



ThinkPlace

LOST IN TRANSLATION

FOUND IN COLLABORATION

USING A DESIGN-LED APPROACH
TO HELP TRANSLATE GENDER
EQUALITY TO LOCAL CONTEXTS

Submitted by ThinkPlace Kenya



Engaging in the act of translation in a linguistic and cultural vacuum means that the translator becomes an active agent in developing and shaping concepts associated with Feminism, while simultaneously conveying the social and moral values that are associated with the quest for female empowerment in the West”

Alanoud Alsharekh,

—
Women's study and Research Center, Kuwait University

OVERVIEW

Three continents, multiple languages, diverse field and office operations and differing education levels. As you might expect, this translates to frequent confusion and complication. In fact, this is a common story in the aid and development sector. The teams delivering work locally are vastly different in composition and background than those advancing the strategic goals of that work in other parts of the world. ThinkPlace identified this disconnect early, realising that any design solution would need to successfully adapt to this complex work environment.

Plan International is a global NGO comprised of 10,000 staff spread across 75 countries unified by a mission statement of “advancing children’s rights and equality for girls in over 75 countries”, towards a world where “Girls Get Equal.” Communicating, translating and contextualising the values of equality for girls and women and implementing them across borders, in both disaster relief and development situations, is a challenge by any measure.

Plan International’s London-based global hub released a complex gender equality policy and advocacy framework that literally became lost in translation for many local frontline staff. The differing cultural, social and historical contexts this information came from made it difficult for staff to contextualise and apply in field situations. This was further exacerbated by differing technology provision and variable internet access.



WHAT WE DID

ThinkPlace used human-centred design and an integrated, immersive research approach to revamp Plan International's content production model to create 'Lesson in a Box'. We helped evolve text heavy documents that sat unread in inboxes and file folders into 'living' grassroots video content filled with provoking reflective videos.



WHERE WE DID IT

India, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, United Kingdom



IMPACT

A global programme of Lesson in a Box is currently being filmed and rolled out, integrating local perspectives and inspiring stories to truly implement Plan International's agenda of *'girls get equal.'*

THE PROBLEM

Methods of learning, means of communicating and the understanding of values are all culturally and personally determined, so making a holistic strategy to diffuse information, especially on gender equality, is challenging. Plan International's global championing of gender equality, specifically the equality of girls and women, posed the question:

How do you localise and explain these values outside of a western context?

CROSS-CONTINENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Malawi

36

PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH

Managers,
partners, field
officers

Uganda

140

PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH & PROTOTYPING

Directors,
managers, field
staff, programme
managers

Thailand

1

PARTICIPANT

RESEARCH

Technical Expert.

Kenya

20

PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH & PROTOTYPING

Communications
, programming,
content,
managers,
fieldworkers

United Kingdom

5

PARTICIPANTS

RESEARCH

Communications,
knowledge
management,
learning, content

India

1

PARTICIPANT

PROTOTYPING

Partners,
managers

Includes: fieldworkers, managers, directors, communications, knowledge management, learning

OUR DESIGN CHALLENGE

Integrating local contexts, customs and beliefs

Not deploying one cultural conception of gender equality – many unified by a common understanding

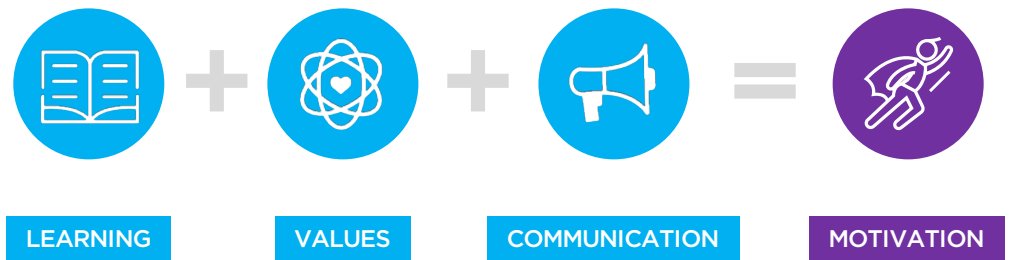
How might we help Plan International sensitively diffuse their values and learning globally, so that they can foster equality and opportunity for girls worldwide?

Make values relatable and personal, so implementation actually happens

OUR INTENTION: UNDERSTANDING THEIR STORY

Our approach was as diverse as the population it serves, deploying a creative, adaptable and empathetic approach. Our team went **to refugee settlements** to talk to staff in northern Uganda, **spent hours in transit** with the teams to understand their challenges, **shadowed** frontline staff in rural Malawi **and interviewed senior management** in London. We spoke to country managers, technical staff, case workers and more. We went from the **most urban** to the **most remote** to understand how people learn, what they apply, their values and their constraints.

Our ultimate goal was to understand how people want to learn, how they internalise values and apply them, how they communicate and what motivates them.





WE MIGHT BE SPEAKING DIFFERENT 'LANGUAGES' BUT WE HAVE SIMILAR GOALS

Western gender equality considerations

Equal pay

Childcare rights

Reproductive freedom

Sexual harassment

Challenging language

Challenging representation

Median income (USA): \$43,002

Life Expectancy (EU): 83.5 years

Literacy rate (USA): 77%

Post-industrial societies

Non-western gender equality considerations

Right to work

Control fertility

Employment

Poverty

Healthcare

Religion

Culture

Median income (Uganda): \$348

Life Expectancy (Kenya): 67.03

Literacy rate (Malawi): 55.2%

Post-colonial societies

OUR INTEGRATED RESEARCH APPROACH

ThinkPlace embarked on a six-month campaign of immersive research deploying shadowing, interviewing and behaviour change concepts in the UK, Malawi, Kenya, Uganda and India in humanitarian and development contexts.

We aimed to understand the dynamics of the organisation, how it communicates with staff, how it creates information for them and overall how its values are diffused.



Research settings:

Development: longer term, permanent operations ranging from education, to childhood development to career skills.

DRM (Disaster Risk Management)

Refugee Camps

Plan transport vans



Qualitative research methods:

Ethnographic research – deep on-site cultural & social immersion

Shadowing – observation of daily work life

Focus-group discussions – group interaction and feedback

Workshops – ideation, feedback and strategy collaboration

Jobs to be done – understanding daily user work journeys, difficulties and trumps

1-on-1 interviews – in-depth conversations with staff at multiple sites

Mapping behaviours - understanding behavioural drivers for information consumption and value adoption (e.g, In group, out group)



INSIGHT 1

For values to be shared, they must be collaborative



This is how we rewrite her story – the story of making one girl smile and so many around the world smile.”

Fieldworker

U G A N D A

INSIGHT 2

Learning should adapt to busy schedules



Today, I had four things on my shoulders, I had to ride 100 kilometres over the day. I'm not going to add another thing by sitting down to read."

Fieldworker

U G A N D A



INSIGHT 3

Local context provides a broader understanding



Examples from other countries are okay, from the region is better, but locally is best...”

Fieldworker

M A L A W I



It's nice to see what is happening with other colleagues. We are all facing similar challenges.

Fieldworker

U G A N D A

INSIGHT 4

Seeing is believing – video makes policies come alive in a way text cannot



Videos show evidence that someone did something. They are testimonial.”

Fieldworker

U G A N D A



OUR SOLUTION: LESSON IN A BOX

WHAT IS IT?

Managers and staff are often confronted with new policies and guidance that they do not understand, are outside of their cultural context and have little time to make sense of.

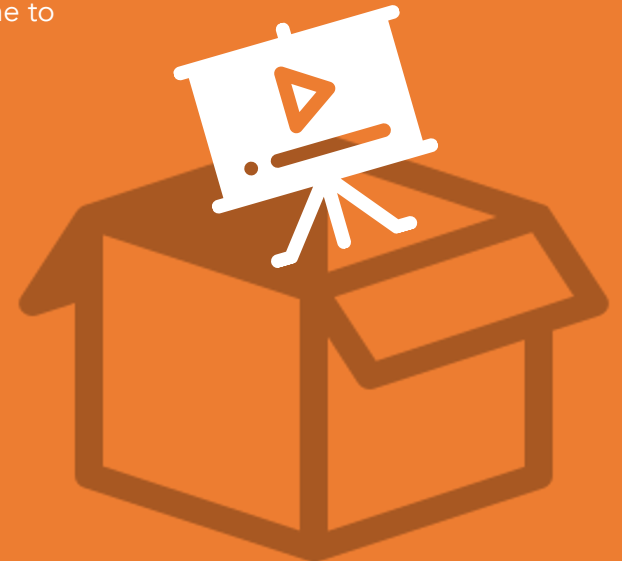
Lesson in a Box provides an answer to this problem by providing regular, short and localised video lessons that explain new policies and guidance. This is followed by a facilitation session where staff discuss the material and are then encouraged to record their own reflective videos. Each lesson includes 3 videos: one on policy, one on local application and one personal reflection. These take nearly no time to prepare for and can be conducted after weekly meetings.

WHO IS IT FOR?

Everyone, everywhere at Plan International.

WHERE?

Initially: India, Uganda, UK
The near future: everywhere.



GENDER EQUALITY + LOCALISM = NORM CHANGE





*“This is to show equality
– so that when kids
grow up, they see that
the father and mother
are providing for the
family.”*

Fieldworker

U G A N D A

LESSON IN A BOX: A LOCAL VOICE FOR GENDER EQUALITY & LEARNING GOING GLOBAL



THE GOAL: LESSONS AT WORK, LESSONS IN LIFE: A 360 UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER EQUALITY



“There is nothing like this gender is better than the other – I want to give them the same: equal love, equal basics in life. I want them to be happy.”

Fieldworker

U G A N D A

Thinkplace.com.au
Australia | New Zealand | Singapore | Kenya

