Girl-Led Advocacy for Policy and Social Change in Guatemala and Honduras

Lessons Learned for Devising Adaptive Funding and Evaluation Frameworks

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Abstract

This article draws on an evaluation of programming to support girl-led advocacy for policy and social change in Guatemala and Honduras. The investments in girl-led advocacy have been small but consistent, supporting programming that empowers local advocates and organizations to foster adolescent girls' agency and advocacy and enable them to make strategic claims on relevant duty-bearers – either nationally or locally. The article does not intend to share the evaluation but use the analysis to explore how the M&E structures favored by many donors have not yet caught up with innovative, locally-led approaches to programming. Such learnings can provide critical insights for donors and civil society organizations seeking to support and document girl- and youth-led advocacy initiatives to promote policy and social change.

Introduction

Extensive evidence demonstrates that investing in girls and young women is critical to creating a more just and equitable world. Research from the World Bank unequivocally demonstrates that empowering girls and young women is key to achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals, reducing hunger and poverty, ending harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, drastically reducing maternal and neo-natal mortality, and fostering substantive and transformational gender equality (Klugman et al 2014). Never has it been more critical to invest in adolescent girls, to support them to raise their voices and act as agents of change in their communities and in national and global arena.

And yet, adolescent girls around the world most often remain invisible, silenced, and ignored. Their choices about marriage and education are frequently made for them by adults in their families and communities (Sen 1999). Their knowledge of their own reproductive health and sexuality is limited or enveloped in taboo and myth (Bearinger et al 2007; Hindin and Fatusi 2009; Morris and Rushwan 2015). Their freedom to earn and learn is highly circumscribed by social norms and traditional practices that define where they can go, what they can do, who they can talk to, and how they can act (Field et al 2018).

This article explores how programming that supports adolescent girls voice and agency can foster meaningful change in the lives of adolescent girls, their communities and even in the delivery of services and accountability of local and national duty-bearers in Guatemala and Honduras. The article grew out of a program evaluation and a series of on-line and off-line conversations between donors, the organization that designed and supported the projects and the evaluators who sought to explore and document the outcomes. Beyond the evaluation, we found ourselves engaged in a deeper reflection about why this programming is pathbreaking and the challenges of documenting and evaluating the success of such programming. The objective of this article is to delve more deeply into the paradigm shift that supported the programming achievements and to interrogate the measurements, log-frames and results-oriented metrics that are typically used to convey how donor funding is used and programming efforts are transformed into "outcomes."

Background and Methodology

The evaluation focused on projects supported by Rise Up in Honduras and Guatemala. Rise Up is an organization that has programming in 15 countries worldwide and supports leadership and advocacy programs for and with adolescent girls and women to enable them to advocate for meaningful change in their lives and communities. The advocacy activities encompass a wide range of issues including ending early and forced marriage, enhancing adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights and fostering meaningful participation in local and national development processes. The core elements of Rise Up's programming are the Leadership Accelerator Training, an initial one-week advocacy training with newly-recruited "fellows" who work in organizations that engage with adolescent girls, and the seed grants awarded to some fellows and their organizations following the training. Fellows are recruited and selected by Rise Up headquarters and country staff, who identify leaders with the capacity to conduct advocacy at the national or sub-national level, or who are able to clearly articulate the benefits that advocacy could bring to their work. Fellows receive training and learn and share their expertise about the status of adolescent girls globally, regionally, and nationally, and learn basic leadership and advocacy skills. The trainings use the Girl Centered Guide to Advocacy developed by Rise Up. The training has a particular focus on adolescent girls' and women's issues and training

and empowering adolescent girls and women to conduct advocacy. Fellows also develop and strengthen skills in political mapping, advocacy planning, communications, building networks, mobilizing resources, and proposal development.

The International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) was contracted by the Summit and Packard Foundations to conduct an evaluation of the Rise Up programming in Honduras and Guatemala. The evaluation drew on a series of qualitative interviews, the systematic review of project documents and monitoring and evaluation reports combined with the secondary analysis of documents and literature on the context and challenges for adolescent girls in Guatemala and Honduras.

While the evaluation focused on all aspects of the advocacy training and institutional support and programming, in this article we choose to surface the programming that deliberately sought to expand adolescent girls' voice and agency and their influence in local as well as national policy advocacy.

The assessment drew on 53 in-depth and key informant interviews with fellows (18), adolescent girls (16), national and local stakeholders, community leaders, NGO partners and colleagues (15) and Rise Up staff (4). The interviews elicited details about the individuals' involvement in the project, their participation in training and capacity building, their perception of how the program works, its achievements and its strengths and weaknesses, and recommendations for improving different aspects of its roll-out and functioning.

The interviewees were not chosen randomly but purposively to represent the type of individual engaged in the programming. We relied on Rise Up staff to provide us with the names and contact information of all fellows in both countries, all of whom were contacted with an invitation to participate. We relied on funded fellows to identify girls who had participated in the project and to obtain consent to share their contact information with the evaluation team. Girls were then selected randomly from this group. We also relied heavily on fellows to share contact information of key stakeholders they had worked with on their projects, and to recruit community members for participatory discussions. Interviews were conducted in the communities where the interviewee lived or worked and only a few were conducted by skype, mostly with NGO peers and Rise Up staff (5).

Interviews were conducted in Spanish or Kaqchikel and transcribed and translated. The evaluation was subject to an Institutional Review to ensure that it was consistent with human subject protection protocols. When we interviewed adolescent minors, permission was sought from a guardian or parent. All interviews were anonymous and confidential. Individuals had a right to refuse the interview or to refuse to respond to segments of the interview. All assessment instruments and activities were submitted to an Institutional Review Board in DC and in each country to ensure adherence to strict human subject protection protocols.

The qualitative data were systematically coded for the different responses and domains and analyzed using NVivo and then were triangulated with data from the Rise Up M&E systems, in-country media and literature searches and compared with previous evaluations.

Evaluative Framework

Given the increasing emphasis on adolescent voice and agency in the Rise Up programming and seed grants, we apply an empowerment analysis based on empowerment frameworks advanced by Kabeer (1999 and 2001). The central tenet of these empowerment frameworks is agency. Although various definitions of empowerment exist in the literature, a commonly accepted definition is that empowerment is an "expansion in one's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to him/her" (Kabeer, 2001). This definition is particularly helpful for the Rise-Up evaluation as it illuminates a process of self-awareness and self-actualization that finds praxis in making strategic choices thereby manifesting agency.

Agency is defined as the ability to formulate strategic life choices and control resources and decisions that affect important life outcomes. Put more simply, it is the ability to define one's goals and act upon them (Kabeer, 1999; Sen 1999). Agency is related to an individual's internal power and the meaning, motivation and purpose that people bring to an activity. Central to exercising and having agency, is having an understanding of one's own values, as well as having self-esteem, confidence

and aspirations for oneself. Self-negation does not support agency. The expression of agency can include bargaining, negotiation, manipulation, resistance and protest. It also includes intangible processes of reflection and analysis that lead to action (Klugman et al, 2014).

Integral to agency is self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the perception of your capability to get something done in a way that leads to desired outcomes (Bandura, 1995). Drawing from social cognitive theory, what people think, believe and feel in turn affects how they behave. Self-efficacy is important because unless people believe that their actions can produce results, they have little incentive to act or persevere when they face challenges. Depending on how well you think you can do something (self-efficacy) your choices and actions will be affected (agency).

Agency is psychological in its foundation, but resources and the institutional environment impact the development and exercise of agency (Kabeer 1999, 2001). Agency can be indirectly reinforced through a supportive environment and directly encouraged through psychological interventions that have people reflect on their personal values, goals and hopes. Rise Up programming empowers local advocates and organizations, fosters leadership, conducts advocacy training, and provides accompaniment and funds, to support adolescent girls' agency to enable them to determine their advocacy objectives and make strategic claims on duty-bearers – either nationally or locally. Rise Up sees their investment[1] in advocacy and adolescent leadership as being fundamental for achieving strategic change:

"Rise Up activates girls and women to transform their lives, families and countries for a more just and equitable world," (Rise Up Overview 2018).

The model seeks to strengthen leadership though capacity-building by providing resources and tools for advocacy, cultivating local solutions and localized advocacy, strengthening organizations and building advocacy coalitions and partnerships to amplify voices. A central focus is upon "activating" girls and women to transform their lives, families and communities.

Rise Up's adolescent girls' programming fosters their leadership and protagonism in their communities and nationally supporting them to identify and confront the particular challenges they face and articulating their needs and challenging dominant and harmful gender norms that restrict their rights and freedoms.

The evaluation we conducted also drew on work by Folbre (1994) that elucidates the collective structures of constraint in a society describing how these affect agency through the exercise of rules, norms and preferences that position individuals within a social hierarchy according to their intersecting group identities (such as sex, age, race, caste, class) and how these rules determine the scope for agency available to them. The distinction Folbre (1994) makes between rules and norms allows us to see how they inter-relate and how change can be brought about by acting in either arena. In Folbre's analysis, rules have an official status and can include laws and regulations that are enforced by an external authority. Norms tend have a more implicit and decentralized nature and are embedded in our sense of who we are and our identities. But explicit initiatives to change rules through legislation, such as whether a woman can drive a truck or work on a construction site, or to set quotas for women's participation in economic and political spheres, can also challenge existing social and cultural norms and begin to shift them over time. Similarly, interventions that support communication and behavioral change often act on social and cultural norms to challenge and reshape them.

The Rise Up programming embraces a similar approach to that described by Folbre (1994) challenging the collective structures of constraint that adolescent girls and women experience and focuses explicitly on rules and norms by supporting adolescent girls to make claims on duty-bearers to uphold their rights. In Guatemala, making investments in advocacy has enabled adolescent girls and women to challenge deeply entrenched social norms and expectations about their role in local and national policymaking arena. In Honduras, the goal has been to advance girls' and women's rights with a focus on adolescent reproductive health and rights. Adolescent girls received training and capacity building and accompaniment to identify actions and activities to raise consciousness about

1. We use the word investment here to convey the fact that it is not just an operational expense to support a project but one that build capabilities and agency and yields a flow of benefits over time to individuals and the communities where they work and seek action.

adolescent pregnancy and reproductive rights targeting schools, health care delivery services and engaging actively with municipal projects.

This assessment draws on the in-depth and key informant interviews to explore how Rise Up programming has effected change and supported girl-led activities. We use the opportunity of the evaluation to engage a broader group of development actors and donors in a much-needed discussion about how the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of results, particularly in girl-led programming that support advocacy requires a different set of metrics to capture change and enable funders to understand the import of what they have supported.

Adolescent Girls' Perceptions and Actions

Adolescent girls were involved agentively in Rise Up programming in a variety of ways. Most funded programs – and all programs included in our sample –included a training element on advocacy strategies using Rise Up's methodology. Girls learned public speaking skills, how to diagnose key problems that they wished to influence and to develop an advocacy strategy and action plan centered on these problems. They also received media training and honed their communication skills. Trainings included a consciousness-raising element that sought to inform girls of their rights, pushing back against a context of normalized violence and silence. This consciousness-raising process was deemed extremely important by the fellows that supported this programming:

"Something I've noticed, I make this analysis, they do not know what they suffer until they reach the project. It is so normalized, the violence suffered or that their rights are not respected, which is normal, but when they reach the project and begin to question ... Through those conversations they grow personally and become empowered, because that's something I see in the project, that no girl will demand her rights if they do not know and if she does not know that those rights are being violated, I think through those processes they are realizing. It does not help to tell them about sexual health or sexuality, if they do not know the other subjects too." – Fellow, Honduras

Girls also put their training skills to use in advocacy activities supporting the overall goal of their projects. In some cases, girls were involved in the development of municipal-level policy proposals, conducting background research, working with their NGOs, Fellows and other stakeholders to refine the policy and presenting it to the local government. Girls also commonly participated in awareness-raising activities on their focal issues, including marches, speaking at public events and in their schools, creating and participating in media campaigns, and meeting with public officials to sensitize them to their concerns.

The girls we interviewed demonstrated remarkable agency and self-efficacy. They were proud of participating in their programs and felt that they had contributed to fostering meaningful change in their communities. They were able to articulate why they had become involved in the program, what activities they had undertaken and why, how their programs had enabled them to grow and express themselves and why they were motivated to continue to do similar work.

"I like it. I received workshops on advocacy. It was the courage to get up. Since I was born, I was discriminated against, and it did not seem good to me. They discriminated against me, it was the start of my awakening: "why do they treat me like this, why do they do that?" I have the right to participate in speaking up. And I'm not ashamed anymore." – Adolescent girl, Guatemala.

"I really liked the workshops, I learned how to speak in public. I participated in workshops on gender equality." – Adolescent girl, Guatemala

Interviewees from all groups (Fellows, NGOs and other stakeholders) said they felt that girls' awareness of their rights, self-esteem, and confidence had increased as a result of participating in the programs. Girls consistently reported feeling less isolated, more confident, and even safer in their communities.

"I think nobody, with the knowledge I have, nobody is going to fool me, and that's helpful." – Adolescent girl, Honduras

With this confidence came the ability to articulate and claim their rights. They exercised this agency "proximately" mostly within their homes, classrooms, and social circles. Girls reported that they challenged traditional gender roles in their families, asked their teachers about comprehensive sexual

education topics, and pushed back when their friends used derogatory gendered or homophobic language.

"I felt changes, for example, some schoolmates are machos. Also, sometimes even the family says, "Go and make food because you're a woman and you have to do it" in those cases, I know now how to defend myself." – Adolescent girl, Honduras

In Honduras, while adult participants felt that it was important that girls had participated in direct advocacy activities, such as development of proposals, speaking to their classmates about sexual rights and reproductive health issues, and meeting with municipal authorities, the girls themselves placed less emphasis on these outcomes. A few, particularly those who spoke in their classrooms, felt that their peers and teachers saw them as leaders and appreciated that. But in terms of impacts on their lives, they placed the most emphasis on their increased knowledge and personal agency, rather than specifically on their increased ability to effect change.

In Guatemala, many of the girls we spoke to framed their experience in terms of seeking "formal" change in their communities, either through policy or institutional change or changes in the curriculum in schools, in addition to the benefits to their personal awareness of their rights and agency. In other words, the direct advocacy activities held prominent meaning for them and they viewed their work through an advocacy lens. However, in Honduras, Fellows emphasized that they had to spend quite a bit of time bringing girls to the point where they understood gender inequality in their communities as a violation of their rights and began to understand that they had these inalienable rights to equality. This is a powerful learning and one greatly influenced by context and the dissonance between *de facto* and *de jure* rights as experienced by the girls in their homes and communities. Girls in Honduras also did not speak in such depth about participating in direct advocacy activities – for them, the learning process of being engaged in the project appeared to be much more meaningful than any direct advocacy. They did not seem to see themselves as actors capable of prompting or influencing wider change in their communities, although they were speaking up in class and at home. This may also reflect civil society space in Honduras which has been comparatively more restricted and circumscribed than in Guatemala.

Local and National Policy Influence

The projects have been successful at multiple levels in influencing policies and programs. The most visible success is more easily documented at the micro and meso levels in the communities and municipalities where the projects are located, but a wide range of stakeholders and peer organizations attest to this success.

"Support to change public policies - they are already working in municipalities, with ministries, it is done. In my case, my first project was to implement a public policy in a community, this community now has the office of children installed and working, perhaps they no longer remember that Rise Up was involved. But there it is!" – Former fellow and current staff member, Guatemala

One example of such a success is from Guatemala where a girl-led project targeted the mayor's office in their district and the girls advocated for an official presence at municipal meetings and the ability to oversee budgeting and decision-making processes. The girls' delegation was initially dismissed and rejected rudely by the mayor and his staff – but they persisted, insisting that the post-conflict governance reforms in Guatemala allowed for "any organized sector" to participate. They argued that they were an organized sector of adolescent girls and that they wanted to participate. The fellow supporting this group spoke candidly about this success:

"Following up with the mayor was a challenge. We went directly to his office. We did not seek him out only in large meetings. We went to him in his office, we asked for an appointment directly with them. They all went, about 25 girls, and they [the mayor and the administration] listened to us. We went and presented a report. The law says that every sector has to have representation in the COMUDE [local governance body]. We made several meetings with him to argue our point, to present our project, along with indicators, objectives. We went and we left reports. Reports about how we feel, we made him know that we feel rejected, so that he knew how his treatment affected us, we all signed our report. He accepted our petition and let in two girls, a representative and an alternate and 13 observers." – Fellow, Guatemala

The participatory community focus groups that were

conducted as part of this assessment developed timelines that explore the key issues addressed by the project in a historical context. Stakeholders, parents and community members participated in developing the timeline and locating the project within the timeline. The participants highlighted key moments in the history of the community, such as natural disasters in the form of earthquakes and mudslides, and also key activities supported by the project. The tool was used as an opportunity to focus community members on the outcomes of the project and the achievements to date. It was also used to corroborate impressions and observations shared in the in-depth interviews with Fellows and adolescent girls. In this particular case, the discussion underscored that there was a strong appreciation for the project and for what the adolescents had achieved in lobbying for their recognition and inclusion in the local development coordinating committee and their role as observers and participants in municipal meetings. How this has modified the behavior of decision-makers or produced concrete change has not yet been fully documented – but that the girls have oversight and recognition is indisputable.

Part of successful policy advocacy, and implementation of policy change, is changing the attitudes of key stakeholders within institutions. Many funded projects focused on municipal-level governments. Rise Up-funded projects raised awareness among municipal authorities, health officials, school teachers, and others of the importance of adolescent girls' issues, voices and rights. Some of these projects had more success in convincing authorities of the importance of girls' issues to their work, and less success in making spaces for girls' participation in governance. However, the act of engaging represents an important step in the process of change.

"The chairman of the community board, he did speak positive about our work and the need to take care of girls. More than girl's learning, he was interested in the issue we address, preventing pregnancy because of the community setting." – Fellow, Honduras

In some cases, the local authorities simply weren't interested, or promised to meet with girls but never followed through. In those cases, the project and the girls refocused their advocacy efforts identifying new "targets" and used the turnover of public officials to their benefit, meeting with candidates for mayor and following up on those conversations after the conclusion of elections.

"Failing to meet with the mayor, he would no longer be interested in anything, and he would leave the mayor's office. We met with the candidates because after the election, one of them would be in charge, and the others were to be integrated into other departments of the corporation. So, we were interested in make them to listen the problem, to listen to the girls, in knowing the project. It was our closing activity. We met with the 4 candidates. This year, the new authorities take office. We have sought out the new mayor and we reminded him that he was with the girls, he already made commitments." – Fellow, Honduras

Due to the intensely challenging political and security situation in Honduras, funded projects focused their policy advocacy on more proximate targets primarily on the municipal level. In Honduras, projects were less focused on establishing spaces for girls' participation directly in governance. However, each of the projects included in the qualitative evaluation had some level of policy success around the issue of preventing teen pregnancy. These ranged from commitments to approve a policy drafted by the project (in coalition with other organizations), to agreement between the municipal government and the Fellows' organization to implement comprehensive sex education programming in education centers, to an increased percentage of the municipal budget allocated to preventing teen pregnancy. These achievements are quite recent and so their implementation is ongoing. These policy results should also be seen as evidence of the effectiveness of other achievements, in training, awareness-raising, and coalition-building:

"When we had already formed the Promoting Committee, we moved to the second objective and we organize several meetings with local government, as I mentioned, we had a lot of support from them. Also, I think I already mentioned, we had the opportunity to make a meeting to sign a political pact with the mayoral candidates during the election period. Finally, we made meetings with the municipal corporation and we elaborate the proposal. We finally got the signing of the agreement in a town hall meeting. We did a lot of training, strengthening, building partnerships, and then, achieving the signing of the agreement." – Fellow, Honduras

The national advocacy in both countries has been conducted in coalition with allied organizations, targeting key decision-makers and fora, taking adolescent advocates to Congress, and facilitating their direct engagement with political leaders and ministries. Stakeholders and peer organizations report on this collaboration and recognize the critical inputs and support that Rise-Up staff and fellows provided and continue to provide. The interviews provided similar accounts of targeted advocacy efforts and collective action leveraging networks and personal ties to get to key decision-makers in ministries and the vice presidency in Guatemala.

"Thanks to the work we have done together, some actions have been significant and influenced the Congress of the Republic which passed a decree 82015 on child marriage and 132017 the amendment that prohibits a judge approving the marriage of juveniles." Stakeholder in a peer organization that advocates for children's rights, Guatemala

The Challenges of Metrics

Chief among the challenges we observed as an external team reviewing the projects, but that were also echoed in the in-depth interviews with fellows and NGO peer colleagues, is the challenge of monitoring and documenting results or outcomes from the projects. The existing M&E instruments, although detailed and meticulous, largely responded to external demands for tracking using logframes and results-oriented metrics that tended to capture more of the inputs than the outputs and measure activities such as consultations, meetings and convenings. Project level data tended to focus on inputs and processes, meetings attended, travel and meeting costs, advocacy activities at key junctures and with key partners. Yet these type of data have shortcomings. Even among direct beneficiaries, monitoring data does not differentiate between intensity of engagement, which is arguably more important. Ongoing and consistent support to 12 girls will have a different impact than a one-time workshop with 50 girls. And data on the national level impact of policy change using demographics and population data are very hard to substantiate and may even be counterproductive or appear exaggerated.

Without a doubt, much of the focus by donors and among peer organizations that we spoke with was on the policy dimensions of the impact of this type of programming. We found that this emphasis misses the micro and meso-level impacts in the girls themselves, through their enhanced agency and capabilities, but also within the local institutions and organizations and in the communities where the projects take place.

This article aims to look deeply into the metrics used to capture success in girl-led and youth-led programming. As part of the evaluation we explored the type of metrics being used for monitoring and evaluation and engaged in a conversation with the Rise Up leadership and some of their donors to interrogate the log frames and results oriented metrics that are frequently required of such programming (Biggs et al 2001; Harley 2010; Prinsen and Nijhof 2015). Despite a gradual shift to the recognition of more complex evaluative contexts and approaches (USAID 2018; van Wessel 2018) and a greater emphasis on mixed methods, many donors require grantees to develop a series of M&E metrics based on logframes that report inputs and their transformation into measurable outputs. The critique of logframes and results-oriented development programming is longstanding. Robert Chambers and Jethro Pettit were part of the chorus of voices calling for different methods and approaches to capture the outcome of development programming and to hold development actors and funders to account (Chambers and Pettit 2004). Their critique is that much of this monitoring can reinforce "relationships of power and control" that it is associated with a linear logic that emerged from the management practices developed for infrastructure and large investment projects more associated with "things rather than people." As these authors deconstruct much of the logframe approach, they remind the reader that the vertical logic embodied in them is concerned with ends and means, the narrative that accompanies this is to link inputs and processes to verifiable indicators of change. Another dimension is frequently added to this narrative that describes the external environment that either enables or hinders the realization of these outcomes. As Chambers and Pettit point out "the common experience through their application has been to privilege the perceptions of those who document and evaluate and this has led in some contexts and projects to reinforce unequal power relations." Moreover, Chambers and Pettit argue,

the reluctance of the disempowered recipients to critique the logframe appears to have been a factor that has prolonged its life.

The gradual shift towards more complexity aware monitoring and evaluation is particularly welcome in contexts where results are "difficult to predict due to dynamic contexts or unclear cause-and-effect relationships," (USAID 2018:1). The USAID summary of complexity-aware monitoring neatly signposts when to use complementary monitoring approaches, all of which are particularly pertinent to advocacy initiatives and to girl-centered and girl-led programming. Drawing on this analysis, the five key dimensions to consider are:

- Cause and effect relationships are uncertain;
- Stakeholders bring diverse perspectives and interests to the engagement, making consensus impractical;
- Contextual factors are likely to influence programming;
- New opportunities or new needs continue to arise; and
- The pace of change in unpredictable.

In the Rise Up work in Guatemala, all five dimensions are relevant. The cause and effect relationships are inherently uncertain. Girl-led programming, particularly that centered on advocacy, where the girls identify their advocacy targets and approaches in a highly participatory fashion, no matter what structured support they receive from Fellows and through the Rise Up program is bound to be uncertain. The stakeholders engaged from families, parents, community gatekeepers through to the local and national actors are all defined by very different perspectives on the subject matter of the advocacy – be that child marriage, educational curricula or adolescent reproductive health – and may seek to retrieve or maintain power and secure their interests differently. Given the highly charged religious context that shapes access to information and family planning services for adolescents in both countries, for example, interests may be particularly oppositional among stakeholders. Contextual factors always influence programming, but in Guatemala and Honduras, the prevailing levels of violence and corruption, stigma and racism shape how adolescent girls and particularly Mayan adolescent girls are seen and their protagonism may be rejected or repressed. Given the highly shifting context, new opportunities and needs are likely to be emergent. Lastly, the pace of change is highly unpredictable. Projects tend to be time-bound, and if something derails a well-thought out advocacy timeline, then the desired outputs are unlikely to be achieved. Indeed, in Guatemala the last two concerns converged in one community project where an earthquake derailed their careful advocacy targeting the municipal assembly as one fellow reports:

"The approval of the policy was difficult, but it was approved in a municipal assembly, the Mayor endorsed the policy. But this assembly was postponed much. Advocacy time frames are very different from those of the projects. According to the schedule of the project, it was different. We could not influence to schedule, we had to postpone the project. The teenagers have the endorsement of the parents. But, nevertheless, other events overtook our project. A strong earthquake, a mini earthquake in XXX near XX. They canceled classes, the municipality joined the emergency response, that also postponed the assembly." – Fellow, Guatemala

This experience draws attention to the unique challenges of undertaking advocacy in resource poor environments where natural and other disasters can greatly influence state actors and their policy agenda.

Conclusions

The review of the metrics and of the projects and their achievements underscored that donors and development actors seeking to support girl-led programming, particularly advocacy programming, would be well placed to use much more flexible metrics for their M&E. Two techniques that they could deploy to revise their M&E approaches are greater reliance on appreciative inquiry tools and the use of Most Significant Change analysis. Appreciative inquiry is a tool that can be particularly adaptable for exploring and documenting individual, institutional and systems change. It is typically used to facilitate positive change in human systems and is focused on organizations, groups, and communities by envisioning how these systems can be changed and processes and outcomes improved. It emphasizes what is working and builds on the positive attributes of existing systems and approaches and draws on the lived experiences of how individuals or collectives experience the system or process. Its methodological origin lies in more participatory and Freirean approaches that fit

well with the mission and vision of girl-led and youth-led advocacy. Conducting AI sessions at the outset of projects could inform the development of localized indicators and storytelling (Van Wessel 2018) that can be used to document systems change over the horizon of the project or activity.

We suggest integrating some more qualitative instruments and approaches into the project monitoring based on approaches like the Most Significant Change Most technique (Dart and Davies 2003; Willetts and Crawford 2007). The Most Significant Change Technique (MSC) is a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) technique/ method used for evaluating complex interventions. It has been applied as a method to monitor social change resulting from a development intervention. It is intended to be more participatory in nature and allows for a participatory analysis of impact with project staff and participants interrogating outcomes and definitions of success. MSC is a participatory monitoring technique that involves the collection of 'significant change' stories from the field, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by groups of designated stakeholders, participants or staff (Davies and Dart 2005). As Willetts and Crawford (2007: 369) point out the primary benefits of using MSC identified by project staff, "were that it 'forced in-depth development thinking'; 'created deep changes in people's thinking among the staff'; and 'helped us learn what actually happens, at least for some cases'." Since MSC involves project participants it is designed to be participatory and to facilitate collective thinking about project success and outcomes. MSC would be among the array of participatory and qualitative methods that would allow for a more detailed focus on the girls' voice and agency that could surface some powerful narratives of individual change as well as collective action.

Finally, for successful programming that links actions to change, the qualitative data can be combined with more quantitative data that are frequently collected at the project level and also quantitative data from national and international sources. For example, data documenting reproductive health gains, access to contraception, reductions in adolescent pregnancy, reductions in violence against women and girls, child marriage, school dropout by sex, from public and verifiable sources provide a critical backdrop to the project-level activities and programming. When monitored over time and disaggregated by sex and sub-region these data can also suggest trends over time that can be correlated with program and coalition activities.

But this requires the support for projects that take place over a longer arc and are more continual and consistent. Inching towards social norm change and policy changes through girl-led advocacy is something that happens over a longer time frame and will require that donors are not focused on short-term metrics but support projects that are deeply participatory in nature and allow for changes in tactics and approaches. Flexibility will be key and so will the commitment to support change and accompany the girls and their communities through that change.

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