



GENDER LINKS FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

THEORY OF CHANGE

Updated August 2021

SYNOPSIS

Just as this Theory of Change (ToC) makes the case that social change occurs in a series of interlocking circles rather than as a linear progression, GL's Theory of Change has evolved through various cycles. GL's work began with a focus on gender and the media. This grew into a campaign for the adoption of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development in August 2008. Our slogan has evolved from *Gender equality in and through the media* to: *Gender Links for equality and justice*. In 2015, the SADC Gender Protocol Alliance that GL leads began a

campaign for the realignment of the Gender Protocol to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We are now in a better position to see our programmes as a spider's web rather than silos; and to articulate the cumulative change that we seek by 2030.

GL's Theory of Change should be read together with its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan which sets out six goals for women's rights that GL seeks to contribute to, and six goals for creating a more effective institution. The link between GL's Theory of Change and its plan of action for the next five years is attached at Annex A.



PROBLEM STATEMENT

Of all the sources of inequality and exclusion across the globe, gender is the most cross-cutting of all. Reinforced in formal and informal ways, gender inequality begins in the home; is perpetuated by the family; schools; work place; community, custom, culture,

religion and tradition as well structures within society more broadly-the media, new media, popular culture, advertising, laws, law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and others. While society generally identifies other forms of inequality, gender inequality is so *normalised* that it often goes unnoticed, including by women who have been

socialised to accept their inferior status. Gender inequality is a *global phenomenon*. In South Africa, often described as a microcosm of the globe because of its history of racial inequality and ethnic diversity, a Constitutional court judge described patriarchy as the country's only truly non-racial institution because of its deep-seated and cross-cutting nature. Gender inequality follows the life cycle of most women from cradle to grave. Despite changes in laws and Constitutions, many women remain minors all their lives - under their fathers, husbands, even sons, and as widows subject to male relatives.



Southern Africa, like many regions in the world, is confronting the chasm between progressive rhetoric of gender equality, and the *reality* of huge social, political and economic gender gaps. On the one hand, this is the only region in the world to have adopted a legally binding Protocol on Gender and Development providing a regional roadmap to the attainment of SDG 5 - gender equality.

The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development brings together existing global and regional commitments to gender equality and enhances these

through time-bound targets. Many SADC countries have strengthened the gender provisions in their Constitutions. With an average of 29% women in parliament and 20% in local government, SADC fares well in the global stakes of women's political representation, although this varies from 11% women in parliament in Botswana to 45% in Namibia. Most countries in the region have also achieved gender parity at primary and secondary school.

However, women remain the majority of the poor, the dispossessed, the landless and the unemployed. HIV and AIDS has reversed many of the fragile gains made. Women constitute the majority of those infected and affected by the pandemic that has added to the unwaged work of women, and left young girls and older women fending for whole families. Customary practices undermine Constitutions and laws, sometimes condoning gender violence, one of the most telling indicators of gender inequality. Research conducted by Gender Links in six of the fifteen countries in the region shows that between half and two thirds of women in Southern Africa have experienced some form of violence over their lifetime, up to 20% within the last year.¹

These studies, which include an attitude survey, show that while the majority of men say they believe women and men are equal, a shockingly high proportion believe that a man has a right to beat his wife. While attitude surveys show that women have slightly more progressive views than men, they show that many women have been socialised into believing in their own inferiority. They also believe that their communities hold highly conservative views, resulting in women being ready to claim their rights but feeling trapped by the attitudes around them.

¹ Violence Against Women Baseline studies in South Africa, Mauritius, Botswana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Lesotho - see <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/page/gender-justice-measuring-gbv>

Women's lack of voice, choice and control over their bodies remains one of the major causes of unequal power relations with men. Key SRHR concerns in Southern Africa include significant percentages of sexually active adolescents below the age of 16; multiple concurrent sexual relations; increasing trends of inter-generational sexual relations; low levels of consistent condom usage during sex and high levels of maternal mortality. Almost one quarter of all pregnancies end in unsafe abortions, a major contributor to maternal mortality especially among young women. The UNFPA estimates that 43% of women in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced gender-based violence (GBV) in their lifetime.

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens fragile gains made. As communities in Southern Africa are forced to stay at home, women and girls are at a heightened risk of domestic violence, intimate partner violence, child abuse, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Several other forms of exclusion intersect with gender to compound the misogyny associated with patriarchal norms. These include race, class, the rural/urban divide, age, disability, occupation (especially sex work), sexual orientation and gender identity. These often multiple burdens of exclusion result in even higher levels of violence for certain categories of women.

Women from marginalised groups, e.g. women with disabilities, indigenous women and LGBTI persons, experience multiple and intersecting layers of discrimination, violence, stigma and exclusion. Social gender norms that see SGBV as acceptable persist. Women and girls with disabilities form a critical category of women facing multiple forms of discrimination based on their multiple identities. While there are

targeted policies and programmes for persons with disabilities, challenges related to access to basic services, buildings, housing, and transport remain a challenge.

Homosexuality is outlawed in all but five Southern African countries (Angola, Lesotho, South Africa, the DRC and Mozambique). Lesbian women experience some of the most brutal GBV in the region as they are subjected to "corrective rape" in order to make them "normal." The African National Congress (ANC) Women's League in South Africa recently broke new ground by inviting women who find themselves trapped in a male body (transgender men) to join their ranks. Progressive decisions such as this are pushing the boundaries of social norms; challenging Southern Africans to think beyond the simple confines of male, female and the associated socially constructed identities that underpin gender inequality.

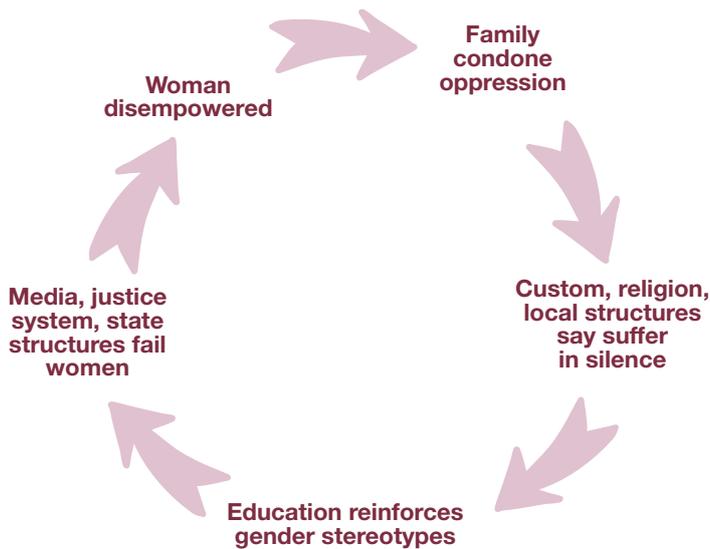
Research showing that women effectively lack a voice, from the bedroom to the boardroom, is corroborated by GL's 2020 *Gender and Media Progress Study* showing that women in Southern Africa constitute a mere 21% of news sources (compared to the global figure of 25% in the 2020 Global Media Monitoring Project).

CHANGE IS POSSIBLE

Behaviour is mediated by cognitions i.e. what people know and think affects how they act.

Individual behaviour is the fundamental unit of group, organisational, community, and national behaviour. The individual behaviour of women and men both shapes, and is shaped by their social environment and its multiple levels of influences i.e. interpersonal, community and public policy (McLeroy et al., 1988).

Vicious negative cycle of inequality

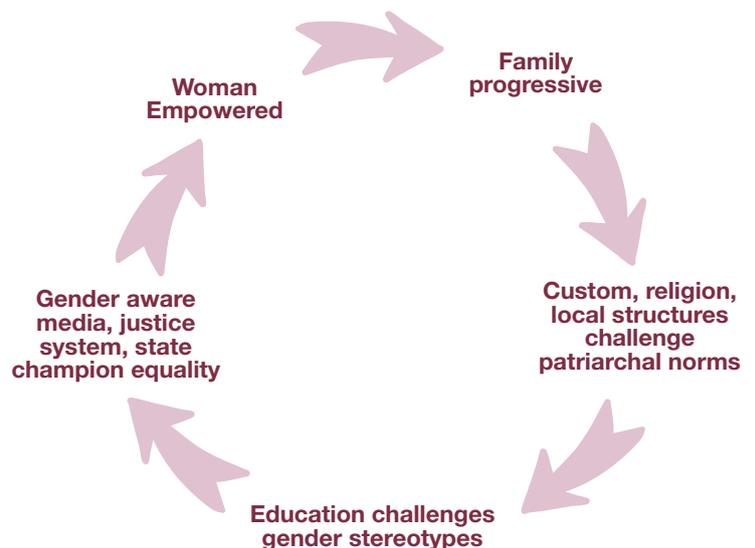


The ecological model often used in gender analysis illustrates the vicious negative cycle that reinforce gender inequality. Like an onion, layers of attitudes, customs, culture, traditions, practices and norms that reinforce the inferior status of women wrap around and entrap the individual woman. For example, a woman who dares to speak out against violence she is experiencing in the home is often told by close family (including female relatives) to go back into the abusive relationship and make it work. The community, including religious and traditional authorities, at best turn a blind eye, at worst condone this violence within the private sphere. Steeped in patriarchal norms and traditions, state structures and processes (such as the police and criminal justice system) fail women. Instead of becoming the “voice of the voiceless”, the male-dominated media denies survivors of violence their own voice, reporting their experiences through heavily biased court reporting; often sensationalising and trivialising their experience.

Each one of these layers can equally become a virtuous positive cycle challenging these deeply entrenched

values, attitudes, systems and norms. Unlike sex, a biological given, gender is a social construct that can be deconstructed. The media may be a part of the problem, or it can be part of the solution. State policies, laws and structures can be transformed to champion gender equality. Communities can be mobilised to reject negative practices, attitudes and tendencies. Women and girls can be mobilised to claim their rights. The growing men-for-change movement is testimony to the fact that boys and men can rise above and challenge social norms - hence the slogan, “men of quality believe in equality.”

Vicious positive cycle of equality



APPROACHES



Feminism is a range of social movements, political movements, and ideologies that aim to define and establish the political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. Feminism incorporates the position that societies prioritise the male point of view, and that women are treated unjustly within those societies. GL recognises that equality of opportunity is not the same as equality of outcomes. This definition

moves beyond women and men enjoying the same status and having equal opportunity to realise their full human rights and potential to contribute to national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and to benefit from the results. Experience has shown that same treatment does not necessarily yield equal results. Today, the concept of equality acknowledges that women and men may sometimes require different treatment to achieve similar results, due to different life conditions or to compensate for past discrimination.

In particular, the dual existence of customary law alongside modern codified laws and statutes is often contradictory and undermines the rights of women. These contradictions need to be addressed head on. For too long culture has been used as a smokescreen to undermine the rights of women even by some of the most progressive entities.

The rights based approach respects diversity and culture but also recognises that culture is dynamic and that no right is absolute. The right to one's cultural and religious beliefs must be balanced against the equality of all peoples, women and men, as enshrined in international, regional and national instruments.

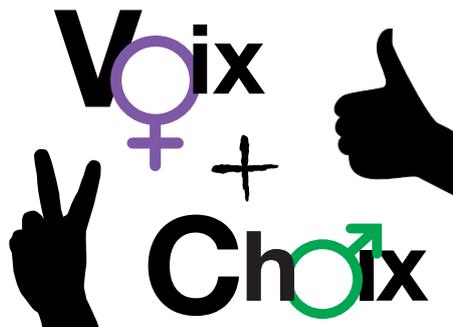
In most Southern African societies, men enjoy the benefits of male privilege but

they also share with women experiences of disenfranchisement, indignity and subordination as a result of diverse and persistent political, social and economic oppressions. Gender analysis of African masculinities exposes the myth of a singular African masculinity. Africa's colonial past, patriarchal cultural structures and a variety of religious and knowledge systems has created masculine identities that may seem strong but can also be limiting for men. The 48th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2004 recognised that men and boys can and do make contributions to achieving gender equality. Dismantling patriarchy is win-win proposition for everyone.

GL will take a two pronged approach to achieve women's human rights and gender equality. Our priority is to strengthen the capacity, voice and organising power of feminist and women's movements. At the same time, we also will prioritise working with other diverse constituencies to ensure feminist and women's agenda are influencing other diverse movements' struggles and activism. The core of feminism is to put the voices, experiences and solutions of women and girls at the center of our work with the aim to shift the historically dominant power relations. We believe to achieve a feminist future, working with both women and other diverse movements are foundational.



Action and results for SRHR in SADC



Action et résultats pour les SRHR dans la SADC



Acção e resultados para SRHR na SADC

PRINCIPLES² - VOICE AND CHOICE

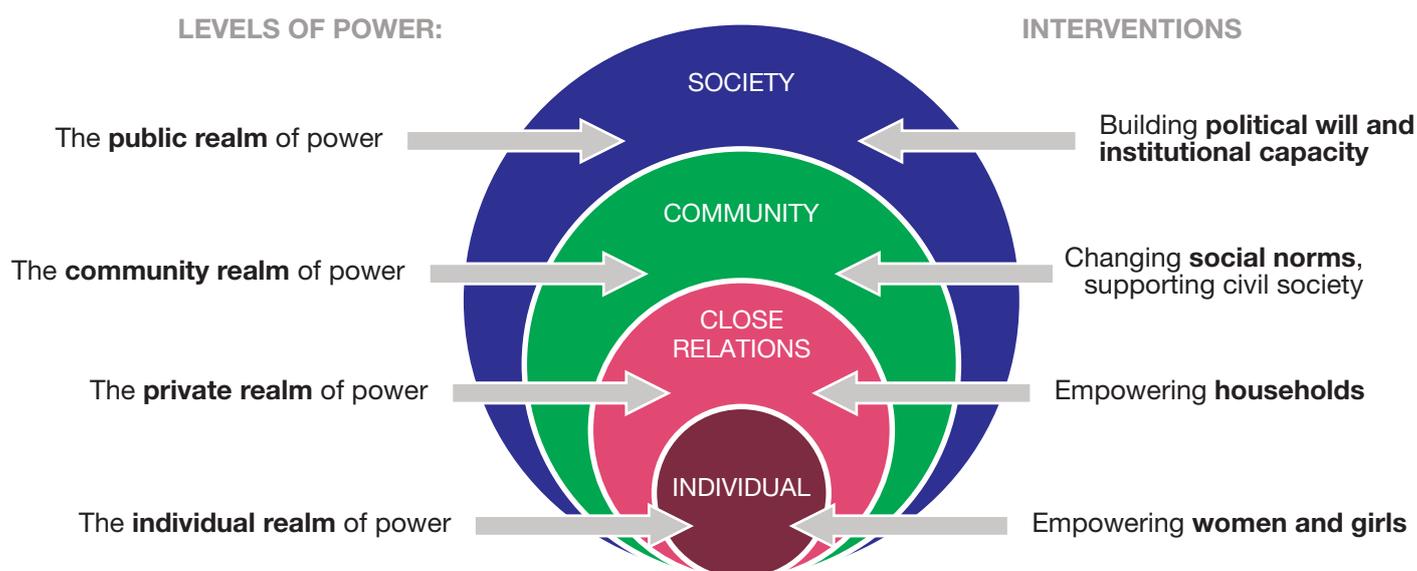
1. **Gender equality:** Refers to a situation where women and men have equal conditions for realising their full human rights, and in which actions taken at the individual, relationship, community and societal level result in this equality being realised.
2. **Women's rights are human rights:** Women's rights are integral to the human rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights of Constitutions and the rights-based approach to development.
3. **The right to bodily integrity and security of person:** Women are entitled to bodily, emotional and psychological integrity; to making decisions over their own bodies, including their sexual and reproductive rights.
4. **Customary, cultural and religious practices are subject to the right to equality:** Religious and cultural rights that contradict, undermine or have a negative effect on the attainment of gender equality must be outlawed and eliminated.
5. **Women's equal participation in decision-making** in the private and public spheres is vital to the realisation of their rights.
6. **Economic empowerment of women is a prerequisite to attainment of gender equality.** Women's ability to exercise voice and strategic forms of control over their lives is linked to being able to generate regular and independent sources of income.
7. **Structural discrimination:** Efforts to promote women's empowerment need to do more than give individual women economic or political opportunities. They need to tackle deeper-rooted structural constraints that perpetuate inequalities.
8. **Affirmative action or positive discrimination,** enshrined in the Constitutions of many countries, is a legitimate short-term strategy for redressing gender imbalances that should not result in tokenism or complacency.
9. **Women are not homogeneous:** Women differ according to such factors as race, disability, class, culture, religion, sexual orientation and geographic location. These differences need to be taken into account in designing programmes to promote gender equality.
10. **Movement building,** of the women's and men's sectors, is vital for achieving gender equality.
11. **Debate and media:** Fostering public engagement and debate is essential to making policies that work for women's empowerment and gender equality. The media and popular culture have a vital role to play in this.
12. **Changing attitudes and values** is as important to bringing about women's empowerment as changing women's material circumstances and political opportunities.

VISION

Gender Links (GL) is committed to an inclusive, equal and just society in which women and girls in all their diversities exercise their voice and choice in accordance with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and related regional, continental and global instruments.

² Adapted from The Pathways to Empowerment research commissioned by DFID.

INTERVENTIONS



Interventions need to tackle the continuum of inequality in both the private and public spheres through both formal and informal mechanisms. The theory of change diagram highlights four levels - or realms - of power, that it is useful to consider:

1. **Societal level (the public realm of power):** interventions which seek to influence formal institutions, laws, policies, and practices and to support and promote women's rights and empowerment as well as strengthening institutional capacity and accountability;
2. **Community level (the community realm of power):** interventions which aim to change social and cultural norms, values and practices which condone or reinforce gender inequality at the community level;
3. **Household level (the private realm of power):** interventions which target relationships within the family, within marriage, within sexual relationships;
4. **Individual level (the intimate realm of power):** interventions which focus on influencing an individual's self-confidence, knowledge or self-awareness.

Assumptions

Several assumptions about attitudes and behaviours underpin this Theory of Change:

Individual level

- Women believe in themselves and are not threatened by either other women or men.
- Women and girls acknowledge and have the self-confidence to challenge all forms of inequalities (social, economic, political).
- Men and boys acknowledge the existence of all forms inequalities.

Close relations

- Mothers, fathers, care givers believe and accept that boys and girls are equal, and therefore treat and social them as such.
- Partners & spouses acknowledge, respect and treat each other as equals.

Community level

- **Workplace:** Men and women are treated and remunerated as equals in their various roles; work place policies and implementation thereof is gender aware/conscious; and selection processes employ a "zebra" system.

- *Local government:* Policies are gender sensitive/aware; the working environment is gender friendly and enabling.
- *Traditional authorities:* There is buy-in and commitment by traditional elders that reflects a value system promoting gender equality; there is commitment to changing customary laws that are gender oppressive; traditional elders create an enabling platform for women to enter the space and participate as equal traditional elders.
- *Religious institutions:* Male religious leaders embrace women as equal partners who are capable of leading the groupings/gatherings.

Societal level

- The principle of gender parity in decision-making in all areas is embraced.
- There is acceptance of affirmative action measures to redress gender imbalances.
- Women in decision-making are empowered and have the capacity and confidence to speak out and challenge gender roles that perpetuate violation of rights.
- Men in decision-making begin to lead from the front on gender equality; it is not just a "women's thing."
- The State, Private Sector and Civil Society put in place Gender Management Systems that include policies, processes, structures and budgets to ensure that gender gaps are systematically redressed.
- The Legal System ensures adherence, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international, regional and national human rights instruments and gender frameworks.
- The Media - mainstream, public, community, new media - adopts proactive policies and practices for achieving gender equality in and through the media, as well as challenging gender stereotypes that limit women and men, young and old.

CIRCLES OF CHANGE

The Gender Links Theory of Change recognises that social change is seldom linear. It occurs in a series of interlocking circles. GL locates its work within the broader framework of SDGs and the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development. Within that framework it seeks to influence change at individual and institutional as well as national policy level. It seeks to ensure that *formal* changes result in changes in attitudes and behaviour at all these levels.

Making every voice count for gender equality:

With its strong roots in gender and communications work, GL uses the ecological model that begins by locating responsibility with the state and all the societal forces that influence change, but follows the concentric circles through to the community and individual level. As GL's ToC has evolved, the organisation has been able to make effective links from local, to national to regional and international level. At the global level, GL contributes to the attainment of SDG 5 GL coordinates the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance that lobbied for the adoption and ratification of the Protocol, and now works for its implementation, review and alignment to the SDGs that have far stronger gender targets and indicators than before. GL mainstreams the targets of the Protocol into its core policy and movement building; gender and media and local action for gender justice programmes to localise the targets. SRHR, 50/50: Women's equal and effective participation in decision-making and climate change.



Changing policies and laws:

At the societal level, GL champions work on the SADC Gender Protocol and related regional, continental and global instruments. This is a strong, visible tool for holding governments accountable

leading up to the 2030 deadline. These instruments are also tools for galvanising civil society to influence socio-economic and political change at the national level. GL works with change agents including women and men in government and civil society to effect change. The outcome of the Alliance programme is strengthened capacity of gender CSOs to hold governments accountable to their commitment to gender equality. This outcome is achieved through CSOs lobbying for the integration of Protocol and other related regional, continental and global instruments targets into government gender policies, planning, and budgets in costed action plans.

effective delivery of good governance to the people.

Changing communities: At the local level, the media and local government programmes contribute to change in power relations. These relations are the connections through which women as social actors or change agents engage with their husbands, children, siblings, parents, neighbours, religious actors, government, other types of authority and social actors to affect change in oppressive and disempowering structures, enhance their own agency, and make rights-based claims.

Changing attitudes and behaviours: Ultimately changing the way women, men and LGBTI persons experience the world and change gender relations is about breaking down the existing patriarchal value system and replacing it with a 'rights' approach. Patriarchy is the most influential intangible barrier that surrounds and conditions women's choices. These are the routine patterns of interactions and conventions that lead to assumed behaviours that legitimise and reinforce the social order. The media and local government have a critical role to play in changing attitudes and mind-sets, as do campaigns against gender violence.



Changing institutions: At the institutional level, GL is taking the targets of the SADC Gender Protocol to the micro-level by working with local councils and media houses. The outcome of the media programme is to advance the Gender Protocol target of gender equality in and through the media. The performance of the media programme is measured by the proportion of women sources in the media houses that GL is working with and how the media covers sensitive topics such as SRHR; HIV and AIDS; gender violence; and LGBTI issues.



The Local Action for Gender Justice programme contributes to the Protocol target of gender responsive governance at the local level through gender action plans featuring gender violence, SRHR, Local Economic Development (LED) and climate change. GL has recently piloted work on changing attitudes towards disability and LGBTI persons at the local level. The performance of this outcome is measured by the proportion of women in local government and the qualitative measure from case studies and testimonial evidence of the difference that this makes. Local government is at the centre of basic service delivery and the



Changing lives: In the work at national and local level, as well as in the media, GL trains gender champions and focal persons who become "drivers of change" within their organisations and the broader society. GL is exploring the link between economic empowerment and ending gender violence by linking survivors of GBV with local economic opportunities created by local government. GL is testing the hypothesis that women who are economically empowered have more voice and more choice, and are therefore better able to challenge societal norms through enhanced agency.

ANNEX A: SUMMARY DIAGRAM OF THE GENDER LINKS THEORY OF CHANGE

VISION 	An inclusive, equal and just society in which women and girls in all their diversities exercise their voice and choice in accordance with the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and related regional, continental and global instruments.						
OUTCOMES - WOMEN'S RIGHTS 	1. A strong Southern African women's movement advocating for #Voiceand Choice and holding government to account for global, African and regional commitments.	2. Women and girls exercise #Voiceand Choice over their bodies through the full attainment of Sexual and Reproductive Health for all.	3. Gender equality in and through the media gives women equal #Voice as citizens.	4. Women and girls exercise equal and effective #Voiceand Choice in the public sphere through their participation in politics and decision-making .	5. Gender responsive local government enhances #Voiceand Choice for women, girls and youth in marginal communities.	6. The cataclysmic destruction of the planet is arrested through innovative links between gender and climate justice in our work and practice.	
INTERVENTIONS 	Societal level  Interventions to build political will and legal and institutional capacity to end gender inequality;,, gender responsive policies, and services which respond to gender specific needs.		Community level  Interventions to end discriminatory practices, tackle harmful social norms, promote equal decision making, support local civil society and women's organising.		Household level  Interventions to promote equal decision-making power and division of household roles and responsibilities.		Individual level Interventions to empower women and girls to seek and claim their rights including through increased voice and agency.
INPUTS - INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS	1. A strong and sustainable organisation that includes a fund raising unit; grant making and income generating capabilities.	2. A robust and transparent system and processes for planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning, innovation, knowledge management and sharing.	3. Making IT work for gender justice through "fit for purpose" use of digital technologies to give visibility to the work of partners and beneficiaries.	4. Engaged, capable staff, partners, and associates with the motivation, facilities and tools to deliver high quality work.	5. Strong, continuously updated policies and practices overseen by a diverse, compliant and accountable governance structure.	6. Strong and compliant financial policies, systems and practices that result in zero tolerance for corruption as well as Value for Money.	
PROBLEM STATEMENT	Gender inequality exercised through individuals, communities and societies, violates women and girls' human rights, constraints their choices and agency and negatively impacts on their ability to fully participate in, contribute to and benefit from social, economic and political development.						