



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA'S APPROACH TO FEMINIST EVALUATION PRACTICES

Key messages

With the aim of advancing gender transformative change throughout its development co-operation efforts, Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is using a feminist approach to its evaluation practices. Feminist evaluations are values-driven – they acknowledge from the outset the need for transformative change in both gender and power relations and challenge the root causes of gender inequalities. Feminist evaluations allow for the contextualisation of evaluation and monitoring practices and place importance on the evaluation process itself, not only the findings.

This In Practice example builds on the [Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners](#) and the [OECD DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation](#).

Keywords

[Gender equality](#) | [Evaluation systems](#) | [Managing for Sustainable Development Results](#)

Key partner

[Canada](#)

Challenge

Measuring and evaluating change, let alone transformative change, is a challenging endeavour. Disrupting entrenched power relations and addressing gender inequality requires different types of change on many levels (such as structural, behavioural, and informal and formal change), is non-linear and takes time. Global Affairs Canada (GAC) found that it was difficult to apply “traditional” top-down approaches to its monitoring and evaluation processes while aligning to [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy](#). Traditional approaches are rooted in systems of power that often exclude key stakeholders from influencing evaluation processes, rely on quantitative over qualitative data, and place more emphasis on evaluation results than the evaluation process.

Approach

Since the launch of [Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy](#), GAC has engaged in an incremental process to integrate a feminist approach into its evaluation practices. The process includes collaboration

with feminist evaluation researchers, academics, practitioners and experts from the Global North and the Global South, as well as Canadian and international civil society. GAC's feminist evaluations aim to:

- o explore power relations and focus on the systemic or structural causes of inequalities and discrimination that may be present in the context of a programme or policy
- o encourage collaborative Global North and Global South partnerships that involve learning and exchanging with local cultures to empower participants and seek transformative change
- o emphasise the voices of women and other marginalised groups by employing participatory processes, placing them at the centre of the evaluation process
- o enable those with lived experiences and contextual and cultural understanding of power dynamics and gender issues to guide and carry out evaluation practices
- o facilitate ongoing reflection and dialogue, allowing room to adapt to evolving needs and information
- o place importance on the evaluation process, not just the findings
- o actively support social justice agendas.

GAC designed the [Gender Equality and Empowerment Measurement \(GEM\) tool](#) for evaluating gender equality and empowerment outcomes for women and girls in the Middle East and Maghreb. This peer-reviewed tool uses a feminist lens to capture qualitative data on gender equality and empowerment project outcomes. It employs participatory approaches to capture the voices and perspectives of project participants on their experiences of empowerment. Additionally, the GEM tool gathers information on cultural, legal, and societal factors that may enable, or hinder, empowerment.

In 2020, GAC designed and implemented its first fully feminist evaluation process with the [Formative Evaluation of the Women's Voice and Leadership Programme](#). The evaluation team, supported by global experts, developed a framework to operationalise feminist evaluation principles in each phase of the evaluation process and to help the team reflect and document learning along the way.

Figure 1 The Feminist Evaluation Framework

Feminist Evaluation principles (Podems, 2018)	How does this look like in practice? HOW / WHAT WE DO?	How does this look like in practice? WHY / FOR WHOM?	How doable/ applicable is this?			
1. Acknowledge and take into account that evaluation is a political activity (...).				<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 10px; background-color: #e6f2ff; border-radius: 5px; display: inline-block;">Brainstorming phase</div>		
2. Frame gender inequities as one manifestation of social injustice (...).						
3. Examine how discrimination based on gender is systematic and structural.						
4. Act on opportunities to create, advocate and support change (...).						
5. Be cognizant that research methods, institutions and practices are social constructs.						
6. Contextualize evaluation because knowledge is culturally, socially and temporally contingent (...).						
7. Generate and use knowledge as a powerful resource that is explicit or implicit purpose.	Evaluation phases/ components	What are we doing to integrate feminist evaluation principles in WVL formative evaluation?	Relevant feminist principles	Existing opportunities/ resources	Potential limitations/ challenges	
8. Respect multiple ways of knowing. Some ways are privileged over others.	1. Team set-up, evaluation management and governance					
	2. Planning phase (scoping and design)					
	3. Data collection and analysis phase					
	4. Interpretation phase					
	5. Report writing phase					
	6. Knowledge sharing and use phase					
	7. Knowledge sharing and use phase					

Application phase

Source: Global Affairs Canada

Results

GAC's experience to date in using a feminist evaluation approach has resulted in stronger findings that truly reflect the diverse perspectives of evaluation stakeholders. For example:

- Using the GEM tool ensured that **women's perspectives were central to understanding the changes they experienced** in relation to gender equality and empowerment.
- Applying feminist evaluation principles to the Women's Voice and Leadership Formative Evaluation led to **more useful evaluation processes** and products, for the diversity of stakeholders involved.
- Feminist evaluations are **allowing evaluators to better contribute to transformational change** by ensuring that recommendations targeted at key decision makers highlight the needs of all evaluation stakeholders.
- A feminist evaluation process can be transformative for all involved. For example, women's rights organisations that participated in the Women's Voice and Leadership evaluation were not only **empowered to influence the direction of the evaluation process** but also to strengthen their own evaluation capacity.

Lessons learnt

GAC's experience found that:

- Keeping **a pragmatic and context-responsive approach** to feminist evaluation was of the utmost importance.
- Depending on the context **a feminist evaluation may take different forms and not necessarily be labelled feminist**. Whether the label feminist is used or not, the principles that underpin this type of approach are worth exploring in any evaluation.
- A **conducive policy environment**, as provided by Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy helps, but is not necessary, to integrate feminist principles into evaluation processes. From GAC's perspective, feminist evaluation is simply better evaluation practice which allows for conducting evaluation work in a more respectful, ethical and impactful way.
- The **engagement and buy-in of different stakeholders**, such as GAC senior management and participating women's rights organisations, was crucial to the success of these processes.
- The participatory, inclusive and empowering approaches that are at the heart of feminist evaluation require **adequate planning of time and resources** by the evaluation team and participants. Not doing so can result in putting an extra burden on evaluation participants, in particular those with less capacity to engage.

Further information

Equality Fund (2021), *Feminist approaches to monitoring, evaluation & learning: Overview of current practices*, <https://equalityfund.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Feminist-MEL-Research-Overview-Paper-FINAL-1.pdf>.

Global Affairs Canada (2021), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in the Middle East and the Maghreb, 2015-16 to 2019-20*, <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/evaluation/2021/empowerment-pouvoir.aspx?lang=eng>.

Global Affairs Canada, *Evaluation reports*, <https://www.international.gc.ca/gac-amc/publications/evaluation/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

Global Affairs Canada, *Formative Evaluation of the Women's Voice and Leadership program*, <https://www.international.gc.ca/transparency-transparence/audit-evaluation-verification/2022/2022-05-wvl-vlf.aspx?lang=eng>.

Please contact GAC's evaluation division at evaluation@international.gc.ca for access to the following resources:

- Feminist Evaluation Tip Sheet 2019
- Operationalising feminist principles in evaluation – Tips and lessons learned from Global Affairs Canada Women's Voice and Leadership Evaluation (forthcoming 2022)
- GEM tool.

Podems, Donna (2018), *Making Feminist Evaluation Practical*, <https://idev.afdb.org/sites/default/files/Evaluations/2020-03/Making%20Feminist%20Evaluation%20practical.pdf>.

Brisolara, D. Seigart, and S. SenGupta (Eds) (2014), *Feminist Evaluation and Research: Theory and Practice*, <https://www.guilford.com/books/Feminist-Evaluation-and-Research/Brisolara-Seigart-SenGupta/9781462515202>.

OECD resources

OECD (2022), *Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls: Guidance for Development Partners*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/0bddfa8f-en>.

OECD (2022), *Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management, 2nd Edition – Prepublication version*, [https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/EV\(2022\)2&docLanguage=en](https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/EV(2022)2&docLanguage=en).

OECD, "Evaluating development co-operation", *Development Co-operation Fundamentals* [forthcoming].

OECD, *Evaluation of development programmes*, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation>.

OECD, "Guidance on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls", *Development Co-operation Fundamentals*, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=1143_1143052-b7ff8og4ir&title=Guidance-on-Gender-Equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls.

To learn more about Canada's development co-operation see:

OECD, "Canada", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/aa7e3298-en>.

OECD (2021), *Canada Mid-term Review 2021*, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/DAC-mid-term-Canada-2021.pdf>.

OECD (2018), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Canada 2018*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264303560-en>.

See more *In Practice* examples from Canada here: <https://www.oecd.org/development-cooperation-learning/?submodel=in+practice&tag-key+partner=canada#search>.

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