-focussed monitoring and the requirement for grantees to report against the Ministry's two corporate indicators on gender equality have, unintentionally, promoted new learning amongst some grantees (see Finding 15). However, the MFA's main instrument for promoting learning amongst grantees were the annual FLOW 2 conferences. These conferences were one- to three-day events held in either The Hague or hosted by a selected grantee in a FLOW 2 focal country, where representatives from each FLOW 2 programme were invited to discuss different aspects of working with the MFA, to share learning from their individual programmes and to consider thematic issues arising from their work on women's rights and gender equality.

Grantee responses to the FLOW 2 conferences have been mixed but on balance, feedback has been more positive than negative. All 34 evaluation survey respondents (from lead grantees, national and sub-national partners) who had participated in at least one FLOW 2 annual conference said they were either somewhat useful or very useful, an assessment which is supported by participant feedback in FLOW 2 conference reports.²³⁰

Key informant feedback suggests the FLOW 2 conferences were useful in three main ways but evidence on how grantees followed up on these benefits is thin:

1. **To support FLOW 2 programme management, developing grantee understanding of how to work with MFA:**²³¹ The MFA used the FLOW 2 conferences to brief grantees on particular requirements, for example reporting against the MFA gender equality indicators and reporting results on the IATI system.²³² Some grantees found this

²²⁷ IBIS FLOW Narrative Report 2020.

²²⁸ WfWI FLOW 2 Final Project Narrative Report.

²²⁹ WfWI FLOW 2 Final Programme Evaluation.

²³⁰ FLOW 2 conference reports for 2016, 2018, 2020.

²³¹ KII 38 consortium partner; KII 56 lead partner.

²³² FLOW 2 conference reports for 2016, 2017.

opportunity for more in-depth engagement with the MFA useful. As one national grantee representative said: *"Before that meeting I thought we were dealing with a very rigid funder, but in that meeting [FLOW 2 conference] I understood there was flexibility and we could change. This was a big takeaway."*²³³

2. **Sharing different approaches and methodologies:** At FLOW 2 conferences, grantees were able to showcase particular aspects of their work. Several grantees and MFA staff reported this to be useful, with participants particularly appreciating field visit opportunities when the conferences were held in FLOW 2 focal countries.²³⁴ For the hosts of these events, there were also benefits of profiling their work, including to the MFA.²³⁵ In follow-up, WfWI drew on one grantee's experience of conducting advocacy at provincial level when revising their own advocacy approach²³⁶ but this is one isolated example of how grantees made use of the learning garnered at the conferences.
3. **Networking with organisations working in similar areas:** Several respondents appreciated the networking opportunities provided by the FLOW 2 conferences but one or two did query whether this led to further collaboration between organisations.²³⁷

Whilst evidence of grantees following up on their learning from FLOW 2 conferences is limited, this doesn't necessarily mean that the conferences aren't of value. Uptake and use of learning is often indirect and unpredictable, as one MFA official summarised.

*The value of learning this way is also intangible, it's like reading a book. But somehow that information creates a fertile ground, adds another layer to what's already there, and new ideas can come out of this. It does shape your thinking, it's an investment, and it's networking and solidarity. Therapeutic ... Not necessarily very tangible.*²³⁸

Those respondents who were less positive about the FLOW 2 conferences raised different concerns but only one or two respondents mentioned any of these, and evidence presented above counters some of these points.

- The conferences primarily served the MFA's learning interests;²³⁹
- The scope of work covered by individual FLOW 2 grants did not have sufficient in common to make this kind of sharing event useful;²⁴⁰
- The participants attending the FLOW 2 conferences changed year on year, so it was difficult to build up a knowledge base and dialogue over time;²⁴¹
- Difficulties in taking the time out from everyday responsibilities to attend an overseas meeting;²⁴² and
- Depth of discussions was limited by the presence of MFA representatives.²⁴³

More obvious in the evaluation data is the fact that, to manage costs, only small numbers of grantee representatives were able to participate in the FLOW 2 conferences, and in some

²³³ KII 56 lead partner.

²³⁴ KII 20 lead partner; KII 45 lead partner; KII 02 MFA stakeholders; KII 04 MFA stakeholder.

²³⁵ FGD 80 Impact and Sustainability.

²³⁶ KII 58 lead partner.

²³⁷ KII 38 partner staff; KII 45 partner staff; KII 56 WfWI partner staff; KII 04 MFA stakeholder.

²³⁸ KII 04 MFA stakeholder.

²³⁹ KII 09 partner staff; KII 45 partner staff.

²⁴⁰ KII 35 consortium partner.

²⁴¹ KII 35 consortium partner.

²⁴² KII 35 consortium partner.

²⁴³ KII 45 partner staff.

cases, participation by lead grantees was prioritised.²⁴⁴ Of the 52 respondents who answered the evaluation survey question about learning activities they had participated in, 35 per cent said they had not had the opportunity to participate in FLOW 2 conferences. Furthermore, a significant number of grantee representatives interviewed for the evaluation either had not had the opportunity to participate in FLOW 2 conferences or were not aware of FLOW 2 conferences.²⁴⁵ This could be addressed to some extent by greater use of online meetings, something which the MFA introduced in 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This may also make participation in the conferences more manageable, as one interviewee suggested.²⁴⁶

Finding 17: Monitoring and evaluation

Grantees have largely welcomed FLOW 2's new outcome-focussed approach to monitoring and reporting which, with MFA support, they have largely used to take a strategic implementation approach, regularly assessing the outcomes being achieved, or not achieved, and adapting the programme to enhance results. Many lead grantees have not, however, taken full advantage of the approach to simplify their monitoring frameworks and reduce the monitoring burden on partners, which, in some cases, is significant. The late introduction of grantee reporting against two gender equality corporate indicators has been problematic and has not easily facilitated MFA accountability to Parliament. Most grantees have complied with the MFA's request to report their programme's results data to International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI), but few see any benefit to their organisation of doing so.

In FLOW 2, the MFA adopted a new approach to monitoring and reporting, seeking to shift the focus away from activities to progress towards intended outcomes. To aid this process, the MFA requested that grantees:

1. Develop a theory of change, which explicitly sets out the project's intended outcomes and expected pathways to achieving those outcomes;
2. Develop a monitoring framework with indicators and targets at outcome and output levels, clearly aligned with the theory of change;
3. Include as part of their monitoring framework at least one of two corporate indicators used by the MFA to report the achievements of its gender equality programming to parliament (**Table 3**); and
4. Report their results data on the IATI online system.

All of these requests were made at proposal stage, except the request to include corporate indicators into project monitoring frameworks, which came in late 2016, in the first year of FLOW 2's implementation.²⁴⁷ They reflected wider trends within the Government of the Netherlands – a shift towards results-based management and a commitment to aid transparency.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁴ KII 42 sub-grantee; KII 76 consortium partner.

²⁴⁵ KII 10 lead partner; KII 73 lead partner; KII 21 lead partner; KII 41 sub-grantee; KII 46 lead partner; KII 50 sub-grantee; FGD 82 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁴⁶ KII 35 consortium partner.

²⁴⁷ Order of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of 3 June 2015, no. TFVG 122-15, laying down administrative rules and a ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations; FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁴⁸ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning;

MFA was trying to have grantees focussed on changes they wanted to achieve, we really wanted to be flexible with focus on actual change and learning agenda. MFA Official²⁴⁹

Table 3: MFA corporate indicators to measure achievements in gender equality programming²⁵⁰

Results Area	MFA Corporate Indicator
Strengthened capacity of civil society organisations to advance women’s rights and gender equality	Number of civil society organisations with stronger capacity to advance women’s rights and gender equality (output)
Improved preconditions for women’s rights and gender equality	Number of demonstrable contributions to women’s rights and gender equality by public and private sector institutions (outcome)

Grantees have responded positively to the MFA’s **focus on outcomes in monitoring and reporting, which many feel has allowed them to take a strategic implementation approach**, regularly assessing what outcomes are being achieved or not achieved, and adapting the programme to enhance results (see Box 9).²⁵¹ More than 70% of evaluation survey respondents said that FLOW 2 had enabled them to take a broader focus on longer-term outcomes in their monitoring to a large extent.²⁵² Sub-grantees were more positive than lead grantees in this respect (77% of sub-grantees compared to 63% of lead grantee). A monitoring approach centred around the theory of change with an aligned monitoring framework was recognised as an important facilitator of this outcome-focus, although the Lebanon case study highlighted the need for national partners to be more involved in the theory of change development to make it meaningful to programme monitoring. Some respondents also highlighted the approach of MFA FLOW 2 Programme Managers in this, guiding grantees as they developed their theory of change and monitoring framework, and using the intended outcomes to steer dialogue with grantees and to inform decision-making.²⁵³

Reporting on FLOW 2 was largely focussed on outcomes achieved as compared to activity outputs. Even in instances where activities are reported on, there was always an interest on what had been achieved by the implementation of those activities. Evaluation survey respondent

Box 7: Examples of how grantees have used an outcomes-focussed monitoring approach to improve programme implementation

ActionAid’s POWER programme: ‘The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system focussed mostly on changes that were occurring, outcomes. Our reporting focussed on outcomes/changes rather than activities. We used a reflection process with communities to understand the changes that were taking place. For example, we found that the time diary was a very powerful tool in sensitising women and communities about the workload women carry in the home, a workload that is not recognised by husbands or communities. It highlighted lots of changes, women trying to hold men to account in contributing to household work. At the start of the project, we introduced [the time diaries] at a small scale, but when we saw how powerful it was in bringing about

²⁴⁹ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁵⁰ Indicators for women’s rights and gender equality, undated, MFA.

²⁵¹ KII 53 lead partner; WfW\MINBUZA-2020.346738 28313; WFWI FLOW Mid-term Evaluation; KII 58 lead partner; Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁵² Out of 72 respondents.

²⁵³ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

change in households and communities, we decided to scale it up and profiled it more extensively internationally.’²⁵⁴

SNV’s EOWE programme: ‘A lot of M&E results helped in our decision-making, we were able to tell what results we had and pushed ourselves to take decisions. Through monitoring and tracking of results we were able to judge the quality of our results compared to what was there at beginning/against indicators, and what we could do in the time/resources left. The results tracking system was very well done and really supported us. That was very important for us especially trying to look at the policies in all the places, the number of enterprises we wanted to reach, the number of sessions we had to do. So, the tracking process helped us improve the performance generally.’²⁵⁵

The focus on outcomes in long-term social change processes has led to at least three grantees using in-depth qualitative measurement approaches such as outcome mapping or outcome harvesting and the Most Significant Change to capture changes.²⁵⁶ However, the use of in-depth qualitative methods to track changes occurring had to be defended by Task Force staff within the MFA as this went counter to the norm.²⁵⁷ The use of qualitative data was accepted, but in addition to quantitative data and indicators.²⁵⁸

Whilst the shift to outcome-focussed monitoring and reporting has been positive for grantees, some of the lead grantees recognise that it is a significant change for their organisation and one that requires time and further experience to embed. Although challenging, these grantees see the value of their organisation moving in this direction, particularly as other donors are also working in this way.²⁵⁹

Box 8: The start of grantees’ journeys towards outcome-focussed monitoring

SNV’s journey: ‘The ToC shaped what kind of results we actually focussed our efforts on. It was a bit of an adjustment as a team, SNV was very activity focussed, but the actual link between activities and the change we want to achieve was less clear. We had to work a lot with the teams to make sure they understand. We used the annual events to reflect on the ToC and how to adjust this. I think in SNV this is still not so easy for people, there’s still a focus on activities, but there’s been an improvement ... The collaboration with MFA helped us to shape our ToC approach, but also it wasn’t the only donor asking us to do this. SNV at the time was moving to a more diversified donor-base, so for us it became more important to understand better how ToC processes worked and what that could bring about. I think we’re not quite there yet as an organisation but we made progress and are still in a learning process.’²⁶⁰

WfWI’s journey: ‘I think the framework was very results-oriented. We didn’t have many “number of people reached” kind of indicators. The challenge on our end was making sure we were reporting towards achievement of results and not just targets. If we didn’t hit a target, one suggestion would be to change the target, rather than really evaluate “are we doing enough to achieve this result?” “If we leave it like that, what would we need to?” ... This is an ongoing challenge and discussion we have as an organisation, how can we go beyond reporting for the sake of reporting, how do we get to a point where we collect this info because we need it, and we need it for our organisation.’²⁶¹

²⁵⁴ KII 09 lead partner.

²⁵⁵ KII 53 lead partner.

²⁵⁶ For example, CREA’s AWC; KII 03 MFA stakeholder; Hivos’ WE4L Mid-term Review; FGD 82 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁵⁷ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁵⁸ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; KII 03 MFA stakeholder.

²⁵⁹ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; FGD 82 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; KII 14 lead partner.

²⁶⁰ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁶¹ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

The relative newness (for some grantees) of an outcome-focussed approach to monitoring and the organisational shift it calls for has meant that many lead grantees didn't make the most of the approach to streamline their programme monitoring frameworks and partner monitoring and reporting requirements. Mid-term reviews and end of programme evaluations for several projects highlighted opportunities to simplify monitoring frameworks and reduce the monitoring and reporting burden on partners.²⁶² One key informant commented that the lead grantee's monitoring demands were 'overwhelming' and probably unnecessary.²⁶³ Sub-grantees in several projects highlight the demands of monitoring and reporting. In the words of one 'We get money in March and we are asked to report in April.'²⁶⁴ Under-resourcing of MEL capacity in programmes is clearly a contributory factor. More than half of grantees encounter challenges with inadequate technical monitoring skills in the team, insufficient time allocated to M&E staff, or inadequate resources to fully operationalise their monitoring approach.²⁶⁵ Despite capacity-building done in this area, several country-level respondents identified this as an area where further support was needed.²⁶⁶ Certainly, in some instances, this is likely to have undermined grantee ability to embed monitoring systems and processes.

The lack of a permanent monitoring and evaluation specialist has not allowed to properly institutionalize and adapt the M&E system and tools put into place, and carry out a meticulous monitoring of the results of the project The irregularity of having an M&E officer has not allowed to regularly accompany the staff to appropriately own and use the concept of 'results', and to adequately report on the achievements of the project.²⁶⁷ Grantee report.

The patchy follow-through of an outcome-focussed monitoring approach into programme monitoring frameworks and partner reporting requirements may reflect the relative newness of this approach for lead and sub-grantees. It could also suggest the need for the **MFA to provide clearer guidance to grantees on the implications of an outcome-focussed monitoring approach for programmes' monitoring frameworks and reporting** (see EQ 10 for further discussion on MFA implementation guidance). Certainly, whilst some progress has been made in moving towards outcome-focussed monitoring, more remains to be done, and this is something that is being emphasised in FLOW 2's successor programme, Power of Women.²⁶⁸

There has been mixed experience with the introduction of the corporate gender equality indicators in late 2016, after the start of FLOW 2, and it has been a challenge for the MFA to draw on grantee data to report on them to parliament, leading to weak accountability. Most grantees responded to the request to report against at least one of the two indicators to some degree, despite the request coming when most grantees had monitoring frameworks in place.²⁶⁹ Two of the grantees, SNV and WfWI, found benefits in the process as the request

²⁶² Hivos, IBIS, IWDA, WfWI. IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report; KII 29 other stakeholder; WfWI\MINBUZA-2020.346738 28313; WfWI - FLOW Mid-term Evaluation.

²⁶³ KII 29 other stakeholder.

²⁶⁴ Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review.

²⁶⁵ ActionAid POWER Mid-term Review; CREA AWC Endline Evaluation; Hivos WE4L Endline Evaluation Report; Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review; KII 36 consortium partner; PIWA Mid-term Review Report; KII 47 sub-grantee; SNV EOWE Endline Evaluation Report.

²⁶⁶ KII 17 consortium partner; IBIS FLOW Mid-term Evaluation. In some cases capacity-building and mentoring support helped build partner M&E capacity: KII 72 consortium partner; KII 47 sub-grantee (but this was targeted to the M&E Officer who left the programme); KII 50 sub-grantee.

²⁶⁷ PIWA Mid-term Review Report.

²⁶⁸ KII 04 MFA stakeholder.

²⁶⁹ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; FGD 82 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; KII 09 consortium lead; KII 21 lead partner; IBIS FLOW Mid-term Evaluation; KII 39 consortium partner.

led to important internal discussions about how to measure empowerment and to the introduction of new measurement methodologies. On the advice of MFA, for example, SNV adopted the 5C approach to measuring organisational capacity.²⁷⁰ Only one grantee found the indicators difficult to incorporate into their monitoring framework and in this case, the MFA accepted they would not formally report against the corporate indicators.²⁷¹ The MFA has however found it difficult to extract and aggregate relevant data from grantee reports to use in its own reporting to parliament.²⁷² The indicators were not defined and so what should be counted against the two indicators is not clear. Furthermore, the Enterprise Agency (contracted to support on FLOW 2 monitoring) and/or MFA staff had to extract relevant data from grantee narrative reports, a process that was time-consuming and, according to MFA staff, often not done well.²⁷³ The process for doing so has not been documented, and as the data was combined with results from other MFA gender equality programmes, it is impossible to validate the reports submitted to parliament.

In terms of IATI reporting, nine of the ten FLOW 2 grantees responded to the MFA's requirement to report results data on the IATI online database to some extent.²⁷⁴ Most of these grantees are said to have reported regularly at year end.²⁷⁵

The MFA provided some guidance and support to orient grantees in the rationale for IATI reporting and to assist them in the process, but grantee feedback suggests this was insufficient to aid them in completing the request. The rationale for IATI reporting was discussed at the first FLOW 2 conference²⁷⁶ and reporting guidelines²⁷⁷ were reported to be shared with grantees.²⁷⁸ In addition, MFA FLOW 2 programme managers and the Helpdesk were able to provide, on request, additional support to grantees.²⁷⁹ However, over 70 per cent of evaluation survey respondents rated the support provided as inadequate or moderately inadequate.²⁸⁰ To fill the learning gap, one grantee attended training offered by Bond²⁸¹, which they reported had been helpful.²⁸² Limited experience of the IATI reporting system amongst MFA officials may partly explain why the support provided did not go far enough.²⁸³

Overall it would have been difficult to use IATI successfully with only the information/support received from the MFA. We would recommend they support new partners to gain training. Survey respondent

²⁷⁰ FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁷¹ KII 16 consortium partner; KII 03 MFA stakeholder.

²⁷² KII 49 lead partner; KII 02 MFA stakeholder; KII 01 MFA stakeholder.

²⁷³ KII 02 MFA Stakeholder.

²⁷⁴ MFA METIS reports for grantees.

²⁷⁵ The MFA can only access end of project data, not annual data, for 2 grantees, perhaps because of certain settings used when entering the data. KII 05 MFA stakeholder; MFA Evaluation manager communication.

²⁷⁶ FLOW 2 policy dialogue report, September 2016.

²⁷⁷ The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'How to Use the IATI Standard. Publication Guidelines for Partners, Contractors and Suppliers of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs', 2015 (updated 2021).

²⁷⁸ KII 05 MFA stakeholder.

²⁷⁹ KII 05 MFA stakeholder; FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁸⁰ Rating the support 1-5 on a 10 point scale, with 1 being inadequate and 10 being adequate. Only 14 responses were received for this survey question.

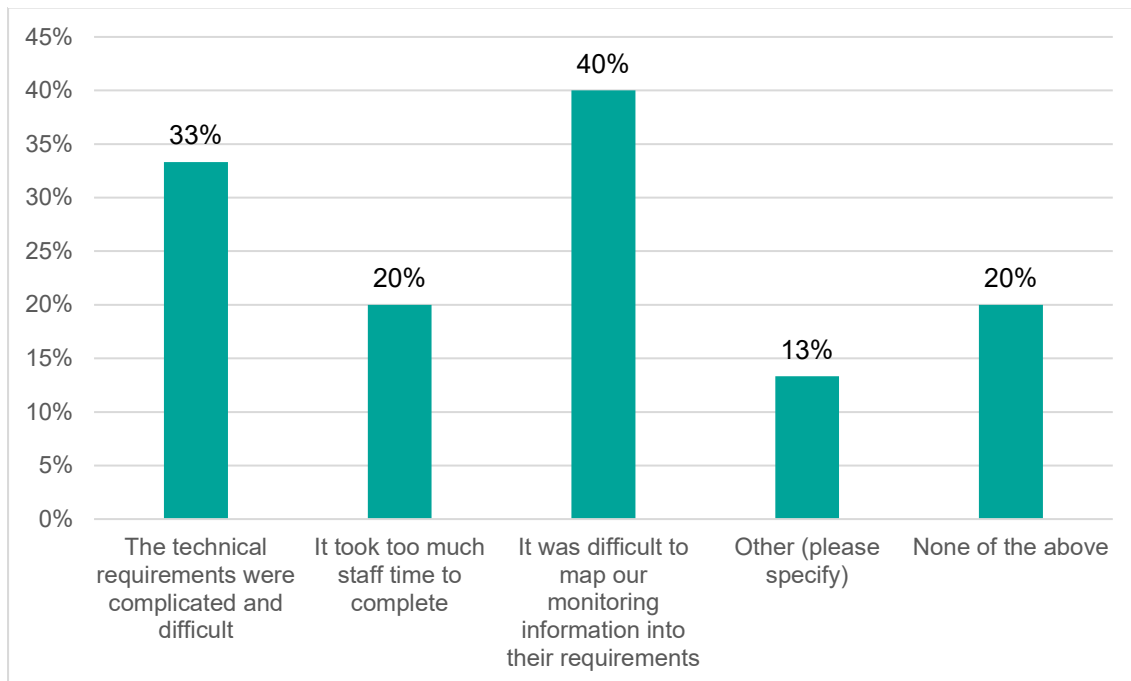
²⁸¹ International development network providing development training

²⁸² Evaluation survey.

²⁸³ KII 05 MFA stakeholder

Although support provided was largely considered insufficient, most grantees indicated that reporting on the IATI system was a manageable task, despite it being time-consuming, with the IATI system difficult to navigate.²⁸⁴ Over 60 per cent of survey respondents²⁸⁵ said meeting financial and results reporting requirements on IATI was easy to moderately easy,²⁸⁶ whilst the remainder said it was difficult to moderately difficult. The main challenges encountered included: difficulty in mapping grantee monitoring information onto IATI requirements, the requirements of the IATI system were too technical and complicated and it was time-consuming (see Figure 16). Qualitative data collected for the evaluation confirms these challenges.²⁸⁷

Figure 16: Challenges in using the IATI system (Source: survey, Q15, 15 respondents)



Few grantees have been able to identify any organisational benefits of reporting results data on the IATI online database, but most have done so to comply with MFA requirements. Two-thirds of evaluation survey respondents assessed IATI reporting as limited or no use to their organisations and in many ways duplicative to the reporting they submitted directly to MFA.²⁸⁸ That said, 20 per cent of survey respondents reported the IATI reporting being useful to extremely useful to their organisation.²⁸⁹ One respondent explained how she had unexpectedly used IATI to source a monitoring framework for one of the other FLOW grantees, a framework she had drawn upon when developing their own FLOW 2 monitoring framework. But this experience was quite unique, and the respondent confirmed that she felt largely ignorant of what the IATI system could offer and difficulties in navigating it were a significant barrier.²⁹⁰

²⁸⁴ KII 09 lead partner.

²⁸⁵ There were however only 16 responses for this question, all from lead grantees, reflecting a tendency for the organisations to handle IATI reporting.

²⁸⁶ Respondents who scored the level of ease 7, 8 or 9 on a 10-point scale, where 10 is extremely easy.

²⁸⁷ CREA AWC 2020 Annual Report; CREA AWC Endline Evaluation; KII 76 consortium partner; FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning; FGD 82 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁸⁸ Scoring 1-5 on a 10-point scale, where 1 is not at all useful and 10 is extremely useful. Programme Level\Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning FGDs questions - group 2: 27-31 (0).

²⁸⁹ There were only 3 respondents who scored 8-10 on a 10 point scale, where 10 is extremely useful.

²⁹⁰ FGD 82 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

Finding 18: Procedures and resources

Sizeable programme budgets, a five-year implementation timeframe and a focus on outcomes have allowed many grantees the scope to adapt strategies to achieve results. But available flexibilities are not always clear to grantees – a situation shaped, partially, by the quality of their relationship with the MFA Programme Manager and the latter’s engagement in FLOW 2. Most grantees have also struggled to ensure appropriate human resourcing for programme delivery and management of the partnerships, especially when adopting a feminist approach, which strives to provide a level playing field for all partners, to the consortium management.

The MFA sought to provide FLOW 2 grantees with a flexible implementation framework, which allowed partners to navigate the complexities and unpredictability of the contexts they worked within and remain focussed on achieving intended outcomes.²⁹¹ Implementation requisites were therefore minimal and kept at a broad level. They included:

- A budget ceiling of between €5 million and €15 million, with an upper limit set for salary costs for northern-based programme staff and an implementation timeframe of five years;
- Project implementation being guided by a theory of change and an aligned monitoring framework with indicators and targets at output and outcome levels; and
- Submission of annual progress reports and financial audits, as well as a workplan and budget for the following year.²⁹²

Overall, grantees confirm that FLOW 2’s implementation framework has been flexible, providing them with appropriate scope to effect change in unpredictable environments. In the evaluation’s survey, 65 per cent of respondents were very satisfied with their partnership with the MFA,²⁹³ with only one respondent stating that they were unsatisfied.²⁹⁴ Most survey respondents were also positive about many aspects of FLOW 2 project management, including annual reporting processes, financial management, allocation of financial resources, selection of partners and communications with partners, although international partners tended to be less positive than national partners.

Some grantees highlighted the **sizeable programme budgets and long implementation timeframe as important factors in this flexible framework, factors which are reported to be fairly unique in the international development arena.**²⁹⁵ But it is these design parameters, combined with the MFA’s flexibility in annual work planning processes where decisions were made on the basis of likely contribution to the intended outcomes (see findings for EQ9) that has given grantees the space to adapt their implementation to respond to

²⁹¹ KII 05 MFA stakeholder; FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁹² Order of the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of 3 June 2015, no. TFGV 122-15, laying down administrative rules and a ceiling for grants awarded under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Grant Regulations 2006 (Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women 2016–2020); FLOW 2 Policy Dialogue Conference, September 2016; FGD 83 Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning.

²⁹³ Respondents scoring 8–10 on a 10-point scale where 1 is very unsatisfied and 10 is extremely satisfied. The total number of respondents for this question was 17, all of whom were international partners.

²⁹⁴ This respondent scored their level of satisfaction with the MFA partnership as 1, very unsatisfied. All other respondents rated their level of satisfaction at 5 or above.

²⁹⁵ KII 33 consortium partner; IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation; PIWA Mid-term Review Report; KII 11 lead partner.

technical opportunities and contextual changes, and thereby support the achievement of intended outcomes (see Box 9 below).²⁹⁶

Box 9: Examples of project implementation flexibility

Changes in country focus: Due to unforeseen circumstances, CREA had to make changes to their country focus. It was obliged to curtail its planned activities in Sudan because sanctions meant they were unable to transfer money to partners. Instead, it was agreed that the AWC project would be implemented in Lebanon.²⁹⁷

Responsiveness to local contextual factors: Grantees often revised implementation plans in response to changes on the ground, whether contextual, or triggered by the programme itself. For example, the end-line evaluation report commended IWDA's flexible operational approach on WAVE, which 'was pivotal in enabling programme partners to be responsive to local events (such as elections) and changes in local context (such as emergent opportunities for targeted advocacy, or the need to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic).'²⁹⁸

Changes in response to the Covid-19 pandemic: All projects were affected to some degree by the global Covid-19 pandemic, with delays in implementing activities due to Covid-19 restrictions being the most commonly reported bottleneck by evaluation survey respondents.²⁹⁹ This led to budget revisions and changes in the way projects engaged with beneficiaries, for example in POWER, ActionAid made use of radio to communicate messages to communities, rather than face to face activities.³⁰⁰ A partner on IWDA's WAVE reported 'IWDA is a very understanding donor, they fully get our situation during a global pandemic, they let us revise our workplan, budget plan, which is very much appreciated. They are quite flexible.'

Whilst the overall trend is positive, there have been some aspects of the implementation framework which have inhibited implementation and, in turn, progress towards intended outcomes. Many grantees and their partners are unclear about the level of implementation flexibility available to them, particularly when it relates to unprecedented events like the Covid-19 pandemic, and the extent to which it is clear appears to be shaped by the quality of their relationship with the MFA programme manager.³⁰¹ Clearly, there are some red lines, which the MFA cannot flex, but what these are is often not apparent to grantees. For example, one grantee expressed frustration at the lack of clarity on budget revisions permissible when reorienting their programme to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic. This led to time inefficiencies with activities planned having to be put on hold as MFA approval was not forthcoming.³⁰² Another grantee recalled the difficulties they had replacing some partner organisations who had not performed well with individual consultants. The MFA did not approve this change as replacing organisations with individuals would have resulted in a reduction in the number of organisations whose capacity the programme was building, one of the MFA's corporate gender equality indicators for which they were accountable to parliament (see Finding 17).³⁰³

This situation places pressure on MFA Programme Managers to be available and responsive to grantee requests, a responsiveness that Programme Managers may be hard pressed to provide. Several interviewees recognized the high staff turnover within the MFA, which

²⁹⁶ KII 16 consortium partner; IBIS FLOW Endline Evaluation; IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report; SNV EOWE Annual Narrative Report 2020; KII 49 lead partner; KII 55 lead partner; KII 58 lead partner.

²⁹⁷ KII 16 consortium partner.

²⁹⁸ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report.

²⁹⁹ 64% of evaluation survey respondents reported experiencing a bottleneck leading to delays in implementing activities due to Covid-19.

³⁰⁰ ActionAid, CREA, IWDA, SNV.

³⁰¹ KII 35 consortium partner; KII 28 lead partner; KII 51 sub-grantee; KII 05 MFA stakeholder.

³⁰² KII 35 consortium partner.

³⁰³ KII 49 lead partner.

undermines relationships with grantees.³⁰⁴ MFA staff face competing priorities and as programme management is not valued as much within the Ministry as other responsibilities, staff may be inclined to deprioritize support to grantees.³⁰⁵ This may partly explain why a much smaller proportion of evaluation survey respondents felt dialogue with the MFA was broadly effective compared to other project management processes, with 38 per cent of survey respondents reporting dialogue with the MFA was very effective, and 28 per cent saying it was somewhat effective. As one grantee summarized,

*'There was not clarity on the rules in the Ministry, the people are always turning over, they are very formalistic in how they answer things, and it's like they don't know what the rules are. We had four or five contact people during the programme. I feel people circulate too often, meaning a lack of capacity because of number of people on board, so people feel insecure about their job and so they stick to details.'*³⁰⁶

Insufficient MFA management support has contributed to delays in some grantees getting approvals for programme changes and the release of funds, something which has likely affected implementation efficiency.³⁰⁷ This was a bottleneck that around a quarter of evaluation survey respondents reported encountering.³⁰⁸ When this occurred, larger organisations such as ActionAid, Promundo and Abaad, were able to draw on their own resources to bridge the gap, but this is not an approach that is possible for all partners.

Beyond these challenges in the interface between the MFA and FLOW 2 grantees, the latter have faced some additional implementation challenges, internal to the consortium. These challenges can be clustered around two main themes, ensuring appropriate staffing and staff management structures, and making a consortium partnership work for all partners. With these, it is not that the implementation framework put in place by the MFA inhibits efficiency and effectiveness. Rather, the issue is lead and sub-grantees understanding how to make best use of available resources to facilitate programme delivery, within specific, but varying contexts.

Although most grantees felt they had an adequate budget for their programme, **all FLOW 2 grantees encountered some challenges associated with the appropriate staffing of programme delivery, which directly affected the quality of implementation.** Challenges faced included gaps in required technical capacities,³⁰⁹ adequately equipping staff to play their anticipated role,³¹⁰ unclear staff management structures, staff turnover,³¹¹ insufficient attention given to organisational development to embed capacities,³¹² staff encountering competing priorities, especially if they are not working on the FLOW 2 programme full-time³¹³ and staff overload, particularly at peak times such as reporting periods.³¹⁴ In addition, **two sub-grantees reported their budgets were insufficient to cover staff statutory payments.**³¹⁵ In some programme contexts, staff turnover was especially detrimental. For example, the end-

³⁰⁴ KII 13 sub-grantee; KII 35 IBIS consortium partner; KII 02 MFA stakeholders.

³⁰⁵ KII 35 IBIS consortium partner; KII 02 MFA stakeholder; KII 01 MFA stakeholder.

³⁰⁶ KII 35 consortium partner.

³⁰⁷ ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation Report; KII 13 sub-grantee; KII 11 lead partner; IBIS FLOW Mid-term Evaluation; KII 28 lead partner; KII 79 consortium partner; KII 40 consortium partner.

³⁰⁸ 23% of evaluation survey respondents stated they had faced bottlenecks associated with fund disbursement and 26% had faced bottlenecks associated with internal or external approvals.

³⁰⁹ Hivos, Simavi, PIWA, Rutgers, SNV and WfWI. See also findings for EQ9 on insufficient M&E capacity.

³¹⁰ Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review.

³¹¹ ActionAid, CREA, Hivos, PIWA, SNV.

³¹² Hivos, IWDA.

³¹³ CREA, IWDA.

³¹⁴ ActionAid, CREA, Hivos, IWDA, PIWA and SNV.

³¹⁵ KII 62 sub-grantee; KII 47 sub-grantee.

line evaluation of PIWA's WOM programme commented 'A high staff turnover at PIWA combined with continual changes to the project design and activities meant that partners felt that the project was unstable and mismanaged.'³¹⁶ Staff overload, which in some cases is linked to staff turnover, has also clearly undermined the ability of some grantees to operate in a strategic way. During the programme's mid-term review, one grantee staff member commented '[M]y entire existence narrows to today's to-do list. When we are frantically racing, we fail to invest the time in planning, reflection, evaluation and capacity-building that could help yield greater and more consistent results.'³¹⁷

There appear to have been different understandings amongst grantees about the extent to which MFA resources could be used for partner organisational strengthening. IWDA and its partners were proactive in strengthening partners' organisational capacity and the evaluator of WAVE commented that IWDA 'provided core flexible funding'.³¹⁸ In contrast, CREA reported that 'The funding wasn't really very flexible, we had to give a work plan, it was not for organisational development, not a core fund, it was a programme fund.'³¹⁹ Hivos partners also recognized the need for more organisational strengthening. As one Director said: 'In women's rights organisations we become more effective change agents when our organisational structures, policies, procedures, and programming are also more democratic and gender-just, but to do this requires some capacities which we often don't have'.³²⁰

Whilst grantees commonly recognise that effectively managing a consortium of partners with different capacities and working in different contexts is time intensive, several have struggled to resource this role adequately, sometimes resulting in project coordination or technical support to partners being compromised.³²¹ These time demands can be particularly significant when adopting a feminist approach to partnership building, where partners manage consortium processes in a participatory way, involving all partners in decision-making processes, as CREA has found. However, the investment can bring other dividends, including contributing to building a stronger women's movement (Box 12). Interestingly, IWDA's experience of adopting a feminist approach to the WAVE partnership has highlighted other challenges, bringing to the fore the tension between ally and funder.³²² In most consortium management processes, IWDA explicitly sought to share power with partners. However, in terms of programme delivery, some partners reported feeling pressured by IWDA's expectations, with high workloads to be delivered on a limited budget, in short timeframes and with comprehensive reporting. This, one interviewee suggested, was a result of IWDA's 'own cultural understanding of high quality [which] got in the way of what they were expecting of their partners',³²³ but it could also be indicative of an incomplete shift towards outcome-focused monitoring and reporting (see Finding 17), with lead grantees continuing to feel the accountability pressures associated with a stricter managerial approach to programme management and the achievement of results.

³¹⁶ PIWA WOM Final Evaluation.

³¹⁷ Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review.

³¹⁸ IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflection Report; KII 29 other stakeholder.

³¹⁹ KII 16 consortium partner.

³²⁰ Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review.

³²¹ ActionAid, CREA, Hivos.

³²² IWDA WAVE Mid-term Reflection Report.

³²³ KII 29 other stakeholder.

Box 10: The benefits and demands of a feminist approach to partnerships

‘Building synergy is very labour intensive due to partners’ capacity, and the budgeting of time needed to develop the politics of the partnership and the necessary instruments of a common approach... In the first phase therefore, energy went into this area and has to continue in the remaining period to consolidate the approach as part of the overall narrative that emerges of what it means to work together as a Global South consortium. This means taking into account how disparate organisational capacity among members of the consortium either inhibits or accelerates the ability of individual partners to respond to the different requirements of the partnership.’ CREA Mid-term Review Report

‘All consortium partners report a greater depth of understanding of what consortium partners and the activists, movements and networks they support face in their geographical contexts ... Understanding these realities has led to a broader intersectional gender sensitive feminist consciousness beyond the boundaries of individual organisations’ regional work. This speaks directly to strengthened solidarity between consortium partners through a shared politics, and across the regions where they operate. Improved relationships, increased inter-connectedness and movement-building practices have been consistently reported as strengthened across the board.’ *CREA AWC Endline Evaluation*

“ Building synergy is very labour intensive due to partners’ capacity, and the budgeting of time...

Finding 19: Value for money

There was no explicit value for money (VfM) framework for FLOW 2, but partners did take a number of steps towards ensuring VfM, largely due to their pre-existing procedures and practices. The programme gave particular opportunity to focus on ethical dimensions of VfM and its flexibility and focus on learning were highlighted as features which particularly supported value.

The MFA did not put any specific requirements in place to ensure VfM, and did not specify a framework or criteria through which VfM would be understood and/or assessed.

Nevertheless, most partners and sub-grantees did routinely or semi-routinely use a number of procedures associated with VfM many of which were already in place as part of their internal functioning. Qualitative data shows that these included implementing finance and procurement policies,³²⁴ undertaking due diligence procedures when contracting with sub-grantees³²⁵ undertaking frequent planning and replanning to manage large budgets,³²⁶ adaptability with to sub-grantees regarding budget size and use,³²⁷ designing multi-purpose monitoring visits,³²⁸ following through on activities to push for outcomes.³²⁹

Survey questions using a VfM framework of Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Ethics show that ethics-type criteria figure high in the type of steps partners were able to take towards VfM. The two most frequently cited factors for VfM were ethics-based ('We explicitly targeted marginalised women and/or girls', 79 per cent of respondents replied 'always'), and efficiency-based ('We regularly reviewed the budget to ensure the project is spending money in the right areas', 68 per cent of respondents replied 'always'). Other steps taken by several partners also included ethics-based questions: 'We took steps to ensure hard to reach communities were involved in the project, 63 percent replied 'always' and 21 per cent replied 'frequently'); and effectiveness-based questions: 'We used a results-based management approach', 53 per cent replied 'always' and 32 per cent replied 'frequently').

Some dimensions were particularly encouraged by the approach the MFA took, including flexibility and an ability to listen to partners about how to achieve results,³³⁰ and an emphasis on learning and adapting the programme to this learning. One example was given in qualitative data of how limits to this adaptability and flexibility threatened VfM on one occasion in the perception of the partner. When one sub-grantee was not performing well, the partner proposed to transition this area of work to individual consultants. Permission for this was not given because it would affect results accrued against one of the indicators reported to parliament (number of CSOs strengthened).³³¹

³²⁴ KII 14 lead partner; KII 58 lead partner.

³²⁵ KII 28 lead partner.

³²⁶ KII 13 sub-grantee.

³²⁷ KII 36 sub-grantee.

³²⁸ KII 47 lead partner.

³²⁹ KII 52 sub-grantee.

³³⁰ KII 49 lead partner.

³³¹ Ibid.

Figure 18: What steps did you take to encourage value for money in your activities? (Source: survey, Q8, 19 respondents)



Lessons Learned

Key lessons

Three very clear messages resonating among the majority of organisations have been: engage men early and intensively in programming, especially influential men; invest the time and resources needed to build networks and movements while paying attention to how funding influences power dynamics among organisations; and invest in and plan for learning and sharing.

Engaging with men

The clearest and most consistent lesson from the majority of partners across FLOW 2 is to **engage with men** in programmes setting out to advance women's rights. All programmes except CREA and PIWA bring this forward as an explicit lesson learned. Several stakeholders note that this would have been better earlier in their programmes and with more focus and intensity.³³² As shown in Finding 7, stakeholders associate the engagement of men strongly with their achievements, and have engaged men at individual, household, community levels and to a lesser extent in governance institutions. Some stakeholders particularly emphasise that engaging with influential men, such as community leaders, traditional and religious leaders, has been a critical component of their programmes in some countries.³³³ These community-level engagements at one level contribute to a favourable environment for women engaging in the programme to be able to express their agency, gain mobility and access to economic opportunities, move into leadership roles, and for better responses to GBV. With clear achievements in engaging men at these individual and community levels, there is perhaps an implication that engaging men more systematically in economic institutions and governance institutions could be fruitful.

However, several organisations note that backlash can be associated with engaging with men, and should be planned for as a part of risk assessment and mitigation. This type of backlash is part of a broader set of risks, including potential backlash from working on advancing women's rights generally, whether specifically engaging with men or not (see below).

Building groups, networks and movements

A second clear message is that building groups, networks, women's organisations and movements is absolutely key: these are put forwards as 'results' in themselves as well as mechanisms potentially offering sustainability and the structures from which further outcomes and impact can be achieved. All programme partners have used group and network building at some level. Fundamentally, building these common spaces is about creating solidarity and support structures from which norms can be challenged and women can analyse their situations, get support and create collective action.

Broader networks are opportunities for alliance building, and amplifying the collective voice and visibility of members situated both at the grassroots and at national levels.³³⁴ They also expose groups to other approaches and learning. Creating networks is a critical component of building movements; stakeholders note that time and resources must be allowed to make investments into these relationships, and that it is incorrect to assume that it is straightforward to build unified platforms for advocacy and mobilisation. The reality of building a cohesive

³³² KII 13 sub-grantee; KII 55 lead partner; KII 11 ActionAid lead partner.

³³³ KII 58 lead partner; Rutgers Prevention+ Final Narrative Report and Annual Report 2020. Countries such as Rwanda and Uganda.

³³⁴ CREA AWC Endline Evaluation Report. KII 62 sub-grantee.

platform amongst different groups is not as easy and/or symbiotic. Both IBIS-Liberia and WAVE experienced some initial challenges in bringing together different WCSO's and actors under one unified umbrella towards women's empowerment, and the AWC consortium, which saw their constituent parts as 'embedded in the movement' had to invest time in exploring the roles of consortium members.³³⁵ In Liberia, initially the women's movement was quite fragmented, and coalitions were difficult to establish on a national level because of existing issues between organisations.³³⁶

For WAVE, the lack of 'oneness' amongst women networks was also experienced within some contexts, and while 'donor resources' could help encourage solidarity amongst the different organisations,³³⁷ if not implemented strategically it could also cause additional rifts – for example, in Solomon Islands, IWDA found that providing funds to one organisation working on coalition-building had a detrimental effect on coalition politics and power dynamics because this one organisation became stronger while others became weaker.³³⁸

There is power in women coming together to support one another. Group-based programming and VSLAs create social support networks for women, reducing isolation, providing comfort and safety in emergencies, and leading to opportunities for community engagement and collective action.
WfWI Results Brief

Incorporate learning into the programme design

All organisations emphasise the value of sharing their programme experience and learning from others, especially by bringing organisations together at national and regional levels. Stakeholders are clear that these learning processes have enhanced results by cross-fertilizing approaches and have amplified impact.³³⁹ Some note that learning is particularly important to establish at early stages of the programme when methodologies are still being tested³⁴⁰ and that reflection and documentation need to be incorporated into programme design, budgeted, and treated as intrinsic parts of the programme.³⁴¹ Facilitating learning at local levels through peer-to-peer exchange events has also been important for women at community levels.³⁴²

Planning for risk, including backlash

A number of stakeholders bring forward the real and serious issue of risk to women's rights advocates as an important dimension which should be clearly made visible and explored, addressed, and planned for. Several organisations note the risk of backlash from working with men or with women at local levels: this includes the risk of increased IPV as a result of women's stronger income earning, for example, as well as a broader risk from a general public to those undertaking advocacy, including risk of online GBV.

³³⁵ KII 15 consortium partner.

³³⁶ KII 67 sub-grantee.

³³⁷ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation.

³³⁸ KII 48 lead partner.

³³⁹ SNV EOWE Final Evaluation.

³⁴⁰ ActionAid POWER Endline Evaluation Report; WfWI FLOW 2 Final Programme Evaluation.

³⁴¹ Hivos WE4L Mid-term Review; KII 54 SNV lead partner; SNV EOWE Final Evaluation Report; CREA/AWC Mid-term Review Report.

³⁴² KII 54 lead partner; ActionAid POWER final end of project report.

As a first step, organisations should be better prepared for, even expect, backlash.³⁴³ Preparedness includes: actively surfacing risks and highlighting them;³⁴⁴ embedding provisions for these risks in both programmes and budgets; being particularly vigilant to develop strong security protocols in high-risk contexts³⁴⁵ (such as, for example, around sex worker advocacy in Kenya) and associated with women who step into leadership roles.³⁴⁶ IWDA's Endline Evaluation noted that supporting individual women to anticipate and prepare for risk and backlash, and find ways to mitigate was an area for further improvement.³⁴⁷

Box11: Good practice for safeguarding against risk and backlash

Rutgers' Final Evaluation Report advises all organisations to review their safeguarding procedures and ensure the provision of a comprehensive safeguarding training module within the facilitator training curriculums.

This should cover context-specific risks, but also include risks associated with:

- Safe travel and/or transportation of female participants to/from counselling and other services;
- Risk of backlash from other men and women as a consequence of one or more aspects of prevention+ programming (for instance objection from partners or mockery from members of the community);
- Duty of care to staff and delivery partner personnel to ensure their personal safety and welfare when entering either higher risk environments (e.g. prisons) or in working with challenging groups;
- Breaches of privacy in GBV cases;
- Risk of missing/avoiding sensitive but important aspects of GBV (e.g., sexual violence); and
- Risk of losing sight of women's rights and engaging with men in more patriarchal ways.

Rutgers Prevention+ Final Evaluation Report

A further dimension of this – noted as a good practice by the WAVE endline evaluation – was the experience in learning about feminist leadership as a conceptual model and way of operating. This included spaces to focus greater attention on self-care, collective care and dual and triple burdens of care experienced by women; as well as recognizing potential for overwork and burnout among staff of women's organisations. They recommend making specific plans to ensure the safety and well-being of staff, and ensuring resources for increased security, self-care and respite.³⁴⁸

Similarly, the WfWI evaluation advises specific conflict, political and risk analysis at the onset of the programme to ensure that the programme is designed in a conflict-sensitive (do no harm) and conflict-responsive manner, to ensure greater clarity over the specific forms of VAWG that the programme seeks to tackle. Further, it advises training in potential participant and staff safeguarding issues to ensure risks are proactively being addressed over the course of the programme.³⁴⁹

³⁴³ CREA AWC 2020 Annual Report; IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report.

³⁴⁴ CREA AWC Mid-term Review Report.

³⁴⁵ KII 64 consortium partner.

³⁴⁶ IWDA WAVE Endline Evaluation Report.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ WfWI FLOW 2 Final Programme Evaluation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations on six prominent themes emerging from the evaluation are offered here. Recommendations are integrated with the conclusions to clarify how they have emerged from the findings and how they are related to each conclusion theme.

1. Networks and movements as potential scale-up pathways

Finding 3, Finding 4, Finding 6, Finding 8, Finding 10, Finding 11, Finding 13

FLOW 2 programmes used groups and networks of some form in every programme. In the main, these are seen as environments in which women can find mutual support and solidarity. At the same time, they are mechanisms to achieve reach – for cascading training, or supporting business development (Finding 8), and for generating discussion on norms, rights and inequalities (Finding 6). In other programmes, they are platforms providing a foundation from which to pursue advocacy at many different levels, bringing people together, hosting campaigns, amplifying the voice and visibility of marginalised groups (Finding 3); in this sense they are also recognised as contributing to sustainability because there are several examples of group and network structures being maintained after the close of the programme (Finding 11).

There is also some evidence that groups play a role beyond these, as a mechanism for scaling up structural change (Finding 6). Linking this with parts of other findings suggests that, in some programmes, opportunities may have been lost to turn groups and networks into mechanisms or melting pots for the further diffusion of results, amplifying spillover through social networks (Finding 10), or in making denser connections across advocacy levels from local to international levels (Finding 4). In the explicitly movement-building programmes, this mechanism has been a focus and efforts have been made to maximise its potential for sustained advocacy; but even here the role they (potentially) play in taking change to scale has not been fully articulated, and results achieved in spreading or amplifying local, dispersed changes have not been systematically tracked (Finding 13). While for this evaluation the specifically movement building approaches formed only a portion of the programmes to be evaluated (2 of 10 programmes) and therefore only a proportion of the findings, there is room for further exploration of the defining features of a ‘movement’, of what these add to results, and of what is the role of funding in creating and sustaining them.

Indeed, FLOW 2 did not have an explicit strategy articulating how scale might be achieved, and there is little discussion in the data of how results have or have not dispersed or disseminated. It is perhaps implicit in the ToC that policy and legal change are the routes through which change can have maximum impact as a top-down process; the role of movements and networks in creating bottom-up pathways to diffuse local level structural changes is not explored.³⁵⁰

Recommendations

MFA: High priority

1. Make the role of groups, networks and movements more explicit in the ToC, in particular the role in scaling up and diffusing new norms, analysis and behaviours.

³⁵⁰ There is some evidence from other programmes that social networks can successfully be used to diffuse social norm changes more widely than the direct participants in activities, perhaps in combination with other communications strategies. See for example the Voices for Change, Nigeria experience: <https://www.itad.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/V4C-Outcome-Legacy-Paper-v5-FINAL-ID-180430-1.pdf>

Strengthen evidence on what works to make networks and movements sustainable beyond the direct funding framework.

2. Articulate a scale-up strategy that can join up dispersed results, and a monitoring strategy which can track this process and draw learning from it.

MFA and partners: Medium priority

3. Maximise opportunities for advocacy processes which link the different levels from local to global and types of stakeholders from rights holder-beneficiary to donor.

2. Feminist ways of working for solidarity, collaboration and learning

Finding 8, Finding 9, Finding 11, Finding 15, Finding 18

FLOW 2 included programmes which were consciously and explicitly exploring feminist ways of working towards gender equality, and others in which particular elements of feminist ways of working were embedded (Finding 8). The distinction between these and other ways of working was not directly explored through the Evaluation Questions (EQs), therefore no systematic exploration was made in this evaluation of their meaning and consequences for effectiveness and results. However, findings here presented some clear themes on how these approaches differ from others. Specifically, how partnerships, exchange and learning were approached at all levels have been key features of these explorations. In the feminist approaches to partnerships, one distinctive element has been that a central objective of learning opportunities is to enhance the agency and leadership of the diversity of women and girls including programme staff (activists) and beneficiaries/rights holders at all levels.

As brought forward in Finding 15, FLOW 2 programmes placing learning more centrally in their project design and implementation and adopting feminist approaches to learning seems to catalyse a wider range of benefits for partners. These approaches have tended to involve a wider group of participants, stretching beyond the main consortium partners to include downstream implementing partners. There are therefore examples of these approaches at all levels of learning and exchange and across partnerships: within consortia members, between lead grantees and sub-grantees, and across lead partners. Partners have explored collaborative approaches to consortium and sub-grantee relationships, which emphasise working to and appreciating mutual strengths; non-hierarchical styles; building solidarity and co-learning methods (Finding 9). They have also included an emphasis on more experimental approaches to strengthening for advocacy, which drew on feminist approaches to knowledge creation and learning (Finding 9). In relationship with sub-grantees, they emphasise confidence and skills gained in applying feminist movement principles and approaches; and they acknowledge investment in individual women as a fundamental sustainability strategy (Finding 11).

These explorations in learning have also themselves generated some learning, including that 'learning' is a core part of change for everyone involved. First: these methods are relevant at the level of attitude and behaviour change. Finding 6 states that the pathway to structural change is discursive and fundamentally relational: behaviour and attitude change has been achieved through discussion-based approaches which allow participants to explore and apply knowledge and ideas. Second, although learning across difference is core to building feminist solidarity, there may be strategic reasons to focus on opportunities where there is sufficient commonality to connect people: these might be regional, thematic, or issue-based commonalities (Finding 5). Third, there are implications of these approaches for resourcing: time demands can be particularly significant when adopting a feminist approach to partnership building, but the investment can directly contribute to building a stronger women's movement (Finding 18). In addition, there is room for further exploration of exactly how feminist approaches to learning contribute to movement building.

Recommendations

MFA and partners: high priority

4. Factor in resourcing for the time demands of a feminist approach to partnership building.

Partners: high priority

5. Build learning opportunities into programme design and resource these adequately. Treat them as integral to the programme.

MFA and partners: medium priority

6. Aim to generate further evidence of the linkages between feminist approaches to learning and partnerships and structural change in power relationships and gender inequality. Future evaluations could explicitly explore what is distinct about ‘feminist’ approaches and how these distinctions are related to results.

3. Working with gatekeepers

Finding 6, Finding 7, Finding 10

FLOW 2 partners increasingly saw the relevance, indeed the necessity, of engaging men in the work towards structural change, and most programmes included methodologies for this which contributed to their results in structural change, mainly at household and community levels (Finding 6; Finding 7). Emerging from this body of knowledge is the implication, however, that it is not working with men *per se* that is the key, but working with the gatekeepers of gender norms at each institutional level. These are indeed usually men.

FLOW 2 programmes did this more consistently at household and community levels. At household levels, programmes worked with husbands and fathers to enhance women’s positions within the household as well as to secure their greater mobility for engaging with wider institutions. At community level, some programmes worked with religious and traditional leaders. However, it is of note that there was less progress in structural change in governance institutions and particularly economic institutions (Finding 6) despite considerable targeting of (male) gatekeepers at these levels (68 per cent of survey respondents said they targeted men in institutions). In terms of the ToC, there was also less engagement of men in the advocacy stream targeting policy and legal change.

However, FLOW 2 also clearly demonstrates that working with these gatekeepers is not straightforward, can be slow, and that they can be the bearers of backlash (Finding 7, Finding 10). Finding 7 notes that programmes have met with different degrees of success in working with these gatekeepers and suggests there is an ongoing role for similar programmes to create more learning about effective methods.

Recommendations

MFA and partners: high priority

7. Treat ongoing programme experience of working with (male) gatekeepers as important repositories of learning, and ensure that new approaches are assessed, tracked, and learning disseminated.

Partners: medium priority

8. Consider increasing the focus on engaging (male) gatekeepers in economic and governance institutions.

4. Advocacy is effective but carries risk

Finding 4, Finding 7, Finding 8, Finding 9, Finding 10

FLOW 2 includes multiple examples of advocacy being effective in contributing to tangible changes at policy and legislation levels, and at many stages and steps that precede these achievements (Finding 3, Finding 4, Finding 9). However, the data also includes evidence from different sources that advocacy on gender equality, including and perhaps especially with marginalised groups, carries very real risks (Finding 9, Finding 10). It is fairly widely recognised that women's economic empowerment can carry risk of IPV at the household level (Finding 10) such that many programmes deliberately include an element of men's engagement to offset this (Finding 7). It has perhaps been less well recognised that advocating for women's rights, particularly in contexts in which civic space is shrinking, carries broader risks beyond the household and including in the digital world. FLOW 2 data include evidence of concern among national and subnational organisations that more attention needs to be paid to these risks, and strategies articulated to anticipate and respond to them.

Recommendation

MFA: high priority

9. Work with partners to better understand risk to women's rights advocates and to develop methods and procedures to anticipate and respond to these which do not further restrict space for advocacy but offer necessary support as identified by advocates.

5. The role of national and subnational organisations

Finding 2, Finding 8, Finding 9, Finding 11, Finding 12, Finding 13

In FLOW 2, sub-grantees and local partners have been the main mechanism through which programmes reached their constituencies of beneficiaries and change agents, and most were recipients of various types of capacity support in order to enhance their ability to carry out this function (Finding 8). But these organisations were also explicitly and implicitly (assumed to be) playing much broader and longer-term roles fundamental to pathways to women's rights and gender equality – an assumption which this evaluation finds good evidence to support. This includes playing a part in sustaining approaches and maintaining and progressing gains made (Findings 11 and 12), particularly but not only as ongoing advocates for women's rights and gender equality, which was also a focus for capacity-strengthening (Finding 9).

Findings here offer a number of areas in which this role could be better supported through funding instruments. First, Finding 2 suggests that involving sub-grantees in programme design and especially ToC design would have enhanced contextualisation and (therefore) the operationalisation of programmes. Finding 8 suggests avoiding project-driven capacity-building, but rather a focus on core support, analytical strengthening and advocacy capacity. Findings 12 and 13 note that while local organisations generally have commitment and durability to continue to play civil society roles long after programme closure, their effectiveness as sustainability investments does depend on the continued survival of the organisation and therefore support for future funding, networks and proposal writing is a key part of their sustainability. At the same time supporting sub-grantees to secure funds elsewhere was an area of capacity support where relatively little was done.

Further, there is support from FLOW 2 for the perspective that more could be done to directly involve national organisations and Global South partners in funding mechanisms. There is some evidence from FLOW 2 that the advantages of a relatively flexible approach on the part of MFA, combined with generous budgets and a long timeframe (Finding 18) were not fully or consistently passed on to sub-grantees – although some partners did explicitly explore non-hierarchical partnership approaches. These inconsistencies are evident, for example, in the

fact that sub-grantees report more difficulties financing advocacy than lead partners (Finding 9); that although the monitoring burden on lead partners from MFA was relatively light, this was not always the case for sub-grantees (Finding 17); and that sub-grantee budgets were on occasion too low to cover staff statutory payments (Finding 18). Finding 1 suggests that relevance and coherence of the programme could have been strengthened by including a greater representation of women's rights organisations from the Global South as lead partners.

Recommendations

MFA: high priority

10. Continue to explore ways and models for funding directly to national and Global South-based organisations, including explicitly women's rights organisations. Possible pathways to this which have potential to include smaller and newer women's organisations with application procedures within reach of these organisations include:
 - Establishing national or regional-level women's funds to route and manage grants; and
 - Establishing a programme specifically supporting capacity-strengthening for southern women's rights organisations by INGOs, with the direct objective of facilitating them into positions to compete with INGOs for bilateral and multilateral funding. This should be built around a ToC which sets out the incremental steps, objectives and assumptions to achieve this goal.

MFA and partners: high priority

11. Consider developing a mechanism for resourcing the involvement of national and subnational organisations in programme design at the proposal stage to offset the concern that it is more difficult for smaller organisations to make investments which might not generate immediate returns.

Partners: high priority

12. Ensure that enhancing potential funding networks and capacity support for proposal writing and core organisational strengthening is a central feature of capacity-strengthening.

6. The role of MFA

Finding 6, Finding 13, Finding 17, Finding 18

The experience of FLOW 2 suggests that MFA is on the right track in a number of dimensions. First, its emphasis on orienting programming towards outcomes has allowed programmes to take a strategic implementation approach, regularly assessing the outcomes being achieved, or not achieved, and adapting the programme to enhance results (Finding 17). Second, its broader emphasis on learning and the flexibility for adaptive programme management based on this ongoing learning is widely appreciated (Finding 18). Third, its willingness to explore movement-building approaches has enabled effectiveness and has the potential to offer a scale-up strategy (Finding 6, Finding 13).

Findings also suggest some areas which could be strengthened. These include:

- Being more intentional about promoting learning within and among consortia: this calls for both the MFA and grantees to set out learning objectives and a plan for delivering on these objectives, with indicators incorporated into results frameworks for tracking progress in this regard;

- Specifying the gender equality corporate indicators further and embedding processes to generate related data in a way that ensures accountability;
- The MFA being more explicit about the high-level parameters which they expect to guide programme implementation and the scope that exists for revisions to key aspects of programme design, team and budget;
- If assessing VfM is of importance to the MFA, elaborate an overarching VfM framework to guide grantee VfM measurement approach; and
- Ensuring MFA staff have sufficient time to respond to the programme management demands.

Recommendations

MFA: high priority

13. In collaboration with partners, explore methods for building evidence on (measuring and documenting) how movement-building approaches offer pathways to scale in advancing women's rights.
14. Clearly define what counts against the two corporate gender equality indicators and work with grantees to fully embed them into their monitoring frameworks, ensuring grantee annual reporting clearly describes results against these indicators, and the evidence for this. Ensure that the process for generating the data reported to parliament is documented so that it can be validated by third parties.
15. Prepare written guidance for grantees on the implementation framework that grantees are expected to work within. This guidance would cover, but not be limited to:
 - What is an outcome-focussed approach to programme implementation, monitoring and reporting and how it can be executed, highlighting the opportunities for adapting programme implementation provided within the framework, the flexibilities that exist for revising programme scope, budget, human resources, partners required etc. and how approval can be sought, as well as the opportunities an outcome-focussed approach presents for streamlining monitoring and reporting by grantees and sub-grantees;
 - The MFA's gender equality corporate indicators and what is expected of grantees in terms of reporting against them;
 - How to report programme results using the IATI system and benefits of the IATI system for grantees; and
 - The MFA's VfM framework and expectations of grantees for tracking and reporting VfM.

In dialogue with grantees, keep human resourcing of programme implementation under close review. Where necessary, challenge grantees to revisit human resourcing to ensure that the required blend of expertise to facilitate programme delivery is in place, that teams are able to work effectively together, and that team members are not overloaded. Ensure that any mid-term review recommendations relating to human resourcing and management are actively followed up.

MFA: medium priority

16. Through the grant application process, encourage grant recipients to make learning an integral part of their programme design, identifying learning objectives, supported by a clear plan for achieving them, and integrating appropriate indicators for tracking progress into the programme's results framework.
17. Develop a considered plan to guide the MFA's efforts in promoting learning between consortia. The plan should set out learning objectives and how these objectives can

be achieved, using a range of online and in-person engagement platforms. It should be informed by grantees' own expressed learning interests and an understanding of the learning platforms and modalities that are most conducive to balancing workload demands.

18. If VfM reporting is of importance to the MFA, develop a framework, which sets out how, at an overarching level, the MFA defines VfM and the relevant reporting requirements grantees are expected to meet. In doing so, the MFA can draw on frameworks commonly used by other development agencies such as the '4Es of Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Equity' used by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. To operationalise this, the MFA would require grantees to use the framework to guide the development of their own programme VfM measurement plan, which identifies the indicators they plan to use to measure this and how they expect to generate the data and use it to inform. To ensure the VfM monitoring is contextually relevant, sub-grantees, and in some cases beneficiaries, could be involved in identifying what is value in the programme's context so that lead grantees can orient their VfM indicators around these aspects.
19. Consider ways to enhance the institutional priority given to programme management tasks through incentives etc., so that these grant management positions can maximise their efficiency and effectiveness, ensuring grantees are appropriately supported to achieve the best possible results.

7. Learning on the Theory of Change

As is clear from several of the above conclusions, the experience of FLOW 2 programmes offers much detail on the causal processes implicit in the MFA ToC. In doing so it has also revealed some gaps and assumptions. First, strengthened civil society organisations clearly have contributed to 'empowerment' and 'transformation' outcomes in an improved enabling environment of laws and policies and in structural change at institutional levels, but learning here suggests that ongoing financial sustainability (from any source) is a prerequisite for local organisations to carry on sustaining and evolving results. An assumption was made that civil society strengthening would include this dimension, but in practice it would be better to specify it.

Second, while the ToC does imply an interaction between local, national and international levels in order to make 'Simultaneous pressure from organisations (bottom-up) and from international standards and supervisory mechanisms (from above) ... to anchor women's rights in national institutions' it does not specify how these pressures require some coherence and linkages derived from coordinated advocacy across these levels, as elaborated in Finding 4.

Third, the ToC does not elaborate on how the shift from outcomes in intervention areas at the level of structural change and changes in laws and policies to impact on 'equal rights and opportunities for women and girls' is expected to be made. The hidden assumption is that these outcomes will 'take off' and achieve scale – women's rights organisations are seen as kick-starting this process – but no detail is given on the drivers of or the mechanism for this diffusion and dissemination process. As suggested in Conclusion 1, much could be learned from exploring further the role of networks, platforms and movement building approaches to support such a scale-up.

Fourth, working across this ToC has generated some unintended consequences of a negative type – specifically that of [male] backlash in the form, at household level, of IPV, and at a broader society level of more general threats and abuse. The ToC should integrate an indication of this type of risk, so that future programmes include strategies to counter it.

Finally, findings have included evidence that participatory processes of ToC development – including sub-grantees where possible – are more supportive of relevance, and therefore also, ultimately, of results. This perspective speaks to the broad function of the ToC as a common framework through which all stakeholders can discuss and analyse learning, and therefore through which adaptive decision-making can be made. Regular participatory reviews of the ToC can help this function reach its potential.

Recommendations

For MFA: high priority

20. Build learning from FLOW 2 into an evolved ToC for women's rights programming, and undertake validation and review processes with stakeholders at different levels and at regular intervals in future programming. Include a feminist technical advisor in the ToC evolution and dissemination process to support its interpretation. Create opportunities for localised ToCs that partners and their partners design together – both to increase ownership, but also to maximise contextual relevance and the power of the ToC as a common analytic framework and an adaptive programming tool.