

Building Cultures of Equality

Biennial Report (2012 - 2013)



Unleashing Capacity

Strategic Learning & Evaluation

Harvesting Knowledge



REFLECTIONS

When I look back over the last two years, two things stand out for me. The first is how we pushed the envelope of our conceptual approaches, drawing from our work across large and small organizations; and secondly, how we fed those insights into a new iteration of systemic change, capacity building and learning experiments.

Analysis of our Gender Action Learning (GAL) programs in South Africa, India, South Sudan and elsewhere together with our efforts to integrate gender equality concerns in multilateral organizations such as FAO and IFAD, inspired new writing about the post-2015 development agenda and Beijing Plus 20. We broadened the conversation through a global contest to elicit ideas and experiences to end gender discrimination.

Our GAL work in South Africa, India and South Sudan has allowed us to interact with remarkable people and communities and across multiple fields: we have engaged with organizations working with HIV&AIDS, rural employment, Dalit women's empowerment, gender-based violence and LGBTI rights.

Working for change in these communities has led to new partnerships and writing which we have shared widely through our website. The generation of knowledge and its application in initiatives with different types of partners has formed a continuous, upward-moving spiral.

“Our endeavour remains to bridge theory and practice fruitfully so that we can chip away at cultural norms that impede gender equality.”

In the next few pages, we want to celebrate this spiral of learning and change. We bring to you stories from our programs, or rather the highlights of these stories. The stories are, of course, too deep and interesting to be fully covered in such a brief space. But I hope what you read here will intrigue you, and inspire you to read more about our work.

Our endeavour remains to bridge theory and practice fruitfully so that we can chip away at cultural norms that impede gender equality. This is just the beginning of a conversation. Let's keep [talking gender](#).

***By Aruna Rao,
Co-Founder and Executive Director,
Gender at Work***



SOUTH SUDAN

"I used to beat my son when he used up all pens. Instead of beating him, I talk with him.... Sometimes I'm harsh when things are not going well. But now I engage in conversation."
~ Participant in a Gender Action Learning process

We built on our work with CSOs to help them identify and tackle cultural norms hindering gender equality. For example:

Women's Development Group recognized that they could not fully address gender injustice without the involvement of men. Their work was noticed by the government who partnered with them to fight gender-based violence.

The Upper Nile Youth Development Association (Malakal) discovered that radio could be a powerful tool for the change they were trying to bring about. On a South Sudan radio station, UNYDA was given an hour to promote girls education and discuss issues of gender-based violence in Malakal. Radio officials have since become important stakeholders for UNYDA.

Nile River Development Corp recruited more women into their organization, and found a partner to support employment of women staff. Through training on gender-based violence, they have encouraged parents to send girl children to school and encouraged women to study English courses.



SOUTH AFRICA

We built on our work with CSOs to integrate HIV/AIDS and socio-economic empowerment issues into their responses to gender-based violence.

Lesbian and Gay Equality Project (LGEP) runs study circles with the community to discuss the challenges they face as lesbians and the community's issues with them. They have gained wider acceptance for lesbians by responding to community needs.

South African Domestic Services and Allied Workers Union (SADSAWU) set up additional branches and they now run meetings differently which enables workers to discuss concerns and opportunities. This has encouraged new members, especially young women. Workers are gaining the confidence to fight for their rights and are improving their economic position.

The Building Construction and Allied Workers' Union (BCAWU) employed more young women as interns with prospects of full-time employment and a union gender committee was created. The union secured bonuses for women who were cleaners on construction sites and whom management was refusing to treat as part of the general workforce.

Health & Other Services Personnel Trade Union of South Africa (HOSPER-SA) organized a workshop which led to a more sensitized approach to HIV and gender equality within their leadership. They reworked their sexual harassment policy and formulated a gender policy which they successfully put on the provincial congress' agenda with a view of taking it to the national congress.

DOCKDA Rural Development Agency supported 181 home-based care-givers to access a stipend from the International Development Trust. Their grant-making program has expanded beyond GBV awareness-raising activities to supporting women's economic empowerment. Their savings groups program has attracted new members and women leaders have increased.

"We can now walk past the taxi rank without fear because we are also seen as members of the community. This space allowed us to have a conversation about hate crime without blaming or shaming anyone. We are also looking at bigger issues now as humans not only as LGBTI. We talk about feminist issues and things that people are silent about." ~ Member of LGEP



"Every year we hold camps for adolescent girls, and always it was the men who would determine the curriculum, what the budget would be. We (women staff members) played the role of teachers. Doing what we were told to do. For the first time this year it was decided that we would manage the entire project...We were scared and a little lost at first but now it's good. We managed just fine." ~ Female staff, Lok Samiti

INDIA

Since January 2010, we worked to increase Dalit women's access and participation in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), a 'right to work' program in rural India. We implemented the project in partnership with four organizations in Uttar Pradesh.

- **Lok Samiti** increased membership and leadership of Dalit women in the local workers' union to 50%.
- **Vanangana** established an all-women's work site that provided two months of work for 140 women.
- **Sahjani Siksha Kendra** developed a training module to train semi-literate Dalit women to become site supervisors at NREGA worksites.
- **Parmarth** set up a 'model panchayat' and ensured that all women in the Panchayat had job cards and bank accounts.

We reached 69 Gram Panchayats across five districts. Dalit women working under NREGA increased from 62 percent to 97 percent and women with a bank account in their name increased from 30 percent to 70 percent.

25 women have found permanent work after the project.

Project strategies shattered myths and stereotypes about the participation of Dalit women and addressed issues of women's representation and economic security.

unleashing capacity

Our work with International Organizations

Gender at Work created a “Gender Strategy Review Tool” for Plan International – an online tool for Plan offices to share their successes and track progress toward implementation of Plan’s Strategy on Gender Equality.

It measures five dimensions of work in the Plan Strategy:

- offices and staff
- programmes
- partnerships
- advocacy
- communications/public engagement

In addition to helping offices stay on track with the implementation of the Strategy, the tool provides Plan’s international headquarters with summary data across all country and national offices.

With this data, they can better understand how they are advancing gender equality and offer targeted support where it is needed. The tool helps share successes, tracks progress toward implementation of their Strategy on Gender Equality and provides a simple, systematic way for each office to reflect upon and capture the actions it has taken.

It also provides Plan’s headquarters with summary data across all country and national offices.

strategic learning

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Our ongoing work with FAO

In late 2010, Gender at Work undertook a consultancy to audit FAO's efforts to mainstream gender equality. Since then, we have provided consultancy support to FAO to implement the recommendations of that audit.

This has included developing and gaining approval for a gender equality and women's empowerment policy; integrating gender dimensions in FAO's work planning process; strengthening the articulation of gender-related results in FAO planning and monitoring systems; strengthening the gender focal point network across the agency, particularly in overseas regions; creating a capacity development strategy for gender equality focused on integrating gender dimensions in other capacity development efforts and an e-learning course on gender and food security.

Currently, we are developing a framework and tool to support member countries in assessing the degree to which gender equality is integrated in their agricultural policy. It will help identify gaps and policy incoherencies.



Gender at Work was contracted by the **Levi Strauss Foundation** to assist them to develop a strategy that brings LSF values (courage, empathy, integrity, originality) to efforts to advance gender equity and women's rights in communities worldwide where Levi's works. A high proportion of existing LSF initiatives engage women garment factory workers around the world—and LSF also has a history of supporting transnational feminist and LGBTI organizations, from the Global Fund for Women to AWID—so Gender at Work's efforts built on an ample history of pioneering work.

Leadership and staff of this 60-year old foundation, established by the founder of the Levi Strauss company to tackle the urgent social issues of the time, collaborated with Gender at Work to engage in an internal analytical, reflective and strategy-building process. We applied a women's human rights and gender equity lens, including use of the G@W analytical framework, to a sampling of existing grants, engaged staff in reflection on the potential to strengthen women's human rights in their existing and future grant-making portfolios, and developed a small number of concrete steps that the Foundation could take to increase intentionality, capacity and results for women's human rights.

As a concrete follow-up to the consultancy, LSF established a Gender Advisory Council to ensure ongoing guidance and feedback on grant-making strategies from women's human rights advocates.

Our work with foundations

Since October 2012, we have been facilitating a learning process with **Global Fund for Women, Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN)** and **Asia Pacific Forum on Women's Law and Development (APWLD)**.

This three-year project will build the partners' understanding of women's transformative leadership, assess progress toward the initiative's goals and help the partners adapt strategies in response to what they are learning.

We have worked to establish a shared understanding of the baseline state of women's transformative leadership and each partner's theory of change for improving it. The variations in our theories of change about how to build women's transformative leadership offered an excellent opportunity for us to learn which variations were most significant.

The learning process emphasized the building of a network as a key strategy in all three organizations and tried to deepen their understanding of how these networks advanced women's transformative leadership.



a global contest

END GENDER DISCRIMINATION NOW!



We joined forces with AWID, BRIDGE and FLACSO in August 2013 to issue a worldwide call for entries for the End Gender Discrimination Now! Contest. We asked for successful strategies, innovative ideas and ‘truths’ (failed trials).

From the stories we received, prominent was the strategy of ‘women inspiring women’. Other strategies included the extraordinarily creative use of traditional and social media (from radio to internet chat groups to databases), the continuing importance of self-awareness and consciousness-raising, the importance of actions by local

governments, and the dedicated and courageous organizing of community-based groups.

We announced winners in three categories. Another six submissions deserved honorable mention because they were so inspiring.

- **200+ submissions from more than 60 countries**
- **More than 30 percent of the entries were submitted by men.**
- **Largest number of entries from Argentina and India**

[Read about them at our website.](#)

The Collaboratory

The Collaboratory is an initiative that will use the very best talent and resources in our community to discover, explore, and share new gender tools for creating gender-equitable cultures. It is envisioned as an inclusive group of practitioners, leaders and academics worldwide, experimenting with innovative approaches to gender equality.

The first meeting took place in New Delhi in 2013. The Collaboratory aims to be:

- A learning space to hone practices and approaches for change interventions in organizational, network and community settings
- A network of diverse thinker-practitioners who bridge theory and practice, and create new strategies for gender equality and institutional change
- A curriculum for activists, researchers, development practitioners, and theorists to discuss and shape cultures of equality while transforming themselves
- A cadre of skilled activists and change facilitators who intervene in organizations to create cultures of equality
- A virtual learning community focused on issue, geographic or sector-specific topics complementary to the Collaboratory.



PUBLICATIONS

The elephant in the room and the dragons at the gate: Strategising for Gender Equality in the 21st Century
by Aruna Rao and Joanne Sandler, 2012

Drawing on Gender At Work's global e-discussion (2012) that involved 40 seasoned gender and development activists and policy makers, Aruna Rao and Joanne Sandler look beyond gender mainstreaming for innovative ways to advance gender equality and tackle the backlash against women's rights in the 21st century.



Extract: When we refer to 'the elephants in the room', we are talking about two dynamics that happen in our work and strategising on women's rights in the real world. The first dynamic occurs because the elephant / that is, gender discrimination in the deep culture and structures of our organisations / is so huge, so all-encompassing, and so omnipresent that it feels like it is barely worth mentioning. Dealing with this elephant would be an enormous task, so in the interest of 'quick wins', which will show results, we feel that we have sometimes chosen to strategically ignore it, and focus on easier gains. The second dynamic occurs because of perceptions about the elephant. Its enormous size means that notions of what it is are different depending on what part is visible to particular people, all of whom have different vantage points.

Transforming Power: A Knotted Rope
2012

14 participants from six organizations step back from their everyday battles of survival to reflect and write. They bring passion, wit, humour, honesty, courage and artistry to their multiple histories of pain, silence, poverty, loss, violence, despair and disappointment.



Extract: There always seems to be a crisis at Kganya at the same time as we have our workshops scheduled and it is always a struggle for Gladys to get to the workshop. Gladys tells us that Caroline Mashale, the second author from Kganya wanted to leave the youth project she had started. Caroline also wanted to leave the writing process and Gladys and the Gender at Work mentor had to persuade her to come to this workshop.

Gladys continues: I was so worried when Caroline said she did not want to be part of the projects. Every week we had burglaries at the project. They took gates, groceries, computers. I asked is it because people hate us, want to see us fall down? Is it because of drugs? I am so confused. No funders want to invest where there is crime. Because of crime maybe we won't get assistance from any one. So I am happy Caroline changed her mind. I was frustrated, asking what will I do? Caroline is trained. If she leaves I will have to look for someone else. I was thinking of not attending this workshop. I was very frustrated. We rely on fees and some parents are not paying for the crèche."

PUBLICATIONS

Sustaining Women's Agricultural Livelihoods: Why Can't Global Institutions Get it Right? by Aruna Rao, 2012

Since the 1970s, research has clearly demonstrated the critical link between women's work and agriculture and food production. Yet, development aid institutions have consistently failed in supporting women's agricultural work. This paper asks: why can't global institutions get it right?

Extract: A key aspect of democratizing power is accountability. For most organizations, accountability means legal and fiscal accountability and it means accountability to the top both within organizations – to the top management – or outside for example, donors. Commonly, we understand that there are two dimensions of accountability – answerability and enforceability. Answerability means that power-holders are obliged to explain or justify their actions. Enforceability refers to sanctions that can be applied when illegal actions have taken place. Goetz suggests that accountability systems are shorthand about how power works in any system. They tell us who has to answer to whom and who can punish somebody for making a bad decision. So, if we use this lens of accountability, what would gender positive institutional change mean?



Bringing Back the Heart: The Gender at Work Action Learning Process with Four South African Trade Unions 2012

Since the formation of Gender at Work in the 1990s, we have worked with a range of organizations. This set of case studies explores Gender at Work's approach to furthering gender equality objectives within four trade unions participating in the Gender at Work South Africa Gender Action Learning Program.



Extract: Sikhula Sonke is fighting for agricultural worker rights in the Western Cape Province, which has the largest concentration of farmworkers in South Africa. Along with domestic workers, farmworkers earn some of the lowest minimum wages in South Africa. The sector is not only marked by inadequate wages, but also by appalling living and working conditions. Farmworkers often depend upon farm owners for multiple benefits—not just their jobs, but also their homes, their transportation and sometimes even their children's education. Losing a farm job can thus be devastating. South Africa's agricultural workforce is characterized by a distinct gender division of labor: Farming is still perceived as predominantly “men's work” with women's labor considered supplementary. The permanent agricultural workforce is predominantly male, with women forming the largest percentage of casual and seasonal labor. “Most of the important jobs are reserved for men... men are supervisors, spraying the chemicals, etc., which means they get (paid) more. Women are categorized as general workers.”

speaking of CULTURES OF EQUALITY

In 2013, we endeavoured to reach out to more people with our knowledge, ideas and resources. We launched a new website which provides easy access to the many books, papers and publications that our Board Members and Associates write or to which they contribute. We also launched a new blog. Visit our [website](#) and drop by at our blog [Talking Gender](#).

We created new communities using social media to share ideas, commentary and opinion. [Like us](#) on Facebook, [follow us](#) on Twitter and [connect with us](#) on Linked In. You can also take a look at some of our resources [at Slideshare](#).

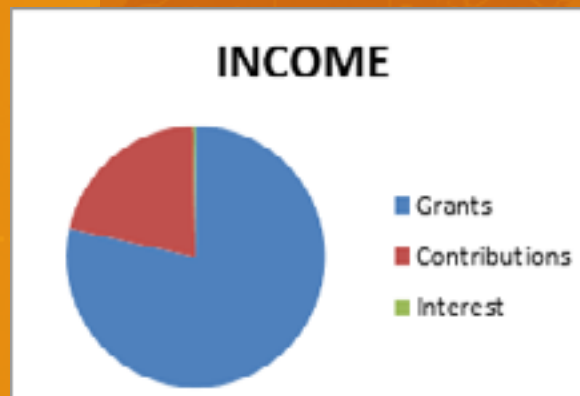
FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

2012 was an exciting growth year for Gender at Work, with the addition of several new contracts and grants including a significant FLOW grant from Ministry of Foreign Affairs – The Netherlands.

Gender at Work's net assets for 2012 were over USD 1 million and remained stable for 2013.

Gender at Work raised over USD 2.8 million in fiscal year 2012, surpassing the previous year by 87%.

Over 95% of Gender at Work expenses went directly to program activities, with administrative costs as low as 2.5% of total costs.



The graphs represent income and expense during the period of 2012 - 2013.

Donors

American Center for International Labor Solidarity
Commonwealth Secretariat
Cordaid
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women
Global Fund for Women
HIVOS people unlimited
International Fund for Agricultural Development
Levi Strauss Foundation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs - The Netherlands
NORAD
Oxfam Canada
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Plan International
Solidarity Center
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

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Africa is rising but the backlash is real

By Hope Chigudu
Associate, Gender at Work

In the 1990s there was hunger for gender equality and it bore fruit. A growing community of people engaged in organizational development learned to incorporate gender analysis in their work. There was resistance but we learnt to uncover hidden values and cultures—the “deep structure” that was resistant to change. Some organizations sustained gender mainstreaming over time and ultimately scaled up for impact, gender was mainstreamed in various sectors and affirmative actions implemented in several countries. Since 2000, Africa has seen the fastest growth in female representation in parliament in the world. Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania all rank in the top twenty countries for percentage of women in parliament. Africa is said to be rising.

But for the majority of women, there is an overarching, deep disappointment and a sense of betrayal. There is crisis of leadership and governance, widespread poverty, rotting infrastructure or lack of it, poor health and education facilities, massive corruption, natural resource predation, and seemingly senseless and endless conflict. Our triumphalism is littered with a wave of repressive legislation that is giving rise to increased violence (especially against girls and women). The law is being used to consolidate the abuse and repression women. On the most personal and intimate level, in our homes and workplaces, in our doctors’ offices,

and at the ballot box, within the fragile dynamics of our own families, women are being aggressively targeted, our rights and liberties besieged.

Cultural norms and traditional roles continue to devalue and denigrate women and girls, and restrict their social status, livelihood opportunities, behaviours and freedom. Tolerance for violence against women has increased. In Mozambique, of the 250 members of Parliament, 40 percent are women. Yet in December 2013, the Mozambican Parliament provisionally approved a law that lets the rapist of a girl under 18 go free if he marries his victim to protect the family’s honour.

Religious extremists are doing their harm. In April this year, about 200 girls were kidnapped by an extremist Nigerian Muslim group called Boko Haram. The attack in Nigeria is part of a global backlash against girls’ education by extremists. At the beginning of the year, a Uganda Christian university dismissed some girls who were about to do their examination because they were pregnant. According to the Vice Chancellor, the university teaches students who are accountable to God—as if he has their register!

Some countries are investing energy and resources in legalizing polygamy. It’s difficult to believe that the Kenyan parliament passed a bill making it legal for a man to take multiple wives without the knowledge or consent of his original partner(s). Female members of parliament stormed out in protest but the law was passed.

To restore what the government of Uganda calls the “moral order”, in December last year, a national anti-pornography law curtailing women’s freedom of dress was passed. The passing of the Act was met by vigilante acts of undressing women by street mobs, of police officers stopping women in the street and ordering them to return home and change their clothes etc. With many women representatives in parliament, several of them chairperson or vice-chairpersons of parliamentary committees, how was the law passed?

This year, Uganda’s President Yoweri Museveni signed the so-called ‘Kill the Gays’ bill which criminalises homosexuality, outlaws homosexual ‘propaganda’ and urges people to denounce gays and lesbians. The laws that have come up across the African continent around LGBTI legislation, polygamy and abortion are signals of what’s beginning to happen in terms of backlash against women. If we don’t watch these signals now and look at how to organise and address them before they ripple into every country, we will always be ‘reacting’. An important question is: **Are the tools we have been using still relevant or do we need other tools?**



NOT THE LAST WORD...

By Srilatha Batliwala
*Co-Chairperson, Board of Directors,
Gender at Work*

Gender at Work is like a space station. Spaceships from different countries, cultures, and social contexts land here for refitting and refuelling—and then zoom off again on fresh journeys of exploration. This is one image that emerged during our 3-day strategic visioning retreat in Cape Town, earlier this year. Another was of a bus rattling its way through Indian villages, amiably stopping to let people on or off when they holler, flexible about its journey, yet moving slowly but certainly toward its destination.

The retreat was an intense experience, full of ideas, interrogations and laughter. We examined our thoughts about where we're going and how. We shared insights, debated concepts and strategies, challenged ourselves and each other. We tumbled back to our regular lives with some clarity—and many questions. Some of us were comfortable with some uncertainty, others would have preferred less of it. But we all agreed that there were some sparkling ideas that emerged, like these:

Building knowledge through community and community through knowledge. We plan to deepen disparate aspects of our current practice to create a knowledge platform that brings together doers and thinkers from different disciplines and sites to reflect, create and share new

knowledge and practice materials that are fresh and lively. This knowledge community hopes to build solidarity and a connected community that believes in the value, beauty, and sheer fun of democratizing knowledge and transforming practice. It is based on G@W principles that knowledge built by activist researchers has greater value and impact on activism; that breaking the North-South and thinker-doer divide is not only possible but essential to creating fresh knowledge; and that we need the space to value different kinds of knowing.

Challenging dominant discourses. We want to break out of traditional modes of advocacy to influence broader discourses by exploring a more creative use of communication and entertainment media, and by penetrating the academy in more strategic ways. On the one hand, we aspire to produce popular radio shows / podcasts / videos and social media campaigns that can influence and reshape the broader public discourse on gender.

On the other, we hope to collaborate with selected academic institutions. Through these means, we hope to reach our knowledge and practice tools to new users in the worlds beyond gender experts and project planners. We want our insights and analytical tools to find fresh application in new hands, and fresh expression through a diversity of new voices.

Building the Gender at Work community by recruiting younger feminists and “gender warriors”. We want to build a cross-sectoral, cross-regional community that generates new and effective thinking and methods so that the ability to reclaim women's rights, gender equality and social justice is increased. The plan is to create multiple forms of affiliation with Gender at Work that enable often-isolated individuals to link together in spaces for reflection, co-creation, mutual support and learning.

Building a sustainable consulting practice that generates knowledge and flexible income for G@W. We want to draw on the vast knowledge and diverse skills available in our global network of Associates and make this accessible in a systematic and effective way to more people, organizations and movements working to build cultures of equality.

Above all, we remain committed to deepening our own capacity to use and support strategic learning—which means intensifying the investment we make in our own learning. We are a learning organization, and that is a strength we will nourish in every way possible.

Exciting days lie ahead! I invite you all to follow our journey as we forge ahead.



CREDITS

Cover: Participant in a Gender Action Learning (GAL) process in South Africa

Page 2: Participants in a South Sudan GAL process

Page 3: Photograph by Reidar Kvam

Page 4: Participants in a South Africa GAL process

Page 7: Photograph by Dorte Verner

Page 8: Participants at the Collaboratory meeting in New Delhi 2013

www.genderatwork.org
media@genderatwork.org

Twitter: [www.twitter.com/GenderatWork](https://twitter.com/GenderatWork)
Facebook: www.facebook.com/gwork
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