The Power of Data: How Research Advances Social Change for Women and Girls

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About WCW

WCW is a premier women- and gender-focused research, theory, and action institute housed at Wellesley College, a leading women’s college in Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA.

For 40 years, WCW’s scholarship and programming has informed public policies and programs and helped define state-of-the-art content knowledge related to women, girls, and gender.
The Power of Data: 3 Questions

1. How can we make research integral to the process of social change work, rather than an afterthought?

2. How can we build women- and gender-related research capacity worldwide?

3. How can we create a culture of research-in-partnership?
Data Is Now Essential

• There is growing recognition that effective measurement and sophisticated statistics are essential to advancing women’s and girls’ equality and empowerment.
  ➢ Dialogues on the MDGs and the emerging post-2015 development agenda
  ➢ Melinda Gates’ July 2013 article on ForeignPolicy.com
  ➢ UN Global Gender Statistics Programme
Increasing Data Demand

• Funders of all types are requiring hard evidence that the programs they fund are effective.
• Policymakers, advocates, and development agencies demand data as evidence of impact.
• Media outlets – print, broadcast, and online – are in need of accessible, easy-to-understand data.
Organizations Need Data

• Women’s social change organizations (NGOs; CBOs; and grassroots, advocacy, and activist organizations) need data to demonstrate that their programs effectively move the needle on social change.

• The challenge: In-house research capacity may be limited, because it is not the organizational focus.
Researchers Ready to Partner

• Women- and gender-focused research institutes, like WCW, have the expertise and focus to provide high-quality research in partnership with social change organizations and funders, while also providing data for policymakers, advocates, and the media.

• In the U.S. and globally, there are numerous women- and gender-focused research institutes (some affiliated with colleges and universities, others free-standing) that are ready to partner.
Research Accelerates Social Change

• In today’s world, competing interest groups make their case using research, and rigor helps sort things out.

• Social change efforts that are supported by *rigorous research* have a competitive advantage in the marketplace of ideas.
Accelerating Research Capacity Globally

• *Global research equity* is now a social justice target itself – can every country / region meet its research needs?

• How can research organizations around the world partner in equitable and socially- / culturally-conscious ways?
Some Issues to Watch & Prepare For

- The “data revolution”
- Data disaggregation
- Big data
- Measurement standards
- Measurement dialogues
- Research literacy
- Research translation
- Global research equity
UN Global Gender Statistics Programme

• New Gender Statistics Manual
• UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators
• Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) Project
Examples from WCW

Research that Moved the Needle...
1980s: Influenced the IRS tax code to exempt infant-toddler programs and afterschool programs.
Gender Equity in Education

• 1990s: Our collaborative report with the AAUW influenced federal legislation on programs for girls in science and math, shaped public discourse, and led to new community-based programs for girls.
Family Violence in the Military

• 2000s: Our research on domestic violence in Navy families led to new prevention and intervention policies and programs in the U.S. Navy.
Gender Based Violence in Schools

- 2013: The *Shifting Boundaries* intervention, designed to help middle schools reduce gender-based violence, was showcased by both the White House and the U.S. Department of Education as an evidence-based program and best practice.
Final Question

How can we – research institutes, on-the-ground organizations, advocates, policymakers, and funders – collaborate to produce the evidence base that moves the needle on gender equality and women’s and girls’ empowerment?
A world that is good for women is good for everyone.

www.wcwonline.org