REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

A lack of finances or threat of gender-based violence (GBV) limits empowerment. It is right therefore, that economic opportunities, education or support networks are central to empowerment programmes.

Through learning and developing business skills, women's self-awareness and confidence improves, although this is often not formally measured.

Having the knowledge that one has the right to speak out or be in a certain place, is central to a change in attitude. Having this faith, as well as the support from others is part of this more intangible success.

Often, GBV survivors who have been supported through organisations, want to help and tackle issues of GBV for others (due to an increased confidence).

This infographic is the 1st in a series of seven that emerged from conversations UK Aid Direct had with organisations awarded Jo Cox Memorial Grants to support women’s empowerment in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and is taken from a new framework.

The road to women’s empowerment does not lie in one infographic however. To view women’s empowerment in the whole, visit www.ukaiddirect.org/learning for the full suite of posters and framework piece.

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Photo credit: Zimbabwe Educational Trust
REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

1. Networks or groups play a role in catalysing, bolstering and enhancing the empowerment process for individuals.

2. Bringing gender-based violence (GBV) survivors together into groups provides opportunity for individuals to share and be heard, and is crucial to empowerment.

3. Sharing messaging with participants that their small support group is part of a bigger movement, that they are fighting on similar issues, reinforces the powers they have as a collective.

4. Women-based groups and women-to-women support can be critical to women’s empowerment.

5. In creating a feminist movement, it encourages sharing and mentoring of others. Individuals involved create a sense of belonging and mutual support.

This infographic is the 2nd in a series of seven that emerged from conversations UK Aid Direct had with organisations awarded Jo Cox Memorial Grants to support women’s empowerment in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and its content is taken from a new framework.

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This infographic is the 3rd in a series of seven that emerged from conversations UK Aid Direct had with organisations awarded Jo Cox Memorial Grants to support women’s empowerment in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and its content is taken from a new framework.

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3. Leadership

Supporting women in power and creating channels for aspirant women to get there, is critically important for women to be empowered.

Providing women with information and role models, encourages them to challenge the status quo and consider what they want or could achieve.

Mentoring is also central to empowering women to put themselves forward for positions of power.

By creating local government forums in which to network, it can bring women already in government positions together, to discuss key barriers they face. Tackling these barriers is key to women joining politics or positions of power in civil society.

Ensuring women are aware of any legislation that has been written to support women into power, is important.

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4. Assets and resources

Meaningful empowerment must include giving women the tools or opportunity to be financially independent. This in turn, bolsters other elements like self-belief or confidence.

Vocational training and work placements can be critical, not just in providing practical skills and knowledge for employment but also in raising self-confidence, self-perception, and giving women the opportunity to decide their own life course.

Creating a community and support system is also key but improving economic conditions is equally pertinent.

Economic empowerment does not just mean the provision of loans or skills. It is also the ability to live safely and securely. A woman who is solely financially reliant on another for their housing or survival cannot be empowered.
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Beyond the mutual solidarity that support groups can foster, being part of a group can also help to encourage advocacy.

Through advocacy, better conditions in the marital, domestic or family sphere can be fought for. But it is vital this is done sensitively and framed as beneficial for the broader community, along with the individual.

When advocating for changes in the domestic or community spheres, it is important to ensure multiple stakeholders are involved and can see the benefits of such changes.

As well as traditional advocacy methods and relationships with stakeholders, media can also be used. Social media for example, can play a successful role in sharing stories and allowing activists to call for justice and the need to address social norms.

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Women can be empowered but to ensure long-term gender empowerment, the rigid community structures that exist around them must be worked away at.

Broader communities and attitudes must all be considered to bring about change. For example, lobbying to gather support from chiefs of police, district level officials, medical attendants, political leaders, along with running community sensitisation sessions with churches, local gatherings or door-to-door visits, all help to change attitudes. As well as the use of media and advocacy.

Work to support women's empowerment can be counter-productive if the facilitating of an enabling environment is not incorporated as a component of the interventions.
REFLECTIONS ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

This infographic is the 7th in a series of seven that emerged from conversations UK Aid Direct had with organisations awarded Jo Cox Memorial Grants to support women's empowerment in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and its content is taken from a new framework.

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1. Considering the importance of community/domestic environments and the impact of engaging men is critical to facilitating women's empowerment.

Ensuring a women's empowerment project is properly understood from the start, with men included in discussions from the offset, helps to dispel misunderstandings of the project's aims and creates a common understanding of the positive impact that empowerment and more gender equitable relationships, can have within the community and the household.

2. Sharing information on who is implementing a project (on women's empowerment) and how they are doing it, can help avoid tensions and conflicts.

For example, addressing locally identified issues, from groups within the community, and embedding local participation within the project design, is recommended, especially if introducing external concepts on gender empowerment.

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