all about MOVEMENTS

WHY BUILDING MOVEMENTS CREATES DEEPER CHANGE

crea

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Primer 2 in CREA's Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation Series

Movements are always about challenging **power structures**

Contents

ALL ABOUT MOVEMENTS

Introduction 4

What is a movement? 12

Why do movements matter? 20

What is a feminist movement? 34

How do movements begin? 56

How are movements built? 68

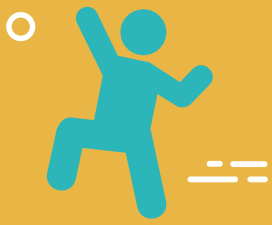
How are online movements different? 88

How do we assess movements? 98

UNDERSTANDING MOVEMENTS

The best way to eradicate **inequality and injustice** is when oppressed people build strong movements that shift the structures of power

In the primer *All About Power*[1] we saw how all kinds of power structures, based on economic or social power, gender, caste, religion, nationality, sexuality and ability, dominate our societies. We examined the 'three faces' of power:



VISIBLE POWER

which we all see and recognize how it acts upon us

HIDDEN POWER

which is the way certain individuals or entities exercise power from behind the scenes, and are not clearly visible to most of us

INVISIBLE POWER

which acts upon us, our ways of thinking and our beliefs about what is 'normal' or 'natural', without our being aware of it at all

We also saw that power operates in three spaces

PUBLIC SPACES

such as in our governments, judiciaries, police and armed forces

PRIVATE SPACES

such as families, personal relationships, clans, castes, and tribes

INTIMATE SPACES

which is within ourselves, and about our self-image, confidence, and self-esteem

[1] S.Batliwala, *All About Power*: *Understanding Social Power & Power Structures*, New Delhi, CREA, Apr 2019; https://reconference.creaworld.org/all-about-power/

All About Power also analyzed how power structures are constructed and sustained not just through greater control of material resources like money and land, but also through control of information and knowledge, human resources (control of people's bodies and labor) and 'intangible resources' such as influence, contacts, and social networks. We realized that power structures sustain themselves primarily by creating and propagating ideologies that justify the inequalities embedded within them and thus gaining the participation of even those who are most discriminated against and marginalized. These power structures are at the root of the inequalities and injustices that we, as social activists, are trying to change.

What we did *not* discuss in ***All About Power***, though, is HOW to change power structures. HOW do we shift power so that marginalized people can attain their full human rights, and live with respect and equality, free from discrimination and violence? That is what this primer is about – why movements are the most effective way of changing power structures, and how to build movements!

History teaches us that the best way to eradicate inequality and injustice is when oppressed people build strong movements that challenge and shift the structures of power. These movements have shown us that change would not have happened without their collective power and actions – think of the struggles against caste discrimination, against the control of our nations by foreign powers, against monarchies and military dictators, or against slavery and bonded labor.

This is very important in today's context, because more and more activists and NGOs are involved in doing 'projects' and delivering services rather than building movements. They work for 'beneficiaries' and 'target groups', rather than mobilizing and building the collective voice and power of the people affected by injustice. Today we have multiple projects that provide resources, services and even legal support for people living with poverty, violence, unemployment, insecure livelihoods and income, lack of access to basic services like education, health care, water, sanitation, or social exclusion and stigma because of their identity, occupation, location, sexual expression, or ability. And these projects are in our control, not in the hands of the people for whom they are meant – so they are dependent on outside actors and leadership, not on the people who have the most to gain from change!

Although these are all serious issues and problems, and certainly have to be tackled, the problem with these approaches is that they work on the **symptoms of injustice**: the battered woman or rape survivor, illiterate adults, girl child mortality or malnutrition, low household income levels, lack of access to water or toilets etc. But they **do not tackle the roots of the problem**: the social norms and attitudes that lead men to commit violence against women, the poverty that keeps marginalized children out of school or forces them to drop out of school, why more girls than boys are malnourished, or why millions of people lack employment or a secure living wage.

In ***All About Power***, we explained how unjust power structures survive and protect themselves: through unequal control over resources, through ideologies that justify these inequalities and social norms that reproduce the injustices every day, and through a range of institutions that protect the interests of the powerful and marginalize others. **Most of our development and women's empowerment 'projects' are not tackling these deep roots of power.** So when the funding dries up, or the project ends, the basic causes of the injustice remain largely untouched, and their roots intact!

This is why movements and movement building are so important. **Movements are always about challenging power structures.** This primer explains how and why movements are able to create deeper change by answering seven key questions:

1. What is a movement?
2. Why do movements matter?
3. What is a feminist movement?
4. How do movements begin?
5. How are movements built?
6. How are online movements different?
7. How do we assess movements?

1

WHAT IS A MOVEMENT?

A movement is a set of people with a shared experience of injustice who organize to build their collective power and leadership

A movement is a set of people with a shared experience of injustice, who organize themselves to build their collective power and leadership, develop a shared agenda for change, which they pursue through collective action, with some continuity over time.

SHARED EXPERIENCE OF INJUSTICE

This means that a movement brings together the very people **affected by an injustice** and are the heart of the movement – they are not beneficiaries or target groups of an NGO project or program, or victims, or clients of a welfare service. They are the people driving the struggle for change, because they have the most to gain from changing their situation.

BUILDING COLLECTIVE POWER

It is very difficult for people to change their situation or challenge power structures as individuals or even in small, scattered groups. **They have to build their collective power** in order to become an effective force for change that cannot be ignored or easily suppressed. Which is why movements organize individuals or

communities in some structured way – formally or informally (via networks, unions, federations, member collectives, 'sanghs','samoohs' etc). These are important spaces for members to meet, discuss issues, analyze the root causes of injustices they face, build a change agenda, develop leadership, and plan strategies.

LEADERSHIP AT MULTIPLE LEVELS

The process of organizing themselves, collectively discussing and analyzing their issues, and building a change agenda, also creates leadership from within the movement. **Strong movements tend to create multiple layers of leadership**, especially if they have a large membership, and they often experiment with collective forms of leadership so that a few people don't dominate the movement. The key point is that movements create strong internal leadership, and are not dependent on external leaders, though outside leaders may play a role in building the movement in its initial stages.

SHARED AGENDA FOR CHANGE

A movement always has a collective analysis of the injustices it wants to tackle, the root causes of these, a set of goals and priorities, a clear vision of the change it seeks, and the strategies through which it will try to achieve this. It also identifies who it sees as allies, as opponents, and who are its targets for change – whether government bodies or policies, other social groups, private institutions, or broader society. All these, together, combine to form what is called a movement's political agenda. We call this a **political agenda**, not because it is about political parties or elections, but because it is about **the true meaning of the word political: changing power structures**. Movements are concerned with changing the power arrangements that create injustice, not just providing resources or services to the movement's members. These agendas are not static. A movement's political agenda evolves over time, through action and deeper analysis, and as its understanding of power structures and change strategies becomes sharpened by experience.

COLLECTIVE ACTION

This is a key feature of movements – actions by movement members, in pursuit of their goals, and to advance their political agenda. **We often think of movement actions as confrontative** – the images that come to mind when we hear the word 'movement' are marches, protests and rallies. But in fact, movements also engage their target groups in other ways, such as through advocacy, social media campaigns, public education, and so on. Interestingly, movements sometimes target their own communities in the change process. Many women's movements, for instance, focus on changing attitudes of men and boys within their own families or communities, and this is where their collective action often begins.

CONTINUITY OVER TIME

Because movements are addressing deep-rooted injustices, they know **change will take time**, and that the movement has to have a longer time span to achieve its goals. So, movements are not just a spontaneous uprising or short-term campaign or action, like a Women's Day march or a One Billion Rising gathering. However, spontaneous uprisings have often transformed into longer-term movements, such as the anti-monarchy protests in Nepal, the Narmada Bachao Andolan in India or the movement against violence on women in Bangladesh triggered by acid attacks and sexual assaults on women. And movements may use campaigns as a strategy – such as the 'jail bharo'[2] or 'rasta roko'[3] campaigns used by many movements across South Asia to protest against government policies, violence against women, or discriminatory laws.

[2] Jail bharo = fill the jail, or courting arrest as a form of protest
[3] Rasta roko = blockading roads or other public spaces as a form of protest

For any collective change process to be considered a movement, it must have ALL these six core characteristics: a set of people with a shared sense of injustice, an organized membership base, leadership from within at multiple levels, a shared political agenda, collective action, and continuity over time.

THAT'S WHAT MAKES A MOVEMENT!

The power of movements – and why they matter - is that they are committed to tackling the roots of injustice, not just the symptoms, and in making long-term changes for their members. Most importantly, they are led and directed by the people with the greatest stake in making that change.

There are, however, many social justice movements around the world that have these characteristics, without necessarily being concerned about gender equality or women's rights. It is therefore important to understand what makes a movement feminist. Before we go there, let's understand why movements matter.

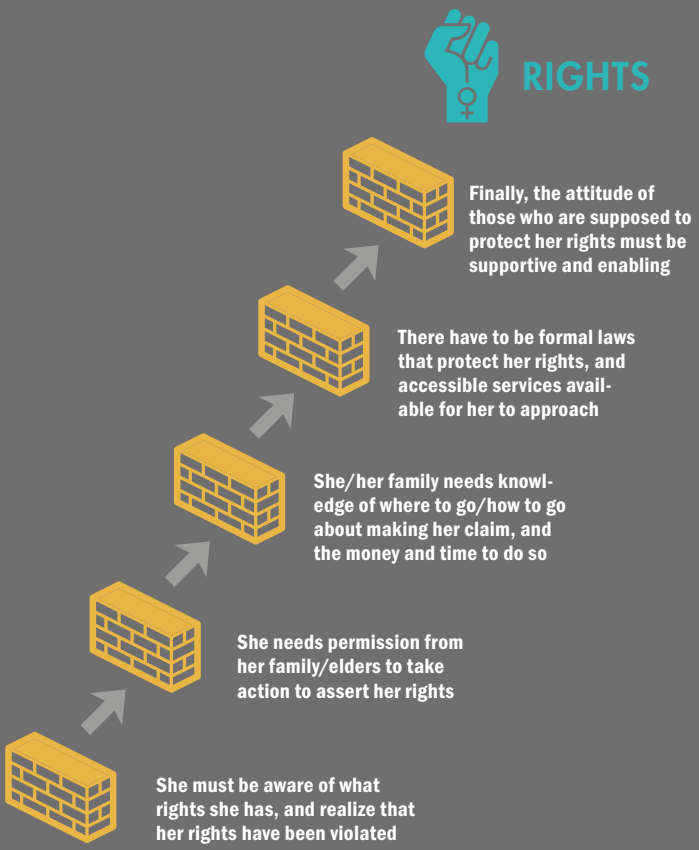
WHY DO MOVEMENTS MATTER?

When the people most affected by an **unjust power structure** organize themselves, the impact is deeper, greater and more sustainable

At its heart, all social change and development work is about shifting power and changing power structures. Power operates in visible, hidden, and invisible ways, not only in public and private spaces but within ourselves, in the way we think and feel about ourselves. Power is based on access to and control over different kinds of resources, and power structures survive by creating ideologies; these ideologies are translated into social norms, perpetuated by social, economic and political institutions, and most of all, through the way we ourselves internalize these ideologies and reproduce these biases and discriminations in our own daily lives and relationships. So deeper, sustainable change requires us to tackle not only the distribution and control of resources and laws and policies, but also discriminatory social norms and our own mindsets or self-images.

Let us use one common example to understand this. There are thousands of credit schemes for poor women in South Asian countries. There is also a lot of data to show that credit and income generation programs for women have increased their access to money and income. But as long as women's roles in housework and care work don't change, and men's attitudes to women don't change, these schemes actually aggravate women's workloads, ill health, and violence against them. Similarly, there may be a strong law to prevent dowry demands or sexual violence, but it is not of much use if there is strong social stigma against reporting these cases because they bring 'shame' to the victim and a 'bad name' to the family. Women must cross multiple barriers to access or claim their rights, such as their own internalized mindsets (especially about what is a 'good woman' or a 'bad woman'), knowledge and awareness of their rights, family attitudes, community expectations and social attitudes.

BARRIERS WOMEN MUST CROSS TO ACCESS THEIR RIGHTS



Suku's story

Suku was married when she was just 16. The law said that girls should not be married before the age of 18 but her family did not want her to be 'spoiled'. Soon after the marriage, her husband and in-laws starting beating and ill-treating her. At first, she suffered this in silence, because she had been brought up believing that a woman should tolerate such things, that she should not bring shame on the family by complaining to others. She honestly thought there was nothing she could do.

An elderly neighbor saw what was happening and told Suku she should complain to the police. She told her there was a law against domestic violence, and her husband and in-laws had no right to beat her. "You are lucky," she said, "there was no such law when I was your age, so we just had to put up with it! But about 15 years ago, the women's movement had a big campaign against domestic violence and convinced the government to pass this new law."

Suku gained some courage from this information. When her father next came to visit her, she told him about the problem, and that she wanted to make a formal complaint. She expected her father to support her – she was his child, after all, and his duty was to protect her from harm. But her father was shocked and absolutely forbade her from doing any such thing. "Don't you dare bring shame on all of us by doing such a terrible thing!" he shouted. He told her to behave properly to avoid provoking the violence, as if it were her fault.

The abuse continued. Finally Suku asked her kind neighbor to accompany her to the police. At the police station, the neighbor asked for a woman police officer to talk to – but there wasn't one. They had to deal with the policeman on duty, a man about the same age as Suku's husband who glared at them. When Suku said she wanted to report domestic abuse, the policeman reacted exactly like her father: "Shameless woman! Coming to the police station to spoil your husband's name and shame his family! Do you have no decency? Go home and do your duty as a decent woman should!"

Her neighbor shouted back: "It is you who have no shame! There is a law against this and you are supposed to help us!" But he only turned his back and walked away. When Suku got home late in the evening, she refused to say where she had been, and had to bear another thrashing from her husband.

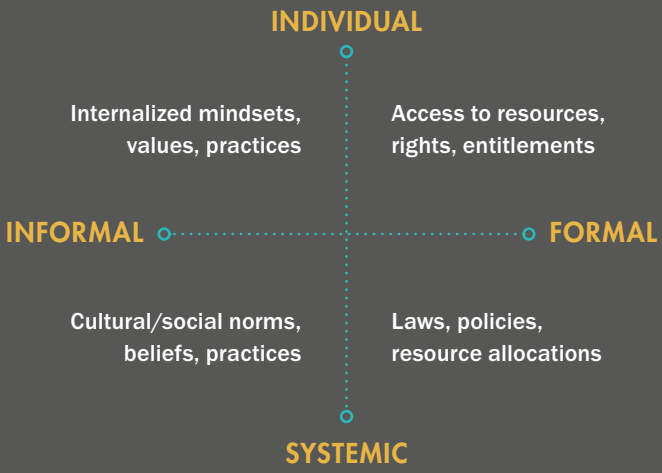
A year later, Suku finally left her husband's home and went to a women's shelter. A woman lawyer helped her file her complaint and, with her old neighbor's help, provide evidence of the abuse she had faced. Suku managed to get a job and make an independent life for herself. The case dragged on for years, but her husband and in-laws were finally found guilty. Only then did Suku file for a divorce, to free herself from this abusive relationship forever.

Suku often thought about how difficult it was for her to access her right to a life free of violence. Why? Simply because even though the law was on her side, social attitudes were not. These attitudes raised so many barriers to prevent her claiming the simple right to a life free of violence.

If you know a story like this, where a woman had to overcome many barriers to claim her rights, write the story down here. Reflect on how the four parts of the framework on the facing page impacted her case, and what were the different walls in the barriers diagram that she had to overcome.

This framework, based on the model developed by Gender at Work,[4] helps us understand Suku's experience – and why movements matter - in a different way.

KEY DOMAINS OF CHANGE FOR TRANSFORMING POWER STRUCTURES



The framework shows that power structures operate from the individual to social/systemic levels, and in both formal and informal spaces. Let us understand what the framework is telling us more clearly.

[4] See https://genderatwork.org/analytical-framework/ for more information

INDIVIDUAL

Internalized mindsets, values, practices

This is about how individuals feel and think within themselves – in psychology, this is called 'consciousness' – and includes what they believe they are capable of, how powerful or powerless they feel, the kind of attitudes and beliefs they hold. This part of the framework reminds us that we cannot change society without changing individuals, and that negative social attitudes and practices are embedded in individual attitudes and behavior. We cannot change the one without changing the other.

INFORMAL

INFORMAL

Cultural and social norms, beliefs, practices

Perhaps most important of all, is the lower left part of the framework – **this refers to the kind of gender norms and rules, attitudes and beliefs that are actually practiced in and by communities at the local level, on a day-to-day basis**. This is often the hardest kind of change to make – changing the social attitudes that justify gender discrimination, violence against women, and various other forms of injustices.

SYSTEMIC

INDIVIDUAL

Access to resources, rights, entitlements

This is about the resources, rights and entitlements that any individual in that society is guaranteed. For example, do the laws of the country formally guarantee gender equality? Does a woman have the right to decide who, when and if she marries, how many children she has, apply for a divorce, or apply for a job? Does she get equal pay for equal work? Does she have the same access and right to education, employment, voting, standing for election, regardless of her race, religion, gender identity, caste, etc.? Are there strong laws against sexual violence that are sensitive to victims? Does a woman have an equal right to apply for – and get a bank loan, old-age pension, or free health care?

FORMAL

FORMAL

Laws, policies, resource allocations

This refers to whether and how far formal policies and laws and national budgets promote equality and reduce socio-economic differences. For instance, are the policies of the country designed to promote equality of opportunity and access in social, economic and political life? Does the government budget allocate sufficient resources for closing the gender gap, to ensure that both boys and girls can go to school, access technical skills and job opportunities, get equal access to credit?

SYSTEMIC

WHY MOVEMENTS MATTER

What does all this tell us about why movements matter? The answer is very simple. What Suku's story, the barriers model, and the Gender at Work framework are all telling us is that if we want to create long-term, sustainable change in the power structures that have oppressed and exploited women and other marginalized people for centuries, we cannot merely focus on changing policies, or giving access to resources through micro-credit, or legal support to survivors of violence. We have to get to the **root causes**: the ideologies of discrimination and subordination that are embedded in our everyday beliefs, practices, 'customs', 'culture', 'traditions', and most of all, within ourselves. We have to tackle and change the structures and institutions through which the discrimination and injustices are sustained – our families, religious institutions, economic systems, our laws. We have to change people's mindsets and internalized attitudes – our own and others' – that believe that these differences and injustices are normal, acceptable, natural.

This means we have to focus on the two boxes on the left.

1. **We have to shift the social norms, beliefs and practices that justify and normalize gendered discrimination, exclusion, and violence.**

2. **We have to change individual mindsets - the way we think and feel and behave, what we treat as acceptable and unacceptable, and our own individual role in either perpetuating discrimination (like Suku's father) or challenging it (like Suku's neighbor).**

This is where movements and movement-building approaches are critical. It is very difficult for external change agents (like an NGO or women's organization) – who will always be seen as 'outsiders', their ideas treated as 'alien', against 'our traditions' and 'our culture' – to make these kinds of changes effectively and sustainably. But when the people most affected by an unjust power structure organize themselves to not only demand changes in discriminatory laws and practices and demand a greater share of resources, but more importantly, challenge social norms and practices, shift their own mindsets and demand that others change their attitudes, then their impact is far greater, deeper, and more sustainable.

To understand this more concretely, go back and reflect on Suku's story and compare it with the story of the Women's Jamaat on pg 71. When the Tamil Nadu women re-examined their own thinking, when they decided to stop upholding and protecting male power and privilege, including the power of the main Jamaat and the biased social norms it was perpetuating, when they decided to reinterpret Islamic law in a more feminist way – they changed everything! And this is what the #MeToo movement did, what Girls at Dhabas did, what campaigns like I Never Asked for It have done. None of these changes happened because of an NGO or a development project – they were the results of movements that mobilized hundreds, thousands, even millions of women. The result is a very deep-rooted change that has impacted larger society, but also the lives of the movement's own members – they see themselves not as victims or beneficiaries of some project, but as powerful social actors building more just and equal societies.

Larger-scale movements have created larger-scale change in a very similar way. Think about this: why is it we no longer believe that it is alright for girls to be kept out of school, given less food or medical care, married off in their childhood, sexually abused, or for women to be beaten by their husbands, paid less for the same work men do, not be allowed to vote in an election, or be denied equal opportunity to become leaders in political institutions, business, or any other public space? Why do we feel these things are wrong when just fifty years ago, they were considered 'natural' and 'normal'? How did this change happen? Was it thanks to an NGO project or development program? Or some enlightened politicians or government?

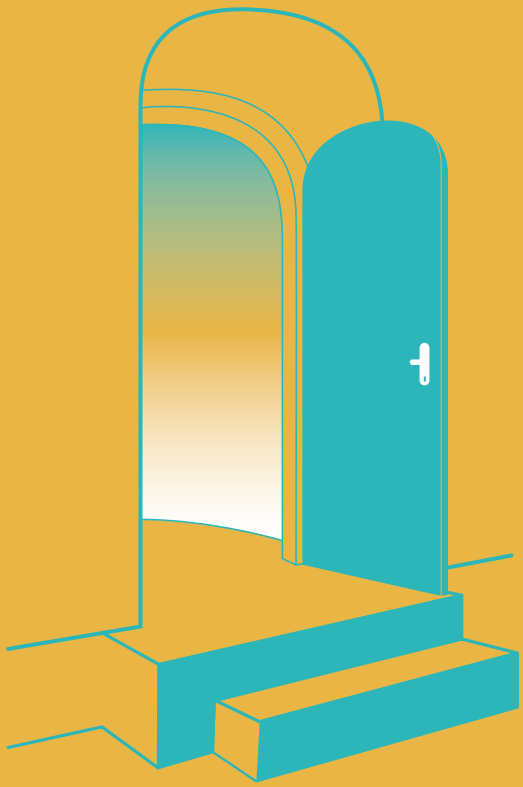
NO. These changes came about because **women's movements around the world**, acting collectively at the national and at the global level, **changed our view of social justice in a very radical way**. They used multiple strategies that demanded an end to gender discrimination in all its myriad forms, and the impact of their struggles is not just more resources and rights for women, or just more gender-equal policies. Women's movements have challenged centuries-old social norms and traditional mindsets to create the radical change in the way women's rights and gender equality are viewed today. We are where we are today, as women, thanks to movements!

So let's remember that….

Movements matter because the people most affected by injustice join hands, organize themselves and act together for the change they seek – and through their collective power and passionate vision of a better world, they create deep and sustainable change.

WHAT IS A FEMINIST MOVEMENT?

Feminist movement building is based on a deeper understanding of how power structures operate, especially patriarchal power



Feminists open the door, and examine how power operates in the most private and intimate spaces

There are movements everywhere in the world that focus on the injustices against women and girls – but they are not necessarily feminist movements. Feminism has a very specific way of analyzing society which is distinct and goes deeper than most other ideologies of social justice. There are at least five reasons why **the feminist vision of social justice is deeper and more inclusive than any other.**

1

Many social justice ideologies embrace the goal of equality, but the problem is they always **stop at the doorstep of the household**, assuming that equality and justice across households is the deepest level to which social justice needs to reach. They are blind to the inequality, violence, and discrimination that exist inside private spaces and relationships. Few other ideologies have recognized how inequality and discrimination survive within our own minds, because of the way we view ourselves, our rights, our place in the world, and what is 'normal' or 'natural'.

2

Feminism, in contrast, recognizes **patriarchy and gender-based discrimination as one of the deepest layers of inequality** in society. This is why feminists realize that equality in terms of laws and policies is not enough; that ending gender discrimination in public institutions is not enough.

3 Which is why **feminists open the door**, and examine **how power operates in the most private and intimate spaces** in which people negotiate their daily lives. Feminists **analyze patriarchal power in both public and private spaces**, in institutions like marriage and the family, within social groups like clans and castes, within racial and ethnic groups, within religious institutions. Feminists know that women participate in their own oppression, and often uphold male power, because of the ideas they have internalized about themselves, and the rewards they are given for protecting male privilege. They analyze how patriarchal power results in multiple forms of inequality, both public and private: in the unfair ways in which both productive and reproductive work (or paid and unpaid work) is assigned based on gender, in domestic violence, in unequal inheritance laws, in the discrimination between sons and daughters, and in who has voice and decision-making power.

4 Most importantly, **feminism recognizes the body and our sexuality as sites of power**, discrimination, stigma, control and violence. Feminists realize that true social justice cannot be achieved as long as we have inequality in the control of our bodies and in the expression of our sexuality, or when we face stigma or violence if we claim the right to do so.

5 **Feminism recognizes our own mindsets and self-image as sites and instruments of power**, both for participating in and perpetuating systems of oppression, as well as for resisting them. That is why feminists have adopted the slogan "the personal is political" meaning we ourselves, our actions and attitudes, either strengthen oppressive power or help dismantle it. Feminism believes change begins with us, and within us, and thus places a responsibility on each individual to reflect the change they want to see in the larger world in their own behavior.

6 Finally, **feminism takes an intersectional approach and recognizes that patriarchal power does not operate alone**, that it is embedded in and works in cooperation with all the other power structures that create inequality in the world: economic power, social and cultural beliefs and practices, social hierarchies like caste, heteronormativity, and others. Feminists call this intersectionality, and the example on the next page explains how intersectionality works.

PATRIARCHAL INTERSECTIONALITY
Why Dalit women have greater freedom of movement

A study of gender power relations in south India was done in the mid-1990s. One of the aspects of women's rights that it examined was freedom of movement: where could women go freely, even on their own? Where could they go only with other women, or only if they were accompanied by their male family members?

It found, surprisingly, that the Dalit women in the village had the greatest freedom of movement, and there were very few places they could not go on their own. In contrast, the dominant-caste women said they were very restricted in their movements, and were really not allowed to go anywhere on their own, not even to the temple or mosque! In fact, the temple was the only place the Dalit women couldn't go, but this was not because they were women, it was because they were Dalit, and even the Dalit men were not allowed in the temple!

Analyzing this data, the researchers realized that this was because patriarchal rules have to work in harmony with the caste system – so they cannot be the same for all women. The norms regarding

freedom of movement cannot be the same for Dalit women and upper-caste women, because this would interfere with the caste power structure: specifically, the power of upper-caste men to control the bodies and labor of oppressed-caste people, especially women. How would upper castes enjoy their privilege if Dalit women were not allowed to go about freely? Who would then work in their farms, clean their houses, wash their clothes?

Dominant-caste women, in contrast, do not 'need' this freedom, and their movements must be carefully controlled to ensure they do not interact with 'lower'-caste people – especially 'lower'-caste men!

This is how intersectionality works. No one power structure is absolute. Each power structure shapes itself to uphold and work alongside other power structures.

Feminist movement building is based on a deeper understanding of how power structures operate, especially patriarchal power.

Feminist movements and movement building therefore tend to have these specific characteristics:

A GENDERED ANALYSIS AND CHANGE AGENDA

Feminist movements analyze gender power and the other intersecting power structures that are at the root of the injustices and discrimination faced by their members. Their change goals reflect this kind of deeper, intersectional understanding of the problem.

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

There are many so-called 'women's movements' where no women from the movement's membership are visible in leadership roles; in fact there are so-called gender equality movements dominated by male leaders! In feminist movements you will see the movement's members as the key thinkers, decision-makers and strategists of the movement, not passive participants whose only role is to take part in marches or rallies organized by external leaders.

GENDERED STRATEGIES

Feminist movements use strategies that are quite distinct and unique, which male-dominated movements may never think of. There are two stories on the next page that illustrate this difference. These strategies usually build on women's own genius for coming up with innovative ideas.

Force-feeding Local Liquor Shop Owners

In the 1990s, impoverished women in the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh began to mobilize to protest against the government's policy of making cheap country liquor available for sale in every village, while basic amenities like water, functioning schools and medical care were not prioritized. The provincial government gained huge revenues from the taxes on the liquor, but this was not ploughed back into providing services that would benefit the poor, especially women. The women began to analyze the impact of liquor in their lives: alcohol-addicted husbands, increased domestic violence due to drunkenness, and most importantly – more than a third of the household income was spent on alcohol rather than food, education, medicines, or other essentials. The women decided to use a uniquely gendered strategy of protest: they surrounded local liquor shops with cooked food in their bags. They forced the shop owners to come out, and then forced them to eat the food they had brought. When the owners protested the women would shout: "WHY? You are taking the food from our stomachs every day! So now eat! Eat our food – and make us starve, the way you have done all these years!" The owners soon shut the shops and ran from the villages, fearing what the women might do next.

I Never Ask for It

The I Never Ask for It campaign – was designed and launched in India by Blank Noise, an India-based organization, but has been adapted and used in other parts of the world. This was a strategy that asked women from all walks of life to send in the clothes they were wearing when they faced sexual harassment or violence in public places like the street, bus or train, parks, bazaars. These clothes were then put up in exhibitions along busy streets or other public spaces where large numbers of passersby would see them. Thousands of women sent in the very ordinary, 'socially acceptable' clothes they were wearing when they faced harassment - sarees, T-shirts, kurtas. This amazing strategy forced ordinary people who were passing by to stop, ask questions, and deal with the reality of how women are targeted in any space, regardless of how they were dressed. Most importantly, it forced people to revisit the widespread myth that women 'invited' harassment by wearing 'provocative' clothes.

Can you think of a movement that has these characteristics?
A deeper feminist analysis of the targeted injustices, an intersectional approach (how different power structures are operating together), the women most affected by the injustice in leadership roles, and innovative, gendered strategies?

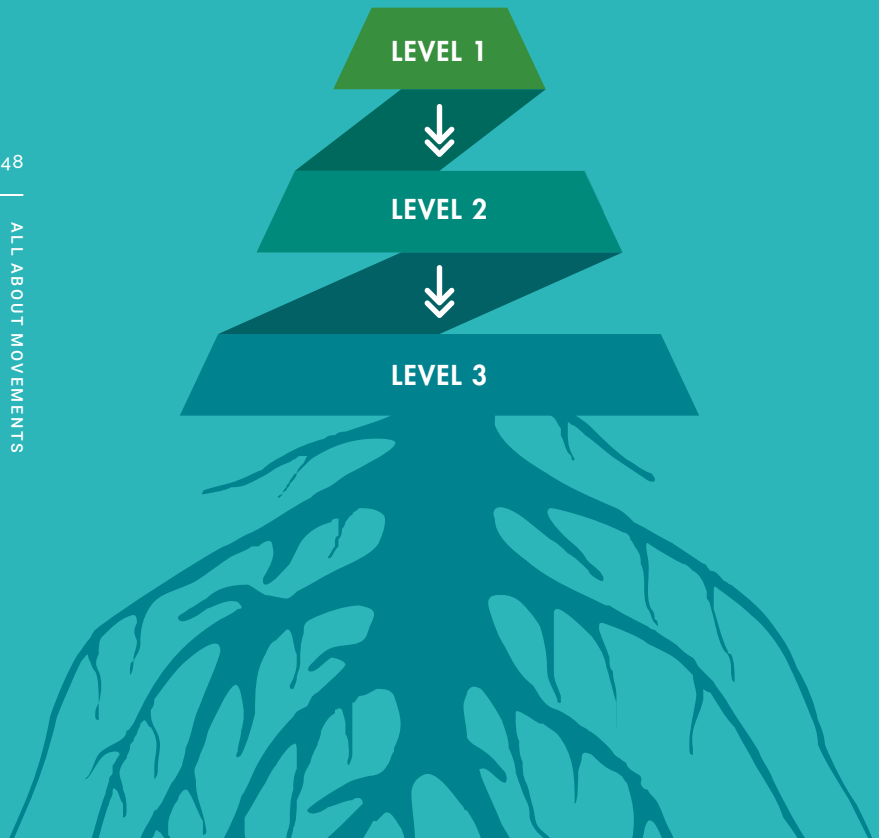
Write your example here, including the name of the movement, where it is located, and why you think it is a feminist movement

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?
Women's Movements and Feminist Movements

What is the difference then between a women's movement and a feminist movement? Before we answer this question, let us recognize what both types of movements have in common: both feminist and women's movements are concerned with the injustices faced by women and girls, and all those who identify as women. These include violence, discrimination, less access to food, health care, education, economic resources, income, assets, higher workloads, low control over their sexual and reproductive choices. Both types of movements also focus on how other social injustices affect women and girls. These include caste or ethnic or religious discrimination, sexualized violence against women and girls during conflicts, the greater impact of environmental degradation, water or food scarcities, or natural disasters on women because of their gendered roles.

The main *difference* between feminist movements and women's movements more generally is in their analysis and goals. **Feminist movements try to address the root causes of gender discrimination, and women's movements tackle more of the symptoms.** Here is an example to help understand the difference.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?
Women's Movement and Feminist Movement



AN EXAMPLE

We have seen a sharp increase in violence against women all over the world, particularly in South Asia. We have also seen that there are several different levels at which individuals and groups intervene to deal with this growing injustice.

LEVEL ONE

At the most basic level are responses that try to help the woman who has experienced the violence: providing her medical care, if necessary, or a safe place to stay to get away from the violator (especially if it is intimate partner violence), giving her support to file a police complaint or legal aid to prosecute the violator and get justice through the courts. **All this is vital and important for that particular woman, but it has little impact on the larger problem.** Even while all this is being done, more women and girls are experiencing all kinds of violence in both private and public spaces.

LEVEL TWO

The second level of intervention realizes there is a larger problem and works towards more collective action to reduce violence. These responses again fall along a wide spectrum, from harass maps to help women avoid unsafe areas, to demands for better street lighting and policing of streets, to the Ring The Bell or Bell Bajao campaign[5] that encouraged neighbors to intervene if they heard domestic violence taking place in the neighboring flat or house.

While these are positive and helpful steps, some of the responses in this category actually end up further policing and restricting women's movements, or blaming the victims for instigating the violence due to their dress or behavior (see the I Never Ask for It campaign on pg 45). For instance, telling women to stay at home, asking parents to control their daughters even more (not their sons!), or allowing women to move about only if accompanied by men. There is little evidence that these steps – both the positive and negative – have lessened violence against women, which continues to rise, and some of these actions actually further restrict women's freedoms and rights, increase family and male control on their mobility, and make gender equality a distant dream.

[5] Read more at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bell_Bajao

[6] See https://wcd.nic.in/act/sexual-harassment-women-workplace-preventionprohibition-and-redressal-act-2013

LEVEL THREE

A third level of intervention on violence against women recognizes the issue as more systemic, and believes that stronger laws, penalties, and policies can reduce violence and ensure women's greater safety. Changing the rape law to shift the burden of proof on the perpetrator, not the victim, and changing the rules of evidence in rape cases, widespread demands for the death penalty for rapists, the landmark Indian law against sexual harassment at the workplace (the POSH Act[6]), naming and shaming highly-placed harassers of women through #MeToo-type campaigns, providing safe transport and escorts for women working late hours in factories and offices, have all been strong steps in terms of legal and policy changes to reduce violence.

Many of these strategies have certainly reduced the sense of impunity that was once the norm, especially among men in privileged positions, have reduced risk for working women in some industries, and created an important shift in public perception to realize that these forms of violence against women are indeed crimes and rights violations, and that they are social, not individual, problems. But have stricter laws and penalties greatly reduced violence against women in private or public? No, they have not. Yet, **many women's movement activists have tended to stop here, or even at the first or second level of intervention**.

ROOT CAUSES

Feminist activists and movements, on the other hand, would understand that ending violence against women requires a long-term strategy that goes to the deepest level, and tackles the very roots of the problem: **the patriarchal values and norms of masculinity that position women as sexual objects, as the property of men**, and that have sanctioned and legitimized violence against women by making it the responsibility of women – through their dress, actions, movements – to prevent violence against them.

Feminists believe that as long as societies allow men and boys to believe that any 'unprotected' woman is a fair target for harassment or violence, or that a wife must tolerate a husband's abuse if she is 'disobedient' or 'displeases' him in any way, violence against women will not end. This does not mean that feminists think that the basic, second-level and third-level measures we have described earlier are useless or should be stopped. On the contrary, they are all necessary and valuable, and feminist organizations have used all these responses. But they will not stop there, because they recognize that they are not enough, and cannot, on their own, eliminate the problem.

The deepest and most effective level of intervention on violence against women, therefore, or the most *feminist* intervention, is to build awareness and mobilize a large mass of people to recognize its root causes, and become part of a deep-rooted change process in themselves, their families and households, their friends, their streets and neighborhoods and villages. A *feminist* change strategy would then include challenging these deeply-embedded norms and

beliefs, changing the entire framework of masculinity, of who is a 'real man', changing the way boys are brought up and their attitudes to women, and creating, in every home and school and community, new male role models whose manhood does not depend on dominating women or violating their bodies and their rights.

This, in a sense, is the essence of the difference between feminist movements and women's movements. Feminist movements recognize that *patriarchy* - operating with other power structures like caste, class, religion, location, heteronormativity etc. - is the *root cause* of injustices against women and girls. Women's movements are not always clear about or even comfortable with this idea, or prefer to deal with the symptoms or effects of these intersecting power structures.

Strategies that only improve women's **condition** (e.g. their health, education, income, employment opportunities), but don't touch their **position** (e.g. their right to equality under law, freedom from violence, equal voice and participation in public and private decision-making) will not help us achieve gender equality, because they are not going to the roots of the problem. Unfortunately, many women's movements are led by people who are uncomfortable with or positively reject feminism and would rather call patriarchy something else, like 'male domination'. They don't want to be labeled feminists because feminism is stigmatized in many societies.

We can actually look at the approaches to gender discrimination as different points on a pathway of change that looks something like this, with each level going to a higher goal and a deeper level of understanding and action.

STEPS ON THE PATHWAY TO GENDER EQUALITY

1

CHARITY/WELFARE APPROACH

'Poor girl'

Strategies at the first step are concerned only with trying to help women and girls affected by injustices, not in understanding the root causes. These are also largely individualistic responses, providing assistance to the affected people, such as income generation programs for widowed or deserted women, nutrition programs for malnourished girls, or rescue homes for girls and women facing violence in their marital homes.

2

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

'This is not fair'

At the next level are interventions that realize that something more systemic is going on, that large numbers of girls and women are facing similar kinds of problems, and that they need to be empowered socially as well as given practical assistance. They see that there is widespread discrimination, and try to organize women to come together to fight the discrimination.

3

GENDER EQUALITY/ WOMEN'S RIGHTS

'Women & men should be equal'

At the third level are interventions that recognize patriarchy as the root of gender discrimination, and gender equality is their long-term goal. They use strategies that combine services, awareness building and mobilizing women to demand their rights, while challenging male-biased laws and policies. However, they may not always question the larger systems within which equality is sought, or address the many other unjust power structures with and through which patriarchy operates (class, caste, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual expression and gender identity, ability, occupation, etc.)

4

FEMINIST SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

'Equality & justice for all'

At the final level are organizations and movements that realize gender equality is not worthwhile within larger socio-economic and political systems that are unjust and unequal. This level of activism takes an intersectional approach and seeks to transform all structures of power – not gender power alone - that are oppressive to people and destroying the planet. They embrace a vision of restructuring all the institutions and systems that uphold injustice and inequality via feminist social transformation.

HOW DO MOVEMENTS BEGIN?

Some movements **begin like a fire.** With a spark that ignites the flames of anger in people's hearts

If we look at the history of social movements around the world, including the movements around us right now, we will see that movements begin in three key ways:

- Through a spark that ignites outrage
- Through conscious, intentional movement-building processes
- Through the networking of individuals and organizations working on a particular issue or change agenda

Let us analyze these pathways in more detail, and concrete examples of each.

SHAKTI SAMUHA in Nepal was launched by survivors of trafficking *https://www.shaktisamuha.org.np*

MOTHERS AGAINST WAR in Sri Lanka emerged during the civil war *(pg 60)*

THE HILL WOMEN'S FEDERATION in Chittagong district of Bangladesh began due to rage against the rape of indigenous women by soldiers *https://www.iwgia.org/en/bangladesh/3235-indigenous-women-target-of-rape-in-land-related-conflicts-in-bangladesh.html*

MANIPUR WOMEN'S MEIRA PAIBEE (Women Torchbearers) was sparked by the sexual abuse of indigenous women by soldiers *https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/if-you-remember-manipuri-women-only-for-nude-protest-against-army-think-again-1436411-2019-01-22*

GRETA THUNBERG, a teenage schoolgirl in Sweden has mobilized a worldwide movement of school students for climate action *https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/47467038*

SEX WORKERS NETWORK Bangladesh launched due to the harassment by police and eviction of sex workers from their homes *https://www.naripokkho.org.bd – Bangla only*

MOTHERS AGAINST WAR SRI LANKA

The 'spark' that ignited the movement: disappearances/ abductions of children and family members

Sri Lanka went through a long civil war from 1983 to 2009, between the forces of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who had been fighting to establish a separate Tamil state in the country's north and east, and the Sri Lankan state. One practice during the war that deeply affected women was the abduction of their teenage children or disappearance of other family members, at the hands of both the LTTE and Sri Lankan forces.

A few mothers met and decided to take action: they walked together to a nearby military camp/detention center, and stood outside carrying placards and holding up pictures of their loved

More at:

https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/sri-lanka/289-sri-lankas-conflict-affected-women-dealing-legacy-war

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-45474584

http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=591:-women-and-peace-in-sri-lanka&catid=130&Itemid=452

https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/inpictures/2015/12/scars-sri-lanka-civil-war-151221062101569.html

ones who had been detained or had gone missing. They raised slogans demanding information and action, seeking the truth and asking for justice. Soon, their actions triggered a strong movement of thousands of other conflict-affected women spearheading protests about the disappearances of their loved ones, catalyzing both national and international attention and response.

This story shows us how sometimes the anger and pain in people's hearts can light a fire that spreads and becomes a strong, sustained movement.

NIJERA KORI BANGLADESH

Nijera Kori has been involved since 1980 in organizing and building movements of the working poor in a number of districts in Bangladesh. It has consistently rejected the service delivery role widespread in the NGO sector of the region. It defines the problem of poverty not just simply in terms of lack of resources but also in terms of lack of voice, agency and organization. Therefore, it seeks to address underlying structural inequities in society rather than simply individual deprivation. **Nijera Kori, in English means 'we do it ourselves'. The organization lives up to its name by building up the collective capabilities of the poor to be informed and demand their rights.**

Nijera Kori has organized marginalized people – especially women – into some 8,622 groups across the country, consisting of 180,000 members, of whom half are women. These groups meet on a weekly basis, contribute to a collective savings fund (to reduce dependence on moneylenders and patrons), elect members to take on organizational responsibilities and participate in various forms of training. As groups mature, they become more independent of NK, calling their own meetings and planning their own actions. NK continues to provide support for activities that cover larger areas and require mediation and advocacy at local, regional and national levels. This boosts self reliance in the region to meet larger goals of transforming society.

More at:

http://nijerakori.org/history/

https://www.jstor.org/stable/40795679?read-now=1&seq=5#metadata_info_tab_contents

Movements can emerge through intentional movement-building processes, where some individuals or an organization – a women's organization, a group of young women, a feminist collective, an NGO – decides to mobilize affected people around one or more injustices that affect them. There are hundreds of examples of movements built like this, especially by women's rights and feminist activists, across South Asia, but here are a few examples that you can read more about.

PINJRA TOD India
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinjra_Tod

GIRLS AT DHABAS Pakistan
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girls_at_Dhabas

JANAJATI MOVEMENT Nepal
http://www.martinchautari.org.np/mc/files/pratyoush_onta_11(2)(1).pdf

DALIT MAHILA SAMITI India *(pg 65)*
https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/changing_their_world_-_dalit_womens_movement_in_india.pdf

EKAL NARI SHAKTI SANGATHAN India
http://www.streeshakti.com/Collection-Safe-Haven.aspx

NIJERA KORI Bangladesh *(pg 62)*
https://nijerakori.org/

DALIT MAHILA SAMITI INDIA

The Dalit Mahila Samiti (DMS) was born in 2002 in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. **It is an organization of the movement of Dalit women seeking to assert their identity as Dalits, working for the transformation of caste equations in the region and the leadership of local women to further Dalit women's interests.** DMS emerged as the result of the movement-building work of Vanangana, a feminist NGO, that had worked since the late eighties to mobilize and organize Dalit women to create their own movement.

DMS uses creative methods to create awareness about the issue of untouchability. They train women performers who go from village to village to enact plays on the caste system and untouchability, and then enrol women members in each village who pledge to work to end such practices. They also invite men to become 'sathidars'- givers of support. DMS works towards changing discriminatory practices at the household and individual level. The movement also works on government schemes like Midday Meals for school children, to ensure that Dalit children are seated and fed alongside children of other castes.

More at:

https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/changing_their_world_-_dalit_womens_movement_in_india.pdf

Finally, there are movements that are created when a number of individuals and organizations come together in networks at the national, regional, or global level, and consider themselves a movement because they have a shared political agenda and goals. These are sometimes called 'meshworks' – meaning webs of activism by individuals, groups, and organizations who connect with each other around a cause or set of goals that they all believe in. Here are a few examples:

NAGRIK AWAAZ Nepal *https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/nepal/peacebuilding-organizations/nagarik-aawaz/ (pg 64)*

NARIPOKKHO Bangladesh
www.naripokkho.org.bd – Bangla only

NATIONAL NETWORK OF SEX WORKERS India
http://nnswindia.org

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES *https://inwwd.wordpress.com*

SLUM & SHACK DWELLERS INTERNATIONAL
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slum_Dwellers_International

GROOTS (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood) *The Huairou Commission https://huairou.org/mission*

WIEGO (Women in the Informal Economy Globalizing and Organizing) *https://wiego.org (pg 67)*

NAGRIK AWAAZ NEPAL

Nepal went through a ten-year long civil war that ended only in 2006. In 2001, when the armed conflict was at its peak, and impacting women and children most severely, a group of concerned development and women's rights activists came together to take action. They created a platform called Nagrik Awaaz - The Voice of the Citizen – and launched a movement for peace and the security of vulnerable people in conflict-affected areas. Many social justice organizations soon joined in. They began to hold dialogues between diverse parties and political groups to understand the longer-term impacts of the conflict and proactively work for peace. Nagrik Awaaz focused strongly on mobilizing young people to play a lead role in peace building and to promote a culture of peace and justice in the country. It played an important role, in partnership with other committed actors, in peace building and helped create safety nets for conflict-affected and marginalized youth and women during and after the civil war.

The Nagrik Awaaz example shows us how movements can emerge when both individuals and organizations come together around a shared agenda or goals.

More at:

https://www.peaceinsight.org/conflicts/nepal/peacebuilding-organizations/nagarik-aawaz/

https://www.facebook.com/naforpeace/

WIEGO WOMEN IN THE INFORMAL ECONOMY GLOBALIZING AND ORGANIZING

WIEGO is a global network focused on securing livelihoods for the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO supports the movements of informal workers – such as domestic workers and street vendors - especially women workers, through research, capacity building, advocacy, and a global space and voice.

The WIEGO Network consists of individuals and institutions from three broad constituencies: membership-based organizations (MBOs) of informal workers such as trade unions, cooperatives, and worker associations; researchers and statisticians who carry out research and data collection on the informal economy and the issues of informal workers; and practitioners from development agencies (inter-governmental, governmental, and non-governmental) who engage with informal workers in various ways.

WIEGO's institutional members include the International Domestic Workers Federation, Streetnet (International street vendors network), Homenet South Asia and Southeast Asia (federations of home-based workers) and the International Union of Food and Allied Workers, together representing over a million informal sector workers spread across the world.

More at:

https://www.wiego.org/about-us

HOW ARE MOVEMENTS BUILT?

Movements are built by **creating spaces** where people can come together to think and speak radical thoughts, and plan radical deeds to change their reality

One of the best ways to understand movement building is through the story of an actual movement. There are hundreds of movements in South Asia, and thousands of movements around the world, many of which are feminist movements… so it is not easy to choose one movement story.

Nevertheless, we have chosen the following story because it shows us all the important steps in the movement-building process.

STEPS AND THE WOMEN'S JAMAAT MOVEMENT
TAMIL NADU, INDIA

In 1990, when she was just 22 years old, Sharifa Daud Khanum, from the small town of Pudukottai, in Tamil Nadu state of south India, attended a national women's conference in India as a translator. She was moved and inspired by the stories of pain, exploitation, oppression, resistance, courage and struggle for justice that she heard there. She decided to go back and work for women who faced discrimination and violence in her own community.

After her return, she actively reached out and persuaded a few like-minded women and men to join her in setting up an organization to work for the empowerment of women in Pudukottai District: they called it STEPS.

STEPS began with poster campaigns to raise awareness of violence against women and gender discrimination, and by offering self-defense courses to girls in schools. They also implemented government programs for marginalized women, especially non-formal education and savings and credit schemes. Many Muslim women joined the savings and credit groups, and began to talk to each other about the problems they were facing in their lives – domestic violence, husbands marrying a second wife and pushing them out of the home with no resources, loss of custody of their children, fathers sexually abusing their daughters, and triple talaaq divorce. Listening to their problems, Sharifa realized that providing these women loans and literacy without addressing these more fundamental and serious issues in their lives was pointless. She also saw that when these women approached their community council

– the Jamaat – for justice, the Jamaat always gave judgments in favor of men. Like most such clan, tribe, or community councils everywhere in the world, it was a male-dominated body interested in protecting male power and privilege, rather than in assessing the real facts of a case. Sharifa soon realized that women would never receive justice from the Jamaat.

Sharifa was convinced that there could be no sanction for such unfairness within the Qu'ran (the Holy Book of Islam) and Shari'a (the book of Islamic laws), so she and her core team began to study both. They soon realized that the guidelines of the Shari'a were being distorted and misinterpreted to uphold men's power and control over women.

Thus, STEPS began doing Shari'a workshops for women, and supporting women to challenge unfair judgments in matters involving dowry, divorce, domestic violence, child custody and abuse. But this led to a backlash. Attempts to seek assistance from the police also backfired, as the police were reluctant to interfere in these 'private' and 'community' matters, and referred the matters back to the Jamaat.

Sharifa and her team then decided to build a Federation of Muslim Women and create their own Jamaat, which they called the Tamil Nadu Muslim Women's Jamaat. The local religious leaders immediately declared it illegal and threatened to excommunicate Sharifa – she was called a prostitute, an unbeliever, a shameless woman who did not wear a burqa or cover her head, and her life was threatened. Sharifa defied them: "When every Muslim man in this community stops taking dowry, and starts paying meher (the Islamic system of bride price), I will start wearing a burqa!" She was also unafraid because the movement had grown very

strong – the Muslim Women's Federation had 6000 card-holding members and branches in 10 districts of Tamil Nadu state and nearly 5000 of these women – including large numbers of women of other communities – had also joined the micro-credit groups.

The Federation also created a very clear agenda of change:

- To **help** Muslim women to get together and have a safe space to express their feelings and discuss the issues most important to them
- To **free** Muslim women from the male-controlled Jamaats and get a new social space and standing within the local Muslim community
- To **advocate** for proper internal control systems within the main Jamaat to reduce the number of biased and male-oriented judgments
- To **reduce** the number of one-sided and arbitrary 'talaaqs' (divorces)
- To **propagate** education and health among Muslim women
- To **work** for rights and justice for all its members, regardless of religion

The Women's Jamaat proceeded bravely, holding hearings on family disputes, and soon gained a reputation for fairness, procedural correctness, and impartiality. In a couple of years, not only women but men began approaching the Women's Jamaat for justice, despite the warnings of the religious leaders. Impressed by their work, the local District Administrator provided land for STEPS to construct a women's center, which soon became the STEPS office, the Women Jamaat's meeting place, a crisis center and a shelter for women in distress.

By 2010, the movement and the Women's Jamaat had grown from strength to strength and achieved a great deal. It had educated women about their rights under Shari'a law as well as the Indian Constitution; trained selected movement leaders - especially divorced, deserted and widowed women - across their multiple locations to steer the Federation and conduct the work of the Jamaat. It had created legal aid cells to investigate and address cases; arbitrated and meted out judgments in nearly 200 cases brought to them; and sensitized men on violence against women and women's rights, including under Shari'a law. Most remarkably, the Women's Jamaat constructed a women's mosque, and trained women members to call the Azaan (the call to prayer).

Most of all, the Women's Jamaat movement had gained huge support among marginalized women of all communities, and their leaders were widely respected. They networked with elected representatives and the judiciary at local, state and national level, and with the media, civil society, academic, and other organizations.

[7] You can also watch an excellent film of the Women's Jamaat's story, called *Invoking Justice*, by feminist filmmaker Deepa Dhanraj, here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7YnTgjfB_8

We should celebrate and honor STEPS and the Tamil Nadu Women's Jamaat not only for inspiring us, but for teaching us so much about how to build a movement[7]!!

We can see that the Women's Jamaat has all the key characteristics of a strong movement: an organized membership of the people most affected by injustice and with the greatest interest in creating change, who have come together, framed their change vision / agenda, created both formal (the Federation) and informal organizations (local women's groups) through which its members participate and shape their movement. It has built leadership from within the constituency at multiple levels, undertaken joint actions in pursuit of its change goals, it has used multiple strategies, and it has been in existence for a good period of time.

We can also see that the Tamil Nadu Women's Jamaat is a feminist movement, even if they don't call themselves that, because:

- They have adopted feminist values and goals of equal space, voice and rights for women
- They have a very gendered analysis of the injustices they are facing, including the very patriarchal nature of the main Jamaat
- Their strategies are very gendered (building a women's mosque!)
- Not only are the mass of their members women, but women are leading the movement at all levels
- Most importantly, they embrace a very feminist vision of transforming their community that goes to a deep level of change

What does this story teach us about the steps in movement building? Those who have studied the STEPS/Women's Jamaat movement closely, and know its history, would track its journey through the following steps or pathways:

KEY STEPS IN MOVEMENT BUILDING

Safe spaces are essential for marginalized people to think dangerous thoughts, speak dangerous words, and plan dangerous deeds! Because challenging the power structures that marginalize them is dangerous work.

Let's walk through these steps to see what each means.

1. Perception of Injustice

Almost every movement everywhere in the world – and certainly the Women's Jamaat – begins when some individual or group of individuals suddenly begins to see an ongoing injustice with new eyes, with new awareness. They decide that "Enough is enough! It's time to confront and stop this from happening!"

This was the awakening Sharifa, for instance, had when she attended the national women's conference and began to see how male power and privilege were operating in her community and home district, and how subjugated women were as a result.

2. Inspired, determined leadership

They then begin to talk to and explain to others – especially those affected by the problem – that it's time to make a change. They are strong and determined, and provide an initial kind of leadership to encourage others to get together and figure out how to end the injustice.

This is exactly what Sharifa did – she would not rest and quickly inspired several others to join in the effort to deal with the many injustices Muslim women were facing in her area.

3. Create space and gather to discuss the injustice

But this process requires time and space – and not just any space, but a safe space where they can speak freely and discuss the issue openly. This is a key stage in movement building because the issues that women particularly want to confront need to be discussed in a different way, a radical way that challenges the dominant values and social norms. This can be dangerous, so safe spaces need to be found or created.

In the case of the Women's Jamaat, the savings and credit meetings provided that safe space, because no one would suspect what the women were really talking about here!

Other movements have used literacy classes, health education groups, and other such innocent-sounding spaces.

4. Frame a preliminary agenda for change

As people begin to gather in that safe space and talk about their anger, pain, and need for change, they also begin to analyze the causes of the injustice they want to confront – they locate key actors, the social norms and dynamics that have kept them silent, the policies and laws that have to change, the forces of oppression that must be challenged.

For the Women's Jamaat, this was the process of studying the Q'uran and the Sharia and realizing there was no basis in the religion for most of the injustices they were facing – they saw that it was not religion but patriarchy that was responsible for their situation.

5. Raise awareness, mobilize, and organize others affected by the injustice around the agenda

This is when they begin to see that change will not come if only a handful of affected people confront the injustice - they need to mobilize others with similar experiences, and build greater collective power. Thus the next step is to move from one small core group to mobilizing others, and convincing more people to join in the struggle for change. This is the stage when the process is beginning to emerge as a movement.

The decision to create the Tamil Nadu Muslim Women's Federation was a clear example of this – of building a strong membership base for the movement.

6. Expand leadership base

For this process to be sustained, one single leader – no matter how charismatic – is not enough. Strong, committed leadership has to be built at multiple levels.

This is what the movement did, as more and more women within the different units began to take on leadership roles, lead action, and gained the trust and respect of others.

7. Identify & implement strategies and actions for change

When the mobilization process has reached a certain size, and people feel they have some strength in numbers, they begin to talk about strategies for change, and identify and prioritize concrete actions.

In the case of the Women's Jamaat, they challenged and asked the male Jamaat to reconsider its decisions because they were biased and unjust towards women, they approached the police, and when neither of these strategies worked, they formed their own Jamaat and began to adjudicate the cases in a totally different way, with a very feminist approach.

8. Visibility and backlash

A movement's first concrete actions are also the first time it becomes visible to the larger world – until then, it has been visible only to its own members. But with this initial visibility often comes backlash – the power structure suddenly realizing it is being challenged, and that too by quite a well-organized set of people, not just a few here and there.

We saw, for instance, how the main Jamaat immediately declared the Women's Jamaat illegal, and threatened to excommunicate Sharifa as a punishment for her role in building the movement that was challenging their power and authority.

9. Absorb gains

Alongside the backlash, though, there are successes and gains that are also achieved.

The Women's Jamaat not only saw that they could create a more just and balanced arbitration process of their own, but soon, many community members also saw this and began approaching the Women's Jamaat with their issues, ignoring the male-dominated Jamaat.

10. Expand participation and systematize governance

Another thing that happens after a movement's initial actions for change, is that many of those people who had refused to join it earlier out of fear, are now willing to become part of the movement.

When its membership is growing, a movement has to create more systematic internal governance and decision-making systems, so that it does not reproduce the hierarchies of power and privilege that it is fighting against in the larger social structure.

In the early days of the Women's Jamaat, many of the savings and credit group members declined to join, fearing it would be quickly crushed by the men's Jamaat or the larger community. When they saw this didn't happen, they began joining it as full-fledged members.

The Women's Jamaat did this by setting up regular meetings to discuss strategies and priorities, so that all its members had a voice in its decision-making.

11. Build new analysis of their situation

It is often at this stage – after some initial actions, and experiencing both backlash as well as gains, and a growing membership – that the movement begins to re-analyze the situation and assess where it is. The members begin to deepen their understanding of the power dynamics they have to challenge and change.

For Sharifa and her fellow leaders, it was this deeper analysis that led to the decision to build a women's mosque, to train paralegals and create cells in different districts to claim women's rights, and to build external support in the form of alliances with key people in the media and the administration.

12. Deepen the change agenda & identify new strategies & sites of action

The movement now enters a new phase of growth, deepening its change agenda, and developing new strategies of action, and new locations and actors that it will engage.

This is what the Women's Jamaat did when they began to engage with elected representative locally and provincially, with the media, and became members of International networks like Women Living Under Muslim Law.

In other words, the cycle – from Step 7 onwards, begins all over again.

DO ALL MOVEMENTS HAVE TO FOLLOW THESE STEPS?

Obviously, each movement is unique and has its own unique way of growing. For example, some movements may begin to act internally first, before they engage any external actors or targets – they organize their own constituency into strong units and create strong practices that meet the members' needs in some way, and help them learn to work together, make decisions together, and hold each other accountable.

In the case of the Women's Jamaat, the savings and credit groups were the first form that its activism took, to bring women together regularly, to help them save money and get loans, and to have a space to talk about their problems. Similarly, domestic workers and sex workers movements, indigenous and Dalit women's movements, workers unions, students movements, have often focused first on organizing themselves, before challenging others or state policies. And many of these movements have also focused first on changing the mindsets and attitudes of their own members and the communities around them, and then moved on to questioning larger policies, laws, and external discrimination.

What this map gives us is the essential elements that actually go into making a movement strong and rooted. It is based not just on one movement's journey, but on the journeys of hundreds of the world's strongest and most effective movements that we have studied. We cannot find a movement – not just in name but in reality – that has not gone through these steps!

MOVEMENTS HAVE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF CLOSENESS

If we look back at the story of the Women's Jamaat, we can see that this is a very close-knit, tight movement, with members who share very similar backgrounds, location, issues, and interests. Although the Jamaat is part of several international women's networks, its main focus is on creating tangible changes for its members where they live.

Other movements operate on a larger level – a national, regional or global level, for instance. So when we say the women's movement of Bangladesh, or India, or Nepal, for instance, or the international movement of sex workers or migrant workers or indigenous women, we are talking about a different kind of membership, a broader change agenda, and different strategies and forms of participation. Movements at these levels are 'looser', with both individuals and organizations as members. Their members are from diverse backgrounds and locations, don't necessarily meet regularly – either virtually or actually – or take regular action in pursuit of their goals. What binds them together is a sense of solidarity, a shared analysis of a range of challenges affecting women and other oppressed gender identities (like gay or trans people) in their country, and the knowledge that when government policies or specific incidents occur that violate their principles, they will act together in some visible way. This is what happened when a young woman was raped and murdered in a bus in New Delhi in December 2012, and women's groups and youth organizations all over India came out to protest in candlelight vigils and marches. This is also what happened in Bangladesh in 2018 when thousands

VARYING MOVEMENT DENSITIES

MESHWORKS

Broad agendas that connect a diverse range of individuals, organizations, and movements in multiple locations, acting together only occasionally

LOOSER MOVEMENTS

Multiple constituencies, locations and issues, broader agendas, meeting and acting together occasionally on specific issues/goals

TIGHTLY ORGANIZED MOVEMENTS

Specific constituencies, with specific goals, agendas, and locations, meeting and acting regularly

of women assembled on the streets in Dhaka to protest against sexual harassment and violence.

At an international or global level, movements become even looser, with individuals, organizations, and even other movements and networks participating, much broader change agendas, and very different kinds of change strategies but again, they are bound together by a shared commitment and set of goals, and occasional joint actions. One Billion Rising is a good example of this – it is a global movement to end violence against women and girls. Every year, in every corner of the world, during the week of February 14th, groups and individuals supporting the movement come out in large numbers and make themselves visible (such as through mass dancing on the streets) to make an impact. This diagram illustrates the different levels of 'tightness' or 'looseness' of movements, and there can be lots of levels and degrees of closeness or looseness in between.

These looser movements are sometimes called 'meshworks' – meaning they are loose webs of activism that act together from time to time, but share a broad agenda of change, such as protecting women's rights or advancing gender equality. The environment movement, labor movement, economic justice movement, human rights movement, are all similar examples of global 'meshworks' with individuals, organizations, movements, labor unions, scholars and researchers, and diverse networks and associations being part of them.

HOW ARE ONLINE MOVEMENTS DIFFERENT?

The boundary between online and onground movements has completely blurred

HOW ARE VIRTUAL MOVEMENTS DIFFERENT?

This is an important question, since today we see a lot of movement building happening online, through virtual platforms like Facebook and Twitter. When we analyze these, we see that many online movements follow a very similar path: an individual or group identifies an issue or problem or injustice that they believe has to be stopped or changed, and she/they decide to start an online campaign on this issue. They will often create a Facebook page or write a blog in a popular blogspace or start a Twitter campaign to raise awareness about the issue and gather support from others who feel the same way. They mobilize hundreds, or even thousands of other people around the issue, and through this process, their analysis and change agenda may expand and deepen. Soon, they decide to take some action together – either online, or on the ground, or both. They act, and face backlash on one side (including cyber harassment, such as trolling and online abuse, or hacking or freezing of their website or Facebook page); but they also experience some gains - more supporters rally to their cause, or the campaign reaches key people like politicians, a government body, or the head of a company.

Let's listen to the story of one of the most famous online movements of recent times: the #MeToo movement!

THE #METOO MOVEMENT

The #MeToo movement is a movement against sexual harassment, sextortion (demanding sex in return for some benefit), and sexual violence, especially of women and girls from poor and discriminated/oppressed races and communities. The phrase "Me Too" was initially used by sexual harassment survivor and activist Tarana Burke of the USA, who launched the movement in 2006 with a post on the social media platform myspace. Burke decided to make her experience of sexual harassment and violence public, and to call on other women with similar experiences to come out in the open – to say this happened to Me, Too! – support one another, challenge their harassers, demand justice, and end these practices, especially by men in positions of power.

In October 2017, the movement began to spread virally as a hashtag on social media, when well-known Hollywood actresses began to name film producers who had sexually exploited them, with one of the actresses asking all women who had experienced sexual abuse of any kind to write #MeToo as their status on their social media profiles. With millions of women doing this, in all corners of the world, the extent of the problem, and the fact that it cuts across borders, cultures, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation became evident. The movement took on different names in different locations and languages, but spread rapidly.

The #MeToo movement's main goal is to break the silence around issues like sexual abuse and violence, end the stigma and shaming of the victim and shift the focus, name and shame to those who commit these crimes, use social media and traditional media to call attention to these crimes and challenge the state to take action. But as its founder-leader Burke emphasizes, the movement's strategies are designed to empower women through empathy, a safe space, voice, resources for taking action, and building strength in numbers. It has been an especially powerful movement space for young and vulnerable women from oppressed and marginalized social groups, offering emotional support and practical guidance, while ensuring them anonymity until they choose to identify themselves.

Widespread media coverage and discussion of sexual harassment has led to legal proceedings against several high-profile men – the most notorious of whom was found guilty by an American court and sentenced to prison – but also criticism and backlash. Many who joined the movement were abused online and threatened in real life. Over time, the #MeToo movement's agenda has broadened and deepened, and it is now positioned as a movement for justice not just for women but for all marginalized people from marginalized communities.

There are several important differences in online/virtual movements that are worth noting:

A space to build new or challenge existing discourse: Meaning a set of ideas, social norms, and ways of viewing and analyzing issues, and what is right and wrong. Digital spaces have become critical sites where women – especially young women – have chosen to challenge dominant ideologies and ways of thinking, and to frame new ideas and perspectives. They have also given a space and voice to people who may be silenced or stigmatized in their own contexts – people who don't fit into the accepted social molds, such as LGBTQI people or sex workers or disabled people.

Build connections and solidarity across traditional boundaries: Online movements have enabled people to connect with each other in ways that were not possible before the digital era. Violence survivors, artists, singers, poets, people with new ideas or affected by the same issues but living thousands of miles apart. It has enabled new linkages between and across movements as well. This has created a whole new form of solidarity, collective power, and resistance, and the possibility of bringing together diverse actors who may never have otherwise connected.

Different notions of 'membership' and 'participation': Forms of engagement within virtual movements work very differently. They cannot be the same as the Women's Jamaat example. Very few virtual movements require or can ask for formal membership, the way the Tamil Nadu Muslim Women's Federation could. Virtual movements tend to be more fluid, more open, with new participants entering and older ones exiting, although they always have a core leadership and membership that remains constant.

New ways of organizing and movement building: Many of the initial mobilization techniques of virtual movements are quite unique and creative. For example, audio-visual communication tools play a critical role in raising awareness and mobilizing people: memes, GIFs, songs, pictures and videos, personal testimonies, which have a powerful impact of their own. These are particularly effective and appealing to young people, who tend to be the majority of those who become part of virtual movement-building processes.

The most important thing to recognize, however, is that the boundary between 'online' and 'on-ground' movements has completely blurred. Few movements remain entirely virtual - because they usually engage in real-time, on-the-ground actions at some point or another. The #MeToo movement, for instance, has resulted in hundreds of harassment and rape complaints being filed in courts around the world, marches and protests by survivors demanding government action and public support, lists of offenders going viral but also leading to formal complaints to their employing institutions/companies/government departments. Anti-violence movements have used very creative strategies such as awareness-raising of the public to increase intervention by 'bystanders' who witness harassment in public places, and in women of all ages 'occupying' and 'loitering' in public spaces like parks or restaurants to demonstrate their right to be in these spaces without fear or harassment. Here is a wonderful example of this strategy.

> "The internet has become a powerful site of movement building, especially for people and issues that were once invisible and silenced, and for building linkages across many kinds of boundaries."

GIRLS AT DHABAS: CHANGING SOCIAL ATTITUDES

Girls at Dhabas is a multi-city movement of young women in Pakistan that aims to challenge the stigma against women being in public spaces like roadside eateries (called dhabas) traditionally dominated by men. The movement was started in 2015 by a young woman who posted pictures of herself eating in such places on social media, and encouraged other women to do the same, using the hashtag #girlsatdhabas. The images went viral across South Asia and led to organized gatherings and events offline, from cricket playing in the streets to bike rallies in Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad, as young women symbolically occupied public places, asserting their right to be there unaccompanied, without being harassed or attacked. In March 2018, Girls at Dhabas organized an Aurat March (Women's March) on the occasion of International Women's Day, in a show of strength. The movement has faced a lot of online backlash from conservative people who believe it is against traditional culture and values of the region. They believe "good girls" should be at home!

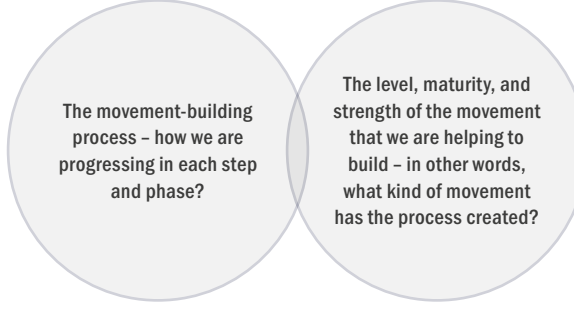
HOW DO WE ASSESS MOVEMENTS?

What happens to movements that don't step back, from time to time, to critically assess their progress and their movements?

ASSESSING MOVEMENTS AND MOVEMENT-BUILDING WORK

How do we assess and evaluate movements and movement building work? Since movement building is very different from other kinds of gender equality work – such as running short-term projects, or providing women micro-credit or legal aid or health care – we need a different approach. We cannot understand where we are in movement building by focusing on **activities** – we have to look at the distinct **steps** and **processes** in order to assess how far we have progressed. We also need different tools to assess the movement-building process, our own capacity and progress in doing movement-building work, and the actual level of growth, strength or maturity of the movement itself. So when we are building movements, or participating in or leading them, it is important to step back, from time to time, and analyze where we are, and how far we have reached.

In the movement context, we have to assess two distinct aspects:



There are different frameworks and tools available to help us do this. In this section, we offer a few that will be helpful for both aspects to be assessed:

1 **Assessing the movement-building process:** use the various 'steps' in movement building (described earlier in this primer pg 76), and assess which steps have been completed, or have been skipped, or have to be started all over again. In this section, we offer a way of converting the steps into questions that help us assess where we are in movement building.

2 **Understanding the different stages of movement growth and level of maturity** of the movement, in order to know which level our movement is at, and what is required to move it to the next level. We could also use the JASS We Rise Movement Building Toolkit to gauge our progress. *https://werise-toolkit.org/en/toolkit*

3 **Assessing the level and strength of movements:** The Movement Building Capacity Assessment Tool developed by the Global Fund for Women, which is based on but expands many of the concepts in this primer, is available at *https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/mcat/#download-tool,* and two key sections are shared here.

ASSESSING THE MOVEMENT BUILDING PROCESS: USE THE VARIOUS 'STEPS' IN MOVEMENT BUILDING

MOVEMENT BUILDING
PHASE 1

1.

TRACKING THE STEPS COMPLETED IN MOVEMENT BUILDING

This is a simple way to assess the movement-building process, not the strength or maturity of the movement itself. Use the 'steps' diagram and discuss which stage of movement building you have reached, and how many cycles you have gone through after once completing all these steps. To assess where you are in the first stage of movement building, use this diagram and track which steps you have completed, what problems you have faced, or where you have got stuck and what might help the movement to move to the next step. To do this, you will have to convert each step into one or more questions – here are some examples about how to turn each step into a question that helps you assess your movement-building process.

STEP 1 could be: How many among those affected by the injustice actually recognize it as injustice? Who is beginning to speak up about the injustice?

STEP 2 could be: Are there at least a few people - from among those affected, or those working with affected people - who feel strongly and passionately enough to bring others together around this issue?

STEP 3 could be: Has a space been created for those affected by the issue to meet regularly and talk about it? Is this space accessible, safe, and inclusive for all those concerned about the issue to gather and discuss?

STEP 4 could be: What positive results have the movement's actions produced? How have the movement's members benefited from these or what positive changes have they experienced?

MOVEMENT BUILDING PHASE 2

When this entire first phase of movement building is over, and the movement has clearly and visibly emerged as an actor for justice, use this next set of steps to track the next stage of the movement journey, to check whether the movement is growing or stagnating at the same level it was in the earlier phase. Again, convert each step into a set of questions.

16.

Build alliances with other movements/ groups who have similar goals

17.

Further action/s for change

19.

Confront & deal with new forms of backlash

18.

Absorb further gains

20.

Analyze the new strategies & multiple layers of situation, further deepen/sharpen change agenda

2.

ASSESSING A MOVEMENT'S LEVEL OF GROWTH AND MATURITY

Even as you use the STEPS tool, you can also assess the level of growth and maturity of the movement that has emerged through this process. Because just like the people who build and participate in them, movements grow, change, and mature, and sometimes, they also decay and die! Healthy movements are like us – they have an infancy, childhood, and adulthood, growing in maturity and impact over time, and many also become old and eventually die. This is because as we saw in the steps in movement building, movements actually go through a cycle that continually deepens their understanding, their change agenda, and their strategies, as they undertake collective actions, and learning from their gains, losses and backlash. In this process, their membership also grows, changes or sometimes even shrinks as their agenda and strategies shift over time. And unless this cycle keeps going, movements become static and die because they are no longer serving a purpose for their members. Sometimes, of course, movements also fade away because they have succeeded, and are no longer required.

The independence movements in India and Bangladesh are good example of this. Other movements die because they were defeated – such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan which failed to prevent the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in western India despite 30 years of powerful movement building, mass mobilization and support of lakhs of people, and incredibly strong advocacy at both national and global levels.

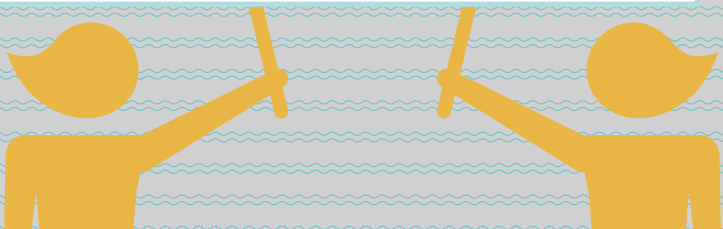
The study of multiple movements around the world has therefore shown that there are stages of growth and maturity in movements, and each stage has certain qualities. These are useful to unpack, because they give us some criteria to assess our own movements, which stage they are at, and provide clues about what we need to do to grow our movements to the next level of strength and maturity. These four charts show us some of the key features of movements at four levels of growth and maturity. These levels do not mean that those in the early stages are failures, and those in the later stages are successes. They simply give us a roadmap to help understand where we are and where we may want to go – or stop ourselves from going!

STAGE 1
MOVEMENTS IN THE MAKING

- Issues/injustices that need to be tackled have been identified
- There is a core of leaders/members committed to creating the needed change
- Affected people are being mobilized, their awareness is growing, and a new sense of identity with the cause is emerging
- The issues/injustices are being analyzed, root causes identified, and preliminary goals/change agenda is emerging
- Affected people are coming together regularly, in some structured way
- Some initial change actions are being tried

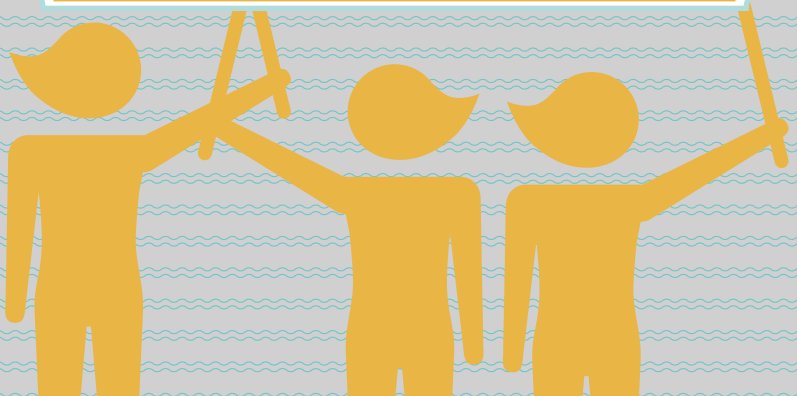
STAGE 2
EMERGING MOVEMENTS

- Steady and sustained membership base, and members have a higher awareness and understanding of the issues/injustices affecting them.
- Movement is creating clearer organizational structures for its members to meet and discuss
- Change strategies are evolving and the change agenda is becoming longer term, and going to deeper roots of the injustices
- As the movement's organizational structures evolve, new layers of leadership, and clearer systems of decision-making and movement governance are emerging
- The movement is now reaching out to and building relationships with external allies who support the cause or have similar change agendas
- The movement is creating visible impacts: on social attitudes, public opinion, policy, law, their own community, etc.
- As a result, the movement is also beginning to face backlash and setbacks



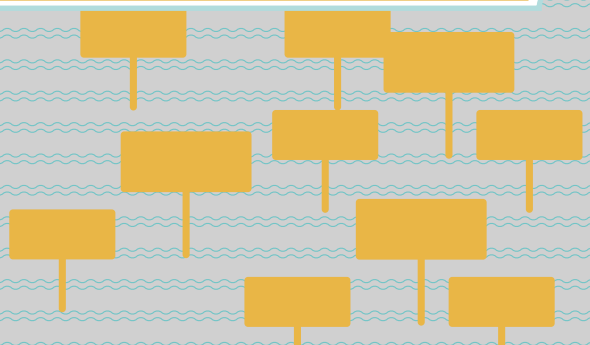
STAGE 3
MATURE MOVEMENTS

- Strong and sustained (but not static) membership base that consciously identifies with the movement
- Strong autonomous organizational and governance structure
- Extensive and deep leadership
- Complex strategies, sustained activism
- Deep and dynamic political analysis, strategies, and long-term change agendas
- High measurable impact on state and non-state actors, and society at large
- The movement has built both long-term alliances and earned some enemies!



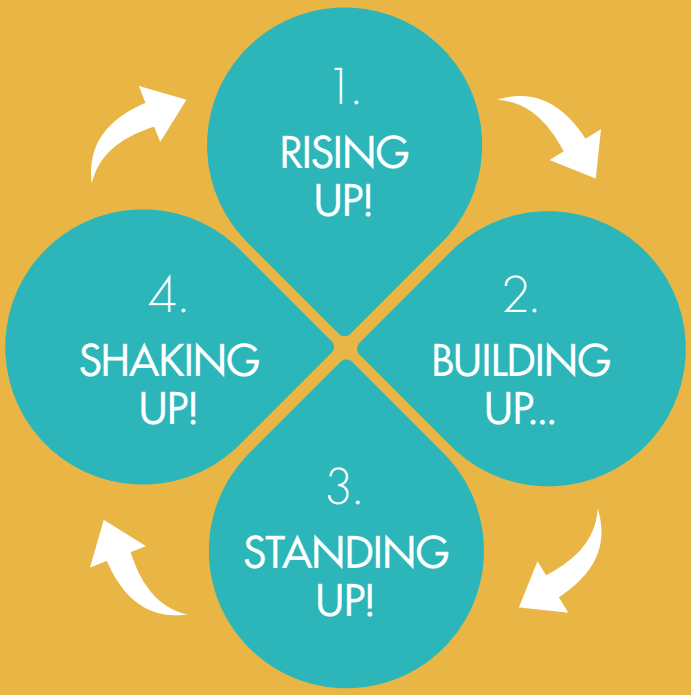
STAGE 4
STATIC/DYING MOVEMENTS

- Stagnant or declining membership base
- The movement's change agenda has become rigid, unchanging, its analysis/agenda has become outdated, lost relevance and appeal
- The movement's strategies are stale, and have limited or declining impact
- The movement is unable to respond to changing political/economic/social environment and the new challenges they are throwing up
- All these problems are often because there is a rigid leadership system that keeps out new people and new ideas, voices
- Other new movements have risen up and drawn away people, because they have more attractive, timely issues, analysis, strategies and leadership



FOUR PHASES OF MOVEMENT BUILDING: **THE JASS FRAMEWORK**

Another way of looking at stages of movement growth is to use the JASS[8] framework.[9]



[8] www.justassociates.org
[9] https://werise-toolkit.org

Let us explore what these four steps are about, and how they incorporate the steps in our earlier diagram:

1 **RISING UP** **(steps 1 – 4 in the movement steps diagram)** is the stage when an individual or small group of people decide to tackle an injustice, have determined leadership that creates space and time to gather and discuss the issue with others, and the framing of a preliminary agenda for change

2 **BUILDING UP** **(steps 5 and 6 of the movement steps diagram)** involves mobilizing and organizing a larger number of people affected by the injustice around the change agenda, and identifying action priorities and strategies

3 **STANDING UP** **(steps 7, 8, 9, and 10)** is when the movement members begin to act for change, showing that the movement is serious and organized and capable of taking action towards its goals, and in the process, gaining something, facing some backlash, and garnering more supporters and members

4 **SHAKING UP** **(steps 9, 11, 12 and 13)** is the stage when a movement actually 'shakes things up' by making an impact, changing social norms, public attitudes, policies and laws, or even simply the way people think and behave, and then moves on to 'stand up' all over again, with a deeper or broader understanding and agenda for change

Here are some examples of what should have happened in each phase:

RISING UP

Critical Awareness and Creating Common Ground

Have those most affected by injustice recognized it, started getting together to critically analyze their situation, and explore what they want to change?

BUILDING UP

Shared Issues, Organization, and Leadership

Have the affected people been organized or organized themselves into groups or collectives that meet regularly? Have they identified the issues they most want to tackle, and built up some leadership for the change they seek?

STANDING UP

Mobilization, Alliances and Action

Have others affected by these issues/injustices been mobilized? Have alliances been built with other groups and movements that would support the movement? Have concrete actions been taken by the movement and its members towards their goals?

SHAKING UP

Strategy, Solutions and Sustained Impact

Has the movement developed clear longer-term strategies and solutions? Has the movement achieved any lasting impact (in terms of, for instance, changes in policies, laws, government programmes, community or larger social attitudes and norms)?

You can explore and download the JASS We Rise movement building Tool Pack here, for more tools and resources: https://werise-toolkit.org/en/toolkit

3.

ASSESSING THE STRENGTH AND CAPACITY OF MOVEMENTS

Finally, we can use the Movement Capacity Assessment Tool (MCAT) developed by the Global Fund for Women[10] to gauge the development of our movements. We have adapted the Tool slightly to work best with the approach laid out in this primer, and have focused the Tool specifically on *intentional movement building processes.*

To use the MCAT, a group of people selected by the movement members themselves – not only the leaders or the movement-building activists, but also representatives from different layers and locations of the movement, should participate in the assessment. External resource/support persons can also be used to facilitate or guide the process if necessary.

[10] https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/mcat/#download-tool

Ideally, the assessment should be done as a collective exercise where all participants sit together, discuss each statement, and come to an agreement on the score for each. Alternately, each participant could give a score between 1 to 5 (1 being the lowest, and 5 being the highest) for each of the following statements. When everyone has completed their individual scoring, one person or small team will work out the average score[11] and see where the movement stands in relation to each of the seven key dimensions.

[11] i.e., the total of all the scores divided by the number of persons who participated in the scoring exercise; e.g. The total score for "There are clear mechanisms to develop and support new leaders" gets a total score of 36, and the number of people who did the scoring is 9, then the average score for that indicator is = 4

Movement Capacity Assessment Tool

How would you rate your movement/the movement you are assessing in terms of the following statements? 1=not at all; 2=a little; 3=somewhat; 4=quite a bit; 5=very much

1. Strong, sustained, and diverse grassroots base	**Average score**
1.1 The movement's membership represents populations most affected by the issue.	
1.2 Participants in the movement represent diverse populations.	
1.3 There is a critical mass of individuals willing and ready to take action to support the movement.	
1.4 There are a variety of opportunities for individuals to participate in the movement.	
1.5 Individuals who are most affected by the issue speak for themselves, lead others in the community, and have ownership of the change process.	

2. Diverse leadership that includes next generation leaders

2.1 The movement is self-led, meaning that the leadership represents people they serve (for example, women with disabilities organizing and supporting other women with disabilities or trans* people making decisions about trans people's rights).

2.2 There are clear mechanism(s) to develop and support new leaders, including next generation leaders and leaders from communities that are most affected by the issue.

2.3 There is a large cadre of young leaders active in the movement, and the contribution of young leaders in the movement is recognized.

2.4 The leadership of the movement is open and accountable to the needs and new demands of their members.

3. Shared collective political agenda

3.1 The movement has clear long-term goals and vision.

3.2 The movement has a set of clear short-term political priorities.

3.3 There is a shared understanding of problems.

3.4 There is a shared understanding of potential solutions to the problems.

3.5 When opportunities arise to take action towards their goals, members of the movement respond quickly in a coordinated way.

3.6 The movement is effective in (re)framing and communicating issues within and beyond the movement.

4. Use of multiple strategies that are mutually reinforcing

4.1 Individuals and groups are using diverse strategies to advance the movement's agenda. Strategies might include grassroots mobilizing, public awareness building, change actions in their own communities, providing services to their members, policy analysis, advocacy, lobbying, litigation, research, etc.

4.2 Individuals and groups using different strategies support the movement's agenda in a coordinated way.

4.3 There is a coordinated effort to generate evidence to inform strategy development.

4.4 The movement is effective in using appropriate technology and media to communicate with different audiences and their own members.

5. Strong decision-making and support infrastructure that includes strong anchor organizations and effective decision-making structures and communication systems

5.1 There are sufficient opportunities for members and their groups to come together for peer learning and joint planning.

5.2 There are organizations or mechanisms created by the members that coordinate and communicate with members of the movement on an ongoing basis.

5.3 There is a clear and transparent decision-making process and mechanism that all members are aware of and can participate in.

5.4 If the movement comprises multiple organizations at different levels, there are recognized support organizations / resource persons that provide appropriate capacity building to smaller organizations within the movement when needed.

5.5 There are recognized organizations or coalitions that are effective in raising, managing, and distributing funds and other resources for the movement.

6. Strong collective capacities of women human rights defenders and their movements to ensure their safety and security

6.1 There are mechanisms in place to provide appropriate and immediate response to address violence against human rights defenders.

6.2 The movement has designed strategies that assess risks to its leaders, activists and members (in public spaces/events, in their office/meeting spaces, and in their homes), and to ensure physical safety of its members.

6.3 The movement has built its members' understanding of and strategies to ensure digital security.

6.4 The movement has prioritized and created dedicated measures for rest, healing, and physical and mental wellbeing of its members, activists and leaders.

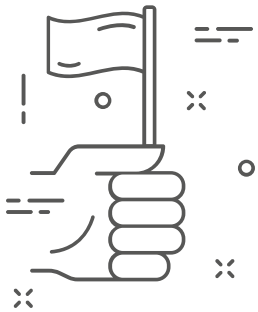
7. Strong collaboration with women's rights groups and other social justice groups

7.1 The movement collaborates actively with other women's rights and social justice organizations and movements working for similar goals.

7.2 The movement receives strong engagement and support from social justice and human rights groups for advancing its agenda.

7.3 The movement creates adequate time and space to learn from, support and collaborate with other social justice and women's rights movements at the local, national, regional or global level.

Assessing the strengths and limitations of our movements and our movement-building work is essential, but there is no perfect tool for this. You can adapt or modify any of the above tools to your specific movement context, or use your creativity, experience and ideas to develop and experiment with your own assessment approach and tools. But however you choose to do so, stepping back to assess our movements is a must – we cannot get so preoccupied with our day-to-day activism that we lose sight of where we are or where we are going.



Because movements – and movement builders – who fail to step back, from time to time, to critically assess their progress and their movements, are more likely to decay, lose direction and disintegrate. And if this happens, they will fail to create the deeper impact and transformation that they set out to achieve!

SRILATHA BATLIWALA

Srilatha Batliwala is currently **Senior Advisor, Knowledge Building, CREA** (Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action), an international organization that works at the intersection of gender, sexuality and human rights (www.creaworld.org), and **Senior Associate, Gender at Work**, a global network of gender experts supporting organizations to build cultures of equality and inclusion (www.genderatwork.org). Her work currently focuses on building knowledge from practice, and on capacity building of young activists and social justice organizations to advance feminist visions of social justice through feminist movement building and feminist leadership.

Through the past four decades, Srilatha's work has spanned grassroots activism, building movements of marginalized grassroots women, research and scholarly work, policy advocacy, grant-making, and capacity building of young women activists around the world. Up to the mid-90s, she was involved for over 20 years in grassroots work in India, where she helped build large-scale women's movements that mobilized and empowered tens of thousands of the most socio-economically marginalized rural and urban women in slum communities in Mumbai (Bombay) and in the back-

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Srilatha has written and published extensively on a range of women's issues, and is best known for her work on women's empowerment, women's movements, feminist leadership, and feminist approaches to monitoring and evaluation. Her most recent publications are (i) *All About Power*, a primer for activists; (ii) *Engaging with Empowerment – An Intellectual and Experiential Journey* (Women Unlimited, 2014, and eBook version 2015), a collection of her writings of the past 20 years.

Srilatha commutes between homes in Bangalore and the Nilgiri Hills of South India, and is an active feminist grandmother to her four grandchildren!

CREA

Founded in 2000, CREA is **a feminist human rights organization** based in New Delhi, India. It is one of the few international women's rights organizations based in the global South and led by Southern feminists, which works at the grassroots, national, regional and international levels.

CREA envisions **a more just and peaceful world**, where everyone lives with dignity, respect and equality. CREA builds feminist leadership, advances women's human rights, and expands sexual and reproductive freedoms for all people.

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Final Editing: Bishakha Datta
Design: Rupinder Kaur - Daalcheeni
Printed at: G.R. Printing Press

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

CREA acknowledges the generous support of the Global Fund for Women in the production of this publication.

AWID (Association for Women's Rights in Development) who supported the author's early work on the concepts and practices of women's movements that are at the core of this primer.

The feminist movement builders and thinkers around the world whose struggles and ideas have contributed so much to this primer.

The participants of CREA's Feminist Leadership, Movement Building and Rights Institutes from 2008 - 2017 whose curiosity, questions and insights helped the author develop and clarify the concepts and analysis that is captured in this primer.