CLEAR
South Asia Center

Building Gender Transformative M&E Systems | CLEAR SA

Sohini Mookherjee
CLEAR SA

27th March, 2024

GEI

J-PAL
ABDUL LATIF JAMEEL POVERTY ACTION LAB
SOUTH ASIA AT IFMR

About CLEAR South Asia

CLEAR South Asia is hosted at J-PAL South Asia

- CLEAR SA contributes to institutionalizing evidence-use by building M&E capacity among users and generators of evidence, and support on setting up M&E systems in the governments and in the region.
- Implementing partner of GEI in South Asia (along with CLEAR PCA)

Our approach to enable gender-transformative M&E systems

Landscaping and Diagnostics

Identify needs and demands around building gender-transformative systems

Capacity Building and Strategic Advisory

Building capacity and providing advisory to incorporate a gender lens

Knowledge Products

Creating public goods to share knowledge and best practices on gender-transformative M&E and policy

Defining gender transformative MEL

Gender blind / gender neutral	Gender aware / gender sensitive	Gender transformative
Does not take gender into consideration Can reproduce systems of gender inequality	Takes gender dynamics into consideration Does not challenge unequal power dynamics based on gender	Seeks to challenge and transform unequal power structures based on gender
Programs make choices for adolescent girls and focus on expanding their skills based on existing roles and life choices as defined by the social and gender norms in their context.	Outcomes disaggregated by gender to identify if men and women benefit equally (e.g. men's income vs. women's income)	Measures gender-specific outcomes (e.g. women's decision making, attitudes towards women, etc.)

Components of gender transformative MEL systems

Gender disaggregation

Disaggregating key outcomes and data by gender to understand gendered impacts

Systematic tracking of gender-related outcomes

Tracking progress on and measuring outcomes like gender attitudes, norms, and women's agency & empowerment

Use of Gender Data and Evidence in Decision Making

An action-oriented approach with feedback loops to incorporate gendered learnings from data/evidence

Participatory Approaches

A solid contextual understanding of gendered norms derived through participatory knowledge gathering and existing theoretical frameworks

Cross Sectoral and Intersectional Approaches

A cross-sectoral approach that applies a gender lens to other sectors, such as education, health, labor, etc., as well as various intersectional groups of women

Care and Wellbeing

Prioritizing mutual support, well-being, emotional and psychological needs, and ethics and safety

Components of gender transformative MEL systems

Gender disaggregation

Program impacts may vary by gender. Women may benefit less due to prevalent norms. It is important to disaggregate data to track these differences

For example: Re-analysing and disaggregating data from 3 impact evaluations enabled Bernhardt et al. to find that business grants had **no effect on women's business profits (but had positive effect on men's)**

Researchers found that women redirected resources towards men's businesses in their household, due to social norms that dictated that men should earn more than women.

Systematic tracking of gender-related outcomes

Gender-related constructs like **gender norms, attitudes, women's agency, and empowerment** which are often harder to measure, are important to track.

Gender norms: Informal social rules defining the expected behaviour of people of a particular gender. (ODI, 2015, UNICEF 2022)

Women's agency: ability to define goals & act on them, make decisions, participate in the economy & public life (Donald et al. 2017; Kabeer 1999; Laszlo et al. 2017)

It is important to accurately measure these constructs, with context-relevant indices (See J-PAL's empowerment measurement guide)

Use of Gender Data and Evidence in Decision Making

Beyond generating gender data and evidence, there is a need to **build feedback loops and ensure that data and evidence informs decision making**

Gender data can help identify gender-related needs and challenges

Evidence can help answer policy questions and directly inform decision making. Examples of such questions:

- Will the policy approach work for men AND women? Will it work for all population groups in need?
- Could there be any negative externalities on women as a result?

(UN Women Data Hub)

Components of gender transformative MEL systems

Participatory Approaches

Participatory approaches are important to tailor measures of norms and agency to a given context, since these constructs can vary greatly by context

A participatory approach should ideally **involve representatives of marginalized groups** to identify **what would constitute transformative change** in a context. (UN Women)

Survey instruments to measure constructs like agency, empowerment, norms, and attitudes cannot solely rely on international standards, but must be **piloted and tailored to the specific contexts,** to measure transformative change accurately

Cross-Sectoral or Intersectional Approaches

Building in gender-specific indicators into other sectors (health, environment, labor), and ensuring that programs benefit women in different intersectional groups.

6 out of 17 SDGs do not include gender-specific indicators. This omission can result in the incorrect assumption that gender factors do not play a significant role in some SDG domains. (UN Women)

It is important to recognize that various domains can influence and be influenced by women's agency, empowerment, and gender norms, **and adopt a cross-sectoral approach**, to create gender transformative change.

Care and Wellbeing

Emphasizing and measuring levels of well-being, access to care, and other ethical constructs, to contribute to enhancing the inclusiveness of programing.

To create gender transformative change through MEL, **it is important to emphasize the principle of care and wellbeing.**

This includes **supporting emotional and psychological needs, prioritising mutual support, and ensuring ethics and safety.**

This is **particularly important from an intersectional stand-point, given that women from vulnerable or marginalized groups face higher risk**s. (The Partos Innovation Lab, The Netherlands)

Challenges to gender transformative MEL strategy in many developing countries?

1. **Inadequate data and indicators**
   a. Existing data systems may lack gender-disaggregated data;
   b. Indicators may not capture the complexities of gender dynamics and inequalities.
   c. Developing gender-sensitive indicators + collecting sex-disaggregated data can be resource-intensive and require capacity-building efforts.
   d. Data quality – Issues like incomplete or inaccurate data, can undermine the credibility and usefulness of MEL findings.

2. **Resistance to change**
   a. Gender-transformative approaches can challenge existing power structures, social norms, and traditional gender roles, leading to resistance from stakeholders who are reluctant to change.
   b. Overcoming resistance requires strong leadership and advocacy efforts.
   c. Addressing deeply entrenched norms and attitudes requires culturally sensitive strategies and long-term engagement with communities.
   d. Lack of gender mainstreaming of institutional structures and failure to prioritize gender equality in decision-making processes.

3. **Ethical considerations**
   a. Privacy, confidentiality, and safety, particularly when working with vulnerable or marginalized gender groups.

Key considerations in designing MEL strategy for the government

1. Why is adopting a gender transformative MEL valuable for the government?

1. What are the fundamental principles and practices of gender transformative MEL that the govt is interested to adopt (and what not to adopt)? Why?

1. What are the barriers and opportunities for implementing gender transformative MEL ?

Examples from CLEAR SA's Work

Enabling stakeholders to adopt gender-transformative approaches in their M&E systems

Projects with long–term government partnerships on Gender

Providing strategic advisory and training to governments enhance enable transformative policymaking

Government of Tamil Nadu

Working with the **Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Department** to provide strategic advisory to enable gender data collection and gender transformative policymaking

Advisory + recommendations on a survey implemented by the government to understand women's workforce participation, to **collect gender-sensitive, contextually relevant data**

Actionable, policy-relevant recommendations to improve women's agency in the economic domain

Niti Aayog

Working with **The Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office (DMEO) within Niti Aayog**, India's central planning agency to train government officials on gender-transformative data, policy and measurement, covering the following:

Providing practical tips on measuring outcomes related to **gender, disaggregating data, cross-sectoral analysis, etc.**

Basic **concepts in measurement,** such as reliability, validity, and measurement error
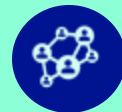
Theoretical understanding of women's empowerment frameworks (e.g. Kabeer, 1999)

Gender Impact Labs

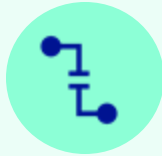**Embedding impact labs focusing on gender in National and State-level and Rural Development Departments to enable gender-transformative policymaking**

Diagnostic Studies	Pilots and Impact Evaluations	Analyzing Administrative Data	Targeted Strategic Advisory	Enabling Data and Evidence Use	Capacity Building
To understand policy challenges faced by governments in implementing and evaluating gender-transformative policies	To understand the impact of policies to benefit women, particularly through self-help groups, in rural India	To generate insights that could inform governments' work to build gender-transformative policy	To help departments tailor their approaches to be more gender-transformative	Sharing knowledge and enabling scale ups of evidence-based programs to benefit women and girls	Conducting training to build capacity of government stakeholders in conducting gender-transformative M&E

A few takeaways for institutionalizing gender transformative MEL strategy in country systems

1. **Prioritizing indicators for decision making-** Combine results-based management with a focus on reporting on fewer, less restrictive indicators
   a. Prioritizing indicators that matter for decision making, instead of increasing the burden of reporting on all output indicators
   b. Starting point is the programme design and priorities of the people we work with rather than the pre-setting of indicators that are not able to capture complex change processes
2. **M&E for learning and gender implications-** Shifting from MEL as onerous accountability reporting to MEL as a learning focus
   a. MEL should contribute to gender-transformative action by identifying opportunities for advancing gender equality and social justice.
   b. Using M&E findings to advocate for gender-responsive policies and programs, mobilize resources for gender equality initiatives, and promote gender mainstreaming across development sectors
3. **M&E use-** The need for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming lens need to go beyond just applying to policies that address women's issues, to analysing all policy instruments of state governance.

Thank you!

smookherjee@povertyactionlab.org