



**Feminist Participatory Action Research for Movement Building Training**  
**Module II**  
**Harare, Zimbabwe**  
**May 20 – 25, 2018**



## Introduction

For six days in May 2018, WoMin convened the second module of its Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) training in Harare, Zimbabwe. This second module was a follow up to the first training initiated in January 2018. Participants numbered thirty-four, from eight African countries: Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, DR Congo, Madagascar, Burkina Faso and Senegal. Each country team was comprised of two community-based activists and one representative from an NGO supporting the FPAR at the national level. The first module laid the political grounding and offered a methodological framework for carrying out FPAR at the community level. This second module was designed to build on the first, as well as the preparatory work that activists carried out in their communities to begin their research. The training aimed to strengthen political understanding and build concrete skills and methodologies for FPAR.

The training was led by a facilitation team consisting of Mela Chiponda, Samantha Hargreaves, and Maggie Mapondera of the WoMin secretariat with remote support from Tamara Braam, an independent consultant who accompanied the first module. Other WoMin staff supported the process in its conceptualisation, facilitation and logistics. The training design encouraged high participation, skills building and practical application of tools and methods participants would use in their communities. A critical part of the process design was to model feminist popular education and facilitation. Each day, space was created for the group to reflect collectively on the methodologies used throughout and think through how they could adapt and implement in their own contexts. The training was interspersed with significant time in country groups where participants could make sense of what they were hearing and experiencing and think through how the approach and its methods could be applied to FPAR in their own contexts and their own struggles.

For two days prior to the second module, a small group of participants who were new to FPAR participated in an 'abbreviated' two-day module one training. This training covered the critical components, grounding activists in the politics and practise of this type of research, exploring ecofeminism and the transformative role FPAR can play in movement building. ([FPAR 1.5 Programme](#))

## Objectives

The overall objective of the FPAR process across the two modules was to ensure all participants had improved capacity and commitment to using this mode of research as a critical tool for strengthening eco-feminist movement building in Africa.

### The specific planned outcomes for module 2 were:

- ❖ Country teams will have shared their preparatory phase work, and selected the key issue and set of questions the FPAR will address in their site
- ❖ Participants will have been exposed to and had the opportunity to apply key methods and tools for FPAR
- ❖ Participants will have a deeper analysis of power structures and interests that oppress them and their communities and a clearer idea of how FPAR can strengthen their knowledge, actions and movement building
- ❖ Participants will have experienced the process of building a radical feminist space that challenges power and encourages questioning, community and sharing
- ❖ Participants will have an understanding of the politics and purpose of communications and documentation in FPAR and will have been exposed to some practical tools and methodologies
- ❖ Participants will leave with a clear plan for their FPAR process which will address (a) the resources and support needed, (b) documentation and communications, (c) risk and conflict, and (d) a mini training process for the rest of the community research team

## Background to Approach & Design

WoMin's first effort to support FPAR was in 2014 and 2015, when we supported organisations in nine countries with a short two-day training, and distance accompaniment during design and implementation. The experience, by our reflection, had mixed results and so, in mid-2017, we initiated an in-depth and participatory review of this experience to inform the next round of effort to build FPAR as a key tool for women's organising and movement building. Three main issues and critical reflections emerged from this review, which informed the design of this FPAR process, namely, (i) the two-day inception training approach while useful is far too short; (ii) the slides and tools that were shared through the training were very useful in supporting implementing partners develop a deeper understanding of FPAR, and sharing this knowledge on to local partners; and (iii) WoMin provided distance support to prioritised countries, which was greatly appreciated, but limited by capacity constraints in WoMin, which was in its first cycle of organisation-building and had only one permanent staffer and a consultant working on retainer for a few days a month.

Informed by the learnings from the internal review and a sideways review of the work of other feminist organisations in FPAR, WoMin developed the following FPAR training design, testing the first module in January 2018 with the follow-up in May:

- Eight priority countries in which WoMin is partnering with allies on either its Women Building Power Energy and Climate Justice Campaign and/or its Women's Right to Consent programme. The FPAR would therefore be located in a longer-term programme of collaboration with allies.
- Three, or a maximum of four participants per country broken down as follows: at least two women grassroots activists from one community site and a maximum of two NGO support staff who would support and accompany the FPAR in the identified site.
- Two training modules of six days each:
  - Module 1 focus: an introduction to FPAR - its political origins and subversion of traditional hierarchical forms of knowledge production; FPAR values and principles; ecofeminism, women's

- movement building and the place of FPAR in this process; feminist facilitation and leadership; phases of FPAR and in-depth orientation to and planning for FPAR preparation in the local sites.
- Module 2 focus: share experiences of implementing the preparatory phase in community sites; deepen discussion on ecofeminist movement building; applied training in key methods and tools for FPAR; explore the 'issues' emerging from the preparatory stage and build a design for the FPAR in each site; and explore approaches to documentation, advocacy and communications in a wider eco-feminist movement building process.
- In the interim between the two modules, activist researchers and local NGO allies were supported directly by WoMin staff to design and take forward the preparatory work in countries. This preparatory phase entailed participants going back to their communities to introduce FPAR's political underpinnings and some of the concrete skills gained from Module 1; engage local stakeholders and authorities; begin to constitute a team of researchers and, importantly; to collectively identify key issues affecting their communities that could be the focus of the research. Prior to Module 2, country groups shared their progress with their WoMin contact person and also generated a short report ahead of the training in Harare.

## Process

The first half of each day focused on political grounding, storytelling and shared context analysis within country and across the region. The afternoons focused on practical tools and methods for FPAR, from Problem Tree Analysis and Power Analysis to Communications for FPAR and Transect Walks ([Access WoMin FPAR Module 2 Tools](#)).

Day One was designed for participants to reconnect with each other and to deepen the building of a participant friendly feminist training environment. It was also an opportunity for participants to share the preparatory work they had done in their communities since February 2018. The country groups each presented the actions they had undertaken over the last five months, sharing challenges and questions. Each country was paired with a 'listening partner' to provide concrete, constructive feedback through a process of peer review.

One of the issues that emerged from the country reports was the difficulty of singling out a key focus for the FPAR given the many interlinked challenges women confront in their communities. In Madagascar, the research team tried to identify main issues in the nine villages where their research will take place and discovered that women spoke about a range of issues, including lack of livelihood opportunities, drought and poverty exacerbated by climate change which affects local agriculture; and the suppression of women's voices in communities. Participants also spoke to the impacts of mega-infrastructure and mining projects, climate change and its direct impacts on women and women's livelihoods, inequality and water issues. ([Read FPAR Module 2 Report for detail on the process](#))

To offer participants an experience of how to analyse more deeply the key problems confronting women and their communities, the facilitators introduced The Problem or Root Tree Analysis. This tool can be used to deepen understanding of causes and effects of a particular problem. Each country group used the tool to explore the issues their communities are facing, and then shared their analysis through a gallery walk. In plenary, participants found that the tool enabled them to think outside the box and identify the deeper causes of the issues they had identified.

On Day Two, participants explored what "development" means. Together, they analysed what a range of stakeholders have to say about "development" – government, World Bank, corporations, multilateral bodies, investors, women, community people and traditional leaders. The purpose of this session was to interrogate the concept of development and how this is understood by different actors and interests. Participants split into small groups, taking on the persona of each stakeholder and answering the questions:

- How do you think about development? What is development to you?
- How do you enforce your idea of development?
- How do you see nature or ecosystems in your idea of development?

The session underscored the importance of understanding the development *paradigm*, who or what holds power within the it, and how powerful actors enforce their idea of development (using tools such as media, violence, coercion and repression) often at the expense of communities and the environment. To underscore this learning, participants were introduced to Power analysis: Stakeholder Analysis and the Venn Diagram as a tool they can use to identify powerful stakeholders in their communities and the relations between them. The group also viewed the documentary film, *Thomas Sankara: The Upright Man*, which helped to reinforce how a global system of capitalist-driven development supporting by international financial institutions impacts government policy, often at the expense of communities. The film also planted a seed for Day Three's theme, which was about understanding the urgency of cultivating counter-power or people power to fight against this system.

On Day Three, the group continued to explore power and what it means to build people power. They watched *After the Revolution* (2014), a film about the Zapatista movement in Mexico. This opened up a conversation about building feminist counter power to challenge oppression. The participants began to draw the links between their experiences in their country contexts, the impacts of development on women's lives, livelihoods and the environment, and ecofeminist movement building as a counter-power. As a fun way to reinforce the power of movements and working together for change, the group participated in a drumming circle led by Rumbi weNgoma, a local musician and her team. Together, participants had an opportunity to create music and also shared dances from their various cultures and contexts.



On Day Four participants formed reading circles to go through an ecofeminist movement building paper together. This opened a conversation about feminist leadership, why women sometimes need to organise separately and what feminist organising and leadership should look like. In the afternoon, participants then explored mapping as a practical tool for physically identifying resources, physical space and social problems. The facilitator explained different types of mapping and explained the principles of transect mapping. Participants worked in groups and went out in the streets of Harare to draw transect maps. A gallery walk to review the presentations was followed by a reflection on the process and methodology of transect mapping. Overall, participants found the tool very valuable, enabling them to observe both physical and social structures. Language was identified as a barrier when trying to interview people but where conversations were held, people were willing to speak and express their concerns/experiences (See: [Transect Walk & Mapping](#)).

On Day Five, the participants explored Storytelling as a tool for FPAR, a way to sustain and strengthen feminist movement building and craft alternative women-centred narratives of climate justice (see: [Storytelling & Feminist Movement Building](#)). Participants also had an opportunity to design their own communications and documentation strategy (see: [Communications & Documentation for FPAR](#)).

The rest of the day focused on planning. To facilitate this, a Planning Framework for the design and implementation of the next phase of the FPAR was distributed to participants. In-country, the plans would shift based on further discussion and thinking by the community research teams. The framework covered the key problem to be addressed through the FPAR; an identification of the key questions the FPAR would explore; the methods and tools to be used to explore these questions with women in the community; and an implementation plan with time frames, roles and resources needed. The plan also addressed questions of

documentation, accountability, communications, team work, and risk mitigation. Participants were also reminded of the various tools that were presented in this training: problem tree analysis, stakeholder and power analysis, mapping, group discussions, storytelling circles, reading circles/listening circles, communications and documentation strategy. On Day Six, each country group shared their plans and received critical feedback from their listening partners as well as the facilitation team.

## **Looking Ahead**

Participants agreed to return to their community research teams, and share the tools and strategies from the process and begin carrying out FPAR supported by the local NGO partner and WoMin staff. Each team agreed to share their implementation plan and budgets once finalised. WoMin would provide some budget support (but only once local sources of resources and support had been explored), staff assistance, as well as communications support to amplify women's research, stories and experiences and mobilise solidarity at the regional level. A consolidated publication about the process is planned for the end of the year or very early next year depending on the how the FPAR proceeds in countries.