What do participatory approaches have to offer the measurement of empowerment of women and girls

Julie Newton, Anouka van Eerdewijk and Franz Wong[1]

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This paper provides insights and guidance on the value of participatory approaches for understanding and measuring empowerment of women and girls and grounding measurement in the lives and perspectives of women and girls. The paper aims to inspire practitioners, M&E specialists and policy makers working on the measurement of empowerment of women and girls in development programmes. It provides practical guidance on *when*, *where* and *how* in the measurement process to apply participatory approaches for empowerment of women and girls.

Introduction

Empowerment of women and girls is regaining much attention from diverse development actors, spanning from development practitioners, civil society, donors and academics, as an important development objective in itself and as a means to other key development outcomes such as nutrition, food security, and health. The multi-level, multi-dimensional, non-linear and dynamic characteristics of empowerment make it both a complex and contested concept, posing challenges for definition and measurement. Currently, there are many definitions of empowerment drawing on the work of Kabeer (1999) and Alsop et al (2006) which share an emphasis on agency, resources and structures as constituting elements of empowerment. For the purpose of this paper, we define empowerment as the "the expansion of choice and strengthening of voice through the transformation of power relations, so women and girls have more control over their lives and future" (Eerdewijk et al, 2017). The field of measuring empowerment is constantly evolving. In response, there is a healthy debate around the adequacy of existing methods to quantify and capture these characteristics of empowerment (Nazneen et al, 2014; Malhotra et al, 2002; Hillenbrand et al, 2015; Narayan, 2015). The discussions raise a number of *technical* issues around the 'what' and 'how' of measuring empowerment as well as *political* issues related to the motivation and act of measurement itself.

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Choices matter with respect to *what* is measured and *for whom* this is being done. Measurement is not a bias-free technocratic exercise, but a political process that affects whose knowledge counts (Holland & Ruedin, 2012; Nazneen et al, 2014). The very act of 'measurement' in its different forms (i.e. Monitoring and Evaluation [M&E], impact evaluation, research, etc.,) involves defining both the objectives and the 'worth' of a development intervention. Such choices often reflect the priorities of decision makers, implementers, researchers and donors rather than those of the target group and beneficiaries (Moser, 2007). When used for upward accountability, it can result in trade-offs between donors judging the success or value for money of an intervention versus the extent to which an intervention contributes to meaningful change from the perspective of those whose lives are affected.

The renewed interest in empowerment of women and girls calls for transparency around how the term empowerment is interpreted and used. With the current enthusiasm to measure empowerment, there is concern that the advancement of women and girls becomes driven by measurement and data (Batliwala & Pittman, 2010). The danger is that the efforts to measure empowerment become and end in itself, and are not grounded in women and girls' voices and interpretations of what empowerment means to them as both a process and an outcome. Moreover, there is increasing concern that it will be co-opted for instrumentalist agendas to support achievement of other development outcomes rather than gender equality as a goal in itself (Cornwall, 2015) and that the measurement process can even be disempowering and cause harm (Holland & Reudin, 2012). For these reasons, it is essential to critically reflect on how measurement practices can contribute to or impede empowerment as a broader social change process (Hillenbrand et al, 2015). Participatory approaches to measure empowerment of women and girls are therefore of special interest here. They are often cited as being best equipped to place the voice of women and girls at the centre of the measurement process and recognise that empowerment programmes should be driven by women and young girls' needs. When

inspired by action learning principles (iterative process of reflection/questioning, learning, and acting), they are noted for their emphasis on the measurement process itself as being empowering.

This paper provides insights and guidance on the value of participatory approaches for understanding and measuring empowerment of women and girls and grounding measurement in the lives and perspectives of women and girls. The paper aims to inspire practitioners, M&E specialists and policy makers working on the measurement of empowerment of women and girls in development programmes. It provides practical guidance on *when*, *where* and *how* in the measurement process to apply participatory approaches for empowerment of women and girls.

The paper draws on an extensive review of measurement approaches to empowerment of women and girls carried out in 2016-2017 (KIT Royal Tropical Institute, 2017) to complement the development of a [conceptual model](#) of empowerment of women and girls (Eerdewijk et al, 2017). We build on interviews with 24 experts as well as online consultations with [Gender and Evaluation Community of Practice](#) and [Pelican Platform](#) for Evidence-based Learning and Communication for Social Change carried out in March 2017. The paper begins with a discussion of why 'voice' matters in efforts to measure empowerment. It then introduces participatory approaches and their added value to measuring empowerment. This is followed by a presentation of different examples of participatory approaches that have been used to measure empowerment of women and girls at different levels.

Why 'voice' matters to measuring empowerment?

Women and girls' own articulations and experiences of empowerment are part and parcel of the process of empowerment and this also applies to efforts to measure their empowerment. This means that by definition, empowerment cannot be prescribed or imposed in a top down manner by external agents, including development practitioners and donors, as this risks imposing their values of what empowerment 'ought to be' or 'look like' (Kabeer, 1999).

> *"Experience shows that women are often the best sources for sensitive indicators of hard-to-assess dimensions of changes in gender relations; so rather than reduce these to 'anecdotal' evidence, our tools will find ways of privileging these perspectives in our assessments"* (Batliwala & Pittman, 2010: 20)

Measuring empowerment can both reinforce and challenge power relations. Different ways of knowing and different power relations will privilege the perspectives of certain actors at the expenses of others (Hillenbrand et al, 2015: 6). Hence, there is a need for caution in the field of empowerment to not reinforce existing inequalities and power relations through inappropriate measurement methods (Eyben, 2013: 27). Because power relations are affected by the way monitoring and evaluation are carried out, there is much critical debate about who is best placed to define and lead the measurement process and give value and meaning to the process of empowerment (Holland & Reudin, 2012; Jupp et al, 2010; Nazneen et al, 2014). There are three core arguments for emphasising the importance of the participation of women and girls in measurement efforts as crucial aspects for downward accountability.

1. **Firmly acknowledging that the voice and knowledge of women and girls are key in grounding definitions of empowerment in women and girls' perspectives and experiences:** The very nature of empowerment suggests that it should be driven and led by those whose lives it affects. This implies that measurement is informed by women and girls' realities and interests. In other words, based on what they define themselves as important.

2. **Allowing for context specificity:** Because empowerment involves multiple pathways and entry points, what empowers one woman will differ in place and time. The interactions between different elements of empowerment manifest themselves differently in different contexts and therefore affect women and girls differently depending on their age, race, class, religion and so forth. As a result, attributes of empowerment have different meanings in different contexts for different types of women and girls.

3. **Valuing whose knowledge counts and who is best positioned to explain the change:** Because empowerment is both an *outcome* and a *process* of transformative change it requires the participation of those being empowered to explain changes, as these may not be observed by others. Measurement approaches need to take this into account when testing new empowerment measures and interpreting changes in empowerment over time.

> *"Changes in power relations are not single-event outcomes but are dynamic and process-based. Understanding what has caused changes in empowerment requires the participation of those 'being empowered' because the causality chain cannot necessarily be observed from the outside, the way it can from other types of interventions"* (Holland & Reudin, 2012:6)

In summary, these arguments highlight the importance of taking explicit effort to privilege women and girls' experiences of empowerment and their perceptions of how changes affect them to inform measurement approaches. This has important implications for which methods are best suited to elicit and capture women and girls' voices and which tools and approaches can be empowering. It is in this context that participatory approaches to measurement offer advantages. When used appropriately, they can create space that actively privileges the marginalised perspective and provide opportunities to validate different ways of knowing that are of greater relevance to empowerment. When used beyond capturing voices, they can be empowering by shifting the power in measurement processes and control of data into the hands of women and girls (Holland & Reudin, 2012).

Participatory approaches to the measurement of empowerment

What do we mean by participatory approaches?
Participatory approaches is an umbrella term capturing a plethora of different methods, grounded in the work of Paulo Freire and Kurt Lewin. These methods emphasize the active involvement of people in the decisions that affect their lives; through speaking up, being listened to and ensuring their voices are acted upon to influence action. In the development field, Robert Chambers spearheaded the use of Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA) to emphasise unheard voices, and the rights of people to participate in defining what matters, privileging local knowledge and diversity, and collective learning and reflection to enhance action. There is no single participatory approach; rather, it draws on mixed methods approaches, including both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to support collective analysis, reflection and action.

Why use participatory approaches?
Practically, participatory approaches can facilitate more accurate data on empowerment by grounding evidence in women and girls' interpretations of empowerment. This contributes to an improved understanding of how interventions empower or disempower. In principle, participatory approaches can help ensure the measurement of empowerment is more relevant and context specific. They can be used by practitioners, researchers and policymakers in the processes of identifying indicators, collecting data, analysing data in the context of M&E, impact evaluation, or learning agendas (Guijt, 2014; Holland & Reudin, 2012; Jupp et al 2010).

Ethically, participatory approaches are embedded in the principle that women and girls have a right to define what is measured, how it is measured, how it is analysed and for what purpose (Guijt, 2014; White, 1996). More importantly, participatory approaches can be empowering in a transformative sense when used explicitly for opening up a space

to critically question, analyze and collectively challenge patriarchal structures that constrain women and girls empowerment (Kabeer, 2005; Hillenbrand et al, 2015; Morgan, 2014).

> **Why participatory approaches have value for measuring empowerment**
> - Ensures that *different groups of women and girls* can voice their concerns and perspectives throughout the implementation process
> - Places *voice* of women and girls at the centre of measurement process
> - *Challenges top-down traditional development partnerships*, shifting power into local hands and local ownership and control of data
> - Prioritizes the selected empowerment outcomes and analysis is informed by the voice of women and girls at different stages of the monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) process

When is it appropriate to use participatory approaches to measure empowerment?
It is important to be explicit about the *purpose* and *value* of participation at different stages of the measurement process to ensure meaningful participation and avoid it being used in a tokenistic manner or unethically in ways that can cause harm (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Arnstein, 1969).

The *four types* of participation summarized in Table 1 are useful for unpacking what participation means and what it actually entails for measuring empowerment. Stakeholders have different motivations for using participatory approaches in the measurement process. Table 1 illustrates the value of being aware of different purposes for using participatory approaches and *when* and *where* they are best suited for a) understanding empowerment and b) being used as a means to empower women and girls. It is important to be aware of these different levels to avoid tokenistic uses of participatory approaches in efforts to measure empowerment.

Table 1: Different types of participation used in measurement

Level	What participation means to commissioners of measurement efforts	What participation means for program participants
Nominal	**Legitimation:** to show something is done about women and girls involvement	**Inclusion:** women and girls gain access to measurement process (as respondents)
Instrumental	**Efficiency:** to make measurement more cost effective by using the contributions of women participants, the community and/or other stakeholders in the measurement process	**Cost, time & labour:** effort and energy is spent on the measurement process, and women and girls potentially gain new capacities as data collectors and/or respondents
Representative	**Fairness:** to avoid creating dependency and to reduce inequitable benefits. To give women and girls a voice in determining what should be measured	**Leverage:** to influence and shape measurement and its management based on women and girls own interests
Transformative	**Empowerment:** to enable women and girls to make their own decisions, work out what to do and take action based on findings	**Empowerment:** women and girls drive the process of assessing through a process of critical questioning, and collectively decide to act and address inequalities

Sources: Guijt (2014: 5), Delgado et al (2016), White (1996) and Cornwall (2008)

From this perspective, placing 'voice' of women and girls at the centre of the empowerment process takes two forms. When participatory approaches are used in a *representative* way, measurement becomes conducive to elicit women and girls' voices, perceptions and understandings of empowerment. When participatory approaches are used in a *transformative* way, more emphasis is given to women and girls driving the measurement process, in which they are able to critically question, analyze and collectively challenge patriarchal structures that constrain women and girls empowerment.

With this in mind, the following three guiding questions can assist identifying both *where* and *how* to support relevant and meaningful participation 'with' and 'by' women rather than 'for' them, at different stages of the measurement process (Guijt, 2014). These questions assist to identify when participatory approaches work best to be *representative* (elicit women and girls voices) and *transformative* (to be empowering through supporting women and girls to critically question and interrogate their situation and decide to act for change).

1. **What purpose will different women and girls' participation support in this stage of measurement?** The specific need and purpose (i.e. for legitimation, efficiency, fairness or empowerment) of measurement will drive the type of participation required. This is closely tied to *whose needs*

will be met in the measurement (i.e. upward accountability towards donors, policy makers or downward accountability supporting learning with implementers and project participants). If the aim is to ensure women's voices are accurately represented, measurement processes should be aiming for *representative* types of participation and when the measurement process aims to empower, *transformative* participation.

2. **Whose participation matters?** The purpose and type of participation required, will shape *where* and *when* to engage different stakeholders. If the aim is for *transformation*, then participatory approaches are required throughout the measurement process and be driven by women and girls from the beginning to end.

3. **When is participation feasible?** It is often not possible to include everyone meaningfully due to financial constraints, time, lack of political will and practical feasibility. *Representative* and *transformative* participatory approaches require skilled facilitation and supportive conditions to ensure ethical and meaningful participation. Adequate human and financial resources need to be invested to support this.

How to use participatory approaches to measure the empowerment of women and girls: applied examples

Participatory approaches can be used at various stages of the empowerment measurement process. Table 2 gives an overview of how participatory approaches have been used in different stages to ensure that outcomes and indicator selection and ongoing analysis are informed by voices of women and girls in efforts to measure empowerment. Each stage with a selection of the illustrative examples is discussed in the subsequent sections. Attention is paid to what each methodology contributes to a) eliciting the voice of women and girls, b) understanding empowerment, and c) whether participatory approaches are used in *representative* or *transformative* ways.

Table 2: Use of participatory approaches at different stages to measure empowerment

Stage	Examples of participatory methodologies	Illustrative examples and case studies
Design: defining key questions, identifying outcomes and relevant indicators to accompany a Theory of Change (ToC), developing M&E framework	Participatory M&E & action learning Outcome mapping	**Indicators:** Women empowerment score card, Chars Livelihood Program, Bangladesh; participatory monitoring system in land rights movement, Bangladesh. **Revising Theory of Changes to support ongoing learning:** Women Strong Coalition used a range of participatory approaches develop empowerment change matrix inspired from empathy change map as evaluation framework. **Mid-term evaluation:** CARE's experience of developing a common gender indicator framework for Pathways to Empowerment program.
Testing: developing and testing metrics capturing core construct of empowerment informed by women and girls context specific realities	Qualitative data collection (Focus Group Discussion) used at different stages	**Developing a women empowerment composite measure:** Oxfam's experience of developing women empowerment measure for its impact evaluation.
Data collection: as part of regular M&E or final impact evaluation	Participatory mapping Visual storying telling	**Body mapping and digital story telling:** Kissa Kahanai project aimed at empowering adolescents to communicate experiences of reproductive health in Uttar Pradesh, India. **M&E:** Empathy mapping and spider tool used for women and girls to identify important empowerment domains and to document their progress on the domains through a program.
Data analysis as part of regular M&E or final impact evaluation	Sensemaker® Community score card	**Data analysis during evaluation:** used to evaluate Girl hub in Rwanda, Ethiopia and Nigeria to develop deeper understanding of complexities of empowering girls. Sprockler, inspired by Sensemaker, used to evaluate Action Aid's women's right work in Rwanda. **Joint analysis as regular M&E and accountability:** CARE's community score card in Malawi , later supported by quantitative empowerment measures (WE-MEASR©).
Validation: ongoing M&E and impact evaluations used to validate findings and conclusions to understand overall impacts	Outcome mapping Participatory M&E & action learning Visual storying telling (Photovoice, participatory video, digital story telling)	**Evaluation design:** An evaluation of Action Aid's women's rights program acknowledges the difficulties of designing a fully participatory evaluation approach. **Impact evaluation and M&E:** Photovoice was used to evaluate Save the Children's gender transformative M&E CHOICES curriculum for girls and boys (10-14). **Participatory video:** used in Video for Girls programme in Uganda and Guatemala.

Source: E-consultation with Gender and Evaluation Community of Practice and Pelican Platform for Evidence Based Learning and Communication for Social Change (March 2017)

Design stage

Participatory monitoring and evaluation approaches capture a plethora of approaches to engage project participants at different stages of the project cycle: from defining project outcomes, identifying relevant indicators, designing the M&E framework and participating in regular reflection for adaptive programming, and final impact evaluations. When participatory approaches are used in a *representative* way from the formative design phase, it ensures that measurement is framed directly by what matters to women and girls and this can be used to inform adaptive programming. Here, participatory methods can be used to generate quantitative and qualitative indicators of empowerment framed by women and girls themselves at the beginning of a grant and feed into ongoing quarterly and/or annual participatory M&E. For example, the Chars Livelihoods Program (CLP) in Bangladesh used a series of focus group discussions with different groups of women and men from different household types to develop a *participatory monitoring system* (Women Empowerment Scorecard) to move away from *nominal* approach to more *representative*. These scorecards capture local interpretations of empowerment of women and measure changes through the project's lifetime. A similar approach was used to evaluate a land rights movement in Bangladesh, where participatory mapping and storying telling were used to identify empowerment domains which were tracked by community participants on a yearly basis. This was then complemented by a second monitoring system driven by project staff to develop an overall aggregate and weighted empowerment score (Jupp, 2010).

When linked to an action learning agenda to support ongoing reflection and learning with project participants and project implementers around changes in empowerment, participatory approaches can have the potential to be *transformative* for the women and girls involved as well as the project staff. For example, a recent Women Strong Coalition evaluation used different participatory approaches to develop an *Empower Change Map* to support women participants together with communities and project staff to collectively define their own evaluation frameworks (visions of change) and map the most important empowerment domains which they

hoped to achieve. Women were empowered during the process through capacity building and training to collect data, and learned new skills and competencies. The process was empowering because it allowed the women to collectively analyse the change that was happening in these domains with community actors, thereby also challenging the institutional structures. This supported them to express their voices to drive and inform the evaluation and question the status quo and existing power hierarchies.

Outcome mapping is a specific approach to monitoring and evaluation based on tracking outcomes of behaviour change to understand the *contribution* (as opposed to attribution) of a project to social change processes such as empowerment. It is well suited for learning approaches to measurement (as opposed to performance monitoring), for understanding the non-linearity of empowerment as a process of change and for tracking the interplay of different components of empowerment. Different levels of participation can be used at different stages of the outcome mapping process. For example, the CGIAR Aquatic Agricultural System (AAS) used a mixture of *representative* and *transformative* levels of participation in outcome mapping to engage project participants to develop visions of gender transformative change as part of the AAS monitoring and evaluation system (Morgan, 2014). Similarly, CARE pathways empowerment programme used outcome mapping as part of its mid-term evaluation. It used participatory approaches in a *representative* way to capture women's voices (through focus group discussions). These were then clustered across different levels of empowerment and then translated these into common semi-standardised gender behaviour change indicators used across multiple countries (CARE, 2015). External facilitators, project staff and project participants were brought together during the mid-term and final impact evaluation to collectively analyse the findings to make sense of the empowerment change process.

Testing stage
Different participatory approaches can also be used in the testing of new measures of empowerment (i.e. index of empowerment) to ensure that the core construct of empowerment is informed by women and girls' realities. Oxfam's experience of develop-

ing empowerment measures within its impact evaluations used mixed methods approaches at five different stages of its measurement process (defining dimensions of empowerment, designing questionnaire, and indicators, constructing cut off points of indicators, developing relative weights, computing the scores) (Lombardini et al, 2017). Women's voices were a critical input during the first stage of designing the index to identify the appropriate dimensions. Secondly, women were engaged with triangulating the results and identifying the appropriate weighting. This is an example in which *representative* approaches to participation were used to ensure women's voices featured in its impact evaluation and attempts were made to tailor the index to multiple contexts.

Data collection stage

Participatory mapping refers to a spectrum of data collection tools that can be used for collecting women and girls' spatial access and knowledge of different resources, freedom of movement, and how this is affected by different relations within communities. For understanding empowerment, tools such as 'visual maps' allow for women to explain and visualize how their mobility and access and control over resources are influenced by different relations

across different institutional spaces (e.g. within the home, market, agricultural field). The use of interactive, fun and engaging techniques facilitates an exploration of sensitive issues around differences in access and control over resources amongst different women in a non-threatening manner. It is *representative* in that it facilitates women to explain how they feel and experience empowerment.

Sub-sets of participatory mapping include body mapping, confidence mapping, mobility mapping, empathy mapping and outcome stars. For example in Kissa Kahana (an adolescent health project in Uttar Pradesh, India), body mapping was used in a *representative way* to support adolescent girls to draw maps of their bodies as a way to discuss their experiences (positive and negative) of reproductive health. When done well, such approaches can also be *transformative* when it opens a space for women and girls to critically question the norms and values that shape their experiences of empowerment.

Data analysis stage

Sensemaker® is a narrative-based participatory research methodology used in M&E contexts for analysis. It is accompanied by a dedicated software package to both collect and analyse a large number

The value of Sensemaker explained at Girl Learning Summit (2014)
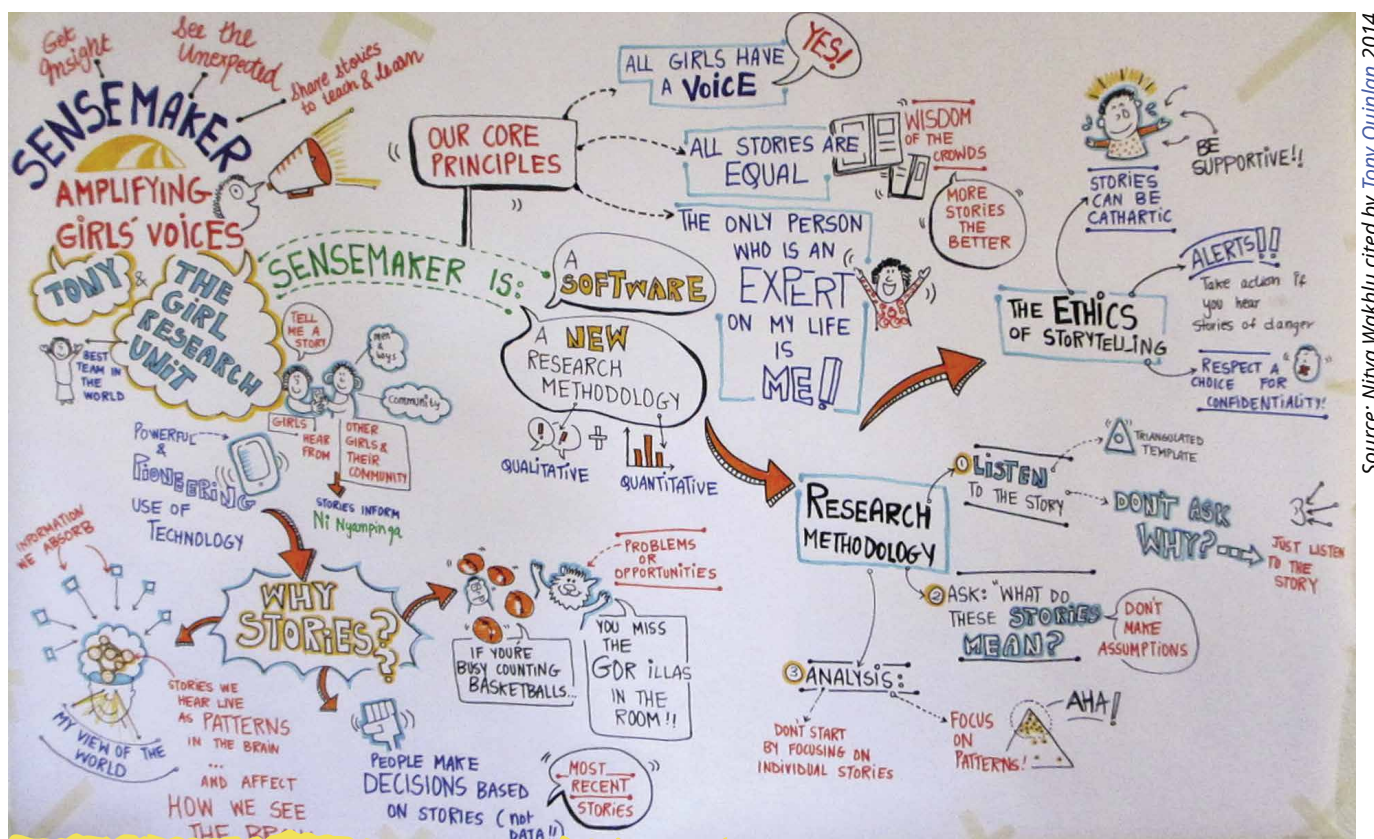
Source: Nitya Wakhlu cited by Tony Quinlan 2014

of stories to understand complex change with active participation of project participants during the analysis and interpretation process (Deprez, 2011; GirlHub, 2014). It can be used *representatively* within M&E to engage women and girls directly with collectively interpreting and analysing large amounts of qualitative stories and to support adaptive programming. The approach is based on asking participants to share a significant story and code their story to identify deeper layers of meaning guided by a framework designed by the implementers and/or researchers (i.e. signification framework). Sensemaker's key strengths include an emphasis on allowing participants to lead the process of analysing what empowerment means for them, and for making sense of empowerment's multi-dimensional and multi-level features. The use of software allows quick analysis and visualisation of large amounts of qualitative data that can be quantified to reveal and visualize trends further disaggregated by other intersectional markers (age, religion, wealth etc). However, the use of the pre-designed framework can restrict the interpretation of qualitative data to the confines of what is covered in the framework and overlook some of the nuances critical for understanding empowerment. Moreover, the reliance on technology for collecting data relies on participants with high literacy which may exclude marginalized groups. It was used in a *representative* participatory way to evaluate and adolescent girl program Girl Hub in Rwanda, Ethiopia and Nigeria to inform a deeper understanding of the complexities of empowering girls. Another similar tool, known as Sprockler, was used to evaluate ActionAid's Women's right's work in Rwanda to understand women leaders' experiences of power. The tool was used to collect stories related to power shifts from women involved in local rights programmes and proved effective in allowing the storytellers to interpret their own stories around key aspects related to power.

Community Score Card is a *transformative* participatory monitoring tool designed by CARE to use the measurement process as a means to empower women and health workers to collectively speak up and be heard to improve the quality of service delivery (i.e. also as a social accountability tool). It is a tool for monitoring and evaluating services from the perspective of both users and service providers to understand the evolving quality of relationships between the users and the service provider. It can be considered a *transformative* measurement tool because it uses the measurement process to diagnose and improve relationships between the actors. At its heart is the emphasis on measuring the quality of relationships and to bring different actors together to collectively make sense of opportunities and constraints in service delivery related to both social and gender norms as a form of social accountability. It is useful as part of inception period of a program, as part of baseline and for regular routine monitoring in context of social accountability. CARE later developed a quantitative women empowerment measure and healthworker measure drawing on WE-MEASR© (Womens Empowerment-Multidimensional Evaluation of Agency, Social Capital and Relations) to complement the tool to gain a multi-level understanding of empowerment focused on women's interactions with community and state institutions. Careful facilitation is required to ensure that multiple voices of different women are heard during the process of facilitation (Khulmann et al, 2017).

Validation stage
Different levels of participation can be achieved when findings are being validated throughout M&E (to inform adaptive programming and validation) and final impact evaluation. Using participatory approaches in a *representative* way to engage with women and girls' understandings of changes in empowerment is the bare minimum level required during any impact evaluation stage of any explicit empowerment programming.

Making the shift to using participatory approaches to be *transformative* in an impact evaluation is not always easy. A *transformative* approach to participation in an impact evaluation implies that women and girls are actively involved from the very beginning in defining the evaluation questions, identifying indicators, collecting the data and collectively interpreting the data and formulating their own actions to challenge the power hierarchies and status quo based on the analysis. In practice, the ambition for a fully transformative evaluation process has to be carefully balanced between the needs for women and girls' meaningful participation vis a vis their other responsibilities, the project's resource and logistical

challenges and overall importance of avoiding causing harm. For a useful analysis of this balancing act, see the experience of a recent evaluation of Action Aid's women's rights program (Delgado et al, 2016).

Participatory visual story telling refers to a variety of participatory tools aimed at transformative change embedded in action research to empower participants through the act of telling their life story as well as other experiences through photography or video as a basis to stimulate social change. Examples include photovoice, participatory video such as used by Video Girls for Change and digital story telling. Examples of how photovoice was used in a *representative* and *transformative* ways to engage children in the impact evaluation process are highlighted below.

Together with its visual outputs (photographs, videos), photovoice can be used as a powerful advocacy tool to communicate simple messages of what empowerment means for women and girls at the end of a project. Such tools can be used to put women and girls' voices as central to explaining empowerment as a process of social change from their own perspectives and minimizes external stakeholders from imposing their own definitions of empowerment. For example, photovoice was used by

Save the Children in Nepal within a mixed methods evaluation (IRH, 2011) to evaluate the CHOICES curriculum (gender transformative curriculum targeting both girls and boys in addressing gender norms). This provides an illustration of how photovoice was used in a *representative* way to ensure that girls (and boys) voices were used to understand how the curriculum empowered girls and boys to challenge gender norms.

When photovoice is used throughout the project to elicit participants voices (life stories) to inform the design of an intervention, as a baseline or needs assessment, throughout project implementation and impact evaluation, it can be both *representative* and *transformative*. For example, in Bangladesh, Save the Children piloted efforts to include photovoice throughout the programming implementation from the needs assessment stage towards final impact evaluation (Save the Children, 2013; 2014; IRH, 2011). Photovoice became *transformative* for the children involved when they were supported to use their photographs to stimulate dialogue with local governance actors to address causes of children's inequalities and disempowerment in their local communities. However, careful facilitation is critical throughout to ensure that no harm is caused to the children or the subjects of the photographs.

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