



PRINCIPLES FOR STRATEGIC LEARNING, RESEARCH & EVALUATION (SLRE)

At AJWS, the following guiding principles inform our strategic learning, research and evaluation work and help us hold ourselves accountable to our mission, values and partners. Through our commitment to these principles, we can capitalize on what works, change what does not, sharpen our strategies and prioritize our resources to advance lasting change and build a more just and equitable world.

I. EMBODY INTEGRITY

We seek to intentionally and consistently engage in ethical practices. Our commitment to integrity includes reflecting on standards in the field of research and evaluation, including honesty, transparency and fairness in our work, regardless of the consequences.

We believe integrity is essential for building trust and credibility.

In action, this principle leads us to ask questions such as:

- To what extent are we being ethical in our practices around gathering and analyzing data, learning and reflection, forming conclusions from our analysis, and recruiting and hiring? To what extent do our practices acknowledge and mitigate bias? Have we done what we can to minimize harm to participants?
- How do we maximize our confidence in the rigor and accuracy of what we report?
- How are we openly recognizing our limitations, discussing and learning from our mistakes, seeking feedback and improving our work?

II. UPHOLD FEMINIST APPROACHES TO SLRE

AJWS employs a feminist approach to our work. This means that we acknowledge that patriarchy plays a critical role in shaping unequal access to power, and therefore we seek to attend to these existing power dynamics, value and elevate multiple forms of knowledge and perspectives, and privilege solutions innovated by local people for the particular cultures and contexts in which they live.

The use of feminist approaches in itself serves as a tool for social change and supports the transformation of power dynamics and structures to foster greater equity.

In action, this principle leads us to ask questions such as:

- How can we address the ways that patriarchal power dynamics perpetuate gender bias and other pre-existing assumptions, which can in turn affect how questions are asked and how we design our work?
- Are we ensuring that we are co-creating knowledge with the communities we are evaluating and sharing back our learnings with those communities?
- How does this work challenge unequal power relations and lead to transformative social change?

III. EMPHASIZE STRATEGIC LEARNING

AJWS deploys “strategic learning”—an iterative, responsive and flexible practice in which we critically and systematically reflect on our work and seek evidence to inform our decisions. Strategic learning supports us in

challenging and/or understanding our assumptions, biases and progress towards desired and expected change—and it helps us respond dynamically to the unanticipated developments or consequences of our programs.

In action, this principle leads us to ask questions such as:

- How can we create the space and time to reflect and discuss what we have done and/or observed, to identify and challenge our assumptions, and to seek input from others to deepen our analysis?
- How can we support an integrated learning practice reflective of the dynamic and unpredictable nature of our work?
- What would it look like to collect data that meaningfully informs our understanding of the social change we seek, assesses our contribution to progress, and aids us in managing our strategies?

IV. BE COLLABORATIVE

AJWS approaches all of our SLRE work collaboratively, by facilitating research, learning and evaluation processes that engage stakeholders with intention and make sure that the experience is empowering and meaningful to all. We design our processes to co-create shared goals and expectations.

By approaching our work collaboratively, the quality of our work improves because it brings a diversity of voices and perspectives—and therefore contributes to the utility, ownership and credibility of our work.

In action, this principle leads us to ask questions such as:

- What does a meaningful collaboration look like for a given project?
- How do we achieve meaningful multi-stakeholder collaboration while also being thoughtful about the intensive time commitment that requires of our staff, communities and research partners?
- What are our obligations to our stakeholders and how are we holding ourselves accountable?

V. PRIORITIZE ACTION

AJWS focuses our SLRE efforts on the most relevant, specific concerns for which practical change is possible. Being actionable focuses SLRE efforts on supporting informed actions and evidence-based decision-making, and it ensures that collaborations with SLRE are relevant, meaningful, and have a practical value add.

In action, this principle leads us to ask questions such as:

- Are we intentional in our planning to prompt reflection on how our learnings can influence decisions and actions of those who need to be engaged?
- What data is being collected and for what specific purpose?
- How can we make our work easy for our audiences to understand and derive meaning from?

ABOUT AJWS

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is the leading Jewish organization working to fight poverty and pursue justice in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. By supporting hundreds of social change organizations in 18 countries, we respond to the most pressing issues of our time—from disasters, genocide and hunger, to the persecution of women and minorities worldwide. With Jewish values and a global reach, AJWS is making a difference in millions of lives and bringing a more just and equitable world closer for all.



American Jewish World Service

45 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

T: 212.792.2900 • 800.889.7146

E: ajws@ajws.org

ajws.org

[/americanjewishworldservice](https://www.facebook.com/americanjewishworldservice)

[/ajws](https://twitter.com/ajws)

[/americanjewishworldservice](https://www.instagram.com/americanjewishworldservice)

