FROM SILOS TO SYNERGY:
LEARNING FROM POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE PROGRAMS

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ABOUT THE GENDER AND POLITICS IN PRACTICE RESEARCH PROJECT

How can a gendered understanding of power and politics make development work more effective? Many development programs tend to look at gender issues and politics separately. Through a series of case studies, this research asks what we can learn from more integrated approaches. It includes:

- a briefing note that highlights key lessons

- a literature review on thinking and working politically and gender equality

- a context paper, and three in-depth studies that examine how gender and politics came together in social change processes

    – women political leaders in the Pacific

    – labour reform in Vietnam's garment industry

    – transgender empowerment and social inclusion in Indonesia

- 14 short case studies of development programs that aim to be both politically informed and gender aware, and a synthesis of their key insights

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See all GAPP resources at **dlprog.org/gapp.**

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SUMMARY

This paper draws together reflections, approaches and practical lessons from 15[1] development programs that are, in various ways, seeking both to be gender aware and to understand and engage with power and politics. It aims to provide food for thought for donor organisations and development programs.

Gender aware programming has been on the development agenda for at least a generation. Most donor organisations have policy commitments to gender equality and to women's and girls' rights, and development programs are commonly tasked with 'mainstreaming' this into their objectives and activities. Increasingly, development programs are additionally required to be both politically informed and adaptive, responding to recent influential work on 'thinking and working politically', 'doing development differently' and adaptive programming. The *thinking* behind these recent approaches has been justifiably criticised for being somewhat gender-blind. However, practice is outstripping analysis in bringing gender awareness and politically informed approaches together.

Gender aware programming and politically informed ways of working both seek to understand, engage with and ultimately reform unequal power dynamics to bring about change—and both approaches are challenging to implement effectively. Too often, targets and strategies are top-down, donor-driven and reliant on external technical experts, limiting both local ownership and impact. There is a great deal to be gained from these two approaches coming together—mutual learning, better and deeper analysis, greatly strengthened practice and improved results.

INCLUSIVE LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Advocates for a more politically informed approach, as well as those arguing for more effective gender mainstreaming, emphasise the importance of programs and mainstreaming initiatives being *locally led*. Solutions to complex development challenges cannot be delivered from outside using blueprint solutions developed elsewhere. Work to promote change requires nuanced local knowledge. It takes time, commitment and courage, and local actors have the legitimacy, relationships and staying power required. Local individuals, organisations and coalitions that are successfully influencing change *without donor support* are almost by definition working in a politically informed way. But donor funding all too easily distorts local actors' incentives for action; competition for funding can compromise their ability to work together; and too visible an association with donor funding can undermine the legitimacy of those championing causes such as gender equality.

Programs in our sample are addressing these challenges by:

- Reaching out beyond the 'usual suspects' to engage partners with local legitimacy and a strong commitment to reform, including those with a direct personal stake in change and those involved in existing change processes;

- Brokering new working relationships bringing diverse partners together in strategic coalitions;

- Working behind the scenes;

- Nurturing locally led processes of change not dependent on or driven by external support;

- Mainstreaming gender by bringing women's groups together with other local actors, raising awareness though joint work.

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1 This paper draws on 14 short case studies, and the in-depth study of Program Peduli's work discussed in the GAPP paper *Thinking and Working Politically for Social Inclusion: The Waria of Banjarmasin, Indonesia*, which is jointly published with The Asia Foundation. See page 3 for a list of the case studies.

POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE ANALYSIS

Understanding context is central to both politically informed and gender aware approaches. Political economy analysis focuses on power, politics and change. Gender analysis examines gender difference, inequality and power relations. Visible and formal manifestations of power and politics, such as legislatures, are the tip of a vast iceberg of informal and less visible power structures and relationships. At every level and in every aspect these are gendered – women and men are positioned differently and unequally. Gender analysis complements, deepens and strengthens political economy analysis by shining a light on these gender differences, including in the informal, less visible culture and norms that underpin visible manifestations of power. Both processes are often already required of development programs, but, typically, they are carried out by external consultants and result in separate reports and recommendations that fail to explore synergies. They often also fail to influence program action in any significant way.

Programs in our sample are addressing these challenges by:

- Bringing political scientists and gender specialists together to develop more holistic analysis of gender, power and political dynamics;

- Using participatory and accessible approaches to actively involve staff and local partners in analysing the gender, power and political dynamics of their context;

- Supporting staff and local partners to use this information to inform their planning and learning.

POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE ACTION

Women's organisations and programs have decades-long experience of campaigning for women's and girls' rights, and their successes demonstrate effective ways of negotiating with power to achieve change. This is a *dynamic process*—informed by an astute understanding of context, a vision of change, a nuanced grasp of entry points and opportunities and a continuous finely tuned balancing act between pragmatism and ambition. It is about 'playing the game to change the rules'.

Programs in our sample are valuing the experience of local actors and supporting them, where needed, to articulate objectives and develop strategies—including in relation to gender equality and rights—in politically informed ways. This involves:

- Carefully framing issues and demands to promote buy-in and build a constituency of support;

- Identifying soft and acceptable entry points, focusing on issues and approaches that have local traction, taking advantage of opportunities and getting the timing right;

- Looking for ways of securing the support, or at least minimising the opposition, of powerful players and potential opponents.

LEARNING BY DOING AND THROUGH ADAPTATION

Working with gender, power and politics means working with uncertainty, and learning by doing, experimentation and iteration. Processes of change are non-linear, take place over the long term, and cannot be predicted in advance.

Programs in our sample are giving significant scope to local partners to adjust their activities in response to learning and changing conditions. This involves:

- Putting in place structures for front-line staff and partners to reflect on and learn from experience, including nurturing relationships of trust and honesty that enable them to recognise, admit to and learn from strategies that are not working, as well as those that are;

- Developing monitoring systems that reflect on partners' ways of working—including their attention to gender, power and politics—and the extent to which these are contributing to the achievement of headline results;

- Monitoring changes in power, politics and gender relations in wider society. Achieving change at this level is a long-term process, and has implications for development program time frames, their levels of ambition and long-term commitment from donors.

MANAGING A POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE PROGRAM

The extent to which front-line staff and partners are able to use both politically informed and gender aware perspectives depends on the extent to which program management systems (and the broader political economy and culture of donor organisations) enable—or disable—this way of working. Conventional ways of recruiting staff, training them, managing finances, planning, monitoring and reporting all reinforce a top-down, technical, results-driven approach.

Empowerment of front-line staff and partners

Programs in our sample are empowering front line staff and partners by:

- Decentralising decision-making to front-line staff and partners, and supporting them to play this role effectively;

- Changing the profile of staff recruited, favouring soft skills and values (including gender equality and inclusion) over technical expertise;

- Shifting the role of external gender and political science specialists, away from providing discrete inputs and toward facilitating the work of front-line staff and partners;

- Investing in hands-on, continuous, practical ways of building the understanding of staff and partners—often focusing less on specialist technical knowledge than on self-awareness; confidence and self-esteem; and co-creation of processes, approaches and tools;

- Providing inspirational leadership, and an inclusive organisational culture that models effective practice;

- Exercising quality control, ensuring a strong overarching vision and pushing back on local staff and partners, where needed, to guard against a series of unfocused interventions.

Flexible management systems and processes

Where possible, managers of programs in our sample are:

- Working with the donor to shape management systems and processes to create an enabling environment for locally led, adaptive work, while at the same time fulfilling donor requirements;

- Facing in two directions: delivering what the donor requires but in a way that protects the space local actors need to shape interventions according to their own context, knowledge and learning;

- Applying their skills in political economy and power analysis to their relationship with their donor: understanding when they need to be compliant and when it is possible to push back to protect local ownership and allow for flexibility, uncertainty and change.

A shared vision of change

The factor most consistently identified as crucial to the success of programs in our sample was an alignment of approach between donors and program management, and/or between donor/program management systems and the dynamics of change on the ground. This allows decisions relating to management systems and evolving opportunities, constraints and learning to be made jointly. Without this shared vision, top-down pressures prevail by default.

1 INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Recent influential work on politically informed programming, doing development differently and adaptive programming has been justifiably criticised for being somewhat gender-blind. Professional silos go a long way towards explaining this: there is little meeting of worlds, either conceptually or practically, between the political scientists and governance experts who have led the way on politically informed approaches and the specialists who shape and analyse gender aware programming.[2]

The language and practice of politically informed programming can feel patronising and alienating to gender activists and programs. This approach champions a way of working that is in many ways part of the DNA of gender equality activism—but without recognising the link. And, in practice, it is all too often narrowly focused on macro-level political analysis, governance programming and male-dominated formal political systems. At the same time, political scientists can easily assume that gender awareness belongs in the realm of the social, the non-formal and the female, removed and separate from the world of formal politics.

In reality, and away from professional silos and assumptions, a gender aware way of working and a politically informed way of working are two sides of the same coin—both are about power. Both seek to understand, engage with and ultimately reform unequal power dynamics to bring about change. Both are essential for any development program seeking to support complex institutional change—a definition which applies to most core development concerns. And both are challenging to implement effectively, and fraught with pitfalls. There is a great deal to gain, both conceptually and practically, from these two worlds coming together: mutual learning, better and deeper analysis, greatly strengthened practice and improved results.

THIS PAPER

Much of the innovation on bringing together politically informed ways of working and gender aware ways of working, and on effective implementation, is coming not from academics but from practitioners. This paper, part of the Gender and Politics in Practice (GAPP) research project, highlights reflections, approaches and practical lessons from development programs that, in various ways, are seeking to be gender aware *and* politically informed. It is designed to provide food for thought for donor organisations and development programs, as well as some practical guidance.

The paper starts with a brief review of the history/trajectory of politically informed approaches and gender awareness in development programs, the current state of these arts and their common and complementary areas of concern and challenge. It goes on to introduce the 15 development programs whose experience provides the basis for this paper, and presents a framework that shapes the analysis. It then draws out practical lessons and observations in relation to analytical processes, action to bring about change, learning through adaptation and the program management systems required for these kinds of approaches to thrive.

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2 See the annex for an overview of what is meant by 'gender aware' and 'politically informed' approaches.

2 DIFFERENT HISTORIES AND TRAJECTORIES

POLITICALLY INFORMED WAYS OF WORKING

In recent years, the importance for donor agencies and programs working on governance and complex development challenges of doing so in 'politically informed' ways—specifically, grappling with the messy realities of local power, politics, interests and trade-offs and 'working with the grain' of local culture—has been widely discussed and increasingly accepted. Otherwise, institutional reform programs all too easily produce results characterised by 'isomorphic mimicry' (Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2012)—that is, so-called 'best practice' reforms and solutions that look good to an external funder but make little real difference on the ground. Typical examples are policies and laws that are debated and passed but never implemented, and the introduction of governance systems and processes that mirror those of western countries, but which never function effectively. Too much focus on this type of result in turn leads to 'capability traps', as those seeking donor support focus on the types of reform that leverage funding, rather than the types of reform that bring about change in their own context.

To date, political economy analysis (PEA) has been the main tool promoted to assist donor-funded programs to work in more politically informed ways. However, according to recent discussion, the impact of PEA on programs has been disappointing, and 'donors have found it hard to move from thinking politically to working differently' (Fisher & Marquette, 2014). The concern is that, in practice, PEA is often reduced to a high-level technical input, with limited impact on development practice or results.

There is a convergence of current thinking on the need for approaches to complexity to move beyond analysis to action, and to accommodate the locally grounded, iterative, messy and un-plannable nature of change. Among other things, this involves developing local solutions to local problems and learning by doing, experimentation and iteration. Many development programs are now tasked with achieving this, and requirements to be both politically informed and adaptive are increasingly incorporated into program design. The practice of 'politically informed adaptive programming', however, is still in its infancy.

GENDER AWARE WAYS OF WORKING

In contrast with this comparatively new approach, gender aware approaches have been on the development agenda for at least a generation. Up until the late 1980s, governments, donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provided support to poor women in developing countries entirely through projects that focused on women as beneficiaries. These had very small budgets in comparison with aid programs as a whole, and their impact was limited and isolated. They left wholly untouched the 'mainstream' of development policy and spending, which often affected women's lives far more.

The 1995 UN International Conference on Women held in Beijing represented a sea change in thinking. Women's organisations, feminist academics and development practitioners successfully campaigned for the establishment of 'gender mainstreaming' as a key strategy for governments and development organisations to promote gender equality. This was about moving gender equality and women's rights from the margins of development to the mainstream, to complement projects specifically designed for women and girls.

Since that time, most donors and development programs have adopted a 'twin track approach'. This means they continue to support *targeted programs* focused wholly on promoting aspects of women's rights, gender minority rights or gender equality. They also engage in some form of *gender mainstreaming*, bringing gender analysis, gender aware action and gender-focused results into their mainstream policies and programs. While there have been some successes in this endeavour, there are widespread criticisms. Women's organisations, in particular, criticise the practice of gender mainstreaming for being too often top-down, donor-led and depoliticised, and as a result for weakening local ownership and impact.

In this paper, we use the term 'gender aware approaches' to refer to targeted programs and gender mainstreaming together, and mention targeted programs and gender mainstreaming separately where appropriate.

POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE WAYS OF WORKING: LEARNING FROM AND REINFORCING EACH OTHER

Gender aware approaches and politically informed programming are both *processes*. Gender aware approaches are sometimes designed to achieve the specific objective of greater gender equality and more equal rights. Sometimes, gender equality and more equal rights is not a specific objective—but gender analysis plays an important part in identifying power dynamics and informing implementation strategies in pursuit of sector specific objectives. A politically informed approach is designed to achieve the general aim of reform in complex contexts—where power dynamics are complex and pathways to change messy and unpredictable. This is a definition that encompasses many core development challenges, *including* reform towards greater gender equality and more equal rights. **'***These things are completely inseparable because you can't work on gender without working politically ... any work on gender is a political project because you're taking on board the ways in which socially, economically and politically, gender difference plays out.***'**³ In this sense, therefore, programs that have been *successful* in advancing aspects of gender equality and women's rights are themselves examples of working in a politically informed way. Those who are newer to this approach can learn a great deal from their successes and failures.

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CASE STUDY EXAMPLES

The following 15 case studies provide the basis for this paper. Nine of the programs are targeted initiatives; five are sector programs in which gender is mainstreamed. For further details, see the individual case study summaries available online at **dlprog.org/gapp**.

Targeted initiatives

- *Pacific Leadership Program: Advocacy for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Tonga:* women's empowerment and leadership
- *Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction (MAMPU), Indonesia*: women's empowerment and poverty reduction
- *UN Women Asia Pacific, 22 countries*: women's empowerment
- *Voices for Change (V4C), Nigeria:* women's empowerment
- *CARE Australia, 23 countries:* poverty and gender equality
- *We Can, 16 countries:* viral campaign on violence against women
- *Peace Leadership Programme (PLP), Myanmar:* support to women's leadership
- *Program Peduli, Indonesia:* supporting the *waria* transgender community
- *Gender and Climate Change, Bangladesh:* women and climate change (research study)
- *Women in Leadership Support Program (WLSP), Papua New Guinea:* women's political representation (research study)

Sector programs

- *Enabling State Programme (ESP), Nepal:* governance, civil society and state-building
- *Empowerment, Voice and Accountability for Better Health and Nutrition (EVA), Pakistan*: accountability for better health services
- *Mobilising for Development (M4D), Nigeria*: accountability at local government level for better services
- *State Accountability and Voice Initiative (SAVI), Nigeria*: citizen engagement in state-level governance
- *Sudokkho, Bangladesh:* markets for the poor, skills development in the garment and construction industries

Information was collected through interviews with key informants and a review of project documentation.

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3 Siow, O. (2018). *Gender and Climate Change Research in Bangladesh* (GAPP Case Study 5). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS5.pdf

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK OF POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING
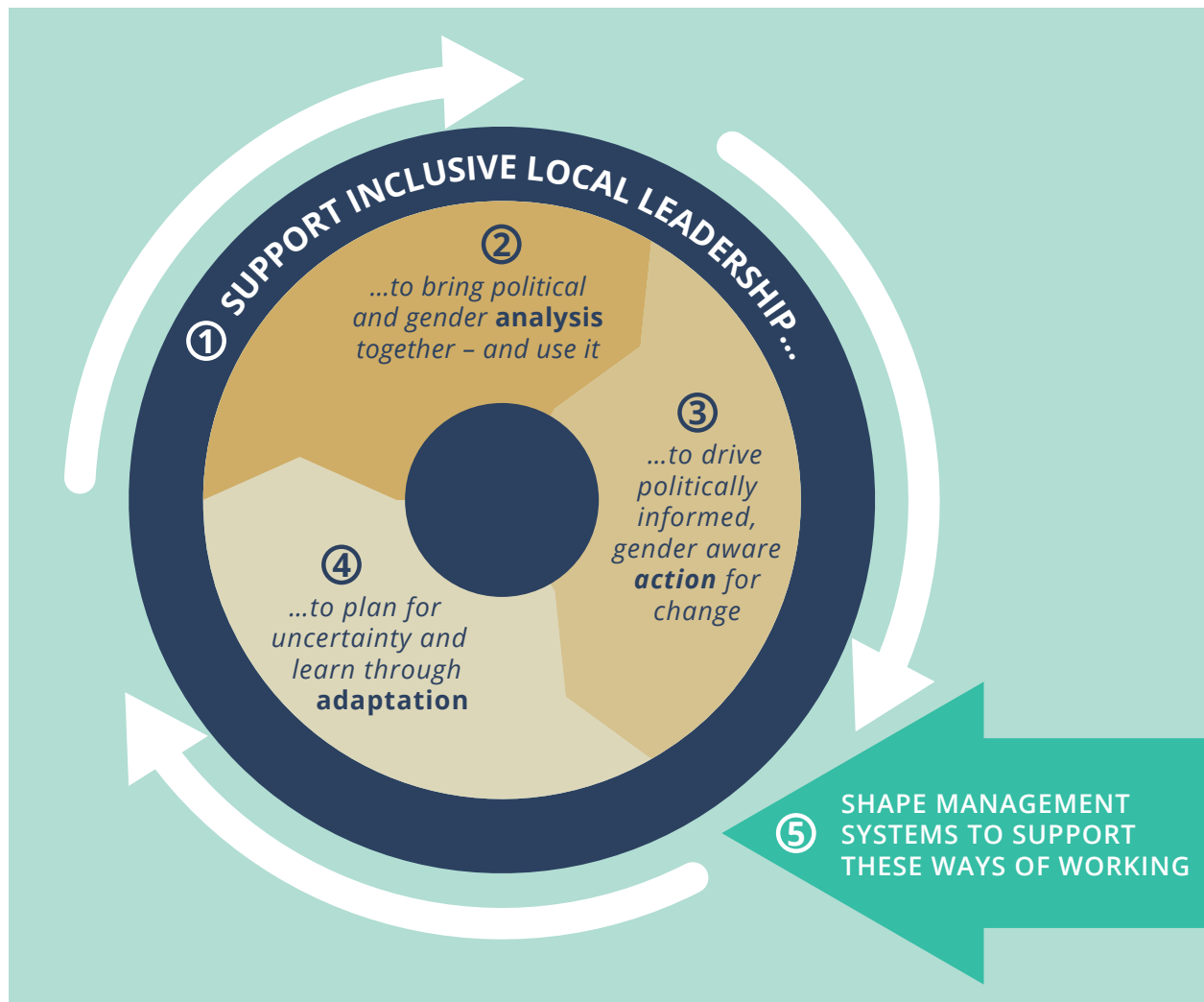
We use the above analytical framework—a simplified view of a highly complex reality—to focus on different stages/elements of working with power, politics and gender in development programs and to help in drawing out commonalities, complementarities, challenges and lessons. It involves:

- Supporting inclusive local leadership...

  ... to bring political and gender analysis together – and use it

  ... to drive politically informed, gender aware action for change

  ... to plan for uncertainty and learn through adaptation

- Shaping management systems to support politically informed, gender aware ways of working.

3 SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS AND INCLUSIVE LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Advocates for a more politically informed approach emphasise the importance of programs being *locally led*. Solutions to complex development challenges cannot be delivered from outside using blueprint solutions developed elsewhere. Work to promote change requires nuanced local knowledge to enable an understanding of where opportunities lie, and it takes time, commitment and courage. Local actors have the legitimacy, relationships, embeddedness and staying power required.

This emphasis on local leadership addresses one of the main criticisms that has for many years been levelled at gender mainstreaming, and also now at politically informed programming. Too often, targets and strategies in both approaches are top-down and donor-driven, informed by and reliant on external technical experts. This limits both local ownership and impact.

There is widespread agreement on the importance of local leadership, but finding appropriate ways for development programs to support effective local leadership is itself complex and fraught with pitfalls. While local actors potentially have the legitimacy, motivation and embeddedness to champion effective change, this is not always the case. Local individuals, organisations and coalitions that are successfully influencing change on their own terms *without donor support* are almost by definition using a politically informed approach. However, donor funding all too easily distorts the incentives local actors have for engagement and action, with the effect of undermining rather than supporting their effectiveness. Funding can attract local actors motivated primarily by personal gain but well able to articulate what donors want to hear. It often shifts even legitimate recipients' focus away from real engagement in local problem-solving to delivering what the donor requires, and to securing their own future through continued financial support. Competition for funding commonly undermines the kind of collaborative relationships local actors need to make progress—and donor funding for work on issues including gender equality and rights lays local individuals and organisations open to accusations of unwelcome foreign influence, which potentially undermines their legitimacy.

Our case studies provide examples of programs supporting and catalysing local leadership while trying to avoid some of the above pitfalls. In many of the cases, programs have consciously reached out beyond the 'usual suspects' in seeking local partners to work with, to identify those with local legitimacy and strong commitment to reform. This includes engaging with those with a direct personal stake in change, such as women's organisations campaigning for improvements in women's lives, and community groups and individuals with direct experience of the problem being addressed.

Programs are brokering and nurturing new working relationships, supporting local stakeholders to work together in strategic coalitions across institutions and levels as appropriate to the context and problem. The strength of coalitions should lie in what members can achieve together, leveraging their collective, complementary and diverse knowledge, skills, networks and resources, rather than in the funding they receive. A number of programs are specifically aiming to nurture locally led processes of change that can take on a life of their own—not dependent on, or driven by, external support. Some programs focus on the role of individuals in bringing about change, building their knowledge, networks and resilience. Some working with coalitions, including EVA, M4D and SAVI, deliberately 'take money off the table' from the outset, and, instead of providing grants, support local partnerships through a combination of capacity-building, relationship-brokering and mentoring. Some build long-term trusting relationships with local partners, starting with the provision of training and grants but over time diminishing financial support and moving into the role of 'critical friend'. However, even with money off the table, it is a constant challenge for donors and partners to navigate the power differences within coalitions.

Development programs have a critical role to play in mainstreaming gender—bringing attention to gender equality into all development partnerships. This is about, where needed, raising local partners' awareness and understanding of how all groups and all processes of negotiation and change are gendered, reflecting or challenging the norms of wider society. Local leadership is critical here too. Encouraging and enabling groups to hear the voices of those who their structures exclude, and building relationships between individuals and organisations campaigning for gender quality and groups working on other subjects, is a more effective and sustainable approach than formal gender training by external experts.

'EVERYTHING IS ABOUT THE CONNECTIVE TISSUE BETWEEN ORGANISATIONS', MAMPU, INDONESIA

MAMPU (the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment) has sought to be politically informed and locally led from the outset. The program selected partner organisations with a record as successful agents of change, and included them in the program design processes. Ten women's and gender-interested organisations reviewed, revised and endorsed the program's goal, outcomes and theory of change, as well as its governance and management structures. This helped ensure from the outset the relevance of activities and approaches, but also highlighted the importance of local organisations working *collaboratively: 'We needed to shift the gaze up, out and across organisations.'*[4]

Although partner organisations share gendered aims, competition for funding had previously resulted in rivalry rather than cooperation. The development of mutually beneficial relationships between partner organisations has been greatly assisted by an influential local leader, who is deeply committed to the importance of organisations working together rather than in silos. The success of this is demonstrated in the gradual emergence of a broad-based and increasingly powerful movement for women's empowerment in the country. MAMPU has extended this collaborative approach into work with government, supporting partners to identify and develop relationships with male and female reformers and change agents at provincial and district level. It's *'a question of bringing the right people together, providing the right level of support for relationships to grow organically and based on mutual respect between politicians and CSOs. That way it has utility value for everyone and becomes sustainable.'*[5]

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *MAMPU: Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment* (GAPP Case Study 2). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS2.pdf

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN COMMUNITY GROUPS, EVA, PAKISTAN

EVA (Empowerment, Voice and Accountability for Better Health and Nutrition) supports community groups to hold local government to account for the provision of maternal and child health services. The program started by mapping the existing landscape of NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs) and other actors and hiring community-level mobilisers who could navigate these networks using their local knowledge. This enabled it to avoid creating alternative structures and using organisations that had been captured by elites, and to identify indigenous grassroots groups to align with.

All attendance in EVA-supported groups is on a voluntary basis. Practically, this means those motivated by money will attend a different group that is paying people; EVA groups are populated by ordinary, civic-minded people who come because they want to, and because the group is achieving results on issues that matter to them.

Initially, the community groups were wholly male-dominated. As the program has evolved, however, it has moved from focusing on *outputs* benefiting women to gender-sensitising the *processes* to achieve such results. This has involved working to increase the number of female participants in the community groups. Mixed groups present opportunities to expose male community members to women's needs and viewpoints—especially important given that *'the political reality is that it's often the men escalating claims to district level and above'.*[6] By 2016, women's membership of community groups had reached over 40 per cent. The election of female leaders has demonstrably helped improve women's representation and enabled them to raise issues that may otherwise have been overlooked. The results are striking.

'We are starting to see successful examples that have nothing to do with women's health. The program is doing things at the community level that it didn't set out to do.' [7]

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *Empowerment, Voice and Accountability for Better Health and Nutrition in Pakistan* (GAPP Case Study 10). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS10.pdf

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4 Key informant, 3 February 2017.
5 Key informant, 1 January 2017.
6 Key informant, 4 February 2017.
7 Key informant, 4 February 2017.

4 POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE ANALYSIS

Understanding context is the starting point for staff and local partners to work in a way that is both politically informed and gender aware. *Gender analysis* informs targeted initiatives with women and girls and gender mainstreaming; *political economy analysis* is the starting point for programs and partners aiming to be politically informed.

Gender analysis focuses on how women and men, boys and girls experience the issue in question differently and/or unequally and the power relations between them. It includes analysis of sex-disaggregated data to identify quantitative gender gaps. This is complemented by qualitative analysis of issues including gender roles, norms, customs and attitudes; men's and women's differential access to, influence over and barriers to resources, services and decision-making at all levels; and their different experiences and priorities. A robust analysis will also look at the ways gender intersects with other forms of diversity, such as race, religion, ethnicity, class and disability. There is also increasing recognition of the non-binary nature of gender identity and sexuality. *Where relevant and appropriate,*[8] gender analysis examines the experience and perspective of people with particular gender identities or sexual preferences. Generally speaking, gender analysis is undertaken as a one-off exercise at the start of a development program to identify gender gaps or rights abuses, analyse underlying causes and shape interventions accordingly.

Political economy analysis looks at stakeholder interests and incentives, the institutional rules shaping decision-making and agenda-setting and the politics of trade-offs, coalitions and deals. Some PEA studies simply provide a snapshot of complexity in the macro-political economy, an approach that can have the effect of highlighting the seeming impossibility of change. One study has gone as far as to describe this approach as a 'dismal science of constraints' (Duncan & Williams, 2012). But, potentially and ideally, PEA studies are both more practical and more dynamic—helping identify possible entry points for reform, potential champions and the people and systems blocking change. PEA takes place at the start of a development program and, increasingly, is then periodically updated throughout its life. The aim and potential is to provide a dynamic view of power and politics that assists in shaping and reshaping interventions in accordance with experience, as well as with shifting opportunities and momentum for change.

There are obvious ways in which these forms of analysis can complement each other, with significant potential for mutual strengthening and deepening. Gender analysis brings a deeper perspective to analysis of power and the political landscape. 'Gender and feminist analyses are lenses with which to view [the]... political economy, with its exclusions, silences and marginalisations, as well as its openings and future paths' (Griffin, 2007: 719). The visible manifestations of power—formal political structures and processes, which are often largely if not wholly male-dominated—are the visible tip of a vast iceberg of informal, less visible power structures and processes in households, communities and social movements that shape and underpin them. Gender analysis explores the power dynamics in these formal and informal spaces and domains.

A conventional view of power looks at 'power over'—that is, getting someone else to do what you want them to do. A more gendered view focuses on the capacity to transform and empower yourself and others. This alternative perspective draws attention to different ways of influencing, as well as the differential needs of different groups. Meaningful, sustained and embedded change in the visible and formal elements of politics and power requires engagement with the invisible and informal elements: 'If we only look at people in visible positions of authority, we will miss most of the story' (Moyle, 2015). Politics and gender can't be divorced: 'you can't do development in isolation from what is going on in broader society. Just working at one level isn't going to make any real change.'[9]

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8 Work in donor-funded programs relating to sexual preference and gender identity almost always takes place in targeted initiatives. Because gender and sexual identity are such highly sensitive subjects, these issues are not generally mainstreamed. Although there are people in all societies with non-binary gender identity and different sexual preferences, these ways of life are illegal in some countries, considered by many to be counter to local culture and/or an unwelcome Western influence. Work on these issues needs to be shaped by those directly involved, and developed with enormous sensitivity to their views, needs and rights, as well as to the sensitivities and dangers of the context in which they live.
9 Key informant, 22/3/2017, GAPP Case Study 5: Gender and Climate Change Research in Bangladesh.

Adding a PEA lens to gender analysis brings in a political and, potentially and ideally, dynamic focus—analysing political bottlenecks to gender-related change at all levels, assisting in strategically framing gender issues and engaging more effectively in the political sphere. 'What political science offers to feminism is the affirmation of the importance of politics, the knowledge that to concede the political arena is to concede the crucial sites of power' (Lovenduski, 1992: 612).

These two analytical processes are already commonly required of development programs, but, typically, 'fly in, fly out' consultants undertake both separately. Separate gender and political economy analyses and recommendations are produced for the same program, with opportunities for synergy rarely explored. In 2014, a Governance and Social Development Resource Centre helpdesk report (Browne, 2014) asked the question, 'How is gender incorporated in political economy analysis, and which tools are used to do this?' It concluded that gender was not systematically included in existing frameworks or applied in completed PEA studies. Both types of study can easily result in highly polished technical reports that meet program milestones but fail to engage more than a few program staff or partners or to inform program action in a significant way.

In contrast with this, our case studies provide examples of programs that are proactively bringing together PEA and gender analysis. They also provide valuable insight into ways of doing PEA and gender analysis that enable program staff and local partners to engage with this information in a holistic manner and use it to inform their planning and review processes.

Some of our case study programs are bringing political scientists and gender specialists together to develop more holistic analysis of gender, power and political dynamics. Many are using participatory and accessible approaches to actively involve and engage staff and partners in analytical processes, and to ensure analysis informs action and learning.

An important way into this is to find a language and tools that work for program staff and partners. 'Political economy analysis' sounds—and often is—academic, focused on formal political systems and conducted by political scientists. The word 'politics' itself is toxic in many contexts, associated with the machinations of self-serving corrupt politicians. Instead, EVA, for example, works with staff and partners on 'power and change' analysis, M4D encourages staff to analyse and reflect using 'power mapping', SAVI supports staff and partners through stakeholder mapping and 'smarter planning' processes and the Pacific Leadership Program incorporates analysis of power and politics into strategic planning and adaptive leadership.

All these forms of analysis and reflection are about helping front-line staff and partners look at the power and politics—formal and informal—around the issue they are seeking to address *and* the gender dynamics involved. They help map existing players to avoid setting up new and unsustainable structures. They look at who is promoting and standing in the way of change; who the potential allies and champions are; and what the entry points are to change.

Analysis prior to action gives an indication of where to start and who to engage. Repeating these processes on a regular basis, and using this analysis to reflect on the effectiveness of strategies and actions, is central to learning by doing and adaptive planning.

UNDERSTANDING THE GENDER DIMENSIONS OF PEACE-BUILDING, MYANMAR

The Peace Leadership Programme in Myanmar uses gender analysis as a lens through which to understand Myanmar's political landscape: *'We focus on a whole systems approach to conflict, and gender is one of the lenses we can use to understand our position and our theory of change. This enriches our enquiry. Using a gender lens as part of program design is just as important as ensuring that there are female beneficiaries.'*[10] Employing a gender lens allows the program to recognise that the persistent and significant gap in women's decision-making power and formal participation in peace processes reflects a fundamental structural power imbalance at play, despite widespread academic and practitioner consensus that empowering women is essential for durable peace.[11]

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *Peace Leadership Programme: Women's leadership in Myanmar* (GAPP Case Study 4). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS4.pdf

SUPPORTING LOCAL ACTORS TO ANALYSE POWER, POLITICS AND GENDER, INDONESIA

Program Peduli, working with the transgender *waria* community in Indonesia, involved locally legitimate and influential community members in shaping the program's outcomes and strategies from the outset. Through this process, it became clear to the *waria* that they were to be the 'subject' rather than the 'object' of the program, able to shape and re-shape activities and ambitions to reflect their own experiences and priorities.

The program strategy was based on the *waria's* deep understanding and analysis of their own local context. Stakeholder mapping processes helped the *waria* to identify key players and their interests, incentives, ideas and relationships – including extending this understanding of local politics as far as the household dynamics that were affecting their quality of life. The *waria* then used this analysis to identify the key stakeholders they needed to work with, and to build networks and coalitions of local actors pushing to transform social norms. Over time, they changed their initial focus on building relationships with government, to developing a wider coalition of stakeholders supporting social acceptance of *waria*.

Mentoring, use of simple tools such as stakeholder analysis, gender analysis and a simple theory of change, as well as the program's capacity to be flexible helped all *waria* partners take incremental steps towards 'thinking and working politically'. This did not require significant amounts of time on capacity building or talking about the theory behind this style of programming.

Source: Koenig, M. et al. (2018). *Thinking and Working Politically for Social Inclusion: The Waria of Banjarmasin, Indonesia* (GAPP series). See http://publications.dlprog.org/Koenig.pdf

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10 Key informant, 3 May 2017.
11 http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/transforming-women-to-transform-conflict/

5 POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE ACTION

Working politically is about negotiating with power. One of the criticisms of this approach relates to the idea of 'working with the grain', which can all too easily imply that development programs and local actors should recognise existing formal structures of power and work through these to achieve change. This holds the obvious danger of reinforcing the inequities of the *status quo*.

Women's organisations and programs have decades-long experience of campaigning for women's and girls' rights. Their successes demonstrate effective ways of negotiating with power, including working with the grain, to achieve change— experiences that are instructive and applicable in other contexts. Gender analysis makes it clear there are multiple 'grains' in any society, and power operates in multiple ways—through formal visible hierarchical structures but also in less formal and more collaborative ways. Actors championing reform need to be politically informed in identifying approaches that have local resonance (Denney & McLaren, 2016: 23), sometimes exploiting 'cracks' in norms that may present room for manoeuvre (Bicchieri, 2006). This is a dynamic process—based on an astute understanding of context, a vision of change, a nuanced grasp of entry points and opportunities and a continuous finely tuned balancing act between pragmatism and ambition. It's about 'playing the game to change the rules'.

The challenge for development programs is to allow local actors to take the lead and to nurture their capacity to work in a politically informed way while exercising appropriate quality control. Although local reform-minded individuals and organisations are well positioned to take a politically informed approach, this may not be how they are used to working. As we have discussed, top-down targets and blueprint planning in development programming often orient local partners toward delivering for the donor rather than responding to opportunity and momentum in their own context. Some organisations also get locked into asserting their own agendas, making little progress, without necessarily considering pragmatic and practical ways forward.

Programs in our sample are supporting local partners, where needed, to articulate objectives and develop strategies— including in relation to gender equality and rights—in politically informed ways, taking advantage of opportunity and recognising sensitivities. This involves careful framing of issues and demands to promote buy-in and build a constituency of support. It is about identifying soft and acceptable entry points, focusing on issues and approaches that have local traction, taking advantage of opportunities and getting the timing right. It is also about looking for ways of securing the support, or at least minimising the opposition, of powerful players and potential opponents.

In the case of women's rights campaigning, powerful players and potential opponents are very often men. Most of the programs in our sample that aim to empower women are also working with men—finding ways of securing men's support for their agenda; breaking down highly sensitive issues into something both women and men can relate to; identifying ways men can also benefit; and bringing men on board as champions of change. In all cases, progress on gender equality and women's rights has involved very careful framing. The word 'gender'—ubiquitous in the world of development programming—is alienating in many aid-recipient country contexts, often holding connotations of foreign imposition.

'I find, in the Pacific, the word "gender" is actually really unhelpful. It gets people on edge a bit. If you frame things as "gender equality" it is seen as foreign and neocolonial' (Women and Leadership Support Progam: GAPP Case study 9).

'You need to work with the grain when you are addressing gender issues. You need to work with what exists and build up from there' (Mobilising for Development: GAPP Case study 11).

'It's like a silent revolution, but the more explicit you are about it, the less effective you will be'

(Sudokkho: GAPP Case study 12).

MAKING A BUSINESS CASE FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: SUDOKKHO, BANGLADESH

Sudokkho is a program supporting the economic development of the ready-made garment and construction industries in Bangladesh. It has successfully built local ownership of its explicit women's empowerment agenda by making a strong business case, concentrating on changes that are in the interests of all parties. This business case focuses on persuading (all male) middle management in private companies of the economic benefits of investing in women, demonstrating that women's empowerment is good for women but also for production, profits and growth. For example, garment factories were experiencing high turnover among female sewing machine operators, adversely affecting profits. Bringing women into the previously all male supervisory grades lessened abuse of female by male staff and substantially reduced this problem.

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *Sudokkho: Skills and employment in Bangladesh* (GAPP Case Study 12). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS12.pdf

IDENTIFYING SOFT ENTRY POINTS AND BUILDING SUPPORT: UN WOMEN ASIA PACIFIC

UN Women works in 22 countries in the Asia Pacific region, supporting women's organisations to catalyse change on locally salient issues. The program supports local partners to carefully frame issues to bring potential opponents on board. *'Whatever you are doing, you have to ask: How can I turn scepticism into the realisation that our aims might be in someone's interests... In certain contexts we have worked on issues such as health or livelihoods in order to gain trust before talking about gender equality and power relations... You have to work on a case-by-case basis to identify the best strategy... We are strategic about looking at what is the current momentum in a country, and leveraging a common agenda that matters to ordinary people. This is the way to create a political momentum with a sense of urgency to engage key local actors, including governments... You cannot manufacture opportunities, so you have to be clever about how you capitalize on those that present themselves.'*[12]

'You have to convince authorities that adding a gender lens is efficient rather than more work. This means you often have to act like you are not a gender advocate in order to get your gendered aims. If you come on too strong, people will shut the door on you.'[13]

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *UN Women: Empowerment in the Asia Pacific* (GAPP Case Study 6). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS6.pdf

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12 Key informant, 1 March 2017
13 Ibid.

6 PLANNING FOR UNCERTAINTY AND LEARNING THROUGH ADAPTATION

Working with gender, power and politics means working with uncertainty, as well as learning by doing, experimentation and iteration. Processes of change are non-linear, take place over the long term and cannot be predicted. There is growing recognition that program design that assumes full knowledge of a problem, its causes and its solutions before implementation, and that does not allow opportunities for revision based on new information or changes in context, is less likely to achieve impact (Rondinell, 1993; Kleinfeld, 2015).

Work in this area is evolving. Some tools have been developed to encourage programs to adapt their plans and approaches during implementation to seek greater impact (Faustino & Booth, 2014; Ladner, 2015) but use of more flexible planning tools is not yet well embedded in development programs. There is also yet to be significant work on bringing gender, power and politics aspects of monitoring and learning together.

Further, there is debate on the focus of learning by doing. A great deal of attention is being accorded to 'fail fast' approaches, with programs encouraged to build in quick real-time feedback loops to make it possible to close down initiatives deemed not to be working. This approach aligns well with donor value for money considerations—but fails to recognise the timeframe and the non-linear nature of complex social and political change. In complex contexts, the impacts of particular actions and groups of actions may not be evident immediately, yet may play a critical part in creating the conditions for change at a later time or in a different place. Learning by doing is not just about value for money considerations but also about more organic and empowering processes, building the confidence and ability of local actors to champion change effectively. In this context, failures as well as successes provide opportunities to learn, and to revise strategies accordingly.

A number of programs in our sample are taking this latter approach, giving significant scope to local partners to adjust their activities in response to learning or to changing conditions, and as a result of their own deepening understanding of problems and potential solutions. This involves putting in place structures for front-line staff and partners to reflect on their experience and their changing context—what is working, what is not and for whom; what new opportunities are arising and what opportunities are closing down; which activities should be scaled up and which scaled back. The focus is on the effectiveness of strategies to achieve results, rather than holding partners to account for the delivery of pre-planned activities and delivering specific outputs. To facilitate this, programs need to create space and opportunity for reflection. They also need to nurture relationships of trust and honesty with staff and local partners, enabling them to recognise, admit to and learn from strategies that are not working, as well as those that are.

Some programs are going further than this by using their data collection and monitoring systems to facilitate these internal reflection and iterative planning processes, as well as for reporting to donors. Working with power, politics and gender entails, as discussed earlier, *ways of working* to achieve complex development objectives, including progress toward gender equality and women's rights. These approaches are about changes in attitudes, behaviour and relationships at all levels of society that facilitate reforms and make them meaningful and sustainable. Monitoring systems that shine a light on shifts in attitudes, behaviour and relationships—of partners and of the actors and organisations the program is seeking to influence—facilitate reflection on the effectiveness of strategies, how headline results have been achieved and what we can learn from this. They also help in exercising a degree of internal accountability, with front-line staff needing to demonstrate the kinds of attitudes and behaviour they are promoting—and practice what they preach.

Monitoring attitude and behaviour change among partners and target agencies could include, for example:

- The extent to which coalitions and governments are proactively reaching out to hear the voices of women and other excluded groups;

- The extent to which coalitions are actively championing issues and concerns voiced by women and other excluded groups;

- The extent to which coalitions are drawing on political analysis to identify appropriate entry points and short-term objectives;

- The extent to which collective action is emerging, not driven by/dependent on external funding.

At the impact level, some of the programs in our sample are looking at how power, politics and gender relations are shifting in wider society, including in the less public, less visible, realms. At this level, changes in power relations and gender norms take place over the long term in unpredictable ways. Simply adding up individual tangible results, such as increases in the number of female members of parliament or in the number of girls completing secondary school, fails to explore how these combine to produce systemic societal change. Achieving shifts in these power relations to the extent of yielding substantial social or political change is challenging in the short timeframes of individual development programs. This has implications for donors' levels of ambition and long-term commitment.

SPACE TO REFLECT AND RE-STRATEGISE: PACIFIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, TONGA

In 2015, the Pacific Leadership Program began supporting a coalition of women's organisations advocating for ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in Tonga. The coalition faced fierce public opposition, including major anti-CEDAW demonstrations: gender equality was seen as threatening to Tongan culture and tradition. Having built up relationships of trust over many years, the program was able to act as a 'critical friend' to some of the leading organisations involved.

Program staff facilitated a retreat for coalition members to reflect on their experience and review their strategy. They introduced members to 'adaptive leadership', encouraging them to stand back from their campaigning work and reflect—to, as they put it, 'get off the dance floor and stand on the balcony'. Through processes of reflection, coalition members began to appreciate the value of taking a more politically informed approach—an important turning point for them. Based on this, they are now engaging with a wider range of issues to build a broad base of support; thinking about what other women are interested and involved in; building relationships with other organisations and relevant ministers; and identifying key junctures where they can influence outcomes. They are building bridges with religious leaders and framing the issue of gender equality in line with traditional Tongan values.

Source: Siow, O. (2018). Pacific Leadership Program: Advocacy for CEDAW in Tonga (GAPP Case Study 3). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS3.pdf

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MONITORING GENDERED ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE: SAVI

Gender is explicit across all levels of the SAVI (State Accountability and Voice Initiative) log frame. At output level, SAVI measures attitude and behaviour change in partner coalitions. The extent to which partnerships 'include the voice of women and other excluded groups' is assessed using a simple qualitative scale against a range of indicators. This encourages local partners to reflect on the extent to which they are hearing the voice of women and other excluded groups in various aspects of their work. The scale starts with 'Aware' of these voices, and moves through 'Permit', 'Facilitate' and 'Promote' to 'Institutionalise'.

At outcome level, SAVI measures the number of demonstrable changes in policy and implementation by state governments, where there is evidence of contribution from SAVI partners, *a significant proportion of which reflect the voice of women and other socially excluded groups*. This means SAVI can report results retrospectively through outcome harvesting. State teams record the headline result, as well as the backstory on the role of local partners. This helps staff reflect on strategies' effectiveness. It also enables SAVI to adhere to donor targets and milestones for the aggregate number of results to be achieved, without predicting or tying down in advance exactly what these will be.

Source: Siow, O. (2018). The State Accountability and Voice Initiative in Nigeria (GAPP Case Study 14). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS14.pdf

7 MANAGING A POLITICALLY INFORMED, GENDER AWARE PROGRAM

Enabling programs to work in politically informed, locally led, gender aware ways is about much more than design and the actions of front-line staff and partners. It is fundamentally about the extent to which program management systems, and the broader political economy and culture of donor organisations, enable—or disable—this way of working. Conventional approaches to staff recruitment, training, financial management, monitoring and reporting all reinforce a top-down, technical, results-driven approach. Careful consideration needs to be given to ensuring management systems and incentives actively facilitate local ownership and politically informed, gender aware, adaptive ways of working.

EMPOWERING FRONT-LINE STAFF AND PARTNERS

Local leadership means decentralising decision-making to front-line staff and partners, and enabling them to play this role effectively. This can mean a significant change in the profiles of staff recruited and deployed. Some programs in our sample are, for example, favouring locally appointed over international staff, and focusing on soft skills and values (including gender equality and inclusion) rather than depth and breadth of technical experience, or experience in conventional program approaches. Working in gender aware, politically informed ways is part of the remit of *all* staff, and not a discrete and siloed responsibility. There is also a shift in the role of external gender, political science and PEA specialists—away from providing discrete inputs and toward facilitating the work of front-line staff and partners, valuing and building on their existing knowledge and skills.

Empowering front-line staff and partners to be politically informed and gender aware is not achieved through one-off training in gender and/or PEA, or training focused on the transfer of expert knowledge. A number of programs in our sample are investing in hands-on, continuous, practical ways of building understanding, often through processes of learning by doing. This is often less about imparting specialist technical knowledge than it is about building self-awareness, confidence and self-esteem; co-creation of processes, approaches and tools; and honest reflection.

In relation to gender equality and rights, to be able to influence and persuade others, staff and partners themselves need to be persuaded, and then to hone their own powers of persuasion—an essential dimension of the 'craft and graft' of social and political change. In the Sudokkho program in Bangladesh, for example, everyone in the team has a gender lens. '*When we go out to a Private Training Provider and ask if they would be interested in training a group of women, we need to be convinced of the benefits in order to make a convincing business case to them*.'[14] As a result, '*We can share our understanding with factories that they will benefit from having more highly skilled women workers... It's really important to live the strategy, not just have it on paper... You need to create a common vision and understanding among your staff*' (Ibid.)

Real progress on working with gender, power and politics means staff and partners are constantly challenged to work in innovative ways, outside their comfort zone, contrary to expectations and using their own initiative. This requires strong commitment to these ways of working by the program management, and allocation of time to the provision of formal and informal support and inspiration. It also necessitates an organisational culture that practises what it preaches, promoting gender equality and inclusion at work and ensuring all staff are heard and respected.

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14 Key informant, 30 January 2017.

VALUES-BASED RECRUITMENT: VOICES FOR CHANGE AND SAVI

To recruit staff appropriate to its ethos and approach, the Voices for Change (V4C) program has developed a system of values-based recruitment. This uses psychometric tests that give a strong insight into candidates' attitudes, values and behaviour, including in relation to innovation, creativity and gender. Interviews are tough in terms of personal reflection, and in this sense hard to prepare for. In one case, V4C decided in favour of a less experienced candidate with an understanding of power analysis and appropriate soft skills, over a much more experienced candidate with high-level relevant academic qualifications and publications. The more experienced candidate was found to be too rigid in their attitudes, and so less suited to facilitating attitude change among potential partners and stakeholders.

SAVI similarly introduced a values-based recruitment system in its latter phase. In its early years, SAVI found some members of staff lacked the motivation to play a behind-the-scenes role with partners and used their position to advance their individual professional or political profile. To address this problem, SAVI—with the participation of all staff—defined a set of core values and associated behaviours, and integrated these into the recruitment and performance management systems. Core values and agreed behaviours include respect and inclusion, contributing to a culture of gender equality within SAVI. Candidates' qualifications and experience continue to be assessed through the screening of CVs but interviews focus on values, attitudes and behaviours. All members of the team are then held accountable to these values through performance assessment.

Sources: Siow, O. (2018). *Voices for Change: Women's empowerment in Nigeria* (GAPP Case Study 7, http://publications.dlprog.org/CS7.pdf); and *The State Accountability and Voice Initiative in Nigeria (GAPP Case Study 14,* http://publications.dlprog.org/CS14.pdf*)*

AN ITERATIVE AND TAILORED APPROACH TO CAPACITY-BUILDING, MYANMAR

The Peace Leadership Programme in Myanmar identifies and supports women leaders to contribute to peace-building, providing flexible training according to their expressed needs. Although the program is working with some experienced and established leaders, there is still demand for technical skills training. *'Leaders gain analytical skills that are grounded in systemic conflict transformation thinking in order to better understand and design strategic interventions into conflict. The program also dedicates time to establishing the important skill sets of lobbying, advocacy and the art of communication in peace work. This means leaders leave more confidently able to clearly communicate and strategically leverage their position in lobbying and networking situations.'*[15]

Additionally, PLP creates space for reflection and renewal, assisting with personal development as well as building relationships. *'The personal thread focuses on making space to pause, reflect and restore. We do this through exclusive and in-depth one-to-one leadership coaching focusing on what drives and blocks the individual. We believe these topics are at the heart of resilient leadership.' (ibid.)*

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *Peace Leadership Programme: Women's leadership in Myanmar* (GAPP Case Study 4). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS4.pdf

ESTABLISHING FLEXIBLE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND A SHARED VISION FOR CHANGE

The factor most consistently identified as crucial to success in our sample was an alignment of approach between donors and program management, and/or between donor/program management systems and the dynamics of change on the ground.

Donor/program management planning, monitoring, reporting and financial management systems *all need to enable and accommodate flexibility and adaptation*. It is striking that the experience of a number of programs in our sample was that, in spite of the current high profile of calls to work in ways that are politically informed and gender aware, the space for flexibility in planning and financial management is closing.

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15 http://www.centrepeaceconflictstudies.org/cultivating-systems-and-self-awareness/

Many programs highlighted the importance and benefits of donors/program management allowing the program to be accommodating and flexible; trusting partners to identify opportunities themselves; enabling funds to be mobilised quickly where there is a pressing need or opportunity; accommodating frequent changes in plans; and providing support to partners on the basis of need. Among the factors most critical to the success of ESP's multi-level strategy, for example, were flexible resources and the ability to mobilise and fund activities quickly: '*For example, there was a series of events that brought gender-based violence to the forefront of the media agenda, so that led to the development of the Gender-Based Violence Unit. The ability to make decisions quickly and respond to real-time openings was crucial. This was also possible because of the insights of local staff, who were on top of events*.'[16]

In a conventional program, where plans, targets, budgets and personnel inputs are agreed upfront, program management is responsible for ensuring effective delivery—on time, within budget and according to agreed milestones. This administrative management task drives the program forward. In a flexible and adaptive program, however, the management task is much more complex, involving strategic technical leadership as well as administrative management. This involves ensuring front-line staff and partners have the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to work in politically informed and gender aware ways, as discussed in the last section.

It also involves exercising quality control, ensuring a strong overarching vision and pushing back to local staff and partners, where needed, to guard against a series of unfocused interventions. And it requires working with the donor to shape management systems and processes to create an enabling environment for locally led, adaptive work, while at the same time fulfilling donor requirements. In effect, the program management needs to face in two directions— delivering accountability to the donor, as in a conventional program, but in a way that protects the space local actors need to shape interventions according to their own context, knowledge and learning. Our case studies demonstrate that program managers may have to apply their PEA and power analysis skills to their donor relationships. They need to understand when to be compliant and 'feed the beast' and when it might be possible to push back to protect local ownership and allow for flexibility, uncertainty and change.

In this context, excellent communication between donors and program management is critical. When communications are good and donors actively support politically informed, locally led, adaptive, gender aware processes, decisions on management systems and evolving opportunities, constraints and learning can be made jointly. On the other hand, when teams are new to each other, and the donor is under pressure to demonstrate hard results in a short time period, top-down pressures prevail by default. '*If the [donor] shares the program vision and has really bought into what you are trying to achieve, plus they have faith in the team, then log frame flexibility is a management tool. But if the [donor] is doubtful of the team, the log frame becomes a stick to beat them with*'.[17]

THE VALUE OF FLEXIBILITY: PACIFIC LEADERSHIP PROGRAM, TONGA

The two factors that have been most crucial to the Pacific Leadership Program's ability to support the Women in Leadership coalition have been the program's degree of autonomy and the strength of its relationships with partners. '*The program has been able to provide nimble support, without necessarily always working to a clearly defined path, mucking in together and seeing where it takes us. That supports thinking and working politically by allowing us to be accommodating and flexible, trusting partners to identify opportunities themselves.*'[18] The program's initial focus on building relationships also '*allows us to challenge as well as support partners, and that's just as important*'.[19]

Source: Siow, O. (2018). *Pacific Leadership Program: Advocacy for CEDAW in Tonga* (GAPP Case Study 3). See http://publications.dlprog.org/CS3.pdf

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16 Key informant, 15 February 2017
17 Key informant, 22 February 2017
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.

A SHARED VISION FOR CHANGE: WE CAN AND VOICES FOR CHANGE

We Can, a hugely successful viral campaign focusing on changing attitudes to and beliefs about gender-based violence, led by hundreds of organisations across 16 countries, was shaped by visionary and inspirational leadership. This was reflected through all levels of this highly decentralised program. A critical factor in its success was gaining support from donors and partners for its novel approach: '*We did have questions from donors because this was new and there was only limited evidence for how it would work. With women's organisations, some of our partners were unwilling to take the plunge and didn't want to get involved… but it was a good tension in some ways because it made us very mindful about how we were working.*'[20]

Similarly, the most important factor in the success of the V4C (Voices for Change) program has been *'the shared vision between the donor, government, civil society, and the program itself… as well as a real appetite to try something new and transformative'.* The program had an excellent, trusting and hands-on relationship with the donor representative. This involved frequent contact, with staff able to pick up the phone if things were going off course. The program management and the donor made joint decisions on annual revisions to the program planning framework, and this flexibility was a critical management tool.

Sources: Siow, O. (2018). *We Can: Campaign on violence against women* (GAPP Case Study 8, http://publications.dlprog.org/CS8.pdf); and *Voices for Change: Women's empowerment in Nigeria* Siow (GAPP Case Study 7, http://publications.dlprog.org/CS7.pdf)

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20 Key informant, 20 March 2017.

8 TENSIONS AND TRADE-OFFS

The evidence from the programs discussed in this paper demonstrates that a politically informed way of working and a gender aware way of working are to a very large extent *complementary*. One obvious tension is that gender aware approaches often presuppose a specific commitment to greater gender equality as an objective. A politically informed approach (interpreted broadly) is a natural part of working toward gender objectives (as described above), whereas the case often needs to be made to include gender objectives in mainstream programs seeking to take a politically informed approach.

Practically, this is often manifested in contexts where '*developing countries have limited resources and so much to do. This means that local governments... have so much on their plates already... it is a challenge to convince them that gender is not an add on. The underlying political power struggle is always there.*' As one interviewee commented, '*Although thinking and working politically and a gender lens are complementary, gender can be marginalised and therefore there sometimes need to be tough negotiations.*' This is because 'gender *and social inclusion analysis sometimes brings out uncomfortable facts, which can be difficult to deal with in politically fragile environments.*'

Sometimes this is a tension between processes and outputs. For example, EVA introduced gender aware processes part way through the program by involving women in previously male-dominated community-based advocacy groups. An interviewee noted that: '*If we'd framed this as being all about women's voices then we would have been much less successful. However, if we'd just been politically smart and not had a gendered lens we could have achieved our program outputs and outcomes more efficiently, but we wouldn't have achieved the wider outcomes such as changes to women's roles in their community.*' Therefore, '*It can be a struggle to justify the process when it takes extra time and effort to improve women's experience of it. But by striking a balance we've been able to achieve the desired log frame outputs, but we've also been able to achieve wider aims.*'

In challenging contexts, focusing on gender as a process rather than as an objective is often the best strategy. Gender analysis has an important part to play in identifying power dynamics and informing implementation strategies in relation to sector specific objectives, and gender aware working processes have valuable knock-on effects as described above. This approach is much more effective in building local understanding and buy-in than the imposition of gender equality targets.

Conventional interpretations of a politically informed way of working are strongly associated with formal political systems and processes, policy reform and a pragmatic focus on achieving short-term goals by engaging with existing structures of power. There are obvious gender dimensions to this work, and some gender programs similarly focus on this formal political sphere. Combining a politically informed approach with a gender lens also, however, broadens the definition of power and of politics. It reveals the multiple visible and invisible ways power is manifested, and demonstrates that politics is about not just formal political systems but also influencing and decision-making at all levels of society. With this broad understanding, a program can take power and politics into account and work 'politically' even at the household level. Evidence from the women's programs discussed here suggests incremental approaches are widely accepted and endorsed, as is working with and through existing structures of power to achieve change.

9 CONCLUSION

Evidence from the 15 case studies discussed in this paper shows that development practice is outstripping theory in moving beyond silos to exploit the synergy of bringing together work on power, politics and gender.

Some programs are making deliberate efforts to be both politically informed and gender aware. Others are engaging with power and politics to bring about change in ways that accord with a politically informed approach, but without using this language, and without necessarily having had any engagement with recent discussion of it.

The programs in this study are varied and they are engaging with power, politics and gender in different ways. In many cases, practice is evolving. Common features include a focus on supporting, nurturing, catalysing and engaging with inclusive local leadership—formal and informal, and at all levels of society. Programs are supporting local partners, where appropriate, to *think* politically—to analyse, understand and engage with the gender, politics and power dimensions of their context. And they are supporting local partners to *work* politically—to join together in strategic partnerships, to find entry points to action, to frame their arguments in politically informed ways and to proceed through processes of learning by doing and through reflection and adaptation. These program experiences show that a politically informed approach and a gender aware approach are, to a very large extent, compatible and complementary.

It is also evident, however, that both approaches are challenging to implement effectively and fraught with pitfalls. In practice, both all too easily become top-down, donor-led, technical impositions, which limits both local ownership and impact.

Enabling programs to work in ways that are politically informed, locally led and gender aware is about much more than program design and the actions of front-line staff and partners. It is fundamentally about the extent to which program management systems, and the broader political economy and culture of donor organisations, enable—or disable—these ways of working. Overall, the key factor cited by respondents in this research as enabling program success was a shared vision of change between the donor and the program management. A collective vision helps shape program management systems—recruitment and staff development, financial management, planning and reporting—to enable ways of working that are locally led, politically informed, gender aware and adaptive. Without this, top-down pressures prevail by default and undermine the space and incentives required.

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ANNEX: UNPACKING THE CONCEPTS 'POLITICALLY INFORMED' AND 'GENDER AWARE'

The GAPP research project uses the following definitions of these terms.

'Gender aware'

Being 'gender aware' is a way of working to achieve greater gender equality. Gender aware programs are often associated with more robust and sustainable development results.

It involves analysing how women and men, girls and boys, experience an issue differently and/or unequally and the power relations that sustain these inequalities. Sex disaggregated data on quantitative gender gaps is complemented by qualitative information on roles, norms, experiences and priorities. This information is used to inform program design and monitoring.

A robust analysis also looks at the ways gender intersects with other forms of diversity such as race, religion, ethnicity, class and disability.

There is increasing recognition of the discrimination faced by people who do not identify as straight women or straight men. Where relevant and appropriate, gender analysis examines the experience of people with non-binary gender identities or diverse sexual preferences.

'Politically informed'

Being 'politically informed' is a way of working to achieve reform in complex contexts – where power dynamics are complex and change pathways messy, dynamic and unpredictable. It is not about formal governance reforms – financial management, elections, civil service reforms – but about a way of working that recognises that power and politics shape all sectors and issues.

It involves analysing the dynamics of power and politics to understand what is politically feasible. These dynamics include stakeholder interests and incentives, the formal and informal rules shaping decision-making and agenda setting, and the politics of trade-offs, coalitions and deals. The approach recognises that change produces winners and losers, and that losers may need to be compensated or won over.

Ideally, this analysis is practical and regularly updated. It helps programs and partners identify entry points for reform, potential champions, and the people and systems blocking change, and to strategise accordingly. And it helps them adapt to shifting opportunities as the political context changes.

A number of approaches to politically informed programming share a family resemblance. These include, but are not limited to, political economy analysis (PEA), thinking and working politically (TWP), doing development differently (DDD), adaptive programming, problem driven iterative adaptation (PDIA), and development entrepreneurship (DE).

See: the GSDRC Topic Guide on PEA at www.gsdrc.org/?p=42965; the TWP Community of Practice at www.twpcommunity.org/about-us/what-is-twp; the DDD Manifesto Community at www.doingdevelopmentdifferently.com; ODI's paper on adaptive programming: odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10401.pdf; Harvard University's Building State Capability program for details of PDIA at https://bsc.cid.harvard.edu/about; and The Asia Foundation's introduction to DE: www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/OccasionalPaperNo12.pdf