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Learning from CEFM End Project Evaluation: Backward integration and learning for future approaches in planning of projects for young Girls in Tanzania and Bangladesh

Context

The GirlsInspire initiative is a unique and holistic approach to address the awareness and livelihood issues of girls and young women. The initiative adapted a community orientation for its two directions, one is to stop Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and the other, Reaching the unreached (RTU). In both the cases GirlsInspire's core value was to engage the entire community, make livelihood training and education accessible to girls and young women. The strategy was to reach a large number through community engagement. So the awareness programme aimed at four levels:

1. The girls and women of a disadvantaged (and at times extremely so)
2. The parents of the enrolled girls and the parents in the community
3. The local decision makers; such as teachers, politicians, officials and community leaders
4. The possible employers, who could place a graduate of the programme

The awareness and training covered a range of areas starting from livelihood to gender equality. Broadly the awareness and training approaches were:

1. Making the community aware through mobilization and enrolling the girls
2. Awareness of a number of issues (varied in different countries and locales) ranging from Health and hygiene to Financial literacy
3. Training of livelihood, such as tailoring, goat rearing, batik, soap making

Post training, most of the girls were absorbed by the local employers or started Self Help Groups (SHGs) or initiated own business. COL partners assisted by linking them to the financial institutions.

The End project evaluation was designed to understand how much we have achieved and more importantly what are the possibilities.

Why?

There is always a danger of losing continuity in any "projectized" approach. As a project comes to an end, it is often seen that the greatest strength of the project- learnings from it, are lost. We often tend to believe that the projects continuation is only a possibility if and only if there are chances of continued funding and efforts from the top. However, the core strength of the project, the learning from it, remains not so well documented and often is lost in absence of an application guideline.

An end project evaluation or impact assessment has its own way of capturing the learning. However, it is imperative that the end project evaluation or an impact assessment captures more than the success and failures of the effort and indicate the possible learnings that could assist the implementation partners to develop a continuity in their future endeavour and efforts. This not only ensures better implementation of the future initiatives, but also creates a strain that reinforces the sustenance of the completed effort, even if it is not directly linked or aligned with the future initiatives.

In today's context, an end project evaluation cannot lead to only an understanding of the project and its achievements as sustainability and continuity have become core concerns. An end project evaluation requires to converge its assessments into a guideline for similar projects or for the same

initiative to continue. It is important to map the aspirations of the initiative the outcome and the impact of the project to understand the continuum or the demand for it that is created.

Impact assessment and end project evaluation studies could play a much bigger role in understanding scopes created by the project at various levels and the essential features for designing new programmes. Such scoping allows the trained individuals to expand their business and enterprises following their aspirations; it also ensures a deep root of learning in the community and ensures new demands for learning and applications are made. The design of such assessment needs reorienting to understand the gaps against the individual participant’s response, the reasons for such response and creating a roadmap for the immediate and long-term programmes and partnerships; which is, required to satiate such aspirations and ensure continuity of the initiative beyond the time period of the project.

How?

The end project evaluation for Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) project of the GirlsInspire initiative was conceptualized around continuous mapping of aspirations that the initiative started with and scopes it has raised. It was important to conceptualize the end project evaluation this way so that the partners themselves could identify the key factors for taking the learning further, even if not in the current form. It was aimed to create a guideline that could be followed by a different partnership or initiative to fulfil the dream that it has instilled. The only way to achieve that was to develop a methodology that allows us to map its aspirations (at the end of the project), responses & reasons and find the possible scopes that may become opportunities for future initiatives and projects.

The approach designed for the end project evaluation had been pivoted around continuous mapping of aspirations at the:

1. Project level at COL
2. COL Partner level
3. Participation and implementation levels (The girls, communities, parents and field trainers)
4. At the level of the field partners and supporting organizations (The network developed by the implementing organization)

To achieve such mapping, certain key parameters were identified that reflected the vision of the initiative. Since GirlsInspire’s core value is expressed by its Theory of Change. The identified parameters were arranged in form of a grid that allows the partners to do a comparison of various achievements and directions such as:

02.1 How did we finalise our choices

| | Community | Partners/ Organization (including yours) | Girls and women | Other influences such as local leaders |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Consultation | What did you consult the community about? (e.g- their economic status?) | e.g- what are the milestone? How could they be achieved and when did we expect them? | e.g- what do you want to do in future? What livelihood? | What is that you are trying the community to achieve? |
| Advocacy & Promotion | Did we talk to the local organizations/ institutions/ communities together and asked them how to go about? | How did you assess the strength of partners you wanted to work with? | How did you understand and raised their expectations from the initiative? | How did you tell them about GirlsInspire and its alignment to their concerns or mandates? |
| Survey | What insights did you look for? | Did you try to build on the past experience in the community or similar activities? How? | What issues and concerns were raised? | Did you ask for their vision? |

03.1 What has changed?

| | Awareness | Empowerment | Participation | Sustenance |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| You & your organization | What do you know that you were not aware of? | 1. Do you take independent decision? 2. Do you try to convince others? | 1. Has your participation increased? 2. Do you actively participate? | 1.What steps have you taken to continue with the effort? 2.Have you shared your learning? |
| Community | What do they talk about, which they didn't earlier? | Do they turn their learning and decision to action? | 1. Are they more responsive? 2. Does everyone in the community get involved? | Use technology to optimise finance and effort |
| Girls and Women | Are they aware of their rights? Are they demanding better treatments from the society? | 1. Are they vocal about their rights? 2. Are they taking decisions for their future? | What areas they are participating more? | 1.What have they done to continue their learning, and efforts? 2.What additional steps have they taken or demanded? |
| Partners | 1. What new things your partners learnt from you? 2. What new perspectives/ thoughts were provoked by your partner? | Do they feel more confident to pursue their own work after Girlsinspire initiative? | 1. Are they showing interest/ collaborating with you? 2. Are they interested in working with you in other initiatives? | What are their takeaway from Girlsinspire to sustain their own efforts? |

i) *The workshop tasks presented to the implementing partners*

This approach also allowed us to create reference points of learning that suggests what was the actual process of implementation vis-à-vis ground scenario, what were the essentiality of improvisation and how was it achieved. The next steps were to plot where the project has taken the target group, the implementing organization and partners who were involved in implementation, whether directly or indirectly. The workshop with the implementing partners brought out key points and learnings that were community and geo-specific that allows us to design our future approaches better in the locations chosen. Also the learning may be relevant in a different but similar context. The outcome of the workshops, mapped onto the field observations provided us with the strength and weakness of the implementation at planning and execution phases; the points raised issues and linked them with effects and concerns that frequently enhance or dampen the implementation and impact. These are insights that indicates possibilities of corrections at the planning and implementation levels, not only for continuation of the current effort, but for ones to come.

The entire evaluation process was built around four triggers; these triggers were selected looking at the changes that the GirlsInspire initiative wants to bring at the level of the community, the human eco system in the locale (community leaders, decision makers and local organizations), the implementing organization down to every individual involved in the project. The triggers were also to capture the country and culture specificity of the results to understand if the same actions led to similar or very different learning and impact. They were:

1. Relevance- to understand how relevant was theme of the project and its approaches, did it align with the concerns and issues that are faced by the target community, the implementing organization and above all the country's vision and goals
2. Impact- What kind of impact that was intended in quality and number? How the impact was propagated to the non-intervention communities around the locale of implementation, what was the impact of the project at the very individual level, whether the individual was from the community, implementing organization or any other way the individual was involved in the implementation process. More over the impact was treated as the biggest indicator of the change the project initiated (for which, it was important to look at even in the individual levels)
3. Partnerships- The CEFM project being a new approach where the implementing organizations were to find an end to end solution for the child marriage and related issues such as school dropout, it was important to look at the existing partnership of the implementing organizations and the new partnerships built. Only partnerships could sustain the effort beyond the project implementation. Also such partnerships are important to take the idea and

the spirit of the project forward; learning and sharing being the core of CEFM initiative, it was important to inspire the partners to deploy their learnings from the project in different contexts

4. Approaches- CEFM initiative and GirlsInspire as a whole was about finding new ways of dealing with the Child, Early and Forced Marriage issues and innovations in learning. Most of the GirlsInspire partners have improvised on learning material, training and learning approaches; they also have developed innovative ways of connecting the training programmes with employment and enterprise that led to economic self-sufficiency of the girls. Another important aspect was to link formal and informal learning in various ways. The trigger was given importance to understand what has worked (and what hasn't) as well as what could have been done.

We will try to see...

How **RELEVANT** was the project to your community, society and organization

What **IMPACT** to the community, society and your organization; and most importantly to you as an individual?

Did the project bring you and Organization closer to others? Will you work with them? Have you strengthened old and made new **PARTNERSHIPS**?

What are the partners view about the initiative, have they adapted some **APPROACHES**?

ii) *How the triggers were presented to the partners*

Based on the triggers the learning were captured, or rather the gaps were captured that led to learning:

03.3 What could've happened to make the outcome better?

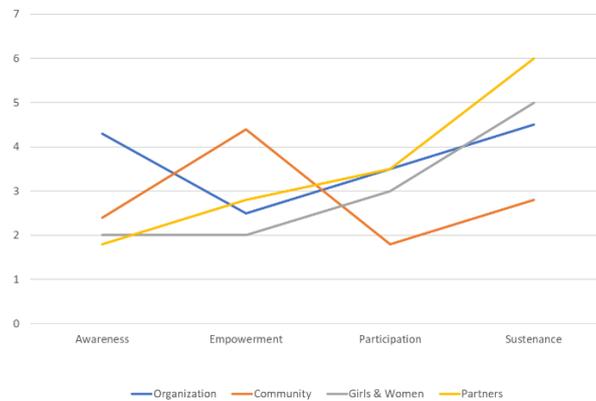
| | Relevance | Impact | Partnerships | Value for money (return) | Sustainability |
|----------------------------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| You and your organisation | An approach document/ guideline could have been better | Better training in data capturing and mobilisation | More inclusive database of field organizations | Guidance in purchasing ICT infrastructure | More regular community engagement/ Hiring of field staff |
| Community | Selection process and understanding their background | Better exit policy for handing over process ownership | | Better distribution of training centres | Marketing strategy and support |
| Girls & women | Diverse livelihood training | More parents awareness drives | Taking all school teachers into confidence and engage them in the livelihood training | Multiple skills for more opportunities | Financial support and market linkage |
| Partners | Understanding of their mandate | SWOT analysis of the partners | | | Involving them in the exit policy development |

iii) *The template given to partners with examples*

To enhance the understanding of how much we have deviated, how much we have achieved and in specific the reasons behind it was focused on. This led to our understanding and learning of what could have been done; and more over in a similar situation when it arises in future. The approximate

quantification, trying to put a benchmark in numbers were done to reach a comparative understanding in what we have done better, that leads to asking the question how we have done it.

Can we (approximately) **quantify** change?



iv) *Example of quantifying the effort and its outcome*

What?

We learnt from the GirlsInspire initiative at Msanzi and Rukwa the importance of an exit strategy and to build a roadmap for the future as an integral part of the implementation plan; without which, a successful process transfer to the community and their ownership to ensure continuation of the process established. Most of the girls and parents we have met, are very enthusiastic about the changes that GirlsInspire has brought in their life and the life of the village. However, the demand was to go further and achieve more. The girls (participants of the programme), parents, local leaders and the neighbourhood had a single question- “we have come this far, what’s next?”

The “what’s next” question was brilliantly answered by the District In-charge of Msanzi. In the interview, he suggested that GirlInspire programme was a trigger, it showed how systematically you could develop a strong partnership with the community and take them along; but child marriage is one of the issues in the community. There are others- how could GirlsInspire help addressing those?” The question made us look closer to the aspirations part. GirlsInspire has raised a lot of expectations and beyond the community partners have worked with. For an example, in Bangladesh, There are many young women came forward to learn in the other project of GirlsInspire- “Reaching the Unreached (RTU)” scaling up effort. There were demands for diversification of learning Bangladesh so that the local economy is not saturated with similar or same skilled women. Since CEFM initiative was completed, the scopes of learning was broadened and new learning areas were adapted for scaling up of RTU. This is exactly where the recalibrated end project evaluation worked.

Similarly in Tanzania, SIDO (Small Industries Development Organization), came forward to financially support the CEFM initiative graduates and also showed interested in supporting similar initiative for women where learning seeks to boost the local economy and creates joint enterprises at the village level.



- v) *The shop started by the young women at Msanzi; currently the women are taking turns and shift to produce soap and batik (hand dyed fabric) to sell in the shop due to the lack of production space. They are seeking support from the Ward members to see if a safe working place could be made available to them.*

When asked how they see the change in the community, one of the community leaders as well as a few parents pointed out that because they can buy soaps and detergent from their own girls, the general cleanliness in the village has improved. Also it was pointed out that if the girls could learn tailoring, then they wouldn't have to visit Rukwa to get them made; since the girls are already selling batik fabric, it would be good integration for their enterprise, ensuring better income. Again, it was a scope that was beyond the CEFM initiative, but could become a realization through other initiatives in the future. One of the suggestion for the exit policy was to develop a market linkage for the hand made soaps beyond the region, in nature resorts around Rukwa reserve. For which both the quality of the products as well as marketing effort needs to be looked at. It is important to record the concerns around this aspirations as they become essential design parameters, such as regular supply, ensuring quantity and transportation, instead of limiting the evaluation to saying what level of production that has been achieved.

In another case, Rajshahi- Bangladesh, the evaluation suggested that there could be business model developed around learning by promoting already skilled girls as a local trainer, connecting her with the non-intervention community who are interested in learning such skills and provide the already skilled women with advanced training, particularly in enterprise development so that she becomes an employer and creates a group enterprise. Similar situations were seen in Tanzania, where the girls already have formed groups and trying to develop and expand their business. This was beyond the time period of CEFM initiative, but could inspire the later projects to adopt and focus on group enterprise development from the very beginning; partnership is an essential component to do so- like in Bangladesh many of the local tailoring businesses have become ground partners by offering internships to the girls, providing employment and raising demands for further and advanced learning.

The end project evaluation focussed on such cases which, may not have been recorded formally, but has immense value for designing projects, planning implementations and defining approaches. The workshops with the partners were used to bring out these learnings that are often not recorded but can prove invaluable in designing new projects, planning of implementation and approaches. The reflections of the field staff on how they have dealt with specific and difficult situations were recorded through the matrix to understand what parameters have aided the progress and if there are, which, hindered it. This perspective brought out the contextual response and, at times, quantified the parameters to enable us to look at the depth of the response.

For an example the following chart demonstrates how many consultation sessions, community address etc. and at what level (community, the participants or the local partners) to initiate implementation

and kick start the process. This allows us to question and reason why certain locales and communities took longer than the others; which, allows us to relook at the planning for another initiative in the same locale and ensure a robust implementation. This approach took care of quantifying the effort as well.

| 02.1 | | | | | | | | | | | | CMES | | |
|----------------|-----------|--------------|----------|----------|--------------|----------|--------|--------------|----------|-----------------|--------------|----------|--|--|
| VILLAGE | Community | | | Partners | | | G 2 W | | | Local influence | | | | |
| UNIT - SURUJ : | SURVEY | CONSULTATION | ADVOCACY | SURVEY | CONSULTATION | Advocacy | SURVEY | CONSULTATION | ADVOCACY | SURVEY | CONSULTATION | ADVOCACY | | |
| BARBRIA | 10 | 03 | 01 | 10 | 02 | 02 | 50 | 03 | 15 | 02 | 02 | 04 | | |
| VUKTA | 10 | 02 | 01 | 10 | 03 | 02 | 50 | 03 | 16 | 02 | 02 | 03 | | |
| UNIT - DAMKURA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MOSHUPUR | 10 | 02 | 01 | 10 | 03 | 02 | 50 | 03 | 14 | 02 | 02 | 03 | | |
| ACHORAM | 10 | 03 | 01 | 10 | 03 | 02 | 50 | 03 | 15 | 02 | 02 | 03 | | |
| UNIT - VATPARA | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| KHAKER BARI | 10 | 02 | 01 | 10 | 02 | 02 | 50 | 02 | 14 | 02 | 02 | 03 | | |
| PACHIM VATPARA | 10 | 02 | 01 | 10 | 03 | 02 | 50 | 03 | 13 | 02 | 02 | 04 | | |

vi) A chart indicating the number of sessions with different segments of the target community done by the Center for Mass Education in Science (CMES) Bangladesh in the respective locales

Summation

At times, while conducting the end project evaluation, it was felt a similar session and approach is also required during the planning process. However, it is imperative that such approaches for impact assessments and evaluations are designed so that there are learnings, which often are not possible to record during the implementation, must be reflected upon and critical points are well recorded so that the evaluation itself becomes a resource for the future planning and efforts. There also are case studies of community members (other than girls and young women), who have come forwards for the cause, have been recorded through the process.



For an example the Ward member Ms. Soyeeda Begum (photograph on the left) of Suruj unit of CMES, Bangladesh; who have come forward very actively to stop about 100 plus child marriages in the region since the CEFM initiative begun. She could be an extremely valuable resource for any such efforts and initiatives in the future. It would be important for CMES to look at the possibilities of engaging her actively in their efforts. Though she is already a Local Support Group (LSG) member, she is looking for more opportunity to directly engage herself in various efforts; it's a chance one mustn't miss out on.

It is pertinent that the implementing agencies record their learning and their response at various stages of the project to ensure organizational capacity building beyond individuals, projects and locales. However, it seems at time it is difficult in reality due to a challenging terrain, access and communication issues and many other parameters we do not critically look at. For an example, KIWOHEDE in Tanzania repeatedly expressed their inability to work with certain communities due very strong religious and cultural values that did not support CEFM initiative initially; so the progress was very slow. We believe such perspectives must be brought out through the evaluation process and recorded. The approach of mapping the gaps and the responses of the organisation as a whole creates a guideline and transcends the organisational learning beyond a project and ensures robust design and planning for the future. A backward integration approach seeks the reasons more than highlighting the

results and captures the spirit of implementation encompassing experiences of all parties involved; that has often results in a deep rooted change seemingly invisible even to the implementing organisation. Such approaches of impact studies and evaluations are our only ways to aggregate learning and changes and point out critical parameters which not only shaped the current effort but will shape the future as well.