



# Feminist Approaches to Building Evidence and Knowledge on VAWG

Experiences and Reflections





# Who is Cofem?





# Who is COFEM

The Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM) is a collective of over 150 activists, academics, and practitioners working globally to end violence against women and girls (VAWG, also referred to as GBV).

Website: [www.cofemsocialchange.org](http://www.cofemsocialchange.org)





# Why is COFEM needed

Thanks to critical work by women's movements, significant progress has been made over the last three decades to address VAWG...

*...and yet...*

Over the last decade women's rights activists have seen the space for feminist-informed VAWG work shrinking, putting hard won gains in danger.





# COFEM Learning & Advocacy Tools

- COFEM Feminist Pocketbook:

<https://cofemsocialchange.org/feminist-pocketbook/>

- COFEM SVRI Paper and Video series

<https://cofemsocialchange.org/learning-advocacy-tools/cofem-svri-paper-video-series/>



# Feminist Approaches to Building Knowledge and Evidence on VAWG



- **Recognising the gender hierarchy that shapes all aspects of the social world, disempowering women and girls**



- **Building evidence with women and girls with the aim of transforming the inequitable systems and structures of the gender hierarchy**



- **Recognising the intersections with other oppressive dynamics and other systems of oppression**

# Empowered Aid,

3 groups to talk about particular dimensions of their work

Harriet; Safety in research

Rassil; Working with the gender hierarchy

Loujine; Women's leadership in research



# Plenary coming together

What have we seen in our discussions?

What do we need to pay attention to?



"Cages. Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would have trouble going past the wires to get anywhere. There is no physical property of any one wire, nothing that the closest scrutiny could discover, that will reveal how a bird could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way.

It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.

It seems sometimes that people take a deliberately myopic and fill their eyes with things seen microscopically in order not to see macroscopically ."

Frye, Marilyn (1983) *'The Politics of Reality'* The Crossing Path





# What happens when we try to do feminist research?



# Feminist research in organisations

## Doing The Work While We're Doing the Work

“Being a diversity practitioner means you are in effect appointed by an employer to transform the employer. It is a difficult position. One practitioner described the job as a “banging your head against the brick wall job.” Even if you are appointed by an institution to transform the institution, it does not mean the institution is willing to be transformed. In fact, many practitioners encounter resistance to their work; diversity is work because of that resistance.”

(Sara Ahmed; feminist killjoys 2017)





**What do we need in order to  
be able to sustain ourselves in  
this work?**



# Stay in touch

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# Thank You!