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# Gender and equity in Outcome Mapping

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A summary of issues and experiences

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## About the Author

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**Cover image:** Women in the CERNAFA cooperative in the Tillaberi region of Niger. World Bank.

# 1 Introduction

There is growing interest in addressing persistent and structural gender and social inequities in development and humanitarian programmes. Outcome Mapping is considered by some to be particularly useful for planning, monitoring and evaluating such efforts. This article is an attempt to capture the learnings from the community regarding the challenges and benefits of using OM to capture empowerment changes related to gender and equity in a variety of programs.

The evidence for this article comes from an e-discussion (including a short e-survey, discussion posts, and Skype interviews) hosted between July and September 2016 on the OMLC forum. The e-discussion indicated a strong interest in understanding how gender and equity could be woven into OM practice across many sectors – agriculture, violence against women, animal health, child marriage, child safety net projects, youth leadership, disabilities, agriculture related, HIV and others. Queries regarding how to use OM came from both OM practitioners as well as gender experts indicating the diversity of demand to meaningfully address gender and equity concerns. Some OM practitioners shared what they had learned and hopefully these insights will encourage others to integrate OM with gender and equity, refine OM processes and concepts and provide a pathway for practice.

This article analyzes the *relationship* of the OM (and Outcome Harvesting) approach, processes and tools towards addressing gender and equity concerns – in other words, *how well does OM “fit” with addressing gender and equity*.

To frame this discussion and using examples and reflections from the OMLC community, I discuss why an understanding of empowerment is essential to address gender and equity, how OM processes and concepts align with the use of a gender and equity lens, in what ways OM needs strengthening to address gender and equity and then, discuss a practical way forward.

## 2 Gender, equity and empowerment

Empowerment lies at the heart of understanding gender and equity. Empowerment is not a one off exercise – it is a process, fluid and contextual. It implies change in people’s attitudes and behavior. Empowerment implicitly means a discussion on power<sup>1</sup> and acknowledges that there are some who have more power over others for reasons that are rooted in socio-cultural beliefs and practices. That is why empowerment or change in gender and equity<sup>2</sup> norms and practices is always contextual and dependent on the people involved in that particular situation.

Gender<sup>3</sup> norms are ideas of what is “expected”, “normal” or “typical” for women and men in a particular context, across intersectionalities of socio-economic status, class, caste, disability and ethnic groups. These norms are often ‘ideas’; unspoken and implicit but highly influential.

With this brief introduction, I explore some of the concepts and processes of OM that align with as well as provide challenges while integrating gender and equity issues.

## 3 OM Concepts and Processes in Relation to Gender and Equity

### 3.1 Core Concept of OM: People

Fundamental to OM, is the centering on people and their changes in attitude and behavior as a result of or because of the contribution of an intervention. In terms of gender and equity, this “people” emphasis is critical since all change is contextual that must re-adjust power relations – between those who have power, who don’t and with regard to agency or the power to be able to do something - all of which point to changes in people’s attitude (belief) and behavior.

“People” may also refer to the boundary partners and strategic partners who in turn impact the target population. In the case of a governance programme aimed at enhancing the responsiveness of local government leaders to community members, a boundary partner (in this case a community-based organisation) was expected to carry out the training. A number of people were involved – duty bearers (local government leaders), rights holders (community) as well as the capacity building organization. Change in behavior would be expected with all stakeholders: a) How nuanced was the CBO training on roles and responsibilities related to gender and equitable participation? b) Were all women and men (leaders and community) more knowledgeable and better informed (“expect to see” change)? c) Were women and men taking action related to the knowledge such as a leader convening meetings or a community member participating actively (“like to see” change)? and d)

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<sup>1</sup> See John Gaventa’s discussion on power and powerlessness

<sup>2</sup> Equity is giving what is needed to be successful and is different from equality which is about sameness, being fair and giving the same opportunities. Equity recognizes that there are some who are more vulnerable than others and need additional support to take advantage of fair opportunities.

<sup>3</sup> Gender refers to socially constructed identities, behaviour and practices tied to being a girl or boy, man or woman. It also includes diversity of gender identities such as transsexuals. For more details see [www.evalpartners.org](http://www.evalpartners.org) or [www.betterevaluation.org](http://www.betterevaluation.org)

Were passive citizens standing for election or were community members (and perhaps duty bearers) challenging processes that were unfair (“love to see” change)?<sup>4</sup>

The OM/OH emphasis on people and valuing progressive changes in knowledge, attitude and behavior provides opportunities for nuanced tracking and monitoring in gender and equity. So, within the overall change processes tracked by OM, a gendered tracking of people’s behavior is possible.

## **3.2 Boundary Partners, Progress Markers and Outcome Journals**

OM practitioners have several choices in using OM tools and concepts, and each choice has implications regarding how gender and equity is addressed and by whom.

### **3.2.1 Boundary partners**

The choice of boundary partners itself can be gendered. In such cases, a conscious attempt is made during the selection of boundary partners to include women either as a separate constituency or in terms of their proportionate representation. By including women as separate boundary partners, OM processes can provide a gendered perspective regarding participation and changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior.

### **3.2.2 Progress markers**

Progress markers may be gender sensitive that capture change among men and women and go beyond just counting the numbers of men and women involved. For example, in a governance project progress markers could capture the extent to which women attended, spoke out and set the agenda at meetings/stand for elections and so on.<sup>5</sup> Progress markers enable a concrete representation of what ‘change’ in empowerment looks like. However, many project outcomes are not necessarily gender and equity focused, so the challenge is to advocate to boundary partners and staff to include gender sensitive progress markers<sup>6</sup>.

Equity and gender related progress markers are fluid, qualitative and contextual. However, it is important to reinforce staff capacity at country level on how best to collect, make sense of, and use the monitoring data. Because progress markers are fluid and qualitative, staff needs to be oriented *against* using checklists<sup>7</sup>. This assumes that individuals and teams monitoring change using progress markers are able to spot gender sensitive and especially gender transformative change. For example, does the monitoring team know what it looks like when a bank manager, village chief or government bureaucrat is behaving in a more gender equal manner?<sup>8</sup> It has also been a challenge to figure out

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<sup>4</sup> Kate Dyer’s post on the OMLC e discussion

<sup>5</sup> See Kate Dyer’s post in the OMLC Forum

<sup>6</sup> Alejandra’s comments in the e- survey

<sup>7</sup> Emily Himmelbrand has used Outcome Mapping to develop Progress Markers as a monitoring tool specifically for gender behavior changes in Pathways (Pathways, a multi-country gender and agriculture program in Africa and India, funded by BMGF), as well as two USAID-funded programs. OM has been applied in Malawi, Mali, Ghana, India, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia

<sup>8</sup> Kaia Ambrose’s post

how best to integrate OM (with gender and equity progress markers) into the overall monitoring, learning and evaluation system, so that it complements and supplements other learning.

Towards that end, progress markers provide the scaffold for detailing concrete actions that represent changes in gender and equitable behavior. This assumes that in formulating progress markers, there is an understanding of what transformative change means. So, in a sense developing progress markers challenges stakeholders – traditional leaders, government, or other service providers – to be aware of gender dynamics, and define what they mean by equality and equity. This “delving into the detail of context” is critical for developing progress markers in an OM approach and critical in any discourse on gender and equity (see section on empowerment, gender and equity).

Progress markers are multi-dimensional, not necessarily indicating linear change which is an important consideration when tracking change in equity and gender. One could change on any one dimension of empowerment (e.g. economic but not social relations) but one could also move back and forth on the same dimension from “expect to see” to “like to see” and sometimes back to “expect to see”. This in turn could be influenced by the progress (or not) of other dimensions. Progress markers are adaptable to this fluidity, which is important when we track transformational change.

Progress markers have been useful to measure internal change such as, how a team or organization has modified and built its capacity related to gender and equity. In fact, it is argued that the Organizational Practices step of OM can be ‘translated’ into a set of Progress Markers that show the progression of building gender champions / gender and equity expertise. Such an internal perspective is important as organizations and staff must first understand *what is gender transformative change* if they wish to encourage a gender lens in programming, M&E and OM.<sup>9</sup> (Also see section on feminist research).

### 3.2.3 Outcome journals

Outcome journals are useful to document and monitor the behavior change of key boundary partners. An example from Tanzania<sup>10</sup> related to supporting smallholder coffee farmers in improving their agricultural production, access to markets and services had used outcome journals to track behavior change of farming households and farmer organizations. One project debated if one needed to have separate outcome journals for men and women in leadership positions and men and women community members for the best monitoring and improving the effectiveness of the programme? Or should there be just one journal for leaders and one for community members, but with different progress markers for men and women?<sup>11</sup> Often these decisions also have a practical angle – too many progress markers that are specific to men and women may make the data collection cumbersome but not being specific enough could lead to missing out nuanced changes in gender and equity.

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<sup>9</sup> Kaia Ambrose shares experiences from a DFID-funded multi-country climate change program run out of ODI - ‘PRISE’ - where Progress Markers were made gender sensitive as well as gender transformative.

<sup>10</sup> Blaga Zlateva (HRNS Tanzania)

<sup>11</sup> Kate Dyer’s post

### 3.2.4 Strategy map

The strategy map can include gender and social inclusion to inform outcome challenges of strategic partners and boundary partners. This assumes that gender and equity issues formed part of the 'vision' or 'dream'. In a project related to Right to Food in Nepal, a majority of the boundary partners included gender and social inclusion in their 'dream' vision which in turn encouraged a lot of dialogue and agreement to include gender and equity in developing the strategy map and outcome challenges.<sup>12</sup>

### 3.3 Dialogue and Discussion

Central to OM is a dialogue among key boundary partners facilitated by staff to articulate what change in behavior means to them (context), and to place them on a continuum. Various OM processes – strategy maps, progress markers, outcome journals, identifying key boundary and strategic partners - lend themselves to dialogue and discussion, which are useful when trying to understand meaningful 'change' in gender and equity rather than general indicators such as 'improved attitudes'.

In fact, the process of identification of change with reference to gender and equity itself is an empowering process for boundary partners.<sup>13</sup> OM provides a way for project staff and partner organisations to discuss implementation steps, agree on appropriate progress markers, and to monitor efforts on a regular basis – all of which leads to changes in mindset and behavior, ensuring increased skills and confidence to manage their own program<sup>14</sup>. Stakeholders find it easy to understand OM processes - that change occurs progressively - and allows them to reflect on their current status, plan of action and expected change.

The documentation of this discussion is important and along with reflections captured in Outcome Journals to bring a nuanced understanding of barriers and challenges in the change process. It can clarify which engendered outcomes are possible and which are not and most importantly why. This is valuable advice for OM practitioners. The OM approach has been used with logframes – such as encouraging partners to break down outcomes stated in the logframe to clarify what they actually meant and would look like in practice.<sup>15</sup>

One of the challenges has been the time it takes for field staff who are the ones doing primary documentation to get comfortable and truly understand the intent of documenting changes and also to share good quality change stories. While OM in principle is a great fit for gender and equity projects the practicalities have been a little difficult to roll out<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Jyoti, Hansh and Prakash's post CARE Nepal/Right to Food Project

<sup>13</sup> See Mike Clulow's post in the OMLC Forum

<sup>14</sup> See *Stories of Empowerment: OM and Empowerment: The experience of SAHA in Madagascar* on the OMLC website

<sup>15</sup> Mike Clulow's post

<sup>16</sup> Nidal Karim (CARE) describes the project Tipping Point implemented in Nepal and Bangladesh where child marriage prevention is being addressed through social norms and girls' empowerment

### **Case study on the Right to Food (RtF) Project**

The Right to Food (RtF) Project funded by DANIDA through CARE Denmark has been using outcome mapping (OM) as a dominant monitoring and evaluation system for the project. The progress markers of each boundary partner were set considering gender and social inclusion dimension jointly by partners and the project team. CARE Nepal/RtF Project has set progress markers of its boundary partners, who are in fact strategic partners (NGOs and Federation, broadly termed as CSO) of the project.

The progress markers of the strategic partners were set under four areas of good governance; representation and inclusion, legitimacy, transparency and accountability and synergy (RILTAS). These four areas are equally important for good governance however representation and inclusion and legitimacy are more relevant for gender and social inclusion. The annual dialogue with strategic partners reviews the progress against each progress marker and plan for the next cycle. The annual dialogue has motivated partners to be more inclusive, for example one strategic partner has made provision for at least 33% women in staff structure and 50% of women in the executive committee. The other partner has recently conducted gender audit as per the recommendation of the outcome journal.

The strategic partners collect information from their boundary partners. There are two types of boundary partners; those having capacity building relation and those to whom partners want to influence for changes. The gender dis-aggregated data both of quantitative and qualitative nature was collected against each progress marker of respective boundary partners. Similarly, ethnic/caste wise data was also collected. The data was collected on outcome journals by field based partner staff. Partners then jointly reviewed these data and and follow-up actions were prepared accordingly.

The merit of OM is that it promotes dialogue between actors. As gender and social inclusion is a popular political agenda, it has compelled our strategic partners and their boundary partners to come up with policies, strategies and plan for this. Consequently, gender and social inclusion is a major factor considered while setting progress markers.

## **3.4 Strengthening OM to integrate gender and equity**

### **3.4.1 Synergy with other methods and tools**

The OM approach – people-centered, emphasis on behavior change and recognition of a continuum of change – enables the use of other methods and tools that synergize with this approach. For example, OM was used with a tool called Empowerment Star to capture change across 17 countries and 27 partners<sup>17</sup> along with adapted outcome journals, focus group discussions, service quality monitoring and case studies. OM and OH have been found useful in developing case studies of

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<sup>17</sup> See Mark Clulow's post. The empowerment star was used to capture incremental change across various dimensions with women survivors of violence and widows receiving support in the program. The tool uses five levels of change (not the three levels of expect to see, like to see and love to see) but follow the same logic of progress markers and express fluidity in change across time.



significant changes as a result of the project<sup>18</sup>. Similarly, various tools have been used along with progress markers as they were found most useful to measure ‘need to know’ behavior changes<sup>19</sup>. Participatory methods have been used along with OM in a prevention of early child marriage in India across 30 field organizations to address gender, sexuality and youth rights<sup>20</sup>.

### 3.4.2 Knowledge of Feminist Research

It is important to understand WHAT is *transformational change (and therefore feminist ideologies)* to identify changes in gender and equity whether one uses progress markers or Outcome Journals or using a theory of change. In this regard, OM practitioners would benefit from a gender analysis grounded in feminist research and understanding of gender frameworks. For example, the gender framework of power to, power over, power with, and power within was used as a foundation to discuss progress markers.<sup>21</sup> Pertinent questions emerge when using a gender lens regarding inclusion and exclusion such as a nuanced understanding of ‘participating actively’ – did the headman’s wife participate actively or did the poor woman; was the poor woman’s opinion solicited but then discarded; did the woman stand as a proxy for her husband/father during elections and other such examples.

A gender transformative lens indicates the importance of tracking agency – the confidence and self-belief to bring change. OM practitioners can ensure that agency is included while formulating progress markers to track equity and gender<sup>22</sup>. OM provides the flexibility to mainstream gender within a theory of change using a gender analysis matrix against set indicators<sup>23</sup>.

Gender analysis prior to the intervention ensures that the project will respond to the needs of men and women. An animal health project that aimed to control diseases in small ruminants and boost women’s participation benefited from a gender analysis at the start of the project and are now using this knowledge to develop indicators within the overall OM approach<sup>24</sup>. Measuring inequities is

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<sup>18</sup> Claire Hughes (ITAD) is using case studies in a DFID Nigeria project that strengthens the enabling environment for women and girls.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret Capelezo (CARE Canada)

<sup>20</sup> Meena Gopal (TISS) refers to a study with Tata Institute of Social Sciences India, who is the research partner with American Jewish World Service

<sup>21</sup> See Kate Dyer (KPMG)

<sup>22</sup> Mike Clulow’s post on OM approach at Womankind. Also see ppt in the OMLC website <http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/change-harvesting-an-outcome-mapping-based-approach-to-capture-complex-gender-transformative-change>

<sup>23</sup> Yasmin Karim (AKRSP) refers to a project that aims for the productive engagement of youth in civic institutions and to enhance their employability and leadership. AKRSP works as implementing partner with financial assistance from Global Affairs Canada in rural settings.

<sup>24</sup> Anne Mulema (CGIAR): Project is implemented by the International Livestock Research Institute, funded by DFID and is known as SMART project in Ethiopia

difficult without frameworks and staff need to be trained and made aware of equity and gender related issues, preferably at the very beginning of the project. Such preparation aids OM practice<sup>25</sup>.

In turn, a feminist perspective supports the use of OM. In an effort to address child marriage in India, the OM framework enabled the development of complex markers of change in girls' lives in communities by the grassroots organizations themselves. This enabled them to identify boundary partners, formulate outcome challenges and progress markers across specified domains of change and with various stakeholders – collectives in the communities, organizations and boundary partners. The Outcome and Performance Journals supported the use of tools to monitor change and document it. OM, with a feminist perspective, was able to address complex structural gender-biased practices and identify the small and incremental changes in girls' lives and how families, communities and the state negotiate power in relationships. OM therefore helped to go beyond numbers to plot real change in girls' lives<sup>26</sup>.

An example from CARE in Uganda about a Forest Resources Sector Transparency Program implemented through partners indicated that prior to the program start, only 19% of women were participating in decision making on matters related forests and other natural resources. The program designed approaches to address such gender imbalances and included the use of community based monitors and the media as social actors of change. Progress markers were defined for both the community based monitors and the media and included whether the monitors conducted awareness sessions in forest adjacent communities and grassroots. Radio stations were monitored whether they through their debates and awareness sessions, were able to capture the voice of rural women regarding forestry issues. OM along with this gender perspective was able to capture qualitative information that indicated change such as, the representation of women in committees and decision making groups (increased), women's access to land for tree growing (increased), women reporting forest crimes (increased) and so on. Feminist research encourages nuanced analysis and in this case, it was noted that participation of young girls in governance of forestry resources also needs to be studied to assess the overall impact of the program.<sup>27</sup>

### 3.4.3 Donor/Government Readiness

Any planning or evaluation that incorporates gender and equity requires investment of time and expertise to facilitate the process. This requires a commitment from *donors* to provide financial and human resources to facilitate such dialogue and discussion. This process cannot be donor *driven* since concerns regarding gender and equity are necessarily bottom up. Donors need to enable key boundary partners to discuss and identify changes in behavior across stakeholders that are meaningful in their context and to monitor such change. Donors also have to be ready to accept the

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<sup>25</sup> Anupama Sharma

<sup>26</sup> Tata Institute Advanced Center for Women's Studies

[https://ajws-americanjewishwo.netdna-ssl.com/wpcontent/uploads/2016/03/ECM\\_Research\\_Strategy\\_onePager\\_HiRes\\_Web.pdf](https://ajws-americanjewishwo.netdna-ssl.com/wpcontent/uploads/2016/03/ECM_Research_Strategy_onePager_HiRes_Web.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Dezi Irumba CARE

program's interpretation of what empowerment is. Finally, if there is no budget for gender - you will see little action<sup>28</sup>.

*Government* buy-in of gender and equity enables mainstreaming within an OM approach. Examples from Nepal indicate the ease with which equity was included in a disability inclusion project that developed disability friendly model villages because of the government's commitment to gender and equity<sup>29</sup>. In a Right for Food project<sup>30</sup> the project could insert progress markers related to gender and social inclusion with ease.

#### **3.4.4 Qualitative analysis expertise**

OM aids systematic monitoring but it is challenging to map qualitative outcomes – and most gender and equity related outcomes are both qualitative and contextual. In some cases, OM practitioners have used stories to tease out the changes but its analysis requires expertise in qualitative data.<sup>31</sup>

Womankind's multi-country complex project on preventing violence against women, increasing their participation and ensuring economic independence, asked descriptive questions to plot change – who changed, what was the change, when did it occur and where; what was this change significant and what was the contribution of the partners towards that change. Analysis included quantitative identification of trends (level of change, stakeholders affected, country) but there was a great deal of qualitative analysis that described change by grouping around themes to tease out the important factors driving change. Case studies were also collected to deepen understanding. The challenges were related to time – collecting, analyzing and reporting. Also, what constituted one change when there were several changes in a person or a group, plus the dilemma of equating a change in one individual with others.<sup>32</sup>

## **4 A Practical Way Forward**

OM has the potential to deal with the complexity that a gender lens introduces and practitioners have shared practical ways to incorporate gender and equity. Each of these steps are important in themselves and affect others.

### **4.1 Introduce gender analysis from the beginning; only OM is not enough**

A Gender Analysis is needed before one proceeds further and includes disaggregated statistics, description of social and gendered norms that impact why women, men, girls and boys have different possibilities, challenges and needs; understanding of power relations, understanding of variations in access to, use of and control of assets; description of strategic and practical gender needs; the analysis of intersectionalities of age, ethnicity, class and others in relation to gender among others.

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<sup>28</sup> Anja Nordland NCG Sweden

<sup>29</sup> Nandlal Banstola in the e survey

<sup>30</sup> Right To Food project funded by DANIDA through CARE Denmark in Nepal

<sup>31</sup> Anne Mulema (CGIAR)

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.outcomemapping.ca/resource/change-harvesting-an-outcome-mapping-based-approach-to-capture-complex-gender-transformative-change>

All of this will impact the development of outcome challenges and progress markers. Gender analysis must be relevant to the specific context being evaluated<sup>33</sup>.

It is also important to plan for gender and equity data from the beginning depending on what the gender and equity goals are. Appropriate tools for data collection and analysis within the initiative's M&E system may be selected with due consideration to time, financial and human resources available to a) interpret overall program outcomes and b) specifically addressing gender and equity issues.

## **4.2 OM strategic design and processes must include gender and equity issues**

The gender analysis will be essential to dialogue and develop a strategic plan – such as, whether to use integrated activities or targeted interventions? For example, one project provides access to grants but the gender analysis indicated that women have little access to decision-making and little experience of handling own money (as in some cultures), and then one might need to consider giving this group a special support so they can apply for the grants. Other strategic decisions could relate to whether one needs to consider special methodologies or communication strategies to get both male and female participation at say, a workshop or meeting.<sup>34</sup>

Gender analysis is the first step to develop gender sensitive progress markers. Boundary partners and the staff must understand why it is important to engender progress markers or outcomes if one wants to mainstream gender. Otherwise one may run the risk of staff or boundary partners dismissing or excluding gender and equity from their results or outcomes or having limited follow up in relation to gender mainstreaming.

## **4.3 Build capacity of and mentor OM practitioners in gender and equity**

It is apparent that OM practitioners DO need skills in gender analysis to guide boundary and strategic partners in developing their strategies, reporting and defining change (especially transformative change) on a continuum. This probably has implications regarding evaluation team composition and the need to have a gender expert. Perhaps gender analysis should be part of the capacity building (of partners and staff) along with OM.

The most challenging part of OM is the field staff capacity to capture changes in the behavior. It is always easy to capture numbers but is very difficult to capture qualitative progress. If the person collecting the data is sensitive to gender issues, the reporting and insights gained on gender are good, but if not, then much is lost. In some ways, progress markers can be used as “prompts” by non-gender experts or less experienced practitioners to look out for gender and equity changes.

This means there is need for a designated gender advisor / expert to provide nuanced questioning, thinking and analysis related to gender and equity. Preferably, a local gender expert who knows the culture, challenges and possibilities would be most useful to provide a contextual understanding.

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<sup>33</sup> Anja Nordland NCG Sweden

<sup>34</sup> ibid

#### **4.4 Resources and Readiness**

Finally, in order to be able to carry out the above there is need for resources (knowledge, budget and expertise) and readiness from decision makers (management, donors, government and strategic partners) to include gender and equity outcomes in the intervention and to invest in capacity building and systematic learning so that the gender and equity agenda is internalized.

OM provides excellent qualitative tools to track nuanced changes related to gender and inclusion and best of all, it enables partners and participants to contribute to defining what change is expected. Importantly, the processes involved value contextual understanding and analysis of empowerment as related to gender and equity.