

Abstract Title: How do positive changes in gender relations happen?

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The Zimbabwe Gender Equality and Change Study explored the perspectives of women and men from poor and marginalised communities regarding changes in gender relations that had occurred in their lifetimes, and how these changes came about (the primary objective of the study). The study was a collaborative effort by the Principal Researcher (Dr Juliet Hunt), Plan International Australia, and Plan International Zimbabwe, funded by Plan International Australia and Plan International Germany.

The premise underlying the study was that a better understanding of the causes of change - from the perspective of ordinary community members - could improve the effectiveness of efforts to promote gender equality by development agencies.

The study was not a review of any project or its results, although some strong programmatic effects emerged. Rather, it explored participants' experiences of changes; whether participants saw these as positive or negative and why; changes in power relations; and the benefits of changes experienced by women and men. The study compared findings with other international lessons and evidence on theories of change.

The study employed 4 qualitative data collection methods including a survey on aspirations. There were 260 participants (160 women and 100 men) across 6 villages. Significantly more transformative changes were observed in 2 villages, including less male resistance. The fieldwork was done in 2015 and an additional comparative analysis was completed in August 2016 to identify strategies that contributed to these transformative changes.

This session will focus on headline findings, including changes in gender relations (positive and negative), factors that contribute to changes, international comparisons, and implications for development practice (design, monitoring and evaluation, partnerships, and policy advocacy).

The study adds significantly to international knowledge regarding effective strategies, including women's economic empowerment, rights-based approaches, addressing gender-based violence, wife inheritance and polygamy, and methods for engaging with men.