

## CASE STUDY: FEMINIST LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT (INDIA AND AFRICA) DEVELOPING FEMINIST LEADERSHIP CAPACITY



In partnership with key women's organizations and networks, development organizations and agencies, and social movements, two feminist leadership capacity development initiatives were

implemented in India and in South Africa with 34 participants from India, South Africa, Jordan, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. The 34 feminist leaders, change agents, and practitioners participated in year-long leadership development training and were mentored to carry out and apply Gender at Work's gender-action learning methodologies in their home contexts and implement change projects.

The change projects saw participants take on complex and difficult issues within their organizations. The majority of participants took on change projects to alter the cultural patterns and behaviour of their team members. In many cases, the policies were present but were understood as abstract guidelines by their team members. In some cases, staff was actively involved in fashioning change within.

The Gender at Work framework was central in enabling participants to identify gaps, mark trajectories of change, and design their action plan. It enabled them to ground their change projects and made transformation an essential component of their work.

### FEMINIST LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE

**80% OF PARTICIPANTS  
REPORTED CHANGED  
ATTITUDES AND  
BEHAVIOURS IN THEIR  
PERSONAL LIVES, THEIR  
ORGANISATIONS AND THEIR  
COMMUNITIES OVER TWELVE  
MONTHS."**

The long-term objective of the program was to increase and enhance feminist leadership capacity within key civil society organisations (CSOs), public decision making structures, and global CSO networks in order to contribute to positive changes in women's lives at local, national and global levels.

Specific program objectives were as follows:

- To broaden and deepen the reach of feminist change processes by enabling 30 feminist leaders, change agents and practitioners to gain hands-on experience in organizational change methodologies and initiatives within 15 key CSOs and networks in India and Africa.
- To build a cadre of feminist leaders, change agents and practitioners adept in facilitating organizational change in their contexts.

## BROAD RESULTS ACHIEVED

Women and men in 15 key CSOs and networks in India and Africa are better able to understand, tackle and change deep culturally biased norms, practices and unequal power relationships that inhibit women's leadership and participation.

## SPECIFIC RESULTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, 14 feminist leaders were mentored and trained in Gender at Work's gender action-learning processes, principles, approaches, methodologies, and values. They then went on to practice these new skills, tools and knowledge in change projects.



At a personal level, the 14 participants in South Africa reported changes in their understanding of power in personal relationships, improved listening skills, ability to critically examine fears and doubts, and an increased knowledge of feminist concepts and tools.

At the organizational level, changes include more openness to discuss gender issues, reflecting gender considerations in budgeting, increased awareness of staff to power relations, strengthened negotiation skills, and an understanding within organizations that gender issues are not just for women. Participants also report an increased consciousness of gender equity for both men and women in their respective organizations.

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**18 of the 24 participants in India reported confidence and clarity regarding the need for organizational change and facilitation**

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Participants report increased skill at identifying and addressing harmful cultural norms, such as violence against the LGBTQI community and increasing women's leadership in unions and other places of labour. This has allowed participants to identify and address areas of change that they need to focus on within their organizations. The Forum for the Empowerment of Women was able to bring together public bearers and community stakeholders, including faith organizations, the safety department, and teachers, to develop a better working relationship to challenge the drivers of violence. This has allowed more open spaces for the individuals and families of the LGBTQI community who experience violence to create better connections and foster a better understanding of sexuality.

Participants in India expressed strong satisfaction with the mentoring and experiential learning, noting many beneficial areas of the mentorship process: the ability to learn from group support, learning new strategies for dealing with challenges, confronting fears associated with the implementation of change projects, and increased knowledge of how to identify and confront unequal power dynamics. Through increased knowledge of Gender at Work tools, participants have noted that increased knowledge of feminist concepts can address stereotypes of feminism.

## SPECIFIC RESULTS IN INDIA

In India, 24 leaders represented 12 organizations. These participants were also trained in using the Gender at Work framework and other techniques of democratic facilitation to design, implement and assess change in their organizations. Various organizations noted that, following the completion of the pilot project, they planned to use this approach and methodology to review and analyse other interventions in their own organization while also to building and mentoring leadership among women.

Of 12 organisations that participated, 9 organisations in India reported significant changes at the personal, organizational and community levels. Over the 12 months, 18 participants recorded increased confidence to initiate change in their own organizations. For example, Vikalp's leadership critically examined its own attitudes regarding the implementation of feminist leadership principles to shift from organizational self-doubt to proactively taking on the mantle of leadership. Other organizations also redesigned their planning and review forums through democratic feminist processes.



Changes in cultural norms were also noted as a result of the program. For example, The Ant noted that indigenous dress was changed as the result of a skills building on driving scooters and motorbikes for women staff members. The Dhokona, a skirt worn by tribal women, was redesigned as loose split pants that allowed women to sit astride the scooter/motorbike. This would increase women staff member's mobility and confidence while also dismantling gender stereotypes.

They also highlighted the importance of leadership in designing and initiating such processes within. These participants reported that they were able to bring a dynamic feminist perspective within their organization and in their field work, implement policies on gender equality with greater depth, strengthen women workers' access to technology, increase women workers' mobility, create the space for second-tier leadership to participate in decision-making, develop democratic forums as part of organizational practices, and introduced new tools of analysis that enabled their teams to look critically at the nature of their field-based interventions.

For some, their organizations change project was a transformational process that helped revive the organizational deadlock they had reached after over a decade of work.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY:

The participants in this process' primary accountability were to one another, and to their host organization. In India and South Africa, the group process encouraged reflections, collective learning, and leading feminist principles by action and example in the groups. G@W facilitators were held to the same action and accountabilities as participants.

Individual participants reflected on each training and workshop and provided feedback reports to their training facilitators as well as to their individual mentors. Individual participants were interviewed at two stages of the programme in South Africa, and their interviews are being analysed and synthesized in a final report.

Participants actively determined the schedule, events and change projects they would implement at the organizational level. Successes and challenges were shared with individual mentors as well as with the collective group.