

GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT MEASUREMENT TOOL: TRAINING GUIDE

Canada

INTRODUCTION



TRAINING GUIDE



FACILITATOR'S
GUIDE



REPORTING
GUIDE



GEM TOOL



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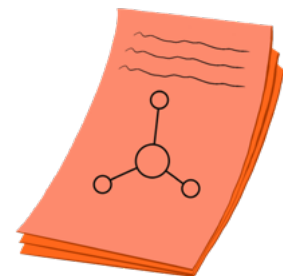
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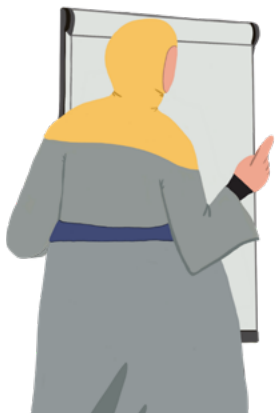
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PART 1: TRAINING GUIDE



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TRAINING GUIDE

Welcome to Part 1 of the Gender Equality and Empowerment Measurement (GEM) Tool Training Guide. In this guide, you will find information and resources for practicing feminist research methodology, a brief overview of international policies and commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and a summary of key considerations to keep in mind for applying a feminist approach to research and data collection using the GEM Tool.

INTRODUCTION TO A FEMINIST APPROACH AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

FEMINIST APPROACH

The GEM Tool employs an intersectional feminist approach to learning and knowledge with its focus on participatory and inclusive data collection to document partner community experiences of gender equality and empowerment.

The ultimate goal of a feminist approach is to understand and eliminate systemic discrimination on the basis of sex and gender identity (as well as on the basis of intersecting aspects of identity such as age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, etc.) in order to bring about transformative change to make societies more equal, prosperous and peaceful.

In international development, a feminist approach involves the use of strategies and interventions that promote the voice, agency and empowerment of diverse women and girls, and of all groups experiencing discrimination and marginalization. In addition, it values the intersectional dimensions of lived experiences and seeks to more fully integrate the perspectives of project participants – recognizing them as rights holders and agents of change in their communities, rather than merely the beneficiaries of development projects. For more information on how to implement a feminist approach, see [Canada's Feminist approach - Innovation and effectiveness guidance note](#).

FEMINIST RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A feminist methodology is an approach to research and data collection that prioritizes gender relations as a category of analysis.

Feminist approaches to research and data collection can vary from one organization to the next depending on the level of engagement or focus on gender issues versus women's participation alone. A basic (and generally inadequate) approach to a feminist methodology involves counting the number of women who participate in projects. A more comprehensive approach to feminist data collection focuses on women and other genders, gender relations, and power dynamics. A feminist methodology uses probing questions to better understand the structural determinants (both barriers and supports) of gender equality and women's empowerment, and the strategies used by project partners and participants to achieve gender equality and empowerment outcomes.

PRINCIPLES GUIDING FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

Several principles of feminist methodology guide how data is collected and how research is carried out.


These principles include a commitment to participatory data collection from diverse voices and perspectives by employing an intersectional lens. In addition to this inclusive approach, feminist methodology focuses on the structural determinants of gender equality and women's empowerment, including social, cultural and legal norms and customs. A feminist methodology also commits to reciprocal learning and knowledge mobilization so that all stakeholders benefit from the findings generated.

Box 1.1: Participant-centered facilitation


In participant-centered facilitation, the researcher leads the data collection activity (e.g. interview or focus group discussion) while allowing participants to guide the conversation as much as possible. This opens up the session to more informal conversations and ensures that the participants are able to provide thoughtful, reflective feedback about their experiences. Keep in mind the following:

- Try not to interrupt participants while they are speaking so they have the time they need to share their experiences.
- Give participants a moment to process questions and gather their response – do not interject to fill silences.
- Maintain focus on participants' experiences related to the project or topic in question (gently steer the conversation back as needed).
- Allow all participants opportunities to contribute to the discussion, or not, if they choose to.
- Ensure that the conversation moves at a good pace, maintaining the focus group discussion schedule but also allowing time and space for further reflection and discussion when needed.
- Keep track of who has spoken and who has not. Pay attention to power dynamics and do not let any one voice dominate the discussion.
- Consider non-verbal communication and silence. Sometimes body language can help the facilitator understand power dynamics, safety-related concerns, etc.


A FEMINIST METHODOLOGY DOES THE FOLLOWING:




Begins with strategies to ensure locally-based expertise is central to the research design, questions asked, process of data collection, etc. This may involve hiring locally-based researchers to facilitate data collection and/or working in teams or collaboratively with local knowledge holders throughout the research.



Centers the research on the standpoints and experiences of women and other marginalized genders (rather than obtaining information only from local leaders or authorities who are typically powerful men in their communities).



Recognizes and actively seeks to mitigate the power imbalance between researcher and participant through locally-led, participatory and inclusive data collection methods (i.e., the researcher ensures space for diverse members of the community to share knowledge and uses participant-centered facilitation – see Box 1.1).



Recognizes that women and other genders experience different demands on their time as a result of the gender division of labour, and may require accommodations to ensure equal participation in data collection activities.

Employs data collection methods that are qualitative (or a combination of qualitative and quantitative) to capture participants' rich and contextualized stories and experiences.



Seeks information that can explain barriers and opportunities for success (i.e., the researcher moves beyond a descriptive analysis of outcomes to learn about the challenges and supports experienced by community members, paying attention to changes in attitudes and behaviours, as well as changes to gender relations at the individual, household, community and structural levels).

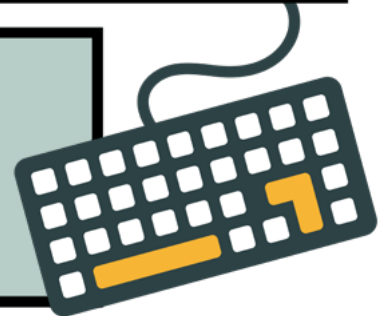
Adopts a flexible approach to data collection based on local realities (i.e., allowing the context to guide the choice of methods used and the types of questions asked and conversations facilitated).



Shares information and findings (i.e., through reports or feedback sessions, etc.) with participants so that all stakeholders benefit from the knowledge generated during research.



Ensures confidentiality and anonymity (when requested) as well as informed consent for use of individuals' information, quotes, photographs, etc. in the spirit of doing no harm.



Demonstrates respect for the time provided by participants and, if possible, ensures appropriate compensation for any costs or inconveniences associated with participation in the research (i.e., covering costs of transportation, providing childcare on site, etc.).

SITUATING A FEMINIST METHODOLOGY WITHIN GLOBAL COMMITMENTS

International policies and commitments have increasingly prioritized gender equality and women's empowerment as essential for achieving sustainable development and peace.

For example, the 2015-2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Prior to the SDGs, the 2000-2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also committed to achieve gender equality and empower women. Other international commitments to gender equality can be found in United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, and the 1979 Convention to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), among other international priorities. Individual countries have signed onto these international commitments while also designing national level policies and priorities.

Canada has a long history of promoting gender equality with many guiding documents and resources to ensure that gender equality is central to its international development assistance. Canada's first gender equality policy was launched in 1999, and the OECD-DAC Network on Gender Equality (GenderNet) has recognized Canada as a leader in this space several times.



GLOBAL
CONTEXT

A feminist methodology is crucial for translating global and national commitments to feminist policy and practice in development. Below you will find examples of some of the global commitments to feminist priorities, gender equality and women's empowerment. This information serves as important context within which a feminist methodology for data collection is needed.



CANADA'S FEMINIST INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

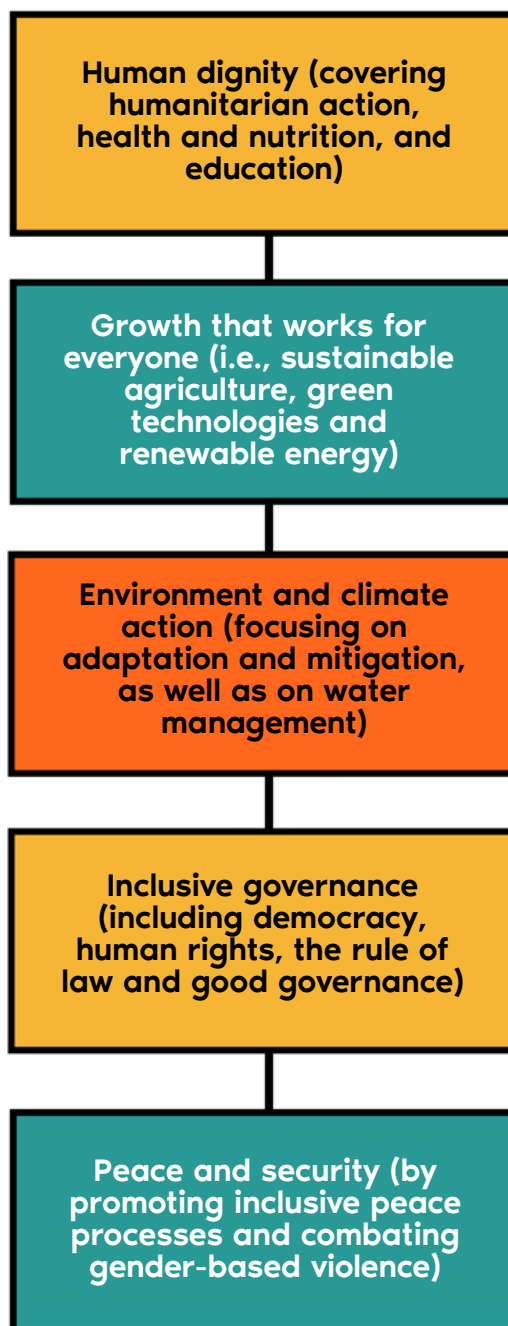
Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy was launched in 2017 to guide Canada's international development programs. It aims to contribute to global efforts to eradicate poverty and build a more peaceful, inclusive and prosperous world by addressing global inequalities and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

GENDER-BASED ANALYSIS PLUS (GBA PLUS)

Canada's commitments to research and data collection on gender equality are also guided by its Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) framework, introduced in 1995. This framework is used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The "plus" in GBA Plus acknowledges that gender-based analysis goes beyond a focus on biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences to also consider other identity factors, like race, ethnicity, religion, age, and disability, to ensure a focus on intersectionality.

As the GBA Plus framework teaches us, not all women experience gender inequality in the same way. Intersectional realities affect the experiences of diverse groups.

This objective of Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy is integrated across the following five action areas:



FEMINIST METHODOLOGY CONCEPTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

In order to carry out feminist research, it is important to consider some of the guiding concepts that are central to a feminist methodology. Below we examine the concepts of intersectionality, gender equality, gender relations and empowerment.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectionality is a term coined by American legal scholar and civil rights activist, Kimberlé Crenshaw. It is used to understand how interlocking aspects of identity (e.g., race, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, class, ethnicity, and religion, among others) shape experiences of oppression and privilege. For example, some groups or individuals may face discrimination in society on the basis of one or more of these identity factors, and their ability to participate in, and benefit from, development programs may be limited as a result.

To learn more about intersectionality, please view the [GBA Plus: Beyond Sex and Gender](#) video.



Box 1.2: Considerations for applying an intersectional approach to research and data collection

When selecting participants: the researcher recognizes and actively seeks out individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences (based on factors such as age, class, religion, caste, marital status, education levels, etc.

When conducting data collection: the researcher uses participatory tools and activities that encourage all participants to share their perspectives and experiences. This could include the use of different methods such as small discussion groups, one-on-one interviews, and techniques like “pass the talking stick” so that everyone has a turn to contribute.

When analyzing data and writing up reports: the researcher is careful to include diverse (even divergent) perspectives and responses, being mindful that some participants may have contributed to the conversation more often than others and ensuring their experience is not unduly emphasized.

GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality means that all individuals have access to the same rights, opportunities and resources. Gender equality is often used to describe equality between women and men, but it must also include gender-diverse individuals (i.e., those identifying as men, women, non-binary, transgender, etc.) and the social relations between them that may contribute to power and inequality.

GENDER RELATIONS

Gender relations define how individuals are expected to interact with others and how others relate to them, based on their gender. Gender relations are the result of gender power dynamics and are influenced by a variety of factors including legal status, social norms and expectations, and intersecting variables such as age, race, religion, etc. Gender relations are socially constructed; they vary from society to society and can change over time.

EMPOWERMENT

There is no single, universally accepted definition of empowerment. However, it is generally accepted that through empowerment individuals and groups become aware of unequal power relations, gain autonomy and control over their lives, and acquire a greater voice to overcome inequality in their home, workplace and community. It is not only a collective, social and political process, but an individual one as well; it is both a process and an outcome. Examples of empowerment might include increased opportunities for women's political participation and leadership, or their improved access to and control over their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In the context of development programming especially, it is important to recognize that outsiders cannot empower women: only women can empower themselves to make choices and to speak out on their own behalf.

For more information about empowerment and related concepts and terms, see Canada's Feminist International Assistance Gender Equality Toolkit for Projects.

Box 1.3: Defining "empowerment" in the GEM Tool

Focus group discussions with project participants using the GEM Tool open with an exercise that engages participants to define empowerment for themselves, in the context of their own lives and communities. Later in the focus group, participants are asked to reflect on the project's results across five key categories of empowerment: economic, knowledge, physical security, self-confidence and social. These categories cover important and widely recognized aspects of empowerment and are suggested to offer some standardization in data collection across focus groups and projects using the GEM Tool. They can also be modified or replaced with other categories that are deemed more appropriate for the local and project context. See Box 2.2 in the Facilitator's Guide for more information on these empowerment categories.



THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR AND RESEARCH TEAM IN FEMINIST DATA COLLECTION

The GEM Tool is designed to be used for data collection by a facilitator who has first completed the training in this guide.

The facilitator may need the support of a small team of researchers composed of locally-based experts to help tailor the GEM Tool and materials for the local context, take notes, provide translation (if required), etc. The composition of the research team will be determined by the implementing organization in consultation with local project partners and knowledge holders who may be able to identify potential facilitators or team members.

Whenever possible, hiring a locally-based facilitator to lead data collection using the GEM Tool is recommended. Another consideration in determining the composition of the research team is to be mindful of the local context, language and norms (particularly gender norms). For example, it may not be advisable for male facilitators or translators to conduct focus group sessions with female participants because they may not feel comfortable disclosing personal information. Whenever possible, the facilitator should conduct focus groups and interviews in the language that participants are most comfortable speaking.

Before we turn to the data collection process for the GEM Tool (outlined in Part 2: Facilitator's Guide), it is important to recognize the important role played by the facilitator in this process. The facilitator is central to feminist data collection. The facilitator sets the tone for the discussion, and guides the research participants to contribute comfortably and openly to the research process.

Whenever possible, hiring a locally-based facilitator to lead data collection using the GEM Tool is recommended.



The facilitator and research team members should consider the following priorities when applying a feminist approach to use the GEM Tool:

ENSURE SAFETY AND DO NO HARM

A feminist research and data collection process commits to ensuring safety and doing no harm. This means creating and maintaining a space that is safe, open and inclusive to diverse voices, views and perspectives. Consider the local cultural norms and practices that may encourage or prevent safe and inclusive discussions. Recognize that some of the topics may be sensitive to some participants and avoid probing for personal experiences or singling out specific individuals. Instead, if you sense that a topic is sensitive or controversial, ask participants to speak generally about community experiences, challenges and opportunities.

Being prepared with some supportive resources (e.g. the name and contact information) to refer research participants to is a best practice. This could include, for example, gender-based violence services like counseling, health services, legal services, child protection, anti-trafficking services, etc. Liaising with local networks, agencies and partners is often the best way to identify these.

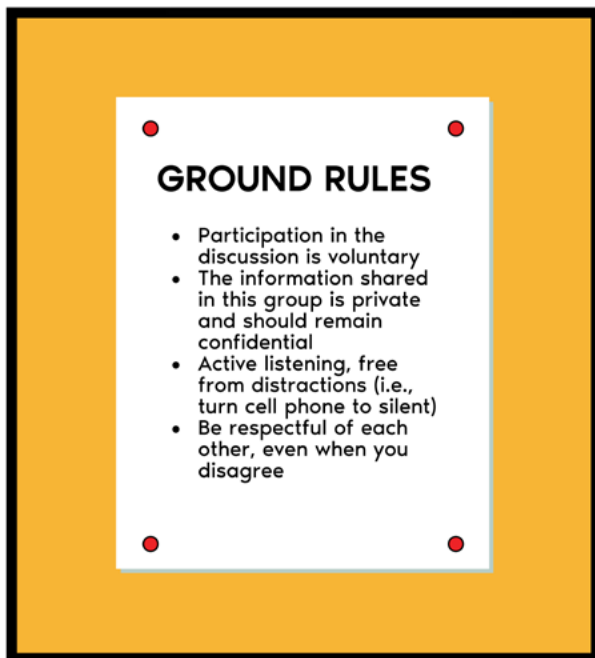


ESTABLISH GROUND RULES

At the outset of any data collection activities involving groups, work together with participants to develop and agree on a set of ground rules for the discussion. This will help to ensure a more respectful, safe and inclusive dialogue among participants. Involving participants in the design of the ground rules is important for establishing a participatory and safe space. Some examples of ground rules can include:

- Participation in the discussion is voluntary
- The information shared in this group is private and should remain confidential
- Active listening, free from distractions (i.e., turn cell phone to silent)
- Be respectful of each other, even when you disagree

More information on setting ground rules during focus group discussions using the GEM Tool can be found in Step 1 of the [Facilitator's Guide](#).





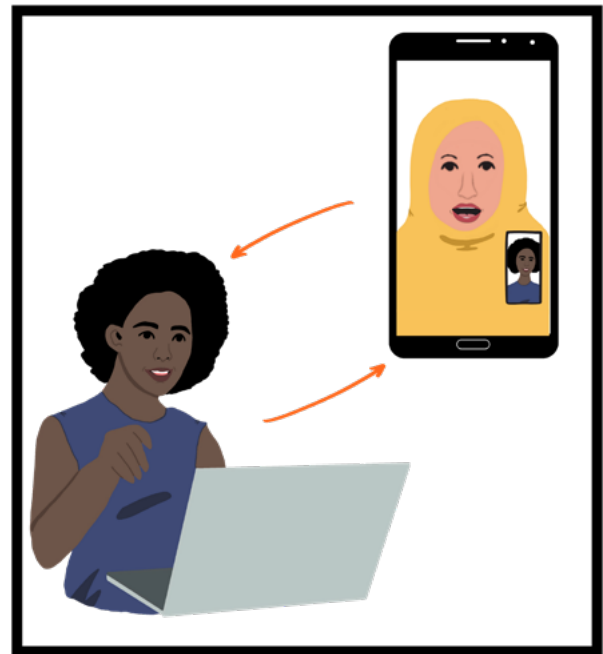
BE PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE

Pay attention to the power dynamics in the room and consider the potential for marginalization or silencing of certain voices (recognizing intersectionality) during data collection activities such as focus groups. Use small group discussions to ensure greater participation of individuals who may not be comfortable speaking about their experiences to the larger group. Recognize the diverse needs of individuals and take steps to ensure the inclusion of those who may face barriers to participating due to things like domestic and childcare responsibilities, physical disability, etc. For example, consider providing childcare on site, choosing a location and time of day that is accessible to all, and covering the cost of participants' transportation.

BE FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTIVE

This tool is not meant to be prescriptive because feminist research requires a degree of flexibility. For example, deciding on the number of project participants to include in focus groups or interviews will depend on the goals of the data collection, and the time and resources that are available. It requires strategic decision-making and consultation with the local project partners and/or other members of the research team.

A feminist researcher also must be able to adapt to new situations and challenges (such as switching from in-person to online formats for data collection). For example, the questions that are asked in focus groups of project participants who have been displaced due to conflict will be different from focus groups questions with project participants who have access to land and property in their communities.

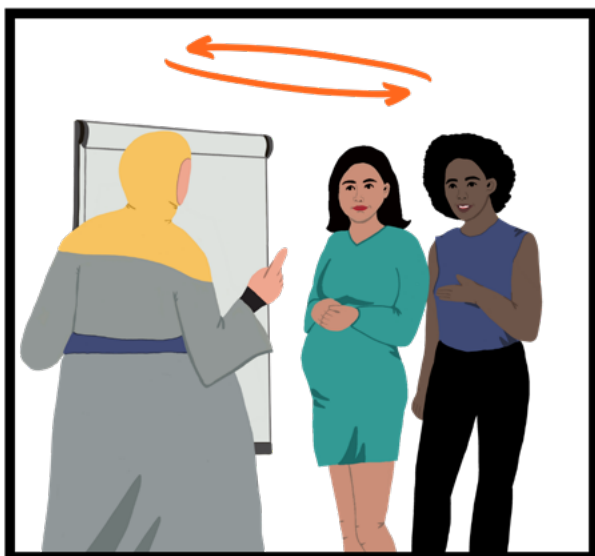


ADD, EXPAND AND PROBE

The GEM Tool is used to gather rich, qualitative information about participants' experiences of gender equality and empowerment. Use your knowledge of the local culture and customs to prepare context-appropriate questions and examples, and to guide discussions in a sensitive way. In [Part 2: Facilitator's Guide](#), we provide many examples of prompts and modifications that can be used when conducting the GEM Tool. Leverage the local knowledge and expertise of research team members to make strategic decisions about what questions to ask and how.

As a researcher, it is important for you to be prepared to ask non-invasive probing questions during the data collection process to collect descriptive examples, quotes and stories from participants.

Be sure to ask questions that do not reflect a bias or lead participants to provide a certain response. For example, always begin discussions with a neutral question: "Did (x) change as a result of (y)? If so, how? If not, what prevented that change from taking place?" To further probe, ask for examples such as: "Can you share a story or example of how that change occurred? What challenges, if any, did you encounter? What successes, if any, did you observe? What did you learn from this? What additional changes do you think are needed to achieve greater success?"



Some examples of probing questions include:

What happened?

How did this impact you and your experience with the project?

When did you begin to see results or changes?

Who provided support or created challenges for you?

Where do you see opportunities for additional changes or support?

ENSURE RECIPROCITY

Feminist research is not extractive; it is committed to knowledge sharing and reciprocity. This means that the knowledge and findings generated during research should be shared with research participants and strive to benefit the community. This can be done in a number of ways and the ideal method will depend on the local context and community in question. In [Part 3: Reporting Guide](#), we provide information on creating outputs from feminist research and ideas for sharing results with participants.