

Walking our Talk – Introducing Developing Gender-Just Resource: Social and Economic Empowerment Dialogue (SEED)

Oxfam Australia -30th November 2022



Over the last six years, Oxfam Australia has been on a journey of developing a gender-just resource called Social and Economic Empowerment Dialogue (SEED) that explores and unpacks interdependencies between gender, inclusion, economic contexts and natural resource use.



OXFAM

THE NEED FOR SEED

Economic Programming can

- Burden women with additional work
- Disrupt existing power structures, increasing the risk of violence for them
- Place of work can be locations of violence, sexual harassment and fear.
- Can lead to perception that women are a separate category in a community
- Failure to assess and transform power results in productive economies will maintain inequality

It is a known fact that economic initiatives can make women even more vulnerable, unless accompanied with an intentional approach that addresses the social and relational aspect of women's lives

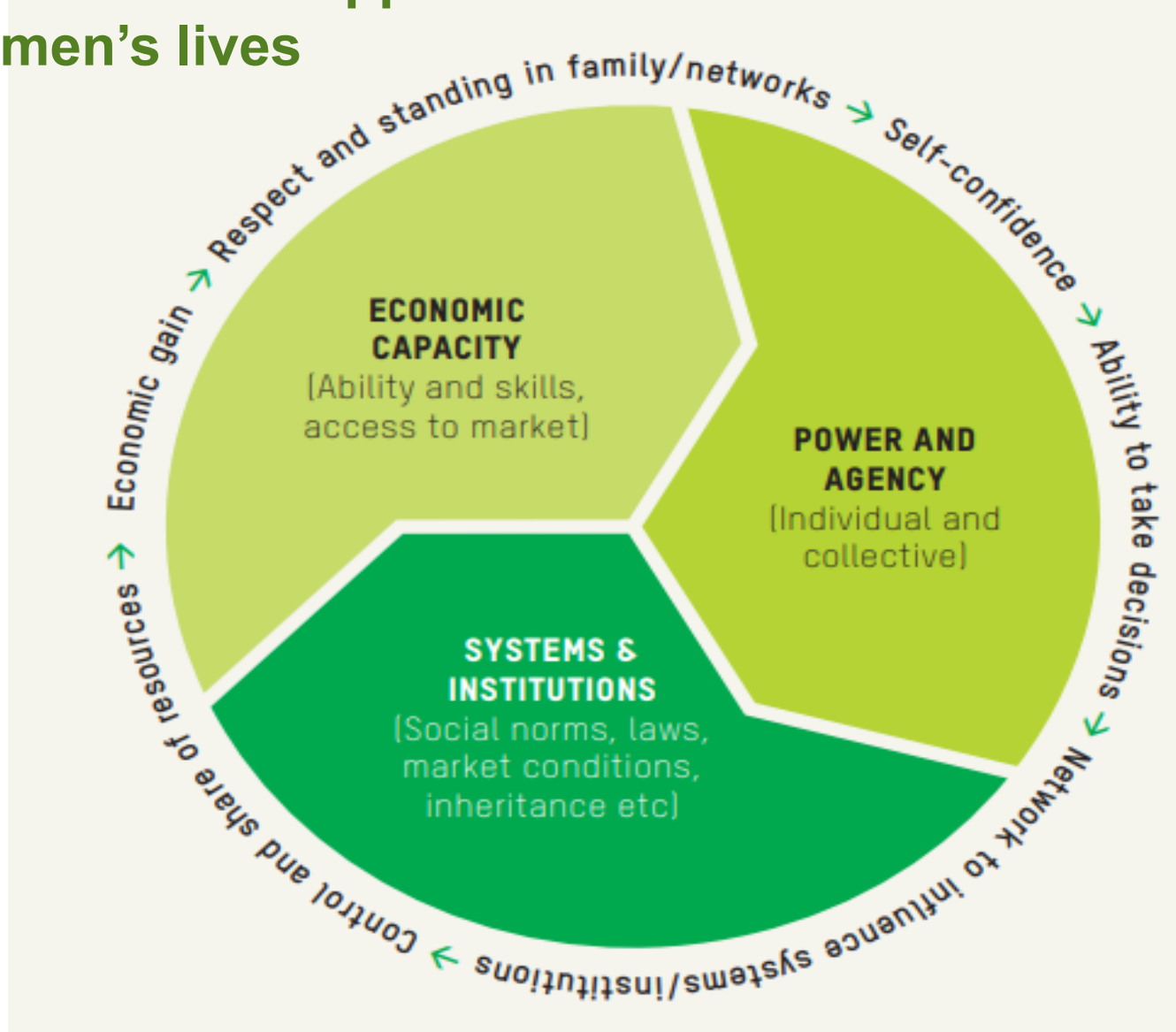
Economic Justice space is very often perceived as purely 'business concepts', 'livelihoods', 'business model', whereas GJ space talks about concepts like 'control over income' and 'decision making'.

In WEE designs, these two tracks don't always marry up and get integrated across each other. It is a known fact that EJ initiatives can make women even more vulnerable, unless accompanied with an intentional approach that addresses the social and relational aspect of women's lives.



Project Manager, Oxfam Timor Leste

An intentional approach that addresses the social and relational aspect of women's lives



Economic programs for people with least power in a community need to pay attention to

- increasing individual capacity,
- power and agency
- work on changing negative social norms and institutions that keep people powerless.

How SEED was co- created

Over the last six years, SEED approach was piloted with our country partners in Vanuatu, Fiji and Timor Leste. Long-term engagement with three teams lead to course correction and revision of the resource.

Feedback was received on the following aspects:

- Thematic content including conceptual clarity, cultural and contextual appropriateness, etc
- User friendliness including language used, formatting, visual aids, etc
- Ability of country and community partners to implement independent of Oxfam Australia
- Content that may be cause of triggers or harm in communities

SEED IMPLEMENTATION AND ADAPTATION TIMELINE

1. 2016 – 2017:

Earlier version of SEED piloted in Oxfam Vanuatu and Oxfam Timor Leste.

2. 2018 -2020:

Oxfam in Vanuatu have contextualised and finalised their own version of SEED.

3. 2018:

Oxfam in Solomon Islands used tools on unpaid care work as basis for a formative study related to gender norms and economic opportunity.

4. 2019:

Oxfam in Indonesia has used SEED tools to sensitise communities and measure trends on unpaid care work.

SEED ADAPTATION – Learnings from implementation

Our Plans

In its original version, we were ambitious in our intent . We wanted to design SEED as ‘one-stop shop’ to gender and inclusion tool.

Partner Feedback

Attaching multiple functions and expectations to SEED resulted in a very broad and varied understanding across various stakeholders on what it does, who it is for and how it works.

The Revision

It is beyond the scope of one resource to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders in a ‘fix all’ approach. We worked with our partners to:

- Reduce the complexity, length and scope of SEED to a simpler, more focused and user-friendly version in the form of a toolbox, where modules and activities could be mixed and matched flexibly to ‘localise’ content as per the needs and context of the partners.
- Rather than reinventing the wheel, work with country partners on building synergies across the sector and incorporate activities from other agencies into SEED (IWDA, Care, etc)
- Make a principle decision that work on ending violence against women is a highly specialised field that has the potential to cause harm not only to communities but our own staff. Instead, partners prioritised creating a new module that could enable tracking impacts of ongoing gender work on power relationships at household level.
- Alongside working with SEED resource Oxfam partners developed a database of specialist agencies to create referral pathways for community level facilitators.

SEED ADAPTATION – Learnings from implementation

Our Plans

Oxfam worked with sector specialists in Australia to create a holistic gender and inclusion resource that was then piloted and fine-tuned with country partners

Partner Feedback

Our partners gave feedback that in our piloting, our approach is extractive. We need to be more mindful of time expectations from staff and community to fine-tune a resource we are developing as OAU.

We hold assumptions about conceptual knowledge of our staff and community activists on conceptual knowledge of gender.

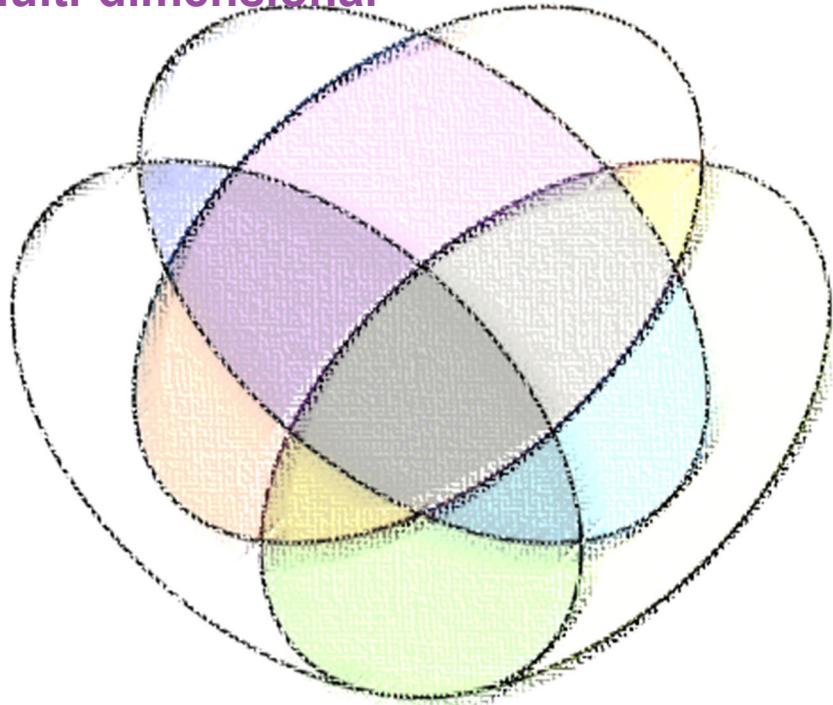
We bring with us donor driven expectations of what is gender and inclusion is - which is a western blanket approach

The Revision

- . We took intentional measures to not have an instructing and informing approach. Through collaborative workshops we worked with our partners to:
 - Consciously take a step towards decolonisation by moving away from abstract frameworks and wordy documents that have jargon
 - Replace wordy and jargon language with simpler terminology and add a chapter that focused on explaining basics of gender and inclusion
 - Steer away from one-size-fits-all solutions. Give space and power to county partners and communities to adapt ‘gender and inclusion’ to their own contexts. Offer to partner to mediate between them and donors – to present and defend a localised gender vision and planning.
 - Ensure hands-on and regular support to partner organisations to analyse available data from a gender and intersectionality perspective
 - Invest in design and visual aids that represent and resonate with local communities

We need SEED because we recognise that the vulnerabilities people face are ...

Multi-dimensional



Context specific

Intersectional



SEED

So SEED essentially became a resource that could enable an understanding of division of power



WHO GETS WHAT



WHO DECIDES WHAT



WHO DOES WHAT



WHO SETS THE AGENDA



What is SEED?

A **flexible community engagement toolbox** that uses experiential learning to introduce and unpack key issues in gender justice, economic justice and natural resource use

A **consolidation of tools and activities** from sources that are both internal and external to Oxfam confederation-brought together in a sequence that enables stakeholders to incorporate the 'gender' portion of an intersectional project in a context specific and localised way

A **guidance to assist program teams** in developing a robust, community-based analysis on gender justice and inclusion at the pre-program design stage



What is SEED?

SEED is a **gender and power analysis toolbox** for a team that seeks to build a more robust and 'balanced' WEE program/project that would, alongside economic concerns, actively resource and address other structural and systematic barriers that women face due to their specific socio-cultural contexts.

SEED **engages organisations, local partners** and communities in a series of structured discussions and action planning to facilitate a deeper understanding of their specific socio-cultural contexts and vulnerabilities to enable self-directed change.



Who can use SEED?

Civil society actors looking to do a comprehensive gender analysis and design for a **women economic empowerment project**

Resilient development and climate justice program teams wanting to explore and build deeper connections between inclusion, giving voice to people with least power, disaster risk reduction planning, climate action, natural resource use, control and management, etc

Civil society actors want to **engage grassroots community representatives** and build awareness on social issues of discrimination, inclusion, economic and climate justice



FORMAL ECONOMY



INFORMAL ECONOMY

SEED has evolved to enable inclusion pathways that are co-created, locally driven and context specific

Issue or theme-based training pathways:

1. Gender sensitisation and do no harm
2. Understanding power
3. Community based gender power and social analysis of a WEE design
4. Monitoring and reporting on do no harm
5. Sensitisation and engagement of men and other power holders

'Meaningful change' would differ as per people and contexts. SEED groups may measure changes against important cultural or local elements that are specific to them.

Key Insights from the SEED process

- Vanuatu and Fiji country teams found SEED tools particularly useful in ensuring that people living with a disability and SOGIESC community members are included in community discussions.
- There was a significant shift in the recognition of care work that is often invisible
- SEED was able to engage men and other gate keepers in addressing harmful norms around masculinity. There was clear evidence of community leaders contributing in processes of self-reflection and collective planning.
- SEED was effective in enabling country partners and community groups to build a holistic picture of ‘economic activity’ that included the full range of women’s work
- SEED did not present women as a separate category from men but as integral part of a community and households where men and women co-exist. Focus was on engaging communities that include men and women, as well as people living with disability and people with diverse genders—in integrated, inclusive and community-based dialogues that focus on transforming adverse social norms that impact all.
- SEED’s Community-based approaches recognized that ending discrimination and violence is the community’s responsibility, not a problem of individual women. It’s not about having a dialogue on ‘men versus women’, but rather changing the system to create more harmony and equality.

SEED Evolution within the Feminist Oxfam

Since the origin of SEED in 2016, Oxfam has evolved as an agency. Oxfam is on a journey to be an anti-racist, feminist and partner-led organisation. SEED would be a living and evolving resource that will continue to grow alongside country partners. In our mission to localise, decolonise and partner we seek to:

- Continue to evolve from domination of English language and white perspective.
- Promote proficiency of the local language and experience as an asset.
- Enable pathways for those with lived experience of racism and other form of inequality and discrimination to define their own agenda
- Enable courageous conversations internally to acknowledge our own privilege and power as a western agency
- Commit to long-term process of transfer of power that is focused on a continuous focus and reflection, with open and courageous conversations on what is and isn't working
- Within the country partnership space, continue to explore new ways that would challenge us to think differently about knowledge and power, redefining who and what is valued most.



A story of Transformation – Enabled by the SEED process

My name is George and I have been volunteering with Rainbow Pride for the past four years now. I understood SEED to be a process of approaching new people and villages to talk to them about fairness and tolerance. I got the chance to talk about being different and facing discrimination.



When I first walked in as a SEED co-facilitator, everyone looked at me funny and no one approached me. Then slowly, as group conversations opened taboo topics, people started approaching me during lunch and tea breaks and sometimes also asked me personal questions. I answered all questions honestly as I knew that people are just trying to understand the difference and come to terms with the reality that actually, I am just a person like them.

Being SEED facilitator has been really good for me. It has given me confidence to be who I am and also to speak in front of people. Facing judgement, harassment and abuse for years makes you angry, sad and bitter. Rainbow Pride and the SEED process has given me a channel to finally do something useful – to start the communication with other on understanding and caring for rainbow people. Rainbow Facilitator, Vanuatu