





Colectiva
Latinoamericana
de Evaluación
Feminista

Feminist Evaluation and advocacy: contributions from Latin America in contexts of setbacks



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1. Introduction

This document presents a summary of the virtual dialogue space “**Feminist Evaluation and Advocacy: Contributions from Latin America in Contexts of Setbacks**,” organized within the framework of the 2024 gLocal Evaluation Week by the Latin American Collective for Feminist Evaluation (CLAEF) in partnership with EvaluAR, the Argentine Evaluation Network.

The objectives of this dialogue were:

- To learn about actual experiences in applying gender and feminist approaches to project evaluation; and
- To promote a participatory dialogue on the advantages and challenges of these approaches, considering contexts of setbacks in human rights.

To address this challenge and establish an initial basis for collective exchange, the event featured Laura Porrini and Tiziana Forte, two experts with extensive experience in project evaluation from a gender and/or feminist perspective, who use evaluation findings for advocacy and have an in-depth understanding of, or active involvement in, the women’s and feminist movements in Latin America.

Laura Porrini holds a Master’s degree in Administration, Planning, and Development from the University of Bristol (United Kingdom) and a Bachelor’s degree in Political Science from the Catholic University of Córdoba. She is a consultant, lecturer, and researcher specializing in the evaluation of public policies, programs, and international cooperation projects. A committed advocate for transformative evaluation, she serves as the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Officer at the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS).

Tiziana Forte holds a law degree with a specialization in Human Rights, a Master’s degree in International Cooperation, and a specialization in Sustainable Development from Sapienza University of Rome (Italy). She is an evaluator of projects and programs focused on social inclusion, particularly regarding Indigenous Peoples and gender. She is part of the coordination team of the Ayni Fund at the International Indigenous Women’s Forum (FIMI).

This summary begins with a section highlighting the insights and experiences shared by Laura and Tiziana, contributing to the collective construction of what is understood as feminist evaluation, both conceptually and in practice. The second section addresses the context of rights regression—which critically shapes the current Latin American reality—focusing on the relationship between feminist evaluation and various actors/partners. The summary concludes with contributions from the more than 30 participants who attended the event.

About CLAEF

The Latin American Collective for Feminist Evaluation (CLAEF) brings together feminists from academia, activism, and consultancy with the goal of promoting evaluation as a tool for learning, advocacy, and social transformation in Latin America from a feminist, situated, and intersectional perspective.

The collective also seeks to encourage conceptual and experiential exchange, along with the technical-methodological application of feminist tools in evaluating policies, programs, and development initiatives. These efforts focus on upholding the rights of women, people from diverse identities, and groups experiencing multiple forms of vulnerability.

As a group of specialists in feminist evaluation with diverse backgrounds and areas of action, we share the conviction that feminist evaluation fosters critical reflection on key evaluation dimensions—efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, coherence, and sustainability—and serves as a vital resource for human rights advocacy for women and LGBTIQ+.

CLAEF Members

• Aileen Allen	• Paula Magariños
• Anabel Fernández Prieto	• Lucía Martelotte
• Eleonora González Porcel	

2. From the Individual to the Collective: Reflections and Experiences

The conceptual contributions of the invited specialists helped establish an initial characterization of feminist evaluation. Their professional journeys and lived experiences enriched the collective understanding of what feminist evaluation entails in practice.

2.1. What Is (and What Is Not) Feminist Evaluation?

- Feminist evaluation starts with recognizing that power imbalances exist in society and that these imbalances negatively impact women, girls, and LGBTIQ+. It aims, in a determined way, to generate information that helps mitigate these power disparities.

- It is not a methodology or a technique. It is a way of understanding evaluation, relating to it, and reflecting on the meaning we assign to it. When an evaluation process lacks a feminist perspective, women and LGBTIQ+ are excluded from defining priorities. This exclusion extends to determining what holds value and limits their ability to make decisions about crucial aspects of their own lives.
- Feminist evaluation is both ethical and political. It involves the value judgments of the evaluator—judgments shaped by experience, background, and worldview. It also depends on the perspective taken, the methodological approach used, and the political intention behind the advocacy sought through the evaluation.
- It must be understood as a process. As Indigenous Peoples teach us, life is always about the past, the present, and the future. Feminist evaluation should be viewed within this same continuous journey.

Five Key Concepts/Core Ideas Defining Feminist Evaluation

Focus:

Feminist evaluation focuses on gender inequalities and the underlying causes that explain them. It prioritizes the voices of women and girls in all their diversity, intentionally centering perspectives often marginalized in evaluation processes. Paradoxically, this focus also includes other experiences, viewpoints, ways of generating knowledge, and forms of evidence. This is where evaluation, evidence, and advocacy become intrinsically linked. Ensuring that alternative evidence holds the same value as traditional verification mechanisms is a key starting point.

Political Act:

Feminist evaluation is an inherently political act. It is not neutral; it is directed and intentional in identifying and mitigating power imbalances. While it does not pursue pure objectivity, its credibility is ensured through the systematic nature of the process.

Centrality of Learning:

The focus extends beyond accountability and generating “neutral” information usable by any actor. Feminist evaluation seeks to create a directed and intentional learning process. This learning is advocacy-driven, as it purposefully aims to transform power structures.

Valuing the Collective:

Feminist evaluation values the collective, not just as an aggregate (the sum of its parts), but as knowledge generated through effective dialogue and exchange. Collective knowledge transcends individual contributions made throughout the evaluation process.

Participation:

There is no feminist evaluation without participation, and there is no participatory evaluation without involvement in planning. Thus, feminist evaluation is inseparable from planning. Its strong participatory component makes it highly capable of capturing collective agency. One critical aspect to consider is the capacity of social movements to influence collective processes.

2.2. How Do We Implement Feminist Evaluation in Practice?

- Feminist evaluation can be gradually integrated into an organization's work by focusing on small, incremental changes in monitoring, evaluation, and learning activities. This step-by-step approach allows for the progressive incorporation of a feminist perspective.
- It involves reflecting from the outset of the evaluation process on the critical inequalities that affect individuals' ability to participate and how these inequalities impact their opportunities to engage meaningfully.

In Practice:

A project led by the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur on feminist and solidarity-based economies in Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay aimed to gather information about women and organizations working on these issues. Initially, the team considered using a virtual data collection tool. However, during testing, they identified significant information gaps, mainly due to limited internet access and lack of electronic devices. To address this issue, they decided to switch to a paper-based questionnaire completed in person, ensuring that these women's voices would not be excluded from the evaluation process.

- **Creating Spaces for Co-Creation:** Feminist evaluation involves working collaboratively with women and gender diverse identities to define which elements are valued and should become the central focus of the evaluation.

Genuine participation occurs when it is possible to co-create the questions guiding the evaluation. What are the key questions? What is our true interest in this process? It requires deep awareness of how to create conditions for meaningful participation. Without this intentionality, inequalities will continue to be reproduced. Identifying barriers and generating conditions that expand the spectrum of participation are essential steps toward a more inclusive and transformative evaluation process.

In Practice:

As part of an Economic Justice program by the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur, a pilot project was conducted using a participatory monitoring system co-designed with program participants. During a dialogue session, participants collaboratively defined what economic justice meant to them. Once a shared definition was reached (as a guiding principle), the discussion shifted to how this vision could be achieved. From this point, they jointly developed indicators to measure intermediate outcomes.

In Practice:

Global Indigenous women's principles are rooted in co-creation, participatory work, ancestral knowledge, and intergenerational wisdom that blends traditional and contemporary insights. They value interconnectedness and collective knowledge built through shared efforts, active listening, and respect for individual and collective rights. From this foundation, they lead in their territories and communities, strengthening organizational structures where individual leadership intertwines with collective action. In this way, every effort and outcome becomes part of a shared evaluation process, reflecting their commitment to community harmony and the joint construction of a sustainable future.

→ Developing Tools and Channels for Effective Participation

In some cases, the presence of a wide range of stakeholders makes enabling the participation of all involved challenging. Therefore, it is essential to consider creative alternatives to promote and operationalize participation.

In Practice:

In one of the projects of Fondo de Mujeres del Sur (FMS), the Evaluative Process Support Group (MAPE in Spanish) was created in collaboration with the evaluation team. Participants included the FMS team, the evaluation team, and representatives from several organizations supported by the FMS. This space facilitated actions such as reviewing questionnaires and workshop documents, allowing improvements and adjustments. For example, Indigenous women pointed out that some data collection tools did not represent them adequately. Revising the questionnaires helped reflect their experiences and generate useful knowledge.

→ Adapting Evaluation Findings for Accessibility

Adjusting the formats in which evaluation findings are presented ensures they are understandable to all stakeholders involved.

In Practice:

The initiative "Liderando desde el Sur" by the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur included a video as one of the evaluation products, shared with participating organizations. This approach fostered dialogue, as the organizations appreciated the accessibility of the video and noted it motivated them to read the written report.

→ Using Evaluation for Advocacy

What happens after the evaluation? Since evaluation is inherently political, the evaluator's perspective must be transparent, aligned with clear criteria and defined standards, and committed to a specific interpretation of reality. Evaluations focused on advocacy aim to generate structural changes and scale those changes, fostering transformation for many more women and diverse identities.

In Practice:

In the context of mid-sized organizations such as Indigenous Women's Movements, evaluations primarily serve to amplify the voices of Indigenous women and organizations implementing projects through evidence-based results. This is achieved by moving from local to international spaces through representation. For instance, Indigenous women use their results to influence dialogue spaces or high-level events such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP), CEDAW sessions, or the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York. This approach shifts the paradigm, ensuring that those who achieve results report them directly rather than having evaluators present findings on their behalf.

3. Context as a Determinant? Advantages and Challenges of Feminist Evaluation Today

The relationship and use of feminist evaluation by donors and organizations that do not self-identify as feminist emerged as both a challenge and an opportunity in a global and regional context characterized by human rights setbacks.

Several guiding questions invite reflection:

- How is evaluation used in mid-sized organizations?
- How can this work be approached with large donors who operate through governments and primarily adopt women's economic empowerment frameworks?
- How can substantive participation, horizontal dialogue, collective co-construction, listening, close support, and process adjustments be ensured?
- How can changes in language and naming conventions be promoted?

3.1. Feminist Evaluation and Donors

While it may seem obvious, it is essential to recognize that not all donors are alike. Understanding their unique characteristics and operational logic can make a significant difference when conducting feminist evaluations. Acknowledging that donors do not need to self-identify as feminist to benefit from a feminist evaluation is part of the ethical framework being discussed.

Generally, evaluations funded by large donors aim to drive institutional changes. These evaluations are highly political, as they require government approval. Therefore, the writing and preparation of reports differ from what is typically expected by mid-sized donors. For mid-sized donors, evaluations focus on descriptive narratives, stories of change, and life stories, often using photographs and other qualitative data. In contrast, large donors emphasize data (often quantitative) and sources. These differences must

be considered when presenting evaluation findings, which may be shared with government entities or inform in-country strategy development.

Regardless of the donor type, applying a feminist evaluation approach goes beyond merely stating this perspective to donors and partners. It must transcend discourse and influence the entire evaluation process, from framing questions to designing and implementing tools and interventions.

3.2. Working with Partners Who Do Not Identify as Feminist

A critical challenge is applying feminist evaluation when working with organizations that do not identify as feminist. It is essential to understand that partner organizations do not need to self-identify as feminist for the evaluation approach to be effective. An example is organizations of Indigenous women; while some self-identify this way, many others do not.

In working with Indigenous communities, organizing evaluation missions is inappropriate. Instead, accompaniment visits—a term defined by the communities themselves—are conducted. This change results from a long learning and mutual listening process, reflecting a transformation in evaluation methods, not just terminology.

Similarly, visit durations cannot be predetermined based on standard calculations. Instead, they are defined throughout the process according to the specific needs of each community. Incorporating these considerations into the evaluation design reflects a feminist approach that prioritizes listening and respecting the actions and voices of diverse stakeholders.

In Practice:

Unlike evaluation missions, the schedule and duration of accompaniment visits are defined jointly with Indigenous organizations. For example, what does organizing a mid-project visit entail? In a year-long project, the Western perspective would consider six months as the midpoint. However, for Indigenous Peoples, time calculations also consider contextual factors such as rainy seasons, conflicts, or other significant events impacting project dynamics.

4. Building Participatory Dialogue: Audience Contributions

Participants in the dialogue space contributed to creating a collective word cloud. Under the prompt “Feminist Evaluation in Three Words,” the 62 responses received provided a snapshot of the concepts, categories, and core ideas explored during the event.



Adding Audience Interactions

The initial dynamic expanded with audience interactions during Laura and Tiziana's presentations. Below are some of the final questions and exchanges that fostered an open dialogue.

How is feminist evaluation perceived in the evaluation field today? Is there any resistance? How does it affect feminist evaluation?

Political setbacks in rights recognition impact not only evaluations but also how evaluations—especially feminist ones—are used. Feminist evaluation is not exempt from the challenges faced by feminist struggles today. In Argentina, for example, institutions working on gender equality and Indigenous Peoples' rights have been weakened or dismantled, complicating interaction and dialogue with the government.

However, implementing feminist evaluation processes becomes even more crucial in such adverse contexts to document situations and promote new interventions. This requires building capacities and rethinking the role of evaluators. Feminist evaluators are not just facilitators but also activists, advocating before clients such as states and international cooperation agencies. This includes questioning certain approaches, like experimental methods, which may have ethical limitations.

What other essential aspects define feminist evaluation?

One core value of feminist evaluation is caring for people. Evaluations aim to drive social change while placing people's well-being at the center. Ethical considerations

include avoiding re-victimization, preventing excessive time demands on women, and respecting Indigenous territories. Feminist evaluation ensures that interventions are compassionate toward both individuals and their environments.

Feminist evaluation also entails pedagogical work with donors. Evaluators translate between on-the-ground realities and donor requirements, adapting these requirements to participants' realities. This process promotes an intersectoral, intercultural, and intersectional approach within institutions. Feminist perspectives influence evaluation designs, questions, indicators, and reports.

Pedagogy also extends to co-partner organizations participating in evaluation design, such as creating context-specific indicator systems. This often requires undoing established models applied homogeneously across territories, particularly by large donors.

A Holistic and Comprehensive Approach

Feminist evaluation is not limited to fields traditionally associated with women (in all their diversity) such as health, poverty reduction, education, and culture. It applies across all themes or areas that are subject to evaluation. It is important to incorporate feminist evaluations in issues such as climate change, technology, artificial intelligence, economics, and infrastructure.

Creativity as a Key Element

Creativity is essential for including the voices of marginalized populations. What tools and processes can be used in challenging contexts? How can participation be encouraged?



In Practice:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fondo de Mujeres del Sur evaluated its “Our Rights, Our Pride” program, which strengthens LGBTIQ+ organizations as agents of change toward more just and equal societies. The challenge was reaching program participants under isolation, particularly trans women in highly vulnerable situations. The team used mobile phones to send brief WhatsApp surveys with the option to respond using text or stickers. Internet access was also facilitated to ensure their participation.

Reflexivity as an Ongoing Process

Reflexivity in feminist evaluation means continuously asking: What does this mean? How should we proceed? How can all voices be heard? Testing and adapting without fear is crucial.

5. Final Reflections

In closing, following are some key insights on what a feminist evaluation entails drawn from the exchanges that occurred during the first CLAEF dialogue, namely:

- **Ethics and Donor Engagement:** Ethical considerations extend to donor engagement, including working with Indigenous women and respecting their contexts.
- **Advocacy and Representation:** Ensuring women's and girls' voices are effectively represented in diverse spaces and forums through participatory processes.
- **Reflexivity and Self-Reflection:** Evaluators should constantly reflect on their role while encouraging stakeholders to also reflect about themselves and their perspectives.
- **Political Nature of Evaluation:** Evaluations are essentially political in nature and even technical aspects are inherently political – for example, the way in which evaluation tools are developed or results are presented have differentiated impacts. Additionally, feminist evaluations are meant to drive advocacy and social change.
- **Territorially Situated Approach:** Evaluation must be context-specific, involving mutual listening and shared decision-making with partner organizations, donors, and governments. Referring to “co-partners” or “co-parts” rather than “counterparts” signals a more inclusive, respectful, and horizontal relationship.
- **Shifting Language and Frameworks:** Using terms like “co-partners” instead of “counterparts” reflects collaborative investment models that promote equitable sharing of resources, knowledge, and responsibilities, as opposed to more instrumental or hierarchical approaches. This is particularly significant when working with communities, women and LGBTIQ+ since it reinforces their collective and individual rights
- **Centering Participants' Interests:** Prioritizing participants' needs ensures evaluations bring transformative value to both participants and evaluators.

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