

# EMPATHY MAP

## Why Do this?

An Empathy Map is a collaborative tool designed to provide deeper insights into people's current lives and/or future aspirations. Product designers and those in marketing frequently use it in order to better understand people and their needs with the intention to design better products or programs. For the purposes of evaluation or practical research, the tool provides a participatory process through which context is explored, new insights are shared, and a collective vision constructed. The resulting vision can then be used to explore where progress has been made, how and why, and where change has not occurred, but is needed critically. In this adapted version, the Empathy Map will help to identify:

- The current status and situation of program participants (and that of their families and communities).
- The visions, goals, and aspirations participants have for themselves, others in the program, and their program overall (or their community).
- Identification of where participants feel progress has been made towards achieving their goals (based on the collective vision they have created) as a result of their participation in the program. Identification of goals where progress has not been made, but which are critical to their overall vision (and transformative change).

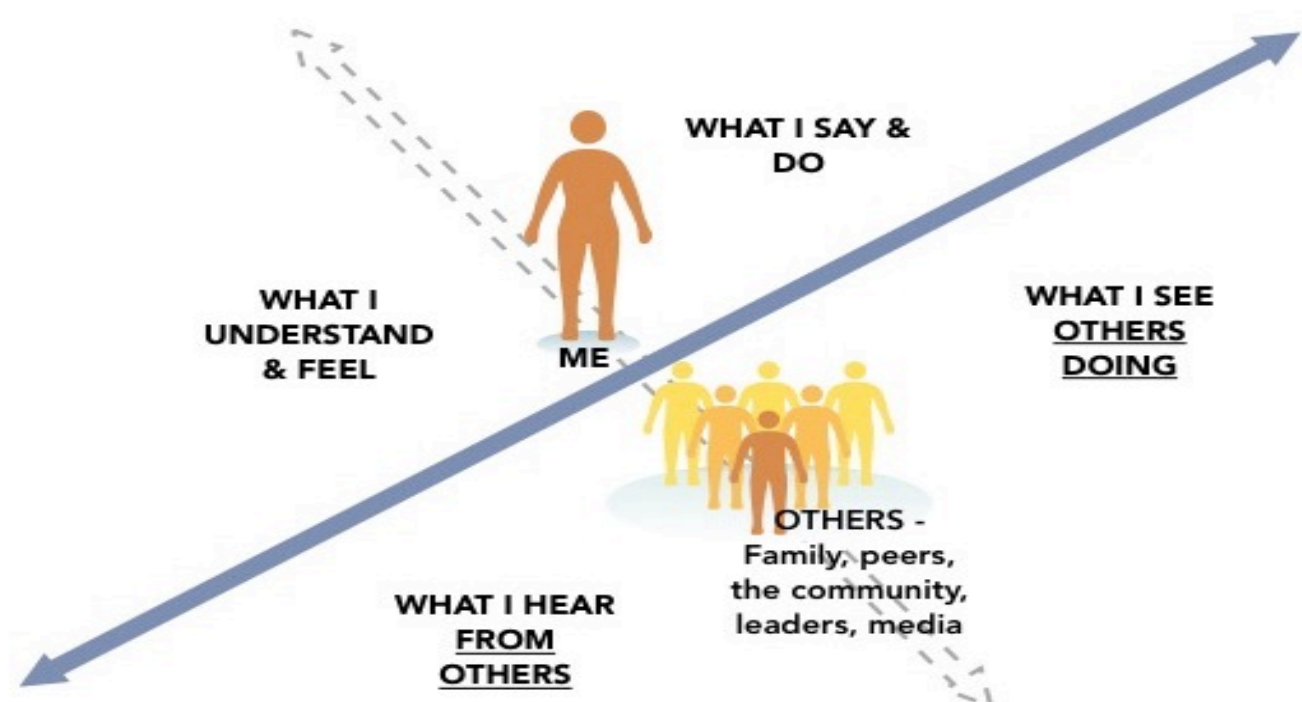
The discussion that results from the creation of an empathy map helps participants and program actors, along with others in the community, to reflect on their reality and goals, which is a critical part of any transformative empowerment process. The structure of the empathy maps also aligns (in part) with a numerous transformative change frameworks.<sup>1</sup>

## Set-Up

1. Make sure participants have a minimum of 1-1.5 hours to complete the empathy map and report backs. This is a minimum, you may need to consider up 2hrs.
2. **Be aware of power dynamics, and do what is necessary to minimize them. Thinking critically about the purpose of the convening (what information do you need and what will be done with it?), who will be involved, and what those relationships might be.**
3. This activity should be completed in small groups (i.e. no more than 5 people per group).
4. Provide each group with a large piece of paper, some small pieces of paper (and tape) or sticky-back notes (post-its), some markers, and some small colorful dots.

<sup>1</sup> For example - [http://www.inwf-resourcecenter.org/Files/ECM001/PUBLICATIONS/1505011130\\_INWF-A.Pittman%20Visualizing%20Change%20a%20Guide\\_2015.pdf](http://www.inwf-resourcecenter.org/Files/ECM001/PUBLICATIONS/1505011130_INWF-A.Pittman%20Visualizing%20Change%20a%20Guide_2015.pdf) or <http://www.genderatwork.org/OurWork/OurApproach/GWFramework.aspx>

5. It is easier for participants to complete the activity if you provide instructions or tasks one step at a time.
6. Make sure someone (from your organization) has been identified to take notes during the group report-backs and discussion. Documentation is key.
7. **Read through the facilitation guide and documentation form before implementing. In fact, try it out with staff before working with participants. Implementing this tool will require small group facilitation by staff or participants who have done the activity and have strong leadership skills. Make sure you understand the purpose of the activity, have a sense for how to implement, and what space, materials, and information is needed. Make it your own!**
  - *You are facilitating a conversation amongst experts – you are not the expert in this scenario. You are there to support a conversation by working through an activity.*
  - *Let people think about the question/prompt for at least 20 seconds before jumping in with another example.*



## How to do this?

1. **GROUNDING THE EMPATHY MAP.** To begin, divide participants into small groups of no more than 5 people and provide each group with a large sheet of paper, small piece of paper (and some tape if you are not using sticky-back paper), and some markers. It is useful to engage participants in a conversation around their current context – what is happening in their lives, the lives of their family, and in the community? The prompts can be around specific issues like women and gender based issues, health, education, community leadership, etc. As it can be challenging for some people to think about goals for their future, especially if they have never been asked, a conversation around current issues or challenges

can provide “a bridge” to discussions about a future without these obstacles. **Write down one idea only on a small piece of paper or sticky-back notes.** (15 to 20 mins)

**2. DRAW OUT THE EMPATHY MAP.** The map is composed of 4 quadrants:

1. *What I hear from others*
2. *What I see others doing*
3. *What I say and do*
4. *What I understand and feel*

Referring to the example above, draw out the four quadrants on a large piece of paper and label each quadrant accordingly. In this adapted version, a distinction is made between what the participants, themselves understands, feels, says and does, and what other around them do (“*what I see others doing*”) and say (“*what I hear from others*”).

**3. EMPATHY MAPPING.** There are a number of ways of going through the empathy map; two alternatives are: (Overall, anywhere from 30 mins to 60 mins)

**OPTION ONE** – Beginning with the quadrant labeled, “What I hear from others” – *others being family, peers, members of the community, leaders, the media, etc.* – ask participants what THEY HOPE TO HEAR FROM OTHERS in the future (*a few years to 10 years from now, depends on your timeframe*) relative to your particular areas of inquiry, such as women and women’s empower, gender and gender identity, health and community wellbeing, education and access to resources, political changes, etc. For example, if the topic were around women and women’s empowerment, a prompt might be, “What do you hope to hear from others around you 5 years from now because of the work being doing through this program?” **Write one idea only per small piece of paper and attach to the corresponding quadrant. Be explicit about WHO and WHAT when writing the vision statements.** For example, it is about husbands helping their wives with household chores, is it participants knowing more about their rights and laws, etc.? **Depending on the conversation, give participants about 10 – 15 mins per quadrant.** Continue to process and fill in the rest of the empathy map.

**OPTION TWO** – Some participants feel more comfortable processing and sharing through storytelling and so it might be challenging for them to think about goals in such concrete ways. An alternative approach to completing the empathy map is to have participants share their ideas for a vision in general, by sharing stories and distilling the key idea of change. The facilitator can then place the statement in the appropriate quadrant, confirming with participants. **Write one idea only per small piece of paper and attach to the corresponding quadrant. Be explicit about WHO and WHAT when writing the vision statements (see above).**

- **CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING** – *If participants are struggling to identify goals or aspirations for the future, go back to the context items discussed and written down on the small pieces of paper. These are ostensible experiences that participants would like to see changed in the future, so use them as an opportunity to explore what that might sound like, look like, feel like, etc. It might also be helpful to provide some examples for participants to consider. Gently push participants to dream a bit, but also to think critically about what else may need to change in order for this vision to be realized. For example, if you want girls staying in school longer, what social norms around girls and education need to change? If you want more people accessing mental health services, what awareness levels and access to services might also need to change?*

4. **IDENTIFYING PROGRESS AND AREAS STILL IN NEED OF PROGRESS.** *(OPTIONAL – based on information needs or when this was implemented in the program cycle as this can be done at a later time).* In this adapted version of the tool, an opportunity is provided for participants to identify where progress has been made towards the collective visions and where critical work remains. This insight is key to generating insights for reflection and bringing new information to bare during decision-making and planning processes. Depending on your information needs, this can be done once the empathy map has been completed by participants or at a later date, as part of ongoing evaluation, learning, and reflection.

NOTE: **You will need two sets of colored dots; we recommend using green and red.** Give each small group up to 5 green dots and up to 5 red dots (the same number for each type of colored dot). We recommend no more than 5 dots per color, for a total of up to 10 dots.

- **FIRST** - Ask participants in each of the small groups to identify collectively up-to 5 visions statements (or outcomes) for which they have seen/experienced progress as a result of their participation in the program or because of the work that is being done. Use the GREEN dots and have participants, after some discussion and agreement to place these on the statements **(THIS IS WHY ITS CRITICAL TO ONLY HAVE 1 STATEMENT PER PIECE OF PAPER!).** Ask participants to discuss HOW they know that progress has taken place and write down this information (essential, evidence).
- **NEXT** – Have participants to identify collectively up-to 5 visions statements (or outcomes) for which they have NOT seen/experienced progress as a result of their participation in the program or because of the work that is being done. Use the RED dots and have participants, after some discussion and agreement to place these on the statements. **Ask participants why progress on this statement or outcome is critical to their overall vision (and transformative change) and write down this information.** (10 to 20 mins).

5. **SHARING IDEAS:** Have each group present their Empathy Map to the larger group. Depending on time, we recommend having participants share the statements they identified (progress and no progress). Each group member should participate in the report back, if possible. During the report backs, make sure to have someone (a member of the staff, etc.) take notes on (or video) what groups are saying. Report backs can take a while depending on the number of groups you have; it is best to give each group around 5 minutes each for a total of 30 minutes for this task. (15-30 mins)
6. **GROUP DISCUSSION:** When each group has finished sharing their empathy map, engage people in a discussion around what they heard overall; for example, *what were the major themes and commonalities across all the empathy maps (the areas of progress or no progress)? What was the most powerful or surprising thing they heard or learned? And what does this mean for them, the program, and the community?*

**DON'T FORGET TO DOCUMENT!** Remember to record the important takeaways from this conversation on large pieces of paper affixed to the wall or on a notepad (which, while practical, may not be transparent in the context of participatory tools implemented in group settings). Remember to take pictures of participants working (if you have consent) and of each completed Empathy Map (if practical and safe, you can include the names of each group or participant on the back of the drawing). (15 - 20 mins).



**7. POST ACTIVITY DISCUSSION:** At the end of the meeting, the facilitators should review what they heard and learned from the participants, review the notes that were taken, the drawings that were created. *The conversation should focus on what was learned, especially new information or insights and what this means for the work or program? What shifts might need to be made, what else what need to be considered. DON'T SKIP THIS STEP!*

