

# Twists, Turns, and, Triumphs towards Transformation: An Internal Evaluative Study of the Global Change Leaders Program (2012-2018)

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## About Coady

The Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University has been accompanying generations of global leaders from around the world since 1959. Guided by Dr. Moses Coady's vision of 'A full and abundant life for all' the Institute's mission is to deliver educational programs to civil society and community leaders from around the globe. Its work begins with assets available at the local level, builds on the strengths of all citizens and establishes a network of supportive partnerships. It emphasizes local ownership and collaborative relationships that strengthen the capacity of people to drive their own development. We have a global network working to strengthen organizations' and communities' approaches to development.

## Acknowledgements

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On the cover: Coady alumnae from the 2018 GCL batch.

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## Executive Summary

The following report provides an overview of an evaluative study conducted from November 2018 to January 2019 of the Global Change Leaders (GCL) program.

GCL is the flagship program of the International Centre for Women's Leadership at Coady. The Centre was launched in 2011 as a unique focal point for quality education, partnerships and network building, and action-oriented research on women's leadership and empowerment. GCL is an opportunity for women from the global South and from Indigenous communities to deepen their leadership capacities through a seven-week residency program in Antigonish Nova Scotia. Mentorship, peer exchange, and global networking are built into its design.

The study's goal was to understand the following:

- How are graduates from the GCL program contributing to social change?
- How has the GCL program fostered a network of women leaders?
- What contributions has this network made to women's leadership and development?
- What factors hinder or contribute to the program's outcomes and impact?

The methods used encompass a document review, an analysis of post-graduate (six to eight months) outcome surveys, a graduate tracer study, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews with key informants which included current and former staff, associates, mentors, and other resource people.

The study found that an emphasis on a reflective and feminist classroom space sets the stage for co-creation and co-learning that strengthens the foundations for broader change. Investing in self-confidence and self-awareness enables participants to take stock of their strengths and weaknesses as well as discover interests and insights. This then helps them take control of their own lives, set goals, and make greater contributions to their organizations, communities, and societies. The course content, and facilitation approaches proved to be highly relevant to their work. Soft and hard skills are combined in the curriculum to impart key ingredients of leadership. Soft skills include personal resilience, communication, relationship building, and power and social awareness, among others. Hard skills learnt include public speaking, asset-based community-development (and associated tools such as the Leaky Bucket, Value Chain Analysis, and Wealth Diagrams), project management, gender analysis and budgeting, and theory of change.

Outcome surveys of each cohort demonstrate that 100% of graduates learn new knowledge and skills and 84% share their new knowledge and skills with others and applied them with others.<sup>1</sup>

The tracer study showed that 98% of graduates from 2012-2018 reported that the program had strengthened their contributions to development and women's empowerment. 2% (one respondent) shared that GCL had "somewhat" helped them in their goals. No respondent said it had not. With that established, the study then asked what do graduates' contributions to development look like. The study team anchored this question around the community plans participants developed during the program.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The targets set for the Global Affairs Canada Investing in Leadership contribution agreement were 80% of Coady graduates report increased knowledge and skills, 75% report applying community- and asset-based approaches in their organization and/or communities, and that 50% report supporting / training others in community and asset-based approaches.

<sup>2</sup> The target set was that 75% of case studies with partners and targeted communities would report that Coady programming helped them strengthen local economies, build community resilience, promote accountable democracies, and advance women's empowerment.

The alumnae are active in organizational, community, and sectoral leadership. Following the program, they some have founded their own organizations and initiatives, sometimes in response to challenges experienced in following their community plans. Often times, the graduates find creative ways to sidestep barriers and confront unequal power relations. It is clear that the respondents recognize that a commitment to women's empowerment means not only enabling women to advance in all spheres of life, but also building the capacity of women to fully and effectively participate as leaders and decision makers. The variety of approaches, tools, modules, theories, and concepts taught in GCL leads to an array of strategies and a strong foundation for pushing for positive social change.

Graduates radiate change out from themselves to their communities, organizations, and sectors and systems. From sharing GCL content with their colleagues and friends in everyday life, to translating training materials into local languages, to advocating for national strategies for women's empowerment, they are achieving scale in different ways.

They are supported in advancing these changes by strong leadership plans developed during their on-campus residency. The leadership plans lay out the personal changes, community changes, and organizational changes that they will implement upon their return home. These plans ground theory and tools into practical action. The most popular topics covered are women's empowerment (governance, social emancipation, and economic empowerment), local economic development, the environment and sustainable development, women's rights, and specific thematic and sectoral issues such as gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, peace and conflict, and inclusion and disabilities.

A mentorship component, in which graduates are matched with established women leaders provides a balance of emotional and professional support as graduates enact their plans. It also enhances intergenerational learning that ensures the continuity of the women's leadership movement worldwide. It has also facilitate long-term relationships, which are an interface between established and emerging leaders.

Finally, a leadership network covers the personal and professional bonds within (and at times across) the batches, facilitators, mentors and mentees across different geographic areas. Graduates also remain connected with Coady by taking shorter certificates, undertaking fellowships, sharing resource materials, and even co-hosting courses. The network is contributing to the continuous knowledge sharing, mutual support, and circulation of the development expertise among its members. This is boosting creativity and innovation on local, regional, and global levels.

Overall, the study found that the GCL program is meeting and even exceeding its targets. Nevertheless, there are ways for program to be strengthen and refine its contributions. This analysis is interspersed throughout the text, and summarized in a list of recommendations in the final section.

## 1. Introduction

Established in 2011, the Global Change Leaders Program is a 7-week education program offered by Coady Institute's International Centre for Women's Leadership. This program enables women from developing countries to strengthen their leadership capacities towards innovation and change in their organizations and communities.

The program participants engage in learning that is grounded in lived experiences and focused on Coady's core thematic areas. Through a shared learning environment with fellow emerging women leaders from around the world, the participants are exposed to a range of subjects which are reflected by diverse experiences and, important, the beginnings of a potentially lifelong network of support. Its ultimate goal is to increase the influence and presence of women in all aspects of development.

Unlike most Coady programs, GCL provides its graduates with structured post-program accompaniment in the form of guidance and mentorship from established women leaders. The mentorship lasts approximately four to six months, and mentorship helps participants with the situational leadership needed to enact their leadership action plans developed during the on-campus program.

The program is led by a core team of staff in the International Centre for Women's Leadership and supported by other Coady faculty and associates. It also explores opportunities for collaboration with other external actors, such as organizations and communities both in Antigonish and StFX University, and further abroad.

Key questions asked within this study include:

- How are graduates from the Global Change Leaders program contributing to social change?
- How has the GCL program fostered a network of women leaders?
- What contributions has this network made to women's leadership and development?
- What factors hinder/contribute (including mentorship and post-program accompaniment) to outcomes and impact?

The research team, consisting of the Coady Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Manager and two contracted GCL graduates, explored these questions using document review, an online graduate tracer study, interviews with key resource people (current and former Coady staff and associated, and GCL mentors), and online focus group discussions.

This report covers the methodology used during the study, scope and population covered, an overview of the GCL program, results from the classroom, broader development outcomes, factors that contribute to outcomes, conclusions and reflections, and specific recommendations and a SWOT analysis. Overall, the study found that the GCL program is achieving and even exceeding expected outcomes.



## 2. Methodology and Scope

One of the goals of the Global Change Leader evaluative study was to design and develop a methodology that captures the special focus of CGL program among the Coady Institute's educational outcomes could facilitates in-depth inquiries on emerging and pertinent themes. More specifically, the study provides a better understanding of how and to what extent graduates of the Global Change Leaders program are applying their new knowledge/skills, attitudes, and perspectives to enhance women's rights and leadership in development and practice and contribute to transformative social change. In order to achieve this, the study design balances a number of theoretical and practical criteria.

### 2.1 Methodology

Coady's monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approach is rooted in Guijt's (2015) assertion that "results and evidence practices must be feasible, useful, and rigorous, be accompanied by autonomy and fairness, generate time and space for reflection on evidence of results, and be agile" (p. 194). In addition, the MEL methodology should be consistent with the philosophy of the program. These MEL standards are in keeping with the following design principles.

**Utilization:** The methods are designed to generate data in a timely and relevant manner for inclusion in reporting and decision-making.

**Trustworthiness:** A systematic and rigorous approach was used to gather, analyze, and share the findings. The evaluative research seeks to uphold professional standards set out by the Canadian Evaluation Society (<https://evaluationcanada.ca/ethics>).

**Representative:** Coady's GCL alumna network is a diverse group of graduates located around the globe with varying degrees of access to the Internet. Therefore, the most cost-effective way to systematically ensure representation of graduates in the study was through a mix of digital tools and in-person discussions.

**Consistency with the Program's Approach:** The approach behind Coady's adult education programs invites a combination of participatory practice and accountability. Thus, the methodology blends storytelling and spaces for reflection and analysis of the breadth of change, along with key performance indicators to mark progress towards results.

**Participatory and Reflective:** Core to the adult education approach is dialogical space for critically reflecting on lived experience and data in order increase our knowledge. The methods embedded in the survey and focus groups help bring a degree of participatory analysis to the study.

### 2.2 Data Sources

The adaptation of the methodology incorporates key indicators, stories, spaces for reflection, and participatory analysis through a combination of outcome and tracer surveys, alumna focus groups and interviews with the resource persons. The methods were deployed in stages.

#### 2.2.1 Document Review

The review encompassed three types of documents: (a) existing Coady MEL reports, case studies and strategic documents (including Coady's Institutional strategy and Theory of Change); (b) outcome surveys 2014-2017<sup>3</sup>; and (c) internal program documents including course evaluations, database

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<sup>3</sup> Outcome surveys were introduced in 2013 to explore early mid-term results from Coady programs. They are deployed six to eight months after graduation, and combine the Most Significant Change and SenseMaker

queries, and organizational reports. These three types of sources provide a theoretical grounding for the analysis, along with insights into the complexity of practice.

### **2.2.2 Online Tracer Survey**

The Online Tracer Survey was conducted from November to December 2018 to provide a snapshot of longer term results. The survey was deployed to all GCL graduates from 2012-2018. As a whole, the survey took into consideration the results of the outcome surveys provided by alumna six months after graduation and included the following sections:

a. *Demographic Information*: basic information about country and year of participation are gathered in order to build a profile of respondents and to stratify the data as required.

b. *Key indicators*: three quantitative questions that rank from the highest to the lowest the impact of the different GCL components on the individual, organizational and the community levels. They are:

- Impact on Self; Purpose and politics; Practices; Principles and values
- Relevance (to career, organisation and communities)
- Significance of specific areas (approach, content, class, logistics, environment, reputation)

c. *Community plans*: a series of narrative questions asking respondents to share their stories of community plan implementation. This provides insights into the breadth of Coady outcomes, both intended and unintended. It also shows the variety of obstacles that women face and strategies they have adopted to advance their intended changes.

d. *Mentorship*: several questions prompting the respondents to do a first level of analysis of their own mentorship experience. They are asked to rank the relevance of the mentorship that they have received after graduation and describe both failures and successes within this journey.

e. *GCL methodology and women's leadership*: the framework consists of series of questions exploring the place of GCL in the global women's empowerment ecosystem, and broader feminist and social movements. It also provides evidence for women leaders' performance years after graduation.

### **2.2.3 Focus Group Discussions**

Following the collection of the tracer surveys, a series of focus group discussions was held to further engage the graduates in reflection and analysis of initial findings. Given the geographical dispersion of GCL alumnae, the three focus groups were conducted online in a variety of time zones and days of the week. The main goal of the focus group discussions was to verify the outcomes of the surveys and discuss the possible solutions and recommendations for the GCL program's development over the next years.

### **2.2.4 Interviews with the resource persons and mentors**

The interviews were developed based on the document review, outcomes surveys, and key evaluation questions. Current and former Coady staff, external associates, and mentors, who had been involved in the program were all interviewed. Including former staff and associates was important to

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evaluative frameworks. The Outcome Surveys collect demographic information, key indicators, stories of change, and a significance framework for respondents to do a first level analysis of their own story. A broader study based on the outcome surveys, *Learning from Stories of Change*, was published in 2017 and is available here: <https://coady.stfx.ca/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/Learning%20from%20Stories%20of%20Change%20-%20Coady.pdf>



understand the history of the program and how it had changed in response to changing contexts and realities. The conversations also explored the factors that support/hinder the program itself, as well as its contributions, connections, and significance to the development field and global feminist movements. Interviews with selected mentors contribute to the deeper analysis of the GCL mentorship component, provide evidence for the good practices within the mentoring process and help to reveal the underdeveloped areas that can be further strengthened.

### **2.3 Limitations of the research**

*Time:* the duration of the case study was limited to three months (November 2018-January 2019) covering the Christmas season and end of the financial year in many countries. That may influence the availability and activity of the alumna and resource people. We estimate that number of engaged graduates and key information could be 20% to 30% higher if the time limit is less restricted.

*Communication:* this study is the first comprehensive analysis of the GCL program since 2012, therefore in some cases we expected difficulties in reaching large numbers of participants. Taking into the consideration that technologies and communication channels had changed since 2012, the invitations to join the surveys and focus groups might not find their recipients due to e-mail address changes.

*Technology:* access to technology is a calculated risk with online events. Participants from some regions or time zones might have unstable internet connections in the suggested time slots for the focus groups and interviews.

*Data:* since the GCL database is not structured in the same way for all years (due to various internal organizational changes) it was challenging to compare all documents and forms starting from 2012. Nevertheless, outputs from course evaluations, outcome surveys, and internal program documents allowed the team to do coherent analysis of the data and highlight some tendencies in the program dynamics.

### **2.4 Additional solutions**

The extra steps involved in the analysis were intended to help with monitoring and provide graduates/staff members with the opportunities for reflection and participatory analysis. Overall, the techniques aim to deepen our understanding and support the uptake of the findings. A unique approach used by this study was engaging two alumnae from earlier (2014) and later (2018) GCL batches into the project team. Their inclusion provided a deeper perspective on the program curriculum, impact, outcomes, and encouraged other alumna to join the evaluation process.

In order to minimize the risks of the case study and secure the maximum outreach for the project communication we offered the variety of options for the focus group timing in order to cover working hours in the majority of the global time zones. Social media was used to promote these opportunities on the Coady Women's Centre Facebook group.

In order to disseminate the results of this study we collected the e-mail addresses of the survey participants who would like to receive the summary of this report and provide their feedback, which can be later be included as an annex to this study. The team is also planning on holding a webinar, developing shorter briefs, and collaborating with Coady communications and fund development teams to share the report findings.

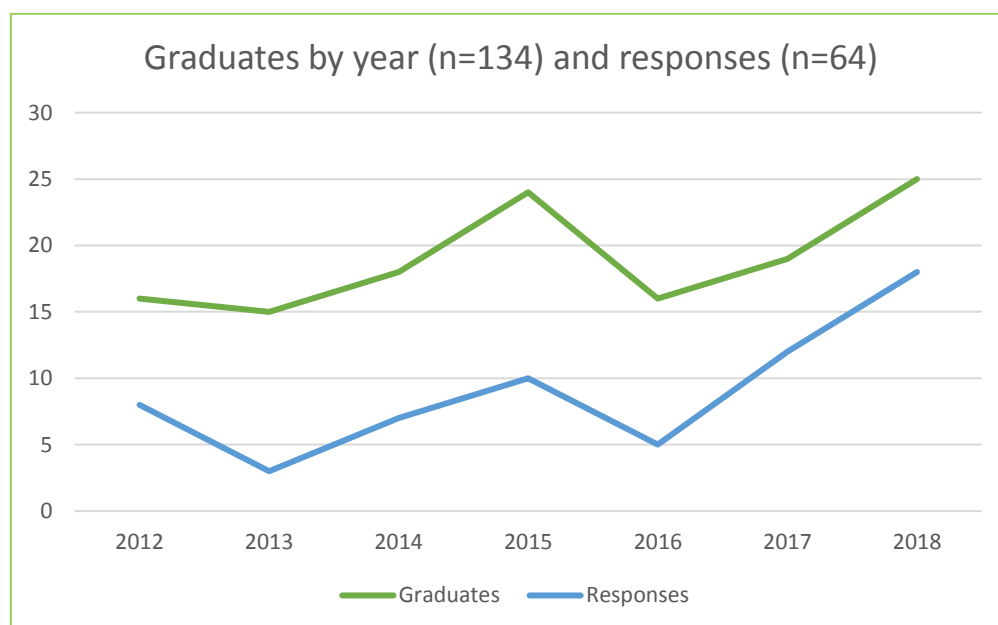
### 3. Population

The GCL case study spans a six year period from 2012 to 2018. The scope focuses on the program alumnae but also encompasses the GCL institutional team – facilitators, mentors, and administrative staff. Surveys were distributed to the graduates only, but in-depth interviews covered the perspective of the program team members as well as its other resource people (former team members and Coady staff, and mentors).

Since 2012, 134 women from 52 countries have graduated from GCL with the size of the group differentiating from 15 to 25 people depending on the year, at an average of 19. Based on conversations with facilitators and other institutional staff, 20 appears to be the ideal number that balances diversity of backgrounds and the realities of facilitation. Numbers fluctuate due to uncontrollable factors, such as the inability of the accepted participants to receive a Canadian visa, personal circumstances, or receiving time off from work. For this reason, approximately 30 participants are accepted each year with the assumption that roughly two thirds will arrive for the program.

#### 3.1 Online Tracer Survey 2012-2018

The 2018 tracer study was sent to all 134 GCL graduates. 72 responses were received, of which 9 which not complete enough for inclusion in the study. This response rate of 63/134 (47%) is a comparatively high result for tracer studies, and in part may have been secured by an active campaign in the Coady Women Leaders Network group on Facebook and high levels of continued graduate engagement with Coady.



Not surprisingly the 2018 graduates were the most active in the evaluation activities within this study as this was their first systematic opportunity to provide formal feedback after leaving Coady. Relatively low activity among 2013 and 2016 batches might be related to the lack of an updated contact list or by a limited communications platform.

The GCL respondents represent 52 countries mostly coming from Africa, South Asia, and South East Asia. A majority of the graduates are the only representatives of GCL program in their country, but there are key concentrations of graduates in several countries. Kenya stands out in this regard with eight alumnae graduated from GCL since 2012. Ghana, India, Malawi, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda also have five or more graduates.

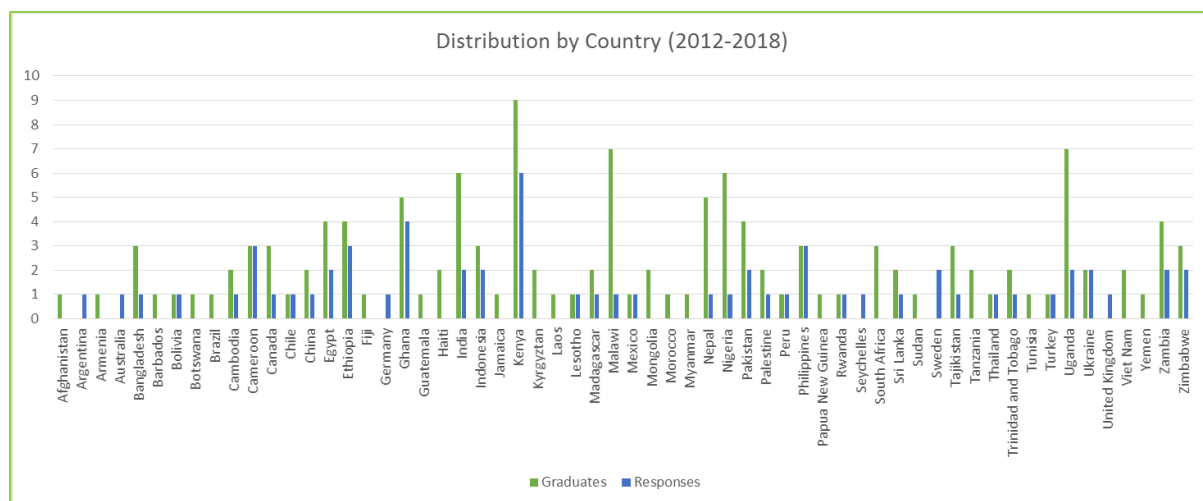
About seven responses were received from the countries other than the participants countries of origin (e.g. Australia, Germany, Sweden, UK), which shows some extent of the mobility after the program. Later in their responses graduates confirmed that GCL enhanced their academic or professional career abroad.

The importance of this diversity was confirmed strongly in outcome surveys, the tracer study, and focus group discussions:

*"It was an eye opener on the diversity of women leaders across the global (diversity in age, educational background, ethnicity, race, color community, etc... etc... the list is endless). Sharing the same space with such powerful women was no mean feat for seven weeks! We must all understand that everyone is coming from somewhere and HerStory shapes the person and their motivation behind the quest for leadership"* (Outcome surveys, 2014).

Reflecting on her experience in a focus group a participant shared that:

*"Living with 24 women is going to be a test of patience, how tolerant we are to different cultures, personalities and attitudes. At the end of the seven weeks is the sense of acceptance among each other and acceptance of everybody's unique contributions however different we are. That's the main thing, the mindfulness"* (Nina Somera, 2018, Philippines).



### 3.2 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions involved 15 participants in three sessions (including researchers from Philippines and Ukraine who were in each focus group as participants). Coverage by year is distributed between the unique participants: one from 2012, zero from 2013, three from 2014, zero from 2015, zero from 2016, two from 2017, and four from 2018. Engagement of the researchers from 2014 and 2018 years had clearly influenced the activity of alumnae from the corresponding years. 11 participants who had expressed interest were unable to join due to timing and technological issues, despite attempts to identify the most appropriate time zones and choose appropriate focus group software.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> One non-GCL participant, who had previously graduated from other Coady programs (including the certificate in Community Development Leadership by Women), was interested in the process and methodology and joined a focus group discussion after seeing a post about it in the women's network group on Facebook.

Countries represented: Vietnam, Turkey, Ukraine, Philippines, India, Kenya (3), Cameroon, Ethiopia, Malawi (non-GCL).

### **3.3 In-depth interviews**

***“It’s nice to be listened to and to be heard. It does not matter who you are”*** (from the interviews with the GCL resource persons, December 2018)

Ten mentors and resource persons were interviewed during November and December 2018. This includes present staff members: Eileen Alma (Director, Women and Indigenous Programming), Naima Chowdhury (Women's Leadership and Gender Specialist and lead facilitator for the GCL program since 2016), and Dr. June Webber (Vice-President, Coady International Institute and St.FX University). Cindy Thompson (Recruitment and Partnerships Coordinator) was not interviewed but provided invaluable insight into administration and logistics of the early years of the GCL program.

Also interviewed were former Coady facilitators and staff but still supporting GCL in various ways (Linda Jones, Nanci Lee, and Pauline Achola) and also mentors from different countries: Dr. Atia Apusigah (Ghana), Glenise Levendal (South Africa), Stella Maranga (Kenya), and Michaela Raab (Germany). Most mentors work remotely and have never visited Antigonish, but have been long standing supporters of the program through the mentorship program.

## 4. The Global Change Leaders Program

The Global Change Leaders program grew out of the leadership programs of Coady International Institute which has been attracting development workers around the world, especially from the global South, since 1959. Established in 2012, shortly after the International Centre for Women's Leadership was founded within Coady, the program aimed to provide a different kind leadership training. It was to be grounded within the traditional adult education and history of the Antigonish Movement, but closely connected to women's movements, feminism, and gender-based approaches at every level of global discourse.

### 4.1 GCL Origins

The 2012 pilot program was ambitious: fully funded, an international placement in an organization in a third country, and mentorship by accomplished women leaders. No less than the Honourable Mary Coyle<sup>5</sup> was a key figure introducing GCL and establishing the International Centre for Women's Leadership during her term as Director of the Coady Institute and St. Francis Xavier University's Vice President. With the generous financial support of Global Affairs Canada and other private donors, at approximately \$1,000,000, the pilot batch of GCL consisted of a 20 week commitment to leadership training: two weeks in online preparatory work, an initial nine weeks spent in Canada, eight weeks in a third country, and a final week in Canada. The participants received specialty communications training and mentorship by an established woman leader over the program. In the international placement, the women could immerse themselves and apply the skills that they had learned.

The scope of GCL in terms of time line, program features, geographical reach and logistical demand made the first batch of GCL a "Cadillac" version – resource intensive, but with the potential for high returns. At a time when there was a dearth of funding for women's leadership, so there was immense pressure for GCL not only to be different from any similar programs but ultimately, deliver results which would lead to greater investment in women's leadership at Coady and beyond.

Funding was available for the pilot model in only the first year. Immediately, there were challenges in securing additional funding for such a high cost program. Further Logistics and resources required to secure international placement were very high. Challenges included securing visas, health insurance, and other significant liabilities. Not to mention the difficulty of emerging leaders leaving their lives, families, and professional responsibilities for a full 20 weeks. Given such concerns, the program was scaled back. A new model put the focus on leadership action plans that could be enacted back at home under the mentorship of an established woman leader.

Since 2013, GCL has consisted of approximately seven weeks in Antigonish of on-campus activities under the guidance of a lead facilitator(s) (Naima Chowdhury 2017-present; Eileen Alma and Nanci Lee, with support from Naima Chowdhury 2016; Stella Maranga 2014-2015; Nanci Lee 2013; Pauline Acholla 2012) with support from the Director of the International Centre for Women's Leadership at Coady (Eileen Alma 2013-present, Dr. Linda Jones 2011-2013). Co-facilitators (both internal to the Coady and external) are frequently engaged under the lead of the Coady facilitator to impart specialized knowledge and skills which buttress the main modules on leadership. Their lessons and experiences are also used as a reference point for updating the curriculum annual to reflect the evolving landscape of women's leadership in development.

GCL still provides successful candidates with a full scholarship for tuition, travel, accommodations, and meals. Successful participants are responsible for costs pertaining to acquiring a visa to enter Canada.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://sencanada.ca/en/senators/coyle-mary/> Retrieved 22 Jan 2019.

The seven week on-campus program consists of approximately seven modules<sup>6</sup>, grounded in transformative and adult education principles, and aligned with feminist approaches. During the on-campus program, participants develop individualized leadership plans (consisting of personal leadership, organizational leadership, and community leadership components) that will guide them as they enact change on the ground upon their return to their countries.

The application process is rigorous. Interested candidates are invited to submit a written application. Shortlisted candidates are then interviewed for experience and fit. While there is not a formal training needs assessment (TNA), the application process includes questions and steps about candidates' interest and expectations. As suggested by some participants, there may be an opportunity to include a formal TNA process for those candidates who are accepted, either prior to arrival on campus, or shortly after.

#### **4.2 Anchoring GCL on feminism**

At the beginning of 2011, Mary Coyle put together a team of passionate Canadian feminists like Linda Jones, Pauline Achola, and Nanci Lee to steer what would be the flagship program of Coady's International Center for Women's Leadership. These key Women's Centre and GCL staff had many years of experience in international development work between them. All had rich experiences and solid commitment to the project, and in interviews shared their excitement to co-create GCL's content that both made the program distinct from the rest of Coady's course offerings but aligned it with Coady's legacy in imparting leadership, the Antigonish Movement, and transformative adult education.

"The whole premise appealed to me. We started from nothing but we had pre-existing ideas on how leadership should be done," recalls Linda. The course started with modules on self-awareness especially over power and exercises which prepared the space to sustain 16 women in the long haul. But the process was also an opportunity for the two experienced feminist development workers, who were armed with countless stories from their engagement with communities around the world, Linda and Pauline. As Linda recounts, "we did not have the same adult education background. I think it was good for us to go through that process because we learned a lot from Coady. And it was a collaborative process." To further develop GCL's curriculum, Linda and Pauline collaborated with Nanci Lee, who had been working with Coady for several years. The initial curriculum drew heavily on Srilatha Batliwala's writings on theory of change and feminist leadership.

While it was clear that the "personal is political" right from the start - hence the investment on modules related to self-awareness - there seemed to be an ambivalence over the label feminist leadership. Some participants have not identified themselves as feminists while others assume that GCL is necessarily a feminist course. Some also prefer to brand the leadership in GCL as "gender transformative." As Nanci explained:

**"Feminist Leadership is not just for women but it is not saying that there is one feminist leadership. The way we talk about it is what for you is "changing the game." The label, "feminist leadership" is not as important as recognizing the root causes and underlying power structures. What is necessary in leadership is people — men, boys, girls, women, queer who are grounded in their integrity in their values, have**

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<sup>6</sup> Updated and changed each year to reflect new realities and the needs of each years' participants. In 2018, these modules included Feminist Leadership and the global situation of women, Leadership and Innovation, key thematic areas (Building Community Resilience, Promoting Accountable Democracies, and Inclusive Economy and Community Economic Empowerment), Systems Thinking, Leadership in Communication, Gender as a Cross-Cutting theme, and Women in Politics (from the 2018 GCL Manual).



**the ability to see the big picture and analyze it from 30,000, act from their heart and build relationships.”**

This approach remains at the core of GCL, even as the GCL curriculum and staff have evolved through the years. The personal remains political, and self-awareness remains the key to unlocking the leadership potential of the participants. It appears that an evolution of GCL is its increasing focus on movement-building to amplify voices and achieve societal change. As Naima Chowdhury, the current lead GCL facilitator describes:

**“By 2017, the course became oriented towards a feminist transformative leadership framework. So it was not just about leadership as in holding the power but sharing the power with others. It is not just talking about a person’s development in leadership, but developing leadership with the community. Hence the discussion started to include the women’s movements.”**

While women’s movements and feminist transformative leadership have become a more pronounced focus, GCL still begins with an exploration of the self to stimulate memory, share experiences, and/or to build community solidarity through remembering events, people, or repertoires. These participatory methodologies straddle art, activism and education to engage people of all genders with women’s history that has been systematically left out or undervalued by mainstream narratives. Participatory methods are used throughout the program to establish and sustain a democratic and empowering atmosphere and a space for free expression. In other words a “container” in which participants and facilitators can freely discuss, debate, disagree or come to shared understandings.

#### **4.3 Creating the “container” and continuum**

Creating a safe space right from the start has been a tall but necessary order for all the facilitators, especially if they are to impress that the “personal is political” throughout the course. But what brought ease among the participants and facilitated a celebration of their diversity is the “container” in GCL.

This container places a premium on the personal stories of every participant, and valuing these as course content comes in handy especially in conversations around power and agency. In the space, participants and facilitators aim to co-create and co-learn together. The Director of the Women’s Centre and lead facilitators are intentional in their efforts to support the participants through challenging moments. Moreover, it is not uncommon for women to have personal stories with imprints of gender-based violence. Having this container as part of a solid protection pathway is one of the strengths of GCL. As GCL co-facilitator Valerie Miller recounts,

**“When a participant experienced a deep emotional crisis, Eileen responded with a seriousness and immediacy that demonstrated an admirable leadership. ...Mustering the community’s resources to support the woman comforted her and showed her a tremendous sense of solidarity.”**

Creating such a container is also a soft skill that is a necessary component of feminist leadership. Hence Pauline described GCL as “an applied reflection program,” putting this container into action on a daily basis with a check in and check out, and through creative exercises. “What a leader needs is to hold space, hold dialogue, hold conflict, hold communities which are healing”, Nanci added. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on tracking the individual journey of each participant as they move through the program. This relationship is and trust building takes time, but as Naima noted “One on one is very important for each participant to explore who she is as an individual and also to decide on her preferences.” This solid container is also a prerequisite to a continuum of sisterhood and support

that go beyond the classroom and graduation – creating a lasting bond that transcends culture, geography, and time.

#### **4.4 Searching for potential leaders**

Then as now, GCL sought emerging women leaders from the global South, those who are “not there yet” but have demonstrated leadership in their line of work.<sup>7</sup> Most lead facilitators have also prioritized women working at the grassroots level, who otherwise might have no access to educational opportunities overseas. As Naima explains:

**“I try to prefer women from grassroots women’s organizations, even though there are challenges: These organizations usually have not developed a professional website. Sometimes people cannot express things properly, based on their response to the questions in the application. But then when they are shortlisted for interview, I try to see the person’s personality, commitment and attitude.”**

Although some participants hold post-graduate degrees or work in well-known institutions, most are engaged in community work, which is seen as an indicator of the level of commitment one has towards societal change. A handful of participants also consist of founders of organizations and some become founders after graduation. It is partly for this reason that GCL includes modules on practical skills like book keeping and proposal development as well as public speaking, all of which are deemed essential in influencing others at any career stage.

But GCL also keeps the cohorts as diverse as possible - with people who come from various fields such as the nonprofit sector, academia, government, private sector, the arts and so on. Having multiple perspectives makes conversations richer, so participants can learn from one another. Multiple perspectives mean multiple examples of roles, strategies, and contexts. Having these also helps increase self-awareness especially in the context of co-creation or collaborative learning. In the last eight years, GCL has attracted over 5000 applicants, from 420 in 2012 to over 1200 in 2017/2018.

#### **4.5 International placements and mentorship**

The first version of GCL had two unique components compared to other Coady programs: international placements and mentorships. The matching processes were informed by the participants’ applications as well as their interests and conditions during their first few weeks in Coady. Pauline was at the helm of these matching processes recounts:

**“Early on we asked the participants, “who would you pick as your feminist heroes”. One of them named the Chairwoman of the Independent Electoral Commission of Lesotho. And so we coordinated with her office and it worked. But it took a lot of work.”**

The international placements also brought some extraordinary challenges, such as arranging the travel of 16 participants to 15 different countries, arranging visas, and health insurance. Faced with these

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<sup>7</sup> From the 2018 eligibility requirements participating women must: possess a minimum of five years of demonstrated leadership experience in a social or economic development endeavor; will be immediately returning to their community and sector following the program to put their learning into practice; have great drive and passion for their work, demonstrated through their outstanding contributions in their organizations and communities; are practitioners in civil society organizations including community based organizations and not for profits, or active in public or private institutions, donor/philanthropic agencies, social movements or in a social enterprise/business; hold a university degree or a combination of post-secondary education and experience; and have strong oral and written English language competencies.

challenges, as well as issues concerning funding such a program, the first element to be removed from the program was international placements, which has never been re-introduced.

However, the mentorship component has been kept since the beginning of the program. The facilitators were and are intentional in choosing of mentors with the capacity to coach people who are in the potentially difficult circumstances in which emerging leaders can find themselves. The mentors were not necessarily experts in the same field as the mentees. As Pauline explains, and other mentors/staff confirmed,

**“We made it clear that mentees had to drive this mentorship process. It is needed for the mentees to be proactive. That’s a way to stimulate a conversation. We gave them a lot of freedom. We also had a couple of situations where the mentee was able to mentor as well (...) What appeared to work then was having a mentor who worked within the same country or region, so it became easier for mentors to relate with the conditions and challenges.”**

Every GCL facilitator has taken it upon herself to facilitate the connection between mentees and mentors. But the relationship-building was not always smooth. The survey and succeeding conversations in the focus groups and resource persons validated that some mentees were not receptive to their mentors. There were also mentors who did not get back to proactive mentees. Nevertheless, the majority of participants had a positive mentorship experience. Over time, a framework was formalized, helping both mentees and mentors set and implement their objectives within a given period. For the more fortunate pairs, the mentorship has gone beyond such period and continues to this day.

## 5. Stories of Change: Twists, Turns, and Triumphs towards Transformation

Because the Global Change Leaders program begins with the underlying assumption that “the personal is political” in substance and space, it is not surprising that much of its impact lies in the sense of self among its graduates. The paramount importance the program places on the individual’s own knowledge and experience facilitates the relationship-building that the course is both designed for and dependent on. By encouraging the participants to claim the space as themselves, not necessarily as staff of organizations, scholars, and public servants, the program separates itself from typical professional development trainings. This enables participants to express themselves with greater authenticity, contribute to the process by sharing their stories and taking on other initiatives, and choose to be connected with Coady International Institute, regardless of their career paths.

The GCL program moves from strengthening the foundations of change, into investing in hard skills, and then into dealing with backlash and complexity. This flow sets the stage for leadership plans the graduates will enact upon their return home, with the support of an established mentor.

### 5.1 Strengthening the foundations of change and building soft skills

The safe space or “container” that GCL creates and sustains throughout the course is crucial in strengthening the key ingredients in leadership - self-confidence and self-awareness. The first few weeks of exercises which limn through the participants’ personal stories of struggles and triumphs tend to break down more superficial facades and foster genuine interaction and sharing at a deep interpersonal level. These exercises include Rivers of Life where one identifies highlights in one’s life as well as others which look at one’s interests, passion, work, and obligations and still others like HerStory which assess the multiple roles women play and their varying positions of power in relation to these roles.

**“I had just left employment and was not sure if I was on the right path. But the learning we got especially the discovering yourself and doing the river of life, all these things helped us believe in ourselves.” Mary Munyao, 2018, Kenya.**

An objective is to make participants’ recognize their achievements, which may be undervalued, unsaid, unpaid or simply deemed unimportant in the households, communities, economies, and societies in which they live. These are common experiences for women around the world, and these stories are not often recognized as an important base for advocating for societal change. These exercises likewise facilitate trust and confidence-building among the participants.

**“The GCL program is unique in the sense that its women friendly and offers a safe space for me and other women to express ourselves without the male gender interference.” Rebecca Bolatito Ibe, 2018, Nigeria.**

The classroom becomes more than a space for learning. It is also a space for unlearning and even undressing. It provides an opportunity to lend oneself vulnerable by exposing unwanted pasts, practices and even perspectives, without the fear of judgement. This reflective space helps participants take stock of their strengths, weaknesses, agency, and other resources with the ultimate aim taking control of their own lives, set goals, and contribute to positive social change. As these participants described,

**“The first two weeks were spent on empowering us and how we need to be powerful to empower others. All along I knew if I wanted to be a leader, it was about the people I lead, but without understanding that I had to be empowered**

**too. Thanks to GCL I am a different person. I take time for myself... I should be the best version of myself so I can also empower others.”** *Jackline Undisal, 2017, Kenya.*

**“I finally managed to say no to my boss and colleagues. I now work within my capacity and this has given me time to concentrate on myself, my program and family more. As a result, my focus on women issues is hands on, I am seeing results because WHRDs are more visible individually and collectively, I got to be awarded for my work (meaning my visibility) and I have more time for self care including being with my family more than previously.”** *Salome Nduta, 2016, Kenya.*

The conversations on self-confidence and self-awareness are necessary in order to segue and frame the type of leadership that GCL advocates, which is a leadership that recognizes power and shapes this to empower others. Hence the focus on communication skills and approaches beyond presenting. These include facilitating conversations, building relationships and influencing people.

**“After GCL I upgraded my style of leadership with my staff and the community. GCL didn’t increase my position, but increased my skills particularly the soft skills. I met people from different countries and I got experience from the facilitators. Today when I am leading different events, my colleagues give me different comments about my speech and facilitation skills.”** *Eyerusalem Gebresalem, Ethiopia, 2012.*

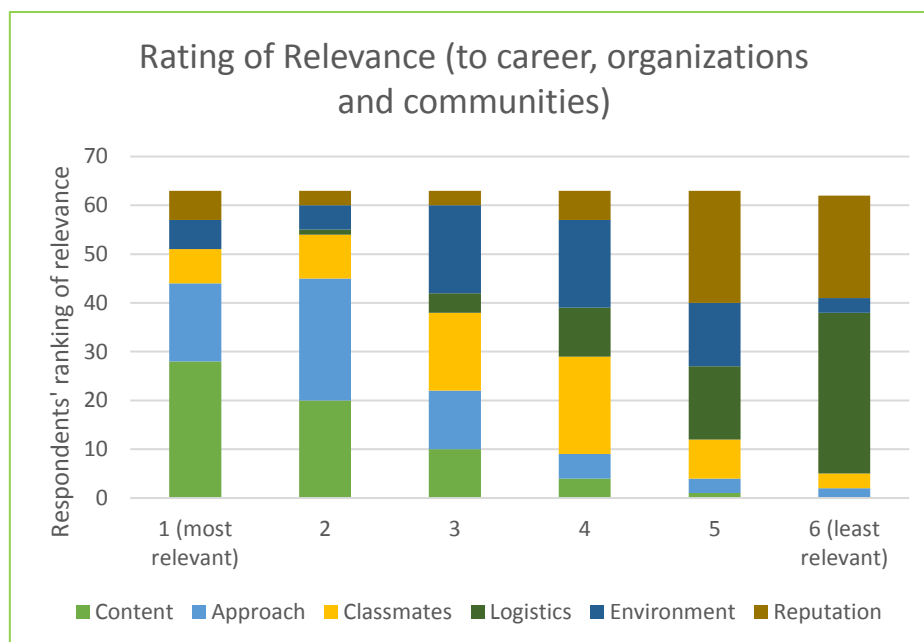
This space stretches beyond the classroom as the participants live together within on-campus residences in shared apartments. They are exposed to various contexts, politics, and cultures without having to step inside national boundaries. This intercultural learning, alongside potential intercultural and interpersonal clashes or challenges, provides an opportunity for the participants to apply the relationship building techniques and approaches used inside the classroom. Buttressed by the trust and confidence building processes, the conversations among the participants inside and outside the classrooms not only strengthens sisterhood it also facilitates a more nuanced worldview, including the ability to sift through mainstream pieces of information about politics and their representation.

**“I often speak about HerStories of my classmates. I think I remember each of it. Every name and every story. When I want to illustrate how important it is when the personal values are at the core of the theory of change I speak of my sisters from GCL. Also when I hear/see any stereotyping or discriminating behaviour towards other cultures I speak about my experience of sharing one house with 18 most beautiful human beings from all over the world and ask to do the effort of understanding other person's story prior to generalizing....Also I remember one moment - we were asked about the things in our communities that we are most proud of and also about main challenges. And when I said that the main poisoning leftover of the communist regime is a loss of trust between people and paralyzing fear - my mates from China and Vietnam confirmed the same. It was so amazing to see this kind of understanding comes from totally different contexts.”** *Kateryna Kravchuk, 2014, Ukraine.*

The container goes beyond the course itself as classmates become friends and a collegial relationship emerges among students, facilitators, and mentors. Following adult education methods, the lived experiences of participants often become the basis for discussions about leadership models, negotiation, social innovation, citizen-driven development, and thematic areas. Countless examples can be cited out of such a well-spring in almost any given topic, given the diversity of culture, background and work experience available within the classroom. This lays the foundation for moving from leadership approaches to applied knowledge and hard skills.

## 5.2 Investing in hard skills

Content remains the key strength of GCL, along with its approaches. In the tracer survey, 48 out of 63 respondents (75%) rated the content most or second most relevant to their careers, organizations, and community work, while 41 out of 63 (65%) rated the facilitation approach as most or second most relevant.



As for the most popular subjects, many cited the modules on leadership, including its components - the self-awareness and social awareness, along with the creative approaches and exercises such as open space technology, the daily circle, and rivers of life, among others. But most graduates have also included in their list of favourite subjects the hard skills around communications and community development. These include the more specific topics like public speaking, proposal writing, and asset-based community-development (ABCD) approach. The word cloud is based on responses to the outcome surveys question “what were the most significant knowledge and skills gained [in the GCL program]?” Their relevance and importance was confirmed in the focus groups held in December 2018.



The immediate changes which are noticeable among the participants while they are in Coady seem to be their ways of communicating. The container effect of GCL has a lot to do in mitigating inhibitions and stretching communications abilities. A roomful of leaders also helps participants to aspire for more.



**"It takes courage to stand up for yourself, be you, and begin standing up for others. Living in a world where women oppress fellow women, I had to swim up the tide after being accused falsely many times. The day I joined Coady August 2015; I felt happy though I had come with my 'who cares and I do not care attitude.' However I was inspired by many women who have done a lot better in life, and have remained themselves no matter what." Estellina Namutebi, 2015, Uganda.**

Investing what are commonly assumed to be basic communication skills, such as speaking and writing, further encourages learning among the participants. However, as these might be assumed to be basic skills, investment in these could potentially be difficult to justify. But it turns out that such investment helps amplify a leader's voice and render its substance even more powerful.

Public-speaking is also a skill that can easily indicate change among GCL students, precisely because it is practiced in daily lives, through basic conversations in the classroom as well as during field trips in nearby institutions. An external facilitator on speech writing was engaged just for a few of the first cohorts, but succeeding years continued to have modules on communication and public speaking, with opportunities for applied learning. Tracer study respondent often noted the benefits of the communication skills they gained as they influenced people within their organizations and communities.

**"Since Coady experience, making presentations at various forums has become part of my work. I do for them awareness-raising or fundraising. Every time I [have a] public appearance, my thoughts go back to Coady and I am reminded of what to do to prepare and during presentation. I always have a pitcher, and I always make sure I speak with authenticity. People say I have powerful presentations and I think I largely owe it to Coady." Tawina Jane Kopa Kamanga, 2012, Australia/Malawi.**

**"I was giving a speech and I remembered many methods we were given at GCL to be an effective speaker." Nargiza Ozguzel, 2018, Turkey.**

**"Public speaking. The nature of my job involves making a lot of presentation to large audience most of the time. Some of the skills I acquired while in Coady enable me build confidence and deliver appropriately." Faustina Vimariba, 2014, Ghana**

There are also instances when the public speaking skills the graduates learned are shared to a wider audience. In Vietnam, for instance, Dao Thi Hang (2014) has trained some 5000 on public speaking in conjunction with her work in developing local businesses in the outskirts of the country. Other graduates stories note the importance of communication skills for amplifying other women's voices and achieving larger scale change.

One of the most popular subjects in GCL is Asset-Based Community-Development (ABCD) and associated tools such as the Leaky Bucket, Wealth Diagram, and Value Chain Analysis. Although ABCD is not an original idea of Coady International Institute, Coady has been among its ardent advocates, such that it has become a feature in almost all courses in the Institute. It is probably one of the most prominent imprints of the Institute on GCL content, and complements the conversations around gender analysis, gender budgeting, and women's economic empowerment.

The Leaky Bucket has been a tool of choice among GCL graduates who ventured into local economies and social entrepreneurship as well as those who played convening roles in their communities. ABCD

provides a realistic approach in assessing the potentials of an initiative based on the needs, interests, capacities, and resources within a given context. It also lends a nuanced perspective on change with the concept of the “glass half-full”, in that ABCD recognizes that even the most successful initiatives do not make a community perfect. There will always be teething and labour pains which require evolution and innovation in initiatives and the ways these are implemented over time.

Unlike the acquisition of certain communication skills, there is less opportunity for GCL students to put ABCD in action while in Coady. This practical gap is usually covered by field trips to places in Canada where initiatives involve an ABCD approach in its design or in its potential to scale up. Nonetheless, some GCL graduates used the ABCD approach in their work, either as staff of their organizations or as community leaders.

**“[I intended] to team up with relevant researchers within and outside my organization to develop and conduct gender-based project in a rural community; identify the community where the project will be carried out and obtain necessary permissions; carry out participatory situation and gender analysis using gender analytical tools and ABCD approaches in order to identify the gender gaps, challenges and solutions as related to resource access and control; link rural women farmers to good, relevant, accessible, affordable and timely information; communicate research findings to project participants; organize relevant capacity building training and skills workshops for rural women farmers as need arises; develop strategies for effective monitoring and evaluation of project and adhere to it; showcase success stories at relevant research events; tutor women on leadership roles, styles and skills.”** *Rebecca Bolatito, 2018, Nigeria.*

**“I was going to use ABCD approach to mobilize and organize women, girls and community members around financial independence and social emancipation. To date, we have 15 women clubs and 16 girls' clubs with a growing membership of 2,000. I launched a website and I have over 7 members of staff and 11 volunteers working for the organization.”** *Tawina Jane Kopa Kamanga, 2012, Australia/Malawi.*

These findings were confirmed in the three focus groups, in which grads shared that the ABCD approach and associated tools remain relevant years after graduation. The interest in ABCD, along with the other practical tools for gender analysis, budgeting, value-chain analysis, among many others has been consistently cited by various batches as a consideration to extend the schedule of GCL to provide more opportunities to test and put into practice the tools while on-campus.

### **5.3 Re-discovering and re-framing power**

Perhaps the most meaningful contribution of GCL in triggering transformative changes lies in the renewed understanding of power and renewed affirmation to empower others. As Nanci Lee pointed out, feminism is quite difficult to impart: “It is not always easy to make a difficult conversation fun.”

Most community plans of 63 graduates who participated in the survey feature skills-sharing activities, often with the objectives of raising awareness on unequal gender relations and the need to address it among individuals, households, communities, organizations, and even universities and government offices; and increasing women’s leadership and participation in governance, including civic bodies. They work to change perspectives, attitudes, and behaviour, a task that requires influencing work on power structures within their organizations and communities.

Jackie Lidubwi, a television producer from Kenya, developed a community plan to communicate messages around inclusion, gender, and disability. In 2018, she was awarded the Sanaa Theatre Award

for a program where she intended to showcase the talent of women and young people.<sup>8</sup> These days, she has been lending her voice in dismantling patriarchal notions on gender roles, with greater confidence because of her experience in GCL:

**Right now in my country we have a debate about gender roles in our parliament. I have done several shows on air to share that gender roles does not mean just women, but it means women, men, persons with disabilities, and minorities. But I have to invite so many people to talk about it to educate the public because when I talk about it people assume it is just about women. I can relate to that before I went to Coady, when I thought that gender was just about women's issues. I now have a better understanding about gender based approaches and how you empower everyone. And this is what our government is trying to enact in the parliament and in the government. And some people don't want this. As a journalist I have taken up that role to educate the public. [My] biggest take away [from Coady is] a gender-based approach. Jackline Undisal, 2017, Kenya.**

Corina Osio (2017, Bolivia) wanted to introduce gender mainstreaming in the projects of her organization, in a bid to “increase women's participation in decision-making spaces, local entrepreneurship and the media [as well as] climate change adaptation measures.” So far, she has managed to pull resources to publish a magazine which feature girls who underwent training in her organization.

Still another graduate, Domoina Randriamiarina (2018, Madagascar), who leads the Association Miarintsoa, an organization that promotes water sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in Madagascar, has managed to integrate certain approaches and tools like ABCD that she learned from Coady in the implementation of her organization's five-year strategic plan. The plans includes participatory analysis of social dynamics, value-chain analysis and trainings on inclusive economies. Four months after she graduated, she conducted trainings on gender mainstreaming to her colleagues and her organization's partners and re-designed existing projects to make these gender-sensitive, among others. As she describes it, “The first steps of my plan is already over-achieved.”

Similarly, Momal Mushtaq, a women's rights activist in Pakistan used her power to communicate through writing and multimedia. Her digital initiative, The Freedom Traveler, aims to facilitate connections among women travelers especially from countries where there are barriers to women's mobility. Her initiative features her continuing collaboration with her mentor, who is now part of the Freedom Traveler's core group.

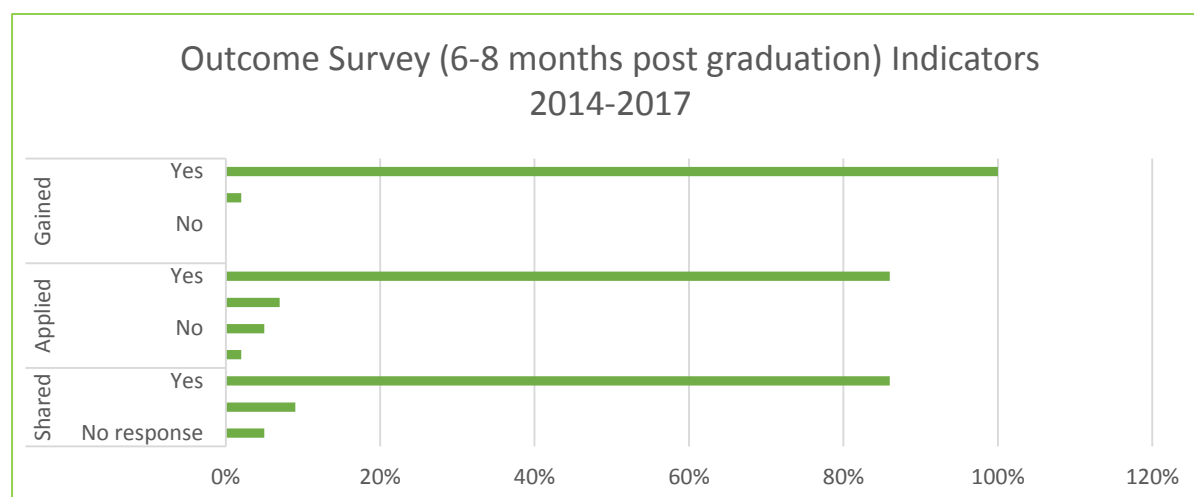
**“GCL helped awaken the feminist in me and kickstart a digital initiative very close to my heart called The Freedom Traveler and establish lifelong connections. Our facilitator at GCL, stayed in touch, lent a listening ear whenever needed and has become one of the most influential persons in my life. She played a key role in helping me get to where I am today. I feel extremely lucky and blessed to have gotten to know her through the GCL program. Besides, I made some great friends at the Coady Institute. We went on to inspire and support each other and meet again and again over the past six years.” Momal Mushtaq, 2018, Pakistan.**

It is not uncommon within and even across cohorts to collaborate, especially in countries which have produced a number of Coady graduates. Being in a position of influence helps participants implement their visions as they can use their power strategically and productively. However, not all participants

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<sup>8</sup> Coady International Institute (2018). “Graduate receives award for TV comedy.” URL: <https://coady.stfx.ca/graduate-receives-award-for-tv-comedy/>

begin in positions of influence as they are early in their careers and lives or work at grassroots levels. Targeting patriarchy at its base - the mindsets of people in power – is a challenging and at times frustrating proposition. For this reason, participants are guided in the development of a leadership plan that takes into account particular challenges they may face as they implement change in their organizations and communities.



Key indicators from outcome surveys (2014-2017) also show a significant amount of gaining new knowledge and skills, and behavioral change in terms of application and sharing of new knowledge and skills. At its core, behavioural change is one of the simplest and hardest factors to positively influence. Despite the challenges, it is fundamental to development practice.

To see if these changes persisted, the 2018 tracer survey asked a key question:

**“Did the GCL program strengthen your contributions to development and women’s empowerment?”**

98% of graduates from 2012-2018 reported that the GCL program had strengthened their contribution to development and women’s empowerment. 2% reported somewhat. 0% percent reported no. The following section explores what this significant and important result means in practice, and graduates’ contributions to development and women’s empowerment in their communities, organizations, and societies.

## **6. Development Results: Leadership, Community, and Organizational Plans**

A leadership plan consists of three parts: plans for one's individual growth, one's role in an organization, and one's contribution to a community. All of these must be doable in the next four to six months, with the support of a mentor. While the leadership plan is ultimately based on the respective contexts of the participants, it is also informed by the renewed, if not newly discovered self-awareness and knowledge of roles and relationships. It also provides an opportunity plan how the participants will put concepts and skills learned during GCL into practice in their organizations and communities. They range from pilot projects for service delivery, research projects, to media and awareness campaigns at the local or national level.

This chapter examines the successes and challenges as participants move to implement their plans. Nevertheless, the vast majority have implemented their plans in full or in part, either on a smaller scale or in a different direction. The community plans were adapted, and changed based on realities on the ground, and scaled back as high ambitions developed during planning phase were fit to a more realistic scale.

### **6.1 Putting theory into practice**

To get a better sense of whether or not community plans were implemented as expected, respondents to the 2018 tracer survey were asked "To what extent have you achieved your community plan based on how you envisioned it while you were at Coady International Institute?" Of the 54 respondents, four (7.5%) had been able to fulfill their community plan exactly as expected, 17 (31%) described the implementation as almost exactly as expected, 19 (35%) noted that they had achieved half of what they had planned, and nine noted that it was not close to what had been expected. A series of qualitative questions were used to explore successes, challenges, and contributions to development and women's empowerment. Nearly 100% of graduates reported that the overall GCL program strengthened their contributions to development and women's empowerment.

Various factors are at play for the progress of these plans. Specific external challenges shared by respondents include a lack of funding and the political environment. Others are issues which are intrinsic to organizations and communities such as resistance to change or lack of interest. It is also not uncommon for some students to be left inspired by certain modules and succeeding conversations, prompting them to rethink and alter their community plans at a later date. However, respondents also noted that even if they had not achieved the original community plan exactly as envisioned, the changes were necessary to reflect realities and deal with unexpected opportunities. We focused on the community plans in our inquiry because these are borne out of an individual's vision and commitment, with little if any expectation in economic returns.

### **6.2 Dealing with backlash and boons in organizations**

GCL graduates' renewed confidence and motivation to enact change is often put to the test as they come back to their home countries and start implementing their leadership plans. What appears to be most challenging to introduce and implement are the organizational plans.

Many grads note a sense of obligation behind the organizational plans, especially as these organizations vouched for the application of their women staff to the GCL program. Some received unpaid leave or paid time off to attend the program. However not all GCL participants are in a position of power to impart the knowledge and skills that they learned in GCL to their colleagues. To some extent, situational leadership is where the mentorship process becomes handy, particularly when mentors become sounding boards for organizational issues and suggest productive ways to communicate recommendations or changes to teams and management.

But there are unexpected turns which render organizational plans moot. As a GCL graduate from Malawi recounts,

**“When I participated in GCL, my sponsoring organization fired me upon realizing that they were empowering me to stand up for women. The experience gave me opportunity to focus on my organization ([www.tawina.org](http://www.tawina.org)) especially because I felt well equipped to manage it with the training I received as a GCLer. I have not looked back since then.”** *Tawina Jane Kopa Kamanga, 2012, Australia/Malawi.*

While the organizational plan was not implemented, this graduate’s circumstances led to unexpected positive outcomes. Others note that while their plan changed due to organizational circumstances such as increased workload or responsibilities, they continue to use the skills and knowledge gained in their everyday professional lives.

Another challenge is that leadership plan consists of three interrelated components: individual, organization and community plans. Implementing these in a few months can be difficult, especially if setbacks in one area lead to delays in another. Consistency and realistic expectations are central to implementing the plan as their scope can also be daunting for GCL graduates whose contexts vary: some are attached to non-government organizations, others are with governments and universities, others are leading grassroots organizations or co-creating start-ups and still some others are scholars and freelancing artists. Other have leadership plans connected not to their employer, but their volunteer commitments or personal social enterprises. It is for this reason that GCL mentor Michaela Raab suggests a rethinking of the leadership plan:

**“These plans are very broad. It is as if participants felt encouraged to choose as many items as possible from a whole menu of personal, organisational and community development options - without getting a sense of the time and effort needed to carry out such ambitious plans. For example, if you are in a demanding full-time job, it is hard to do a PhD on the side. On the other hand, if you run an NGO, then you may be better placed to carry out community development plans than others.”**

GCL graduates tend to have greater flexibility in designing, implementing, and redesigning community plans which are typically unpaid. Some of those who faced resistance in their previous organizations, transformed their organizational plans into community plans. Teams Advancing Women in Agriculture (TAWINA), a grassroots organization that empowers rural women through education and livelihood is an example of such shift.

There are also practical barriers to community plans, particularly funding and political contexts. Funding is probably the main concern among GCL graduates whose community plans involve direct support services particularly around gender-based violence (GBV). Take for example the community plan of one GCL graduate of 2017<sup>9</sup>

**“In response to the alarming incidences of gender based violence, I proposed to set up a one stop center where I would attend to women victims of SGBV as a back-up center to offer services in addition to the already on-going legal aid. This Centre would be an inter-agency unit for women victim/survivors of SGBV. When a case is received, the survivor was to be first be examined and treated by a doctor (we shall partner with community clinics) and also be seen by a counselor, a social worker, within 24 hours in a separate examination room that protects privacy and**

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<sup>9</sup> It would be great if we could identify the country and the corresponding result of this plan



**confidentiality. The underlying principle of such a multi-sectoral approach was to recognize the rights and needs of survivors as preeminent, in terms of access to respectful and supportive services, guarantees of confidentiality and safety, and the ability to determine a cause of action for addressing GBV incidents. The services to be offered [in this center] include; vocational skills with a goal of empowering them economically, provision of temporary accommodation/ shelter, protection from perpetrators, counselling, prosecution, representation in court, provision of medical care, provision of basic needs food clothing etc.”** Ashah Mwanga Mastullah, 2017, Uganda.

The scale of this plan is quite ambitious especially as it aspires to be better than the framework, investment and services of the State. Even as a pilot within a small community, such plan would require significant investment in resources through grants and partnerships, including investment from government agencies themselves. As of January 2019, the graduate has acquired a full house with 22 rooms, and the project is proceeding well. Projects like this are also dependent on the political climate. There are administrations which tend to be more receptive to the participation of civil society, especially women’s rights organizations. But there are also administrations which tend to shrink democratic spaces and even make misogynistic policy pronouncements.

A GCL graduate (who must remain anonymous) found it difficult to implement her community plan in the wake of communal violence as her country’s politics became hostile for her work. Extremist groups could threaten her family and loved ones. Therefore, it was not possible for her to work at a local level. However, she has continued to apply the GCL learnings at the international, sectoral and organizational levels.

Meanwhile, some community plans have banked on opportunities in governance. For example, the willingness of several women to stand for leadership positions in Busia County in Kenya was considered an opportunity to promote the visibility of women leaders and more importantly create a feminist agenda. A GCL graduate facilitated conversations among prospective women candidates. These conversations not only explored strategies to increase the chances of women to get leadership posts but also make their political agenda responsive to women’s rights and gender equality.

**The positive change about my action plan was that it brought women who were competing for similar positions together to discuss pro women agenda like security for women contestants, the available opportunities for women to influence change among other things. Through these dialogues, some women even gave up on the idea of vying. They ended up working for their political parties and still ended up nominated into the county assembly. This project also made me realize that despite there being a lot of things that women can do, a good number of women are still not willing to have a feministic approach to their political agenda. This project helped me to also interact with the different intersectionalities that women face in the community.** Bernadette Muyomi, 2017, Kenya.

Following her experience, the graduate decided to establish a non-profit organization with a focus on women’s rights issues and to work on feminizing the political and socio-economic agenda.

The most consistent challenge to most community plans lies in perspectives, attitudes, and behavior of people around them. Another Kenyan GCL graduate wanted to establish a library focused on women human rights defenders (WHRDs) in a bid to support WHRDs even at the community where access to education and women’s mobility remain an issue. But this initiative failed to get enough

support from her organization. Instead of dwelling on this failure, she moved on and tried another initiative, focusing on women's economic empowerment.

**“We have however teamed up with ten women who are like sole breadwinners within their families because their husbands have been subsumed in alcoholism and they cannot fully support their families. With the women, we are currently involved in small scale organic farming where we grow greens and other organic foods and supply in small scale to hotels which sell organic food. We intend to start off a catering services which we will be offering services to people in locality when they have ceremonies. With funds raised, we intend to use it to educate the children and do other things including buying books which in the long run will be used to set up a library when each of our children finish schooling.”** *Salome Nduta, 2016, Kenya.*

The key strategy for her was to sidestep power holders which perpetuate the gender division of labour and deprive women of decision-making over their own income. She thus worked with women, who tend to be less dependent on their husbands and have greater mobility but who also share her agenda on WHRDs. This strategy has kept her community plan alive.

These different pathways illustrate that advocacy and change are often incremental, and require creative thinking to sidestep barriers and confront unequal power relations. What is clear is that all of the respondents recognize that a commitment to women's empowerment not only means enabling women to advance in all spheres of life, but also building their capacity to fully and effectively participate as leaders and decision makers, thereby ensuring their influence in all aspects of development and their elevation in societies worldwide. While they face challenges, the variety of modules, tools, and concepts taught in GCL provide an array of strategies that they can use to implement, adapt, and change their plans as need be.

### **6.3 The Question of scale**

Graduates have also moved on to new opportunities. Many have left their organizations for new roles. Some have received scholarship for further studies. Others have also assumed new roles like motherhood. These shifts in their personal lives have had an impact in their original plans. Some changed career paths even before they finished the course, which meant organizational plans had to change right from the start. Sandra Winarsa (Indonesia, 2017) noted, “after returning from GCL I was promoted to Program Development Manager which allows me to develop new inclusive programs under the green energy unit at Hivos.” While this may have impacted the community plan, it also provided new opportunities to apply and share knowledge and skills. As Nanci Lee puts it, “Maybe they move from organization to government, but they bring the leadership and values.” Michaela Raab also adds, “GCL is about a commitment to developing oneself.”

Beginning with the individual, change radiates out to communities, organizations, and the wider policy environment. And, smaller scale change is no less meaningful. As Kuy Chheng Treng (2012, Cambodia) pointed out “I would suggest that you do not have to dream big or jump into a big role or position in the government or an organization in order to make an impact. Actually you still create the impact around yourself to advocate and educate people about themselves with the core values and integrity of leadership.” In fact, it seems that this approach is what leads to larger scale change, as many of the respondents noted.

There is an opportunity to help GCL graduates scale up their work and innovations through endorsing the materials they develop based on their Coady learnings. This could be done through a “Graduate Innovations Policy.” Focus group participants noted that this would enable them greater visibility, and could contribute to new or updated teaching materials for GCL. These materials could also form a

compendium of tools that have been translated by graduates into local languages other than English and reach a much larger audience.

Many GCL graduates become mentors to younger women, passing along their knowledge and contributing to broader change.

**“Building onto this invaluable GCL experience of being able to reflect and learn about the 'leadership from women's/ feminist perspective', I have utilized this learning through consciously investing in mentoring my teams and colleagues, especially young women in Afghanistan, and now Ukraine.”** *Shruti Upadhyay, 2012, Ukraine.*

Small is the new big, but it does present challenges in monitoring and evaluating the direct impacts of change. Education programs in general can be difficult to monitor and evaluate, due to the difficulty of assessing contribution and attribution. However, graduates shared many stories of direct change at the community, organizational, and policy levels that are directly attributable to the GCL program. It seems that one of the strengths of the program is that it provides graduates with the tools to enact change where there are possible pathways and recognize the importance of incremental change to broader societal shifts.

In addition to the stories spread through the narrative sections of the report, the following selection provides an array of stories of impact in the three areas: Community Change, Organizational Change, and Sectoral/Systems-wide Change. In this selection, these graduates noted the direct contribution of the GCL program to these changes. With over a hundred GCL graduates, the continuum of change increases, leaving a challenge and opportunity for Coady International Institute to track GCL's contribution to and through its graduates.

<b>Organizational Change</b>
<i>We started a new HR department with policies like child protection, sexual harassment within the organization, and we have scaled our operational area with secure funding. I have developed a school safety curriculum based on Coady teachings which is ready to roll.</i> Smita Dharmamer, 2017, India.
<i>At this stage, 4 months after the GCL programme, the first step of my plan are already over achieved: 1) Training staff and implementing partners on mainstreaming gender in our projects. 2) Re-designing gender sensitive projects, 3) Fundraising which are supposed to start in January 2019 are already fruitful (two successful proposals).</i> Domoina Randriamiarina, 2018, Madagascar.
<i>I designed my original plan to cover the needs of my club and a few female university students as a pilot initiative. When my responsibilities and horizons were expanded, I had to adjust my work plan accordingly to work with an expanded audience at local and national levels. I have conducted various trainings for eleven clubs under my jurisdiction and worked with more communities in Kenya. I am currently the Programme Director of Soroptimist Union of Kenya. At the University of Kabianga I am a lecturer and I work with both male and female students to develop their capacity to provide community service.</i> Dolphine Anyango, 2014, Kenya.
<i>GCL has helped me to see women's issues in a wider way and also my approaches to tackle them. This has also affected my organization's way of doing things. Some major achievements are citizen participation and inclusion.</i> (Vida Kabuga, 2015, Ghana.)
<i>I have been appointed to work in many boards of management in health and education institutions. I have also been able to steer safeguarding and training for staff in different institutions.</i> Rose Wanjiru Mancharia, 2014, Kenya.

**Community Change**

*I don't think there has ever been a time in my training sessions with the Lions Clubs that I have never used an experience from one of the classes... I have always applied my experience to my material preparation and presentation.*

Nomsa Imgwa, 2012, Zambia.

*I have then tried to use opportunities in meetings and especially where influential leaders are to talk on issues affecting women and children with disabilities. I have also searched opportunities to talk with my leaders on this issues. My immediate community leaders have committed to support me in seeking solutions to create inclusive and equality in my community for children and women with disabilities.*

Mary Munyao, 2018, Kenya.

*There has been a change in attitude towards women with disabilities in the communities. Because they are now engaged in their own businesses, they are able to cater for themselves and lead dignified lives. People now respect them. Though there is no policy change yet, the gains being made in the communities and the involvement of women with visual impairment in leadership will go a long way to change stereotypes and obsolete cultural and societal norms and policies.*

(This graduate has chosen to have her response remain confidential).

*The plan was implemented in two communities. Young people in both municipalities were trained in gender issue, climate change and communication/media. As a result the girls from on the municipalities created a local environment that disseminates gender issues and climate change in their community.... The girls discovered their potential as leaders and have more participation in their municipalities.*

Carrina Osio, 2017, Bolivia.

*With the present war in the NW/SW in Cameroon, I brought up the idea of us women taking the lead. I approached a few other women leaders and we formed a platform known as NW/SW Women's Task Force- SWNOT with the objective of engaging women to lead the peace process in Cameroon. We have already done a Peaceful Lamentation with over 2000 women during which we called for a cease fire from both parties. Our next move is a press conference at the capital city of Yaounde on Monday 10th of Dec. We already have an action plan and will continue till peace returns to our regions.*

Clotilda Andienza, 2015, Cameroon.

**Sectoral and System-wide Change**

*[my team] is developing a national strategy for business incubation. One of the terms of references is ensuring that there is a higher percentage of women and youth... I was the only one to argue in favour of women. As much as more women than men are involved in entrepreneurship, their businesses do not grow as fast as their male counterparts. Women are also at the lowest level of production in value chains. This made people see the matter in discussion differently and incubation programmes will target at least 70% of women and youth.*

Majubere Mofolo, 2017, Lesotho

*I was able to influence my local council to appoint 11 women out of the 21 appointees. It had never happened before at the political party elections at the local level. Through my activities in increasing women's participation, 40% of women contested for various positions which used to be claimed only by men. The schools under my catchment area, girls also now contest for other positions within the school instead of girls only going for the girl's prefect position.*

Vida Kabuga, 2015, Ghana

*Getting government on board takes time especially when it relates to funding and participation commitment and relevant personal political will at both Ministries. At this moment the Ministry of*

*Women Empowerment opened up the first step, in addition to agreeing to doing the pilot but also is planning to develop a roadmap based on lessons learnt from the pilot as a showcase/example to other technical ministries on gender integration as a crosscutting issue that brings stronger positive social added values. Two national CSOs are also joining in this effort as coalition partners. (This graduate has chosen to keep their name confidential).*

*We have embedded GCL approaches in my organization. So now we have programs with the police, with SAG group, with educators, with other departments and stakeholders in 16 states in India. It's a large country so scaling here is difficult, and each state has their own culture and politically it is very volatile. We are approaching our elections soon. So there are so many bills that are coming up. We just passed our bill on trafficking. We just changed our juvenile justice act and our child labour act. In conjunction, what is happening to the child? If nobody cares about this we have to keep pushing. That is scale for me – everybody knowing of that and we are doing that. In two states we are working with the education department. In 3 states working with police. That is a new success. We built that strategy in GCL. And fortunately we all started working in our organizations towards it. That is scale for me I think. And the spread to our program and it has helped me a lot.*

*Smita Dharmamer, 2017, India.*

*In past few years, I have worked extensively on the issues of UNSCR1325, Women, Peace and Security, where this realization has helped me devise strategies to look at WPS is not only about women at peace negotiating tables, but in fact, 'peace' from women's perspective. So now, while I want to see many more women taking on the positions at the negotiating table, I equally (or dare I say, 'more importantly') want to see the notion of 'power' and 'leadership' changed from a hierarchical 'winner takes all' to 'a shared vision of the world'.*

*Shruti Upadhyay, 2012, Ukraine.*

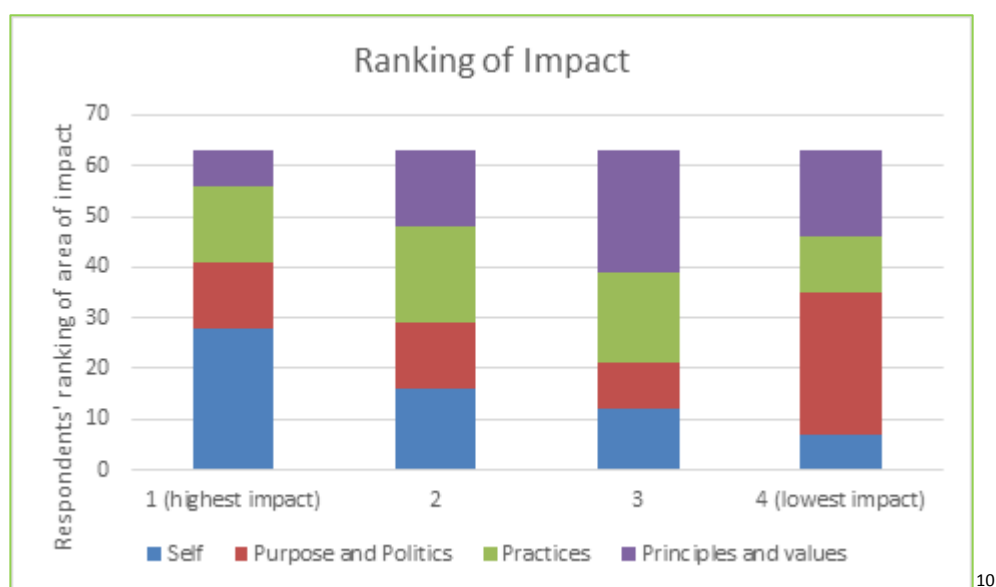
## 7. Contributing Factors

The stories of change from GCL graduates are a testament to the value of the program. They demonstrate graduates' contributions to development in general, and more specifically their organizations, communities, and sectoral changes. GCL has been meeting and even exceeding its intended outcomes. This section probes the elements which have made GCL effective within the ecosystem that supports and harnesses women's agency to exercise their rights, resources, and leadership. This section also surfaces some potential reflection and recommendations that could strengthen already effective elements of the program.

### 7.1 Substantive content and empowering approach

***“Coady intervenes in the right time for many women - at the beginning of their leadership journey”***  
(Stella Maranga, GCL mentor, Kenya)

The 2018 GCL Tracey Survey affirms that GCL is primarily about an individual's journey. 28 alumna out of 63 respondents mention that GCL have had the highest impact on them personally while 19 alumna say that it had the highest impact on their practices. But both self and practices are the two most impacted areas. It clear that content and facilitation approaches are relevant and effective, and have great impact on graduates.



The GCL approach is to start with women at where they are. It is bringing women to a location where they can focus on themselves and on work, to have a sense of connection across borders, to learn about other countries and know that the issues are not stand alone. The future network of these groups of women is vital in the multi-layered world and multi-issued struggles as they continue to connect, celebrate successes, and support each other in challenges.

***“I am now studying as Master of Innovation and global sustainable development in Lund University of Sweden. I got scholarship by Sweden government and I think GCL has been a strong factor for me to get this study opportunity. The Innovation of the project I presented in Coady and the vision for my career path is a plus of the grant.”***  
*Ha Do Thuy, 2017, Sweden.*

<sup>10</sup> Based on the “feminist leadership diamond” in Srilatha Batliwala (2010) ‘Feminist Leadership for Social Transformation: Clearing the Conceptual Cloud’, New Delhi: CREA. <http://web.creaworld.org/files/f1.pdf>



According to GCL mentors and facilitators, the program is reaching women that would not otherwise be reached by other programs. It makes the difference where there would be a gap otherwise – working with emerging leaders, who can still change their lives easily; who are often working at the grassroots level, tackling the needs of the marginalized groups. Often coming to Coady is their first experience of traveling abroad and it gives them a powerful start. It is not a rare case when women start with Coady programs and then move from community-led participatory work to issue-specific organizations or advanced academic programs.

GCL's course content and schedule have changed through the years. Some specific themes have been added to further locate women's leadership in fields like agriculture, climate change, peace and conflict, and many others in the global South. Based on graduate feedback, the course content was and continues to be relevant to their personal, organizational, and community leadership.

However, given that the on-campus component's schedule has not increased beyond seven weeks, there seems to be reduced time for the practical application of tools and individual reflections. This has become a consistent issue among GCL graduates in their final evaluations.

**The timetable is too tight! There's no room to absorb and internalize issues taught in class (2016)**

**Duration of the course was short to cover some of the topics in depth. If appropriate increasing the length of the programme for additional week would add additional value. (2017)**

**The reading days should be provided once every week and not only once in the whole program duration to give chance to the participants to read the course materials. (2018)**

Although interfaces with groups and institutions outside of the campus have been integrated into the curriculum, the schedule remains tight. As days are generally spent fully in the classroom, the hours can be quite long, particularly for intensive adult education processes. When the weekend assignments are added, the schedule can be overwhelming for some participants.

The GCL content reflects the contributions of students and graduates, and changes based on the specific interests of each cohort. But the substance has been enhanced over the years and balances by content demands that help move participants' work forward and the transformative, adult education approach taken by Coady. Nevertheless, several suggestions have been made in regards to course content, such as leaning towards more practical applications of theory and tools. For example, in tackling leadership models and styles, some students are interested in discussing the stories of some women leaders, the challenges that confronted them, and their strategies dealing with these. As emerging leaders, some students have brought with them experiences based on specific concerns in the work places and communities, particularly around relationship-building and influencing.

There has also been a request, especially among grassroots women leaders, for greater focus in undertaking and facilitating gender analysis and gender budgeting in various set ups. This, especially because the results of gender analysis and to some extent gender budgeting could inform grant and

non-grant based partnerships that they would be developing in their home countries and while at Coady, their own exercises on project management, including proposal development.<sup>11</sup>

To help manage the time, some graduates recommended a training needs assessment (TNA) prior to the on-campus component, whose results may allow facilitators to adjust the modules and allocate time accordingly. This TNA can also be an opportunity to see whether some incoming GCL participants could co-facilitate certain modules, given the wealth and specificity of knowledge and skills that they have: “If we are considering [an] “open space” [approach], the skills-sharing [activity] could have also been genuinely designed as an opportunity for the participants to set and implement their agenda and interest.” The focus group discussions also echoed the call to have more GCL graduates considered as potential co-facilitators, mentors, or sources for documentation/case studies.<sup>12</sup>

## 7.2 Dedicated mentorship and intergenerational learning

***“We all mentor as women, this often takes the form of informal mentorship. So, it is important that GCL offers this space for formal mentorship”*** (Dr. Atia Apusigah, GCL mentor, Ghana)

The mentorship component is another distinctive feature that makes GCL stand out among the other Coady programs. It strengthens participants’ connection to women’s issues and different contexts. According to the mentors themselves and Coady staff, GCL contributes into the promotion of the intergenerational learning and it is crucial to the women’s movement globally.

Among the reasons that motivate mentors to dedicate their time and efforts in their work with GCL alumna is a desire to share the expertise (“feminism should be dynamic”) as well as the opportunity to have the moments of reflection together with their mentees which contributes to the mutual continuous life-learning. Mentorship provides a good balance of professional and emotional support and enhances intergenerational learning that ensures the continuity of the women leadership movement worldwide.

It offers a rare interface between the emerging leaders among GCL’s graduates and women who have established their leadership in various fields. This mechanism has also facilitated long-term relationships which in turn strengthen a graduate’s relationship to Coady International Institute.

***“Thank you Coady for introducing me to such a wonderful mentor turned special friend! Pauline (Achola) emphasized the need to acknowledge and celebrate small victories. This gives a sense of progress and keeps the community energized. If eyes are too focused on the end goal, which is more often than not far away and filled with obstacles and detours, participants easily get discouraged and fail to notice the small steps that contribute to the achievement of the end goal.” Dolphine Anyango, 2014, Kenya.***

The mentorship indeed extended the sense of sisterhood but one that starts off as purpose-driven, especially as both mentees and mentors are obliged to set goals in the next four to six months. However these bonds are not always experienced by every GCL graduate, and in some cases the mentor/mentee relationship never established itself. Some practical issues such as finding common

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<sup>11</sup> Naima Chowdhury’s innovation project “*Exploring Techniques to Simplify Feminist Economics through Gender Sensitive Budgeting tools*” was completed in late 2018, with the intention of using as a classroom resource on this topic.

<sup>12</sup> To some extent Coady’s Advanced Fellowship in Citizen-led, Asset-Based, Community Development meets this need. Approximately 50% of nearly 30 fellows have been women leaders, many of whom were selected in an open call from Global Change Leaders and the broader women’s network.

time across several time zones and bad internet connection hampered what timely coaching opportunities. One graduate also felt that her mentor was not the appropriate match for her, “The choice of mentor did not suit my personal and organizational aspiration.”

There were also cases when it was mutually felt that the mentorship was not necessary. These issues are likely to have been reflected in the survey which showed that 65% found the mentorship “relevant” while 23% found it “somewhat relevant” and 12% thought that it was “not relevant” at all. While care is taken to match mentors and mentees, it is clear that personal relationships and connections cannot be predicted in advance.

Several recommendations surfaced in the series of conversations with GCL graduates, facilitators, and mentors. Among these are calls for greater investment in relationship-building. While the mentorship has sometimes been seen as an opportunity for GCL graduates to initiate and sustain conversations and ultimately take charge over their plans, there may be a need for Coady International Institute to play a proactive role in monitoring the progress of the mentorship. This role becomes even more important should there be a need to make adjustments in un-matching mentees and mentors which have failed to achieve chemistry.

Some mentors have also suggested greater involvement in the course to get a better sense of the context. The mentors have varying knowledge and familiarity over the course, especially as are connected with their mentee after graduation. Long-time mentor Maja Cubarrubia seems to echo similar thoughts around face-to face conversations between and among mentees and mentors,

**“While I think I understand why mentorship happens post the course, it has been helpful to reinforce what the women are learning and the mentors can help mentees with lessons that may be a little difficult to see the relevance or the potential application to your work. Coady can also bring in some of the mentors to work with the women, using case studies based on the mentors’ experience.”**

Mentors and staff also noted Coady’s efforts in formalising the engagement of mentors over the years. The contracts and guidelines have indeed eased the attendant challenges in relationship-building between mentees and mentors. The next goals in strengthening mentorships could include greater substantive involvement of existing mentors such that they themselves would appreciate better the results of their pieces of advice and support, and an expanded pool of mentors (potentially drawing from GCL graduates) and consequently, extended fields of expertise.

***“Support from the women’s leadership team and Coady team at large is strong. Having women leaders all over the globe that are always making themselves available as mentors is essential and advances a sisterhood of women motivated towards the common goals of gender equality and women’s empowerment.”***

(Eileen Alma, Director of International Center for Women Leadership at Coady Institute)

### **7.3 Substantive Community plans**

***“Communities are not gender neutral, so it is crucial to apply gender analysis to the community development”*** (Glenise Levendal, GCL mentor, South Africa)

The majority of respondents in the GCL Tracer Survey stated that they have nearly, if not fully implemented their community plans. The fact that the Theory of Change is mentioned among top development tools being used by alumnae long after graduation, suggests why personal change radiates to broader change in societies. While not all community plans were implemented, they

provided a way to ground theory and tools into a practical action. Several graduates mentioned that many years later, their community plans are still relevant, and they continue to build upon them. It is important to highlight that during the focus group discussions, communication skills and ability to raise their voice was mentioned as one of the key components that have influenced their success in the implementation of the community plans.

According to the results of the GCL Tracer Survey, among the most popular topics covered by GCL alumna community plans are:

- Women's empowerment (governance, social emancipation, economic empowerment)
- Local economic development
- Organic food, environment and sustainable development
- Working with the vulnerable groups
- Gender-based violence
- Sexual reproductive health

As mentioned earlier, among the main reasons that have caused the delay or change in the community action plan are:

- Workplace change
- Change in the personal interests
- Lack of funding
- Lack of support
- Unstable political environment

Understanding of these reasons creates the field for additional activities that can be further developed within the GCL leadership network and post-program alumna network to contribute to the achievement of community plans. Some graduates flagged the option of post-course funding. This funding accompaniment might help kick start some community plans. The 2018 GCL cohort, in their end of program focus group<sup>13</sup> also suggested crowd funding amongst themselves to support one another's community plans. A funding accompaniment is not new to Coady International Institute. The Oceanpath Fellowship and the Indigenous Women in Community Leadership provide funding for the projects of its cohorts, following a careful project design.

#### **7.4 Extensive Leadership Network**

***"It's more than simply an alumna group of an educational institution. This network is developed for women by women and we all own it" (Eileen Alma)***

The GCL Leadership Network exists in both formal (CoadyConnects), semi-formal (Coady Women Leaders Network on Facebook), and informal formats (WhatsApp, and other communication tools) that cover personal connections within the batches, friendly ties between mentors and mentees as well as connections that exist within the countries or regions. Coady in general and GCL in particular are somewhat special because they constantly continue involving the alumni - in research projects, co-facilitation and fellowships. This is one of the reasons that keeps the network alive and holds a lot of potential to enhance its vibrancy.

Being connected to the global women's leadership movement adds additional value to the GCL programs. Meeting government representatives, members of parliament, and leaders of prominent

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<sup>13</sup> An evaluative focus group held on the last day of the residency portion of the program.

women movements sets up a sense of belonging that inspires emerging leaders to contribute to the global community working towards the shared vision.

***“The program left a mark on my life, one that I wish many more women would get to experience. Please do continue with this program and if possible graduate it to a Diploma program. I for one would definitely love to achieve a Diploma in such an out of this world course.” Nomsa Ingwa, 2012, Zambia.***

All participants in the focus groups noted that they have strong bonds with their batches and that the GCL Leadership Network is contributing to the continuous knowledge sharing, emotional and professional support, and circulation of expertise among its members, which boosts more innovation and creativity both on the regional and on the global levels.

***“This training is very important for women leaders but they cannot all travel to Canada. It is a popular course judging from the number of applicants. I suggest the establishment of regional centres which can admit more women. The official mentorship component should also be extended for one year to give the mentors and mentees ample time to engage effectively. A GCL alumna directory should be done per country and/or region with details of activities of each graduate so that they can keep tabs on one another and this will also ensure that graduates do not fall off the radar. Graduates should be encouraged to have active regional alumna organizations which can push the GCL agenda forward.” Dolphine Anyango, 2014, Kenya.***

With advances in information communication technologies and internet access, there appears to be better chances to create, use, and maintain a strategic and appropriate communications platform. Such platform may facilitate connections and collaboration within and between cohorts. More important, it could potentially be used to track and document the journeys of GCL graduates and consequently, the extent of GCL’s contribution to transformative changes among individuals, households, communities and societies over time.

In the early years of GCL, this was an issue because of availability, cost and bandwidth considerations. Moreover, any communications platform needed a community manager, which is a role that may be beyond the remit of a facilitator. As Pauline Achola recounts, “the idea was great: We would have an online website, where everybody would be connected, keeping in touch with the mentors and each other. But at the time we did not have the technical resources and capacity to put up and manage a website.”

Social media, especially Facebook and Messenger have become quite popular worldwide. But there are still a few jurisdictions where these are banned and where few GCL graduates are based. Coady Connects is one such platform, but uptake amongst GCL graduates has not yet been high because, in general, managing online communities is not technically demanding, but still requires time from Coady facilitators and commitment from graduates. This means that a more targeted investment may be required from Coady, especially if it is to consider such activities as partnerships in line with its Institutional Strategy. Such investment could inform and be informed by a broader monitoring and evaluation framework.

Communication platforms are not just limited to strategic and appropriate tools. They also extend to activities like focus group discussions, webinars, and online courses which GCL graduates can participate in or even lead.

## 8. Broader Reflections for GCL and Coady Institute

Based on the research and evaluation activities, it can be said that GCL program is effectively achieving its goals of strengthening women's leadership, increasing organizational capacity to create change, and establishing network of women leaders working together to improve their communities. A remarkable 98% of tracer study respondents shared that the GCL program had helped strengthen their contributions to development and women's empowerment. This is due to a relevant curriculum that increases knowledge and skills, skilled facilitators and facilitation approaches that strengthen and incubate leadership, a leadership plan that helps participants translate their learnings into action, and the support of dedicated mentors and classmates who can assist in situational leadership through the post-program accompaniment period. It is also assisted by dedicated Coady staff who accompany the participants and graduates on their leadership journeys.

The evaluation activities also provided an opportunity to examine some of the broader implications for the Global Change Leaders Program around its Theory of Change, MEL plans, relationship with Coady and StFX, and graduate innovations.

### 8.1 Updating a Theory of Change

The Global Change Leaders program has evolved significantly over the years, and it may be time to revisit and sharpen its theory of change. GCL has become more than an extension of the legacy leadership programs of Coady International Institute and an exclusive space for women leaders. Its content is increasingly anchored on the most fundamental forms of inequality, which requires far more than access to rights, assets and other resources.

Its substance has increasingly seen the contribution of its students and graduates, pushing an intersectional approach further, a desire that several of its facilitators share. As Naima Chowdhury, the current GCL lead facilitator and with years of international development and humanitarian work adds:

**"Climate change, peace and security, gender-based violence are very important to women leaders. So [these, along with] women's natural resource management and environmental feminism were introduced. There are also discussions about people who have different social, cultural, economic identities. To me feminism is the first declaration to acknowledge and respond to diversity."**

As GCL is increasingly seen as a major space and resource for women's leadership, it has necessarily attracted the interest of potential partners, even among its graduates who have ideas for collaboration. It has also become even more active in engaging with broader feminist movements.

Because of its expanding circle beyond its existing partners, increasing engagement outside of St. Francis Xavier University, and the sheer potential for intersectional collaborations with its graduates and many other actors, GCL may have to consider focusing its ambitions and optimizing its resources. This, in turn, can inform an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework that can better track the contributions of GCL to and through its graduates and interface with other partners even in shared spaces outside of Antigonish.

### 8.2 Investing in monitoring and evaluation

The last seven years of GCL have contributed to multiple changes among individuals, households, communities, and societies by harnessing the leadership potentials of its graduates. The anticipation of a wellspring of knowledge, skills, initiatives and even a bigger pool of leaders, being inspired and mentored by GCL graduates was not lost since Day 1. In fact, GCL's "Cadillac" version took monitoring, evaluation, and learning to heart. As Pauline Achola recounts, "for every session, we had an evaluation

all throughout the four-month program. It was evaluation-heavy. We made sure that we would learn as much as we could from the first cohort.”

While the first GCL was rich in documentation, including a few case studies which featured selected students, tracking its impact was a challenge. Back in 2012, the plan was to create a website, where participants could share their stories. But internet was not as accessible as it is now, and it discouraged the participation of people from places with poor internet connection or with restrictions over certain applications.

Later GCL received the support of MEL personnel from Coady International Institute. This provided regularity in gathering and analysing insights from participants based on course evaluations, end of program focus group discussions, and graduate outcome surveys (distributed six to eight months after graduation). GCL thus became part of an institutional knowledge management strategy that has been meant to assess and increase the quality of all courses. While data collection and storage have become more systematic, a comprehensive MEL strategy has yet to be developed to track the long-term progress of GCL graduates. The current study is potentially an important basis on which to build these efforts.

Fortunately, more and more tracking tools and applications have become available. An interactive map that indicates the presence of GCL graduates and charts the progress of their community plans is no longer a remote possibility. It also helps that there is buy in over MEL, including advancing a feminist MEL that further invests in capturing stories which tackle personal agency and multiple backlashes.

While the need for a robust MEL strategy for GCL is clear, there are diverging options for how this could be developed. As Coady has moved towards systematizing its MEL systems since 2012, some support and responsibility has shifted towards dedicated MEL staff. However, others are of the mind that MEL must be embedded within GCL, under the stewardship of the facilitators. As Nanci Lee, a former associate and staff person of the Institute, reasons,

**“I think monitoring and evaluation is a core part of GCL. You can have external support but it is very important that monitoring and evaluation is stewarded by the directors and coordinators themselves.”**

This, as GCL carries a set of values whose prioritization might be distinct from the other courses. Feminist MEL gives voice to multiple ways of knowing – including integrating reason, emotion, and experience. Relationships and interactive processes that involve emotions or intuition are recognized as legitimate sources of knowledge. This in contrast with traditional MEL which focusses on the need to aggregate results and prioritizes impartiality and independence.

More importantly, the key facilitators and staff tend to have a more nuanced understanding of the context, in comparison with monitoring, evaluation and learning staff whose interface with the GCL participants may be quite limited. The substance of an MEL plan lies in GCL’s theory of change, but investment will necessarily be informed by the ongoing deliberations over Coady’s new Institutional Strategy.

### **8.3 Locating GCL in-between Coady International Institute and StFX**

Among the most common observations from graduates of GCL and other Coady courses is the absence of StFX’s accreditation of education programs, which could add value for graduates and increase its reputation among development practitioners.

There is a symbiotic relationship between Coady International Institute and StFX. Both increase the substantive and symbolic profile of each other through their respective unique roles and resources. Coady has cemented its mark in StFX and in the broader community of Antigonish because of the cohorts which it hosts every year and who also impart their own insights to various organizations and communities in town. Meanwhile, StFX has its own courses on Adult Education, Development Studies, and Women and Gender Studies, where some Coady staff teach occasionally. However, the two institutions also cater to entirely different audiences. One provides education primarily to Canadian undergraduate students and prioritizes academic knowledge. The other primarily caters to development practitioners and leaders from the global South who are grounded in practice. Both institutions recognize the Antigonish Movement as a lived and living example of community organizing and mobilization. Nanci Lee further reflects,

**“The added value of GCL is being grounded in Coady’s added value which is helping on the ground practitioners, really be grounded and reflective, have their fingers on the pulse of practice and research. We are never going to be the strongest academic program and if we are, - going back to gender and power - we are going to lose those grassroots activists and even some policy makers who are not very educated. You are going to risk being very privileged.”**

Given the distinct identities of Coady International Institute and StFX, the interest to keep them separate is quite understandable.

**“We need practitioners who are thoughtful, and researchers who are grounded in practice. There is a lot of value with connecting with the university, with a huge risk of being an academic department.”**

But as both reinforces each other’s identity, it is also important to locate GCL even within the grey zone which the two institutions share and explore overlap where strategic.

#### **8.4 Developing a Graduate Innovations Policy**

GCL graduates have their own stories of change, which are worth sharing to a broader audience. Some have seen their leadership plans unfold in an unexpected scale. Some others have matured as community leaders, social innovators and development practitioners, whose interests and skills share so much in common with Coady International Institute. These are just the entry points to potential collaboration, which could be harnessed by clear principles and policies around graduate innovations, research and documentation.

**“Can Coady endorse us? Can we share our outputs on the website? Can my materials be presented to Coady?... If can put Coady stamp on these, then Coady can endorse and good way of promoting GCL graduates.” Smita Dharmam, 2017, India.**

The Institute can be quite instrumental in the transformative changes a graduate would like to pursue long after graduation. Its reputation can add significant weight to a budding but brilliant initiative that is being marketed to donors. Consequently, the positive returns of a project can further increase Coady’s profile. Although such partnerships may not be able to replace grants, they can increase the chances of initiatives to be further supported in the future.

But collaboration also comes with risks which sometimes emanate from uneven power relationships and varying capacities and resources. It is thus essential to lay down partnership principles like non-discrimination, transparency and accountability, among others as well as to clearly communicate GCL partnership policy.



## **9. Recommendations and reflections on feminist MEL**

The study generated enough data to make recommendations for potential ways to enrich or strengthen the Global Change Leaders program. The recommendations were triangulated between the feedback of participants, staff, and resource people. In general, we have included recommendations that are feasible and achievable. However, they should also be considered in light of the fact that the GCL program is meeting and even exceeding its goals. The program is contributing to its ultimate outcome of increased influence and presence of women in all aspects of development based on both quantitative indicators and qualitative information. Some aspects could be tweaked, others strengthened or clarified.

### **9.1 Recommendations**

#### **Inside the classroom**

1. The focus on self-empowerment is a core component of the program and should be continued. It contributes to personal and professional changes in leadership approaches and styles. It also extends mentorship to actors outside of Coady, and leads to the integration of new tools and concepts into organizations and other professional activities. This aspect of GCL leads to scale, as graduates are inspired to pass along learnings to their wider networks.
2. Other tools/approaches that stood out strongly include: ABCD, personal resilience, gender-based approaches/women's leadership, theory of change, communication skills and group facilitation. These should also be considered as 'core' components which contribute to broader development outcomes and achieving scale. These topics can be further covered within the alumna network learning activities and online databases.
3. Cultural and professional diversity leads to a re-thinking of biases, enhanced ability to share space with different cultures, sharing of insights/lessons from different contexts, heritages and cultures, and a feeling of sisterhood which persists beyond the classroom space. This is a core strength of the program, and makes it unique among other women's leadership programs.
4. An adjustment in the curriculum could allow time for more practical application. Graduates shared that there is not enough time to tackle both theory and practice, including the practical challenges of leadership (though mentorship provides help on situational leadership). Hard skills that were mentioned include proposal development, project management, ABCD, and gender budgeting.
5. A pre-program Training Needs Assessment may also help adjust the curriculum, content and timing to best fit each batch of participants. It would also provide an opportunity to identify skills for skills-sharing sessions and expertise amongst the participants.

#### **Leadership Action Plans**

6. The community plans are valuable, despite not always being successfully achieved as planned in the classroom. They provide a framework for achieving change and thinking through community work. They lead to targeted, measureable change, much of which can be directly attributed to the GCL program.
7. There were some suggestions that the leadership plan of three components (leadership plan, organizational plan, and community plan) may be too broad. However, the majority of graduates seem to be following through on the plans, even if not always during the 4-6 month post-program mentorship.
8. The program could explore the possibility of funding accompaniment. It may be possible for Coady to provide seed funding, but the 2018 graduating class also had creative ideas for crowdfunding amongst themselves.

### **Mentorships**

9. Mentorship enables significant learning when the match works well. Mentorship often deepens and maintains the gender analysis, and provides support for situational leadership as participants return home and face challenges in implementing their leadership plans.
10. There is potential to expand the pool of mentors in a way that reflects the diversity and size of each cohort. Mentors could be drawn from inside the GCL alumnae pool, as many have become established leaders.
11. The participation and ownership of existing mentors can be enhanced. The suggestions include:
  - 11.1 Briefing mentors more thoroughly on the curriculum and enabling them to contribute by sharing their own knowledge and experiences;
  - 11.2 Organizing an “after action review” with each mentee, mentor and Coady;
  - 11.3 Enabling mentees choose their mentors, or engage mentors as a group in providing input on the ‘best fit’ for each mentee.
  - 11.4 Further investment in the mentor-mentee introduction to clarify the goals and objectives of the mentorship.

### **Leadership Network**

12. There is a high level of ownership and belonging over the wider GCL leadership network. This is a strength of the program, which should be further documented, explored, and supported.
13. Coady should explore ways to continue connecting each batch, as well as connecting across batches. Respondents suggested that this should be done in a purposeful manner that leads to tangible outputs or networks. Lower cost options include: continuing fellowships, online focus group discussions, webinars and online courses, an online conference, and creating an ‘opt-in’ alumnae database with contact information. Higher cost options include regional activities, other face-to-face opportunities for GCL and Coady graduates.
14. The GCL program, and Coady as a whole, may also wish to explore ways in which it can highlight or endorse materials created by graduates. This could be through a “graduate innovations policy” which periodically takes calls for graduates’ research, teaching materials, and translated document.

### **Organizational Environment**

15. Articulate GCL’s alignment with the broader strategy for women’s leadership, Coady’s institutional strategy, and its theory of change.
16. Explore options for accrediting the program through StFX as this would add value for graduates and the Institute.
17. Look at the GCL as a model for other Coady programs (like Youth programming, Indigenous programs, etc.) – partly due to its successful resourcing and unique elements such as mentorship and community plans.

### **Other**

18. Provide a syllabus of the program for participants so that graduates can refer the program in future professional use. This could also be a valuable marketing and recruitment material.

## 9.2 Reflections on ‘feminist’ MEL methodology

At the very end of this report we would like to share the research team’s experience of conducting the study while applying the GCL tools within the research methodology. This can serve as an additional evidence to illustrate the program outcomes and approach as well as working in the multi-cultural environment and coming from different positions (Eric Smith, Canada, Coady MEL Manager; Kateryna Kravchuk, Ukraine, GCL early graduate (2014); Nina Somera, Philippines, GCL recent graduate (2018)).

The MEL team began with the understanding that they wanted to bring feminist principles to the study. This approach placed considerable weight on the process that involves contextualization from the personal agency to the more political and practical circumstances as much as results. This, in our bid to encourage learning, collaboration, participation, inclusivity, and responsiveness. An explicit aim was holistic reporting that facilitates telling stories and embracing complexity.

We also recognize that evaluation is a political activity: it is necessarily inseparable from the contexts where it is embedded and the actors within its immediate environment. The principles, perspectives and preferences of the evaluators likewise contribute, however indirectly, to the politics which the evaluation represents. Hence we also strove to be mindful among ourselves throughout the process. We think that such self-awareness adds integrity into this report.

Our research process began by setting and validating the goals of this evaluation based on the resources which were available to us and those which were possible in the next few months. Our subsequent meetings began with check-ins and check-outs, which in turn, built and strengthened trust amongst each other. It also strengthened our shared values and approaches, amid our diverse contexts, experiences and biases. It was clear that we did not want short cuts, despite the limited time. We were happy to get raw data and explore tools which would help us organize these. We welcomed stories as pieces of evidence and we were also open to explore hypotheses.

We have become comfortable with each other. There may be occasions when we were not gentle in checking each other’s biases and assumptions but there was always respect. Working as a team also helped identify gaps and new tools (for example using the feminist leadership diamond), and new approaches (initially the tracer study was not planned).

Each team member brought a different experience, philosophy and/or approach to the overall work. The team also came from different cultures and countries. As we proceeded, we were able to edit each other but bring a singular voice. As we led focus groups, survey design, and analysis there was an explicit attempt to share power and empower each other. This was effective because we brought commitment and flexibility. That we felt comfortable, speaks to the shared ethics. We protected our inputs from personal judgements, but were also good to check each other’s biases.

A double edged sword is that the team became emotionally involved in the work. Perhaps no surprise as two of the participants were graduates, and the third is a Coady employee. However, it was an asset in that it added value and helped us to dig deeper and support each other (both personally and professionally). However, the time and effort increased because of this. It is difficult to judge or anticipate the correct balance. As a team, we could have set stricter rules at the beginning, or extended the initial time frame once we realized it would be a deeper experience. This is a significant lesson as Coady continues to develop approaches to feminist MEL.

Overall, having a mixed team and incorporating feminist MEL was fruitful. They brought added value by extending the GCL program beyond the classroom and putting into practice a new approach. We

hope that this attitude brought integrity and quality into the report, put shared leadership into practice, and can be an aspiration and inspiration for others. It was an empowering process for the research team. We remain hopeful that the methods, report, and follow-up work were also empowering to the participants in the evaluation, the people who have been involved in GCL and Coady, and many others who are invested in women's leadership. We plan to further engage Coady graduates, especially GCL alumnae in the process by asking for their feedback. We intend to organize a follow-up webinar or online focus group. This will not only ensure that the study provides evidence for reporting but also enables the networking and development opportunities for the future initiatives within GCL.

## Appendix A: References and Resource Materials

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